Therapy-on-Sea

What is in a Healthy Relationship

There are certain qualities that a couple need to have for a thriving strong healthy relationship. These qualities shouldn't be optional, they need to be consistently there.

These qualities all help to form a sustainable, close, exciting bond with one another. In no order:

Trust

To move anywhere in life and within a relationship trust is essential. Without it so many elements of life are stunted. The most important being emotional intimacy. If there is no emotional intimacy or connection, then there is instability. Without trust, there is no guarantee that you can count on your partner to be there for you and whether they really mean what they are saying. A lack of trust leaves the relationship open to stress, anxiety, and uncertainty.

Action – to check what is trust to each of them. Have there been any incidences when trust has been breached.

Communication

Communicating is essential. To be able to talk openly with honesty and with respect to your partner is an important part of a relationship. The need and level of communication is different to everyone and is dependent on how each were raised and communicated to by parents or care givers. There are many reasons why communication may be hard, being taught to not talk about things that are sad or uncomfortable to others, to put others needs before their own.

Communicating in a calm peaceful way is pivotal for a functioning progressive relationship.

Action – to identify how they communicate with each other. What is being heard and what is being shown nonverbally. PAC work.

Patience

Life has ups and downs, a relationship needs degrees of patience when things are rough. When in a committed loving relationship there is allowance and patience for when there is a bad day for one or for both. It gives flexibility and space to readjust to what is happening within life.

Without patience in a relationship there is an increased risk of stress, anxiety, anger, tit for tat and ultimately resentment building among other emotions. Being able to be patient and adaptable gives a couple the necessary freedom to feel secure, safe and unconditionally loved and respected.

Action – what have you observed about patience between the two of them. What emotions are being projected?

Empathy

Therapy-on-Sea

A relationship needs empathy. It needs to have people in it that understand and share what each other is going through. To understand and respect their feelings. Seeing things from a different perspective, listening to opinions despite disagreeing with it. Feeling their pain and trying to help the other to feel better. Being happy for their successes.

Action – So many emotions block empathy. It is crucial to identify what emotions are at play in this relationship if empathy is missing.

Affection and Interest

Having a genuine sense of affection and interest is important in a relationship. There needs to be gentleness and an interest in the growth of each other. A liking for each other that is shown with words and through physical closeness for example hugs, kisses, and comforting touch and holding hands all form parts of affection and interest in each other. It is the sustainable part of a relationship that grows gently but strongly.

Action – work with the love languages, what are theirs in order of preference, is it shown?

Flexibility

Works neatly alongside patience. Flexibility is required from both sides. It should not always be the same person that gives. It is a requirement that both adjust as and when needed. Give and take in equal measure. In healthy relationships, both partners are willing to adjust as needed to the changes and growth — positive and negative — that may come about during a long-term relationship.

Action – are they adaptable with their needs and wants. How flexible are each of them.

Appreciations and Gratitude's

Everyone in a relationship needs to feel appreciated. The more a person feels appreciated and feels gratitude for the things that they offer then the further the relationship can go.

Action – ask when the last time was that they felt and absorbed an appreciation and gratitude for being who they are. How was it expressed? How do they like it expressed?

Growth

Capacity for change and switching it up to allow the relationship to grow is essential for a healthy, fun, and progressive connection. If there is nowhere to move, then there is no ability for growth. This applies as a couple and as an individual. Everything that happens within a relationship changes; it is meant to do that. There is growth and change at several points in life, this means that hopes, fears, goals and interests constantly move.

Action – what have been the changes that have happened over length of the relationship to date. How were those changes handled?

Sian Hines Counsellor and Hypnotherapist (Ad Dip Psy C, Prof. Dip Psy C)

Respect

This is important in all parts of life's relationships, but it is especially important as part of a relationship. Respect is shown in how they talk to one another; each person is heard in a way where there is no devaluation or belittling happening. All the actions are respected such as time and effort. There is mutual protection of privacy and reputation because of the respect that is shown.

Everyone feels a disagreement differently, Couples can spend a long time trying to change each other's mind on what they think, this is hard work. This is because most disagreements are rooted in differences in how they think, feel, values, lifestyle and personality as examples. The trick is to recognise what their bottom-line difference is and work on accepting it and respecting it.

Action – what is the level of respect for each other. Do they each feel respect. Obtain examples.

Reciprocate easily and without expectations.

A healthy relationship falls into the ebb and flow of life. There should not be stored up favours. Life just happens and each member of the couple picks up the slack as and when needed. It is equal considering each person's physical and mental health, time, and ability, but most importantly grudges are not held as the bigger picture can be seen at all times.

Action – check that each person is not holding onto a hidden grudge. Do they see the bigger picture?

Healthy Conflict Resolution

Closely linked to communication, when in conflict there needs to be a healthy safe way to resolve it. It is healthy to have conflict. This is needed to move forward and to have that growth element present. Ensuring that the relationship is not falling foul of the '4 horsemen of the apocalypse' negative communication pattern and that there is not an element of hiding true feelings to preserve the illusion of perfection together. There is freedom and space to talk through issues and resolve it with respect, empathy, and understanding on both views.

Action – check in with the 'Four Horseman of the Apocalypse' criteria. What is happening, what is the conflict style. What has been demonstrated to each growing up.

Individuality

Individuality is essential for growth. Having own interests and styles which are respected and encouraged allows for more excitement and connection. If the same things are done together with little or no change to routine, then possibilities for growth and communication can fade. In

an ideal relationship there are similarities in what is done for connection but also individuality in what is done for communication and freedom. Separate friendships, mutual friendships, professional goals, shared goals, separate and shared hobbies are all needed to keep a relationship strong and healthy.

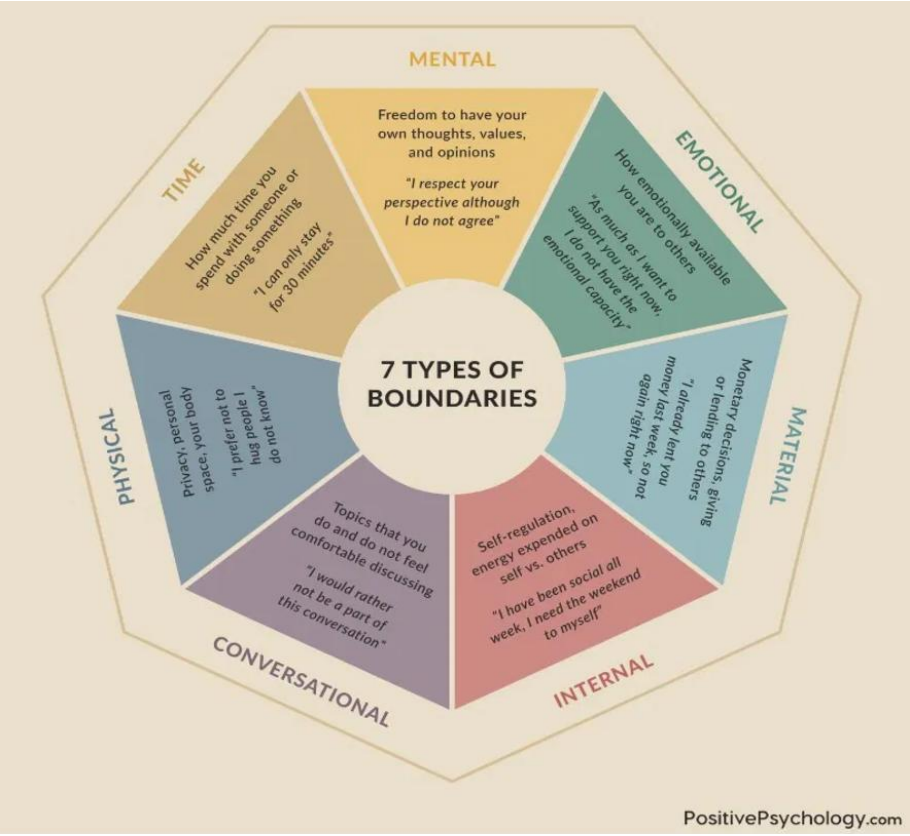
Action – What do they do together and singularly. What are the likes and dislikes. Hobbies and goals. Maslow's Hierarchy of needs and Joharis's window work.

Boundaries

An essential part of any relationship is having boundaries and respecting them. Without boundaries there is a high chance of overwhelm and negative feelings on self and others building. With boundaries and them not being respected, there is a high chance of anger and resentment building.

Ensuring that the 7 main boundaries are strong in the relationship and that the need for them are understood and respected keeps the relationship strong and a safe place to be.

Action – Check in with the 7 main boundaries, is this part of the relationship, what is needed and what boundary needs to be stronger?



Therapy-on-Sea

Honesty with openness

A strong relationship will be able to show genuine openness with each other. Conversations are easy and flow. Mutual understanding about what each person is comfortable being open with happens. There is honesty in what is spoken and honesty in why something remains hidden or subdued within the relationship. Respect and understanding on what is brought into the relationship is shown and reciprocated.

Action – Use Johari's window here to talk about hidden, open and blind windows. Do they feel that they can be open? Where is the block?

Intimacy

A strong healthy relationship has intimacy, this is more than sex although it forms part of it. The four types of intimacy must be present to maintain intimacy, these being emotional, mental, physical and spiritual. This helps a couple to feel safe and connected.

Action – How is their intimacy, are there blocks to it? Do they feel safe in their own intimacy and does their partner see it and feel it? Working with the love languages.

Forgiveness and Recover

A strong relationship needs to be able to work with the principles of forgive and forget if possible or remember and recover. It is not always going to be plain sailing. There is going to be something that makes the couple work hard and slip up. Remembering that it is them versus the problem not them against each other is key.

Action – How was forgiveness demonstrated to each other growing up. How hard is it to say sorry and mean it? What emotion is felt and where is it felt in the body? Wheel of emotions work.

Laughter

Shared natural laughter in a relationship is essential. It gives a sense of connection and helps to lift the mood from a negative one or elevate a good one. It can assist in healing from disagreements and resentment that happens as part of a relationship's life cycle. Those that laugh together, stay together.

Action – Ask, when was the last time they properly laughed together and what was it over. Is it hard to be light-hearted and free spirited. Look at positive child part of PAC.

Listening to hear each other.

This is called active listening. It is a skill that can be taught and developed during the relationship. It means that the couple are taking the time to hear what the other is saying with attentiveness and compassion. It is allowing for trust and respect to be built continuously. You are listening to understand not to interrupt and contradict. This is then reciprocated back.

Action – How do you listen, explain about summarising, clarifying, body language. What they each need to know they have been listened too. How do they feel if they are not listened to.

Sian Hines Counsellor and Hypnotherapist (Ad Dip Psy C, Prof. Dip Psy C)