

Difficulties in Human Relations

Human relations are the social and interpersonal relations between people. This includes our behavior with and toward one another. Our relations with others affect the joy, love, and comfort we experience in life. We thrive on positive human relations, but at times we experience difficulties. Some difficulties may be quite simple to overcome, whereas others may seem insurmountable. While we are who we are, we can learn to control our behavior to help our relations with others.

Positive Ways—Respect and Courtesy

Over the course of our lives, we develop as people. We improve in our ability to communicate with and understand one another. Setbacks and difficulties may make us timid. Someone might lack confidence in relations with others. It is good to remember that God made us what we are. This, however, does not give us the right to act however we wish, not heeding others' needs, wants, and feelings. Rather, we want to learn how to interact with other people in a positive way, to increase courtesy and respect and to reduce difficulties or friction.

There is a wide range of human nature, from calm and unobtrusive to loud and aggressive. We can challenge ourselves to understand and appreciate all kinds of personalities. A brother recently told me, "There is beauty everywhere. Sometimes we just have to look harder to see it." We want to work to be more accepting of others' natures. We are all God's creations. Nevertheless, offenses do occur. Then we want to approach one another in love and put matters away through the healing power of the gospel. Jesus teaches us: "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother" (Matt. 18:15). Here, Jesus encourages forgiveness of offenses between believers.

When someone is difficult or has hurt us, it may feel difficult to forgive them. We want to remember the instruction Jesus included in the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Sometimes, the matter in question is such that, even when forgiveness has been preached, there is still need for help with healing. One who has suffered from another's behavior may need professional help or therapy to recover and become healed. In such a case, a person may need to discuss the matter in confidence to receive help.

Interactions at Home and Away

Each home environment is unique. Each home and family has its own customs and personalities. These shape who we are. In addition to our home environment, we attend services, Sunday school, camps, and other activities in the community of believers. We also belong to our local community, attend school, go to work, and belong to other groups. Our interactions with these people in the various environments impact the way we relate with others.

Within our social groups, we try to form rewarding relationships. We work at nurturing relationships, especially when we feel we are benefitting from them. Jesus says, "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." (Luke 6:31). We all want to be accepted and recognized as a normal, interesting friend. We need to feel that others want our friendship and company. We are not always successful in these endeavors. Our emotions, confidence, and overall energy level vary over time, and sometimes these affect how we act toward others and what we say or how we sound when we speak. This can lead to difficulties in interpersonal relations.

Hopefully, over time we would be able to interpret when a friend or acquaintance is acting "out of character" and adopt a forgiving attitude. Apostle Paul writes in his epistle to the Galatians: "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season

we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:9,10). We can gently ask the other what is on their mind and listen with a sympathetic ear. We should carry one another in love, even on days when others seem difficult to bear or listen to.

Help and Forgiveness

When we feel stress or experience failure in interpersonal relationships, we can easily become overwhelmed. This can lead to a feeling of helplessness, which may give rise to destructive behavior, such as controlling behavior, one-sided relationships (people who demand but do not give), emotional neglect, abuse, and bullying. Domestic violence or other harsh psychological abuse can be the result of the inability to deal with stress and failure in interpersonal relations. These poor behaviors are never acceptable.

When we have been hurt, we pray to have a mind of forgiveness and forgive the offender. Yet we may still need to talk about the hardships we have experienced. People may need to seek help to find ways to communicate their sense of failure, their stress, and their actions in a constructive way. Regardless of the situation, there is always somewhere to turn for help. If one of your interpersonal relationships is causing you harm or stress, seek help.

Sometimes we pause and wonder what the future holds and how our lives may change. Some of us are at school, some of us are in outside work life, and yet others work at home. In school and work life as well as at home, we are naturally inclined to fit in with our peers. In all these settings, we are faced with challenges and temptations. In an ideal setting, we are all free to be ourselves and thrive. However, all settings are not ideal. We may feel suppressed or intimidated. Bullying can occur in all kinds of situations, particularly at school. Bullies use all kinds of ways to belittle and harm their fellow humans. Bullies often bully in order to divert attention from issues that cause them deep-seated personal insecurity. Bullying is always wrong.

In the difficulties that befall us, God’s children are all blessed with escorts who can support us in our lives. We should seek individuals in whom we can confide about our challenges, trials, and fears. These trusted escorts are, among others, family members or close friends. If it is difficult to find someone with whom to discuss matters and difficulties you may be experiencing, talk to your congregation’s minister or youth worker. The supportive people we are blessed with are precious gifts from God. God knows our needs and can bless us in innumerable, mysterious ways. Let us heed the words found in Ecclesiasticus:

“A faithful friend is a strong defence: and he that hath found such an one hath found a treasure. Nothing doth countervail a faithful friend, and his excellency is invaluable. A faithful friend is the medicine of life; and they that fear the Lord shall find him. Whoso feareth the Lord shall direct his friendship aright: for as he is, so shall his neighbour be also” (Ecclus. 6:14–17).

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Discussion Questions:

- How has miscommunication caused hardship in your life? Have you had to approach somebody you’ve offended to clarify matters?
- In what ways can the bonds of faith help you overcome social pressures?
- When faced with judgmental behavior from others, how have you made matters right?

- How can you help others overcome their trials?
- Have you experienced or witnessed bullying? How were you able to deal with the situation?

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