Global Forgiveness Day

National Forgiveness Day began in 1994 in Canada when a single banner proclaiming “National Forgiveness Day” was hung in downtown Victoria, British Columbia. Canadians felt the need to exercise forgiveness on the international, national, and local levels, as well as within their homes. With time, more and more people began to express the need to forgive and be forgiven. When the media began to publicize this day in Canada, interest grew even more. The name of the day was changed to Global Forgiveness Day in the hope that the day would be adopted by other countries.

The United States is one of the countries that has decided to join Canada in acknowledging Global Forgiveness Day. However, the exact day seems to fluctuate: in Canada it is observed on August 27, in the United States it’s usually June 24 or 25.
Characteristics of Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships
By Lusine Hambardzumyan
Clinical Counselor, MS, MA, LLP

Intimate relationships are a marvelous domain for apprehending the complexity and wonder, the sublime and the terrible, of human nature. In truth, the positives and the negatives of the intimate relationship mind are two sides of the same coin. The needs for intimacy and love come as a package deal, always with the fear of rejection and the pain of loss. This is part of the human condition, which we humans are unique among species in grasping and understanding.

J. O. Fletcher Garth

Humans are an exceptionally social species with a strong need to belong and to have positive and significant interpersonal relationships. Extensive empirical data indicates that people greatly desire social attachment, think often about their relationships with other people, and expend considerable effort to maintain and protect social bonds – even those that have become unnecessary or are a source of pain and trouble. Our natural tendency to develop a few intimate and intense relationships with a few select and significant others can bring joy and happiness into our lives but can also result in pain, hurt, guilt, frustration, anger, and disappointment.

While the early months of a relationship are often effortless, exciting, and successful, it takes effort and compromise from both sides to sustain a long-term relationship. Successful relationships require good communication, balancing, cooperation between partners, and the development of healthy boundaries. The quality of your relationships affects your life in many ways, including your ability to handle stress and your academic and work-related productivity. Relationships change over time. Being prepared to accept those changes and taking an active and constructive part in the relationship can help you manage the stages of a relationship in a healthy way.

It is important to realize that almost all relationships go through periods of crisis. During that complicated time one or both partners may be confused, disappointed, irritated, or angry, feel misunderstood or ignored, and think they have been treated unfairly. A relationship crisis can be made even more painful if the partners have developed different behavioral strategies for dealing with these unpleasant feelings. Sometimes one or both partners are not psychologically ready to manage conflict. Some partners choose a hostile, defensive style with a tendency to deny and avoid existing problems. They allow everyday routines, customs, and role-determined behaviors to provide the structure and form of the relationship, often replacing the original warmth, affection, trust, and respect for one another. Recognizing that all relationships have their ups and downs is the first step in developing a healthy approach to managing your relationships. Keep in mind that it takes time, effort, social skills, emotional maturity, and a desire to be open and flexible to discuss problems in an honest fashion. Working together through the hard times will allow partners to test the quality of their relationship.

A healthy relationship is characterized by good communication, realistic expectations, mutual respect and support, trust, honesty, clearly defined boundaries, sociability, and separate identities. A successful relationship is composed of two individuals – each with a clearly defined sense of her or his own identity. Without your own understanding of self, who you are and what makes you unique, it is difficult to engage in an ongoing relationship in such a way that it functions smoothly and enhances each of the partners. You need a sense of self in order to clearly communicate your needs and desires to your partner. When you have a strong conception of your own identity, you can appreciate and love those qualities in your partner.

The Benefits of Being Grateful
By Brenda Hildreth, PsyS, LPC

The American Dream has been defined as the faith held by many in the United States that through hard work, courage, and determination one can achieve financial prosperity. Unfortunately, the American economy is making it harder and harder for Americans to remain believers. Perhaps this has prompted Americans, who are so often labeled materialistic, to begin to question the real source of happiness. If you are not able to buy things that you think will make you happy, how can you attain happiness?

Increasingly, Americans are wondering where or how they might find happiness. Books have been written to assist in that search, and there is also research being done to examine the effect something as simple as gratitude may have in attaining happiness.

Gratitude is linked to a number of positive emotions, including pride, hope, and, of course, happiness. It has even been found that listing the things they are grateful for, once a week, leads people to view their life more positively, and report fewer physical symptoms. So perhaps gratitude can be considered a way to find happiness, but what is gratitude?

Gratitude is hard to categorize. It has been labeled an emotion, an attitude, a moral virtue, a habit, a personality trait, and a coping response. It has generally been defined as “the willingness to recognize the unearned increments of value in one’s experience” (Bertocci and Millard 1963, p. 389).

Philosophies and religions have promoted gratitude as a virtue and an integral component of health, wholeness, and well being for centuries. The Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu religions view gratitude as a highly prized human disposition. Maybe these religions are onto something. Try listing things you are grateful for and see what happens.

Sources:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Dream
that make him or her a unique person. When two people with a clear definition of their own individuality come together the potential for a healthy relationship can be astounding. The similarities between two people may bring them together, but it is their differences that contribute to the growth and excitement of their relationship.

Unhealthy and dysfunctional relationships come in many different forms and may have begun “positively and lovingly.” The most destructive relationships are those that involve some form of abuse, whether physical, sexual, emotional, or financial. Abuse can make you feel trapped, ignored, insecure, worthless, depressed, or scared. The warning signs of an unhealthy relationship are extreme jealousy; controlling, disrespectful, and manipulative behavior; quick involvement (the relationship moves forward too fast); and wild mood swings or explosive anger. In an unhealthy relationship, your partner tries to control you. He or she tries to make you feel unimportant. An essential feature of an abusive relationship is threatening or violent behavior. Your partner uses guilt to manipulate you and isolates you from friends, family, and activities. He or she also likes to play mind games, using jealousy to justify actions, pressuring or forcing sexual activity, and always wanting to be together. Abusive relationships are a threat to your emotional and physical well-being and are not likely to be fixable.

Finding yourself in an unhealthy relationship can be a learning experience if you use it to examine your beliefs about yourself. Don’t just run away from a bad relationship. Use it as a mirror to look at yourself, to understand what part you play in creating the relationship. Do you have negative attitudes about yourself or others? Are you afraid of abandonment or rejection? Many relationships fail because the partners cannot be honest about their feelings and behavior; instead they get defensive, which limits their ability to develop and maintain closeness and intimacy.

A relationship benefits the two people involved most when they recognize the differing expectations they bring into the relationship and how those expectations may affect it. This task is often challenging, but communicating about expectations and resolving differences in a way that works for both partners can help to build and maintain a healthy relationship.


An intense relationship can be a source of emotional pain. There are two primary sources of psychological pain: interpersonal and existential. Interpersonal pain is caused by frustration and the experience of separation as well as by intentional and unintentional aggression and mistreatment. Existential pain arises out of our sense of aloneness, and the realization that we could potentially lose the object of our love. Emotional pain of both kinds impacts an individual’s personality development and personal relationships throughout his or her life span. Some partners are so focused on their own feelings and responsibilities that they don’t have the appropriate emotional and social skills to respond to their partner’s feelings and needs in a close relationship.

Empirical evidence demonstrates that physical and psychological well-being is strongly related to one’s sense of being part of a social network, of feeling needed and accepted. By understanding the characteristics of healthy versus unhealthy relationships and choosing only to enter into healthy relationships, you are more likely to experience satisfaction, a positive self-image, and constant personal growth.

Sources:


To Forgive or Not to Forgive
By Brenda Hildreth

The definition of forgiveness varies from researcher to researcher. However, applied researchers appear to agree that forgiveness “is a positive method of coping with a hurt or offense that primarily benefits the victim through a reorientation of emotions, thoughts, and/or actions toward the offender. Forgiveness is a process that leads to the reduction of unforgiveness (bitterness, anger, etc.) and the promotion of positive regard (love, compassion, or simply, sympathy and pity) for the offender” (Wade and Worthington 2005, p. 160). With that said, a distinction must be made between forgiveness and reconciliation. Reconciliation means to restore a friendship but you can practice forgiveness and still end a relationship.

Forgiveness is a spiritual intervention that can help an injured person cope with hurt. It is part of the traditions of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism and is viewed as a healer of the body and mind. This spiritual intervention has been closely associated with physical benefits that include lower blood pressure and heart rate, a better immune system, less depression, and a longer life.

Some of the more current research acknowledges the benefits of forgiveness but suggests there may be times when forgiveness is not the best solution. For example, research has shown that the promotion of forgiveness among women who have experienced violence and abuse from men may very well result in the women suffering from a lack of self-respect and it may discourage them from exhibiting a healthy expression of anger. If you have questions, speak with a professional mental health worker. They can help you decide what is best for you.

Sources:


Training for Your First 5K

By Scott Trudeau, MA

People tell me all the time that they could never finish a 5-kilometer (3.1 mile) run (5K). The most common excuses are: I don’t have enough time, it’s too long, I’m out of shape, I have bad knees, and I can’t run for longer than five minutes. Almost anyone can finish a 5K even if they spend most of their time behind a desk and are not very active. There are no rules in a 5K that say you have to run the entire 3.1 miles. First things first – you have to set a goal.

Finishing a 5K is not only an achievable goal but also a very healthy goal. During your training you will lower your blood pressure, burn calories and fat, have more energy, and feel better. The key is to start out slow according to your current level of activity. If you have never run before, don’t jump out of the gate and run a mile your first day of training. Not only will you be disappointed in your body, you may be too sore to ever want to train another day. Another way to achieve your goal is to get a training partner. Grab a co-worker, a family member, or a friend and do the training together. It will be that much easier to stick with it.

Outlined below is a training program that will require between 20 and 30 minutes a day, three days per week. Remember to rest in between your training days. Rest days are just as important as training days as rest allows your muscles to recover so you can run again. Your muscle will build in strength as you rest after a training session. During your training, remember to only work as hard as a conversation will let you. This means during your walking and jogging you should be able to talk, while taking deep breaths. You shouldn’t be out of breath between every word in the conversation. If you are out of breath then you are training too hard. Just slow down your pace.

According to the American Council on Exercise, you should start with an eight-day walking program in order to begin running. Walk 20 minutes the first four days, followed by 30 minutes of walking the last four days. If this is easy for you, step it up to running for two minutes and walking four minutes, repeating this five times for a total of 30 minutes. As you continue with the program, add one minute of running time and subtract one minute from the walking time. Increase each week, until you are able to run the entire 30 minutes, the approximate time it will take to finish your first 5K.

Another easy guide (from “The Couch-to-5K Running Plan”) outlines the training as follows:

**Week 1**
Day 1, 2, and 3 – Walk 5 minutes, then alternate 1 minute of jogging and 1.5 minutes of walking for a total of 20 minutes.

**Week 2**
Day 1, 2, and 3 – Walk 5 minutes, then alternate 1.5 minutes of jogging and 2 minutes of walking for a total of 20 minutes.

**Week 3**
Day 1, 2, and 3 – Brisk 5-minute walk, then do two repetitions of the following:
- Jog 1.5 minutes, walk 1.5 minutes, jog 3 minutes, walk 3 minutes.

**Week 4**
Day 1, 2, and 3 – Brisk 5-minute walk, then jog 3 minutes, walk 1.5 minutes, jog 5 minutes, walk 2.5 minutes, jog 3 minutes, walk 1.5 minutes, jog 5 minutes.

**Week 5**
Day 1 – Walk 5 minutes, jog 5 minutes, walk 3 minutes, jog 5 minutes, walk 3 minutes, jog 5 minutes.
Day 2 – Walk 5 minutes, jog 8 minutes, walk 5 minutes, and jog 8 minutes.
Day 3 – Walk 5 minutes, jog 20 minutes.

**Week 6**
Day 1 – Walk 5 minutes, jog 5 minutes, walk 3 minutes, jog 8 minutes, walk 3 minutes, jog 5 minutes.
Day 2 – Walk 5 minutes, jog 10 minutes, walk 5 minutes, and jog 10 minutes.
Day 3 – Walk 5 minutes, jog 25 minutes.

**Week 7**
Day 1, 2, and 3 – Walk 5 minutes, jog 25 minutes.

**Week 8**
Day 1, 2, and 3 – Walk 5 minutes, jog 28 minutes.

**Week 9**
Day 1, 2, and 3 – Walk 5 minutes, jog 30 minutes.

You have completed your training and should be able to complete a 30-minute jog or a 5K, Congrats!!!

Sources:
American Council on Exercise, www.acefitness.org

---

Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues but the parent of all the others.

— Cicero