



BFF or bankrupt?

The Foundations Newsletter

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Relationships

Family members don't trust you; former friends avoid you; neighbors and acquaintances are openly hostile? Sounds like your relationships are in the red. Don't get it? Think of a relationship as a bank account. Every time you meet someone you open an account. **Deposits like keeping promises, doing small acts of kindness, smiling, or giving compliments improve relationships.** Withdrawals like setting false expectations, breaking promises, being rude, or lying damage them. How can you build a strong relationship or repair a broken one? Simple—one deposit at a time.

Building and maintaining strong relationships is not often viewed as a learnable skill by teens. However, it is one of the most important skills they can develop. Try some of the tips below to help your teen strengthen his or her relationships.

- **Give compliments.** Make a goal to compliment each family member at least once every day. In addition, establish a "compliment day" for each family member. On each person's "compliment day" he or she gets to be specifically complimented and affirmed by every other family member. It's amazing how happy a simple compliment can make a child or an adult!
- **Make and keep promises.** Show your teen the importance of promises in relationships. Keeping our promises is one of the most important things we can do in any relationship because keeping promises focuses attention on someone other than ourselves. Teens can be very self-centered so learning to focus on others is important.
- **Teach your teen the importance of an apology.** Apologies have great power to heal a damaged relationship. Apologies can be difficult to say, but the rewards for both parties can be enormous. Model this concept for your teen. Apologize to them clearly and sincerely if you make a mistake, or allow them to witness your apologies to others. Your teen will learn more from your actions than from your words.
- **Remember that love is a verb.** Society would have us believe that love is just a feeling, but it's not: love is an action. The prevalence of television and movies in the lives of teenagers makes them especially susceptible to society's inaccurate message about love. Help your teen learn that love is a verb—love is affirming others, listening to others, helping others, empathizing with others. The action of love isn't always easy, but the result is the feeling of love—not the shallow love portrayed by society, but a deep long-lasting love based on a strong relationship.

"You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth." –Khalil Gibran

