

Happy Relationships Good for Health

Nina Chen, Ph.D., CFLE
Human Development Specialist

Why do healthy relationships matter? Research has already shown great health benefits of healthy relationships and marriages. For instance, married people have longer life expectancies than singles, especially married men. Children who live with their own two married parents enjoy better physical health than children in other family structures. Married mothers have lower rates of depression than single or cohabiting mothers. Several studies show that people who have a rocky marriage or relationship are likely to experience anxiety and stress and increased risk of health problems. Researchers at University College London tracked about 9,000 people for 12 years and found that negative relationships increase the risk of heart problems by 34%. According to researcher John Gottman, an unhappy marriage can increase the chances of illness by 35 percent.

Some studies indicated marriage was tied to better survival in certain cancers such as breast and prostate cancers. A study led by Dr. John Gore of the University of California, Los Angeles also showed married patients with bladder cancer had the best survival odds. Researchers from San Diego State University and the University of Pittsburgh found high marital satisfaction can benefit women's health. The study found that women with happy relationships were less likely to develop risk factors that lead to cardiovascular disease compared with other women.

The health benefits attributed to marriage shows what partners bring into marriage. For instance, couples can benefit from strong social and emotional support. Knowing that your partner is interested in the details of your life and cares about you can lessen stress levels substantially. It matters when a partner neglects his or her health or struggles at work. Couples work as a team and are likely to have regular checks-ups or reminders on exercise or other recommendations that will improve their life or health.

With the pressures of work, children, and chores, it can be difficult to focus on nurturing healthy relationships. Building and maintaining a healthy relationship takes time and effort. Here are basic tips to help couples build a healthy and strong relationship.

- Make time for each other.
- Make a commitment to your relationship.
- Have positive and open communication.
- Be appreciative and affectionate.
- Show interest and care.
- Be supportive.
- Fight fair.
- Take time for yourself.

- Keep romance alive.
- Have a good sense of humor.
- Learn to compromise and forgive

Happy2808/nc

