

Research Article

Managing Interpersonal Relations

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Abstract:

Interpersonal relations are very important for every human. No one is self-sufficient. Accomplishment of the goals of our life, our success depends upon the support, cooperation and goodwill of our family, friends, colleagues and staff. Caring and sharing are obvious feelings and necessity for any individual.

Having healthy and positive interpersonal relations can motivate us, make us happy and support us to achieve our goals. On the other hand, having negative or unhealthy relationship can break us, destroy us, make us sad and demotivate us.

It is really interesting to understand, the impact these relations can have on us. We all know the result of having healthy relations, still many people have problems with interpersonal relations. It is observed generally that we make issues with behaviour and attitude of people. These issues and unsatisfying relations unnecessarily stress us. It affects our mind and body. It leads to depression as well as physical and mental illness.

Our relations will always have very strong impact on every aspect of our life, personal, social as well as professional. It builds trust. One has to have good communication to build good relationship. Hence, for a happy and successful life it becomes essential to learn to manage interpersonal relations. Interpersonal relations include not only IQ, EQ but also SQ.

Key Words:

Interpersonal relations, emotions, attitude, responsibility, communication, trust, intelligence.

Introduction:

What is interpersonal relationship?

Though the term interpersonal relationship is the gift of twenty first century, the base of all personal and professional life is interpersonal relationship. We use this term frequently; do we really understand the meaning of this word when we use it? What's its importance? What kind of impact it has on our life?

Hence, let's first understand what is Interpersonal Relationship.

- It can be seen as strong bond between two or more people.

- Some also define Interpersonal relationship as strong connection we feel with people who are close to us. They can be friends, neighbours, colleagues, blood relations, romantic partners etc. It can be at social level, personal level or professional level.
- Interpersonal relationship is the typical behavioural pattern that exists or develops between two or more individuals.

Imagine the situation when we meet someone for the first time. We try to guess, understand, judge the person based on feedbacks given by others, looks, behaviour we can observe etc. In short, we become prejudiced and judgemental. More often we are cautious and reserved about our reactions and responses. It's after few conversations, spending some time together, we decide our own ways to react or behave with the person. This can be positive or negative. This behaviour pattern becomes an individual's interpersonal relationship with the other individual. There are many factors which decide our behavioural pattern with any individual, such as our experiences, pre conceptions, prejudices, beliefs, observations, expectations, rigidity etc.

There are 2 more important features about these behavioural patterns.

1. They are unique and
2. They are relatively stable.

One can easily observe and understand these features even if one thinks about his/her own relations. May be with siblings, friends or colleagues etc.

If one has more than one sibling, his/her behaviour is not necessarily the same for both. It is different. Similarly, one doesn't behave the same way with his/her colleagues or friends.

An individual has his/her own ways to react or behave with every other individual.

Why interpersonal relationship is important?

As we all know Human being is a social animal. The prime need of all human beings is communication. We need to be surrounded by people for various needs like sharing, caring, love, appreciation, support, sharing of innermost feelings and opinions etc. We can easily make out the impact our relationships on our overall development, growth, shaping our personality, being the person what we are today. From very young age, people around us play a pivotal role in developing thought process as well as value system. Mostly they are key factors in our physical and mental well-being.

This clearly means that having healthy and positive interpersonal relations can motivate us, makes us happy, help us achieve our goals. On the other hand, having negative or unhealthy relationship can break us, destroy us, make us sad and demotivate us.

Both these results will have very strong impact on every aspect of our life, personal, social as well as professional.

It is really interesting to know, what impact these relations can have on us. We know what we can achieve having healthy relations, still most of us have problems with interpersonal relationships. It is observed generally that we make issues with behaviour and attitude of people. These issues and unsatisfying relations unnecessarily stress us. It affects our mind and body. It leads to depression as well as physical and mental illness.

Can this be managed?

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We have already learnt that interpersonal relation is nothing but the behavioural pattern between two or more individuals. We have also seen some factors which affects the development of this pattern. The pattern can certainly be managed. We can easily develop it as we want.

Let's first see some of the situations / reasons which can initiate the downfall for any relationship. We find many situations arise in our day to day life, often. The impact or results on the relation, might not be seen immediately but these situations definitely damage the relations.

Elements Affecting Interpersonal Relationship

1. Communication Gap

Communication is one of the most important factors for healthy relationship and any communication is incomplete without proper response. Communication must be a two way process. In day to day life we witness many situations, where:

- There is no response
- Response is received but is delayed and lost its importance
- The response is not as expected.
- Wrongly interpreted message

The obvious reaction to any such situation, is to be upset, start having negative attitude towards the person, jump to conclusions and being judgemental about the behaviour of a person.

2. Lack of recognition

Every individual has self-esteem. Irrespective of age, qualification, gender, positions, designations, income every individual has self esteem which is important. A small child's self-esteem is as important as it is for a seasoned businessman.

The self-esteem demands recognition. Recognition as an individual. This makes an individual feel important. This doesn't always require costly awards or rewards. Recognizing someone's efforts openly, in front of everyone can also play magic.

Imagine a situation, where the boss is walking through the corridor of his/her office. The sweeper is busy doing his daily work, notices the boss, stands up and wish good morning, just to show the respect towards the boss. It is expected that the boss should acknowledge the wishes, reciprocate the same. Even a look, nod and smile is enough. But, what if the boss ignores the person all together and goes straight to the office? This is denying the recognition. This is where the person feels hurt and eventually lose the respect for the boss.

It is important to understand that every individual is important in his/ her own way and we need to accept and recognize their worth, their efforts. This will work as a booster to our healthy relations.

3. Emotional Engagement

Relation, be it personal, social or professional, involves emotions. Emotions are important part of any relation. Excessive emotional involvement makes the relations sour.

The problem starts when the emotional engagement crosses the limits. Everyone has got his/her individual space. Encroachment on that 'Space' is not acceptable at all. Many times, it happens unintentionally due to care, love and possessiveness. (This usually happens with people who are very close to us). At times, it becomes irritating for a person on receiving end.

For example, when a child is born, it is totally dependent on the mother for everything. The mother loves it. She is happy and proud to fulfil all the needs of her child. The child starts walking and moving around. Now the dependency is reduced but still the mother is happy running around the child, trying to help him/her for everything. At one point of time the child grows up to a young person having his/her own world but the mother never realizes that. Her love and affection and excessive care irritates her child.

Unknowingly the child is hurt. The intention of the mother is not bad. Its only that she is unable to understand where to stop. It slowly starts spoiling of what was a wonderful and important relation for both of them.

It is essential to understand the fact that excessive emotional engagement will spoil the relationship. Understand and respect the individual space. Not trying to control people is an essential quality for healthy and positive relations.

4. Cognitive engagement

Multitasking is a talent. But while working, thinking about multiple things spoil the work culture and relations as well.

If a person, very effective and successful in professional life, brings all his work home denying the quality time to his/her family (which is their right). He is always engaged with his thoughts, plans for career. His personal relations are at risk.

In today's highly competitive world, where professionals are trying to live 48 hours a day, it is essential to know and manage work life balance. Its immensely important to be realistic and live in 'present', physically and mentally. This will bring in clarity of thoughts and clarity of thoughts will bring in clarity and confidence in action, communication and behaviour. Which will lead to healthy and positive relations.

5. Inappropriate attitude

There are individuals who have "I am always right" kind of attitude. They are always ready to find and point out mistakes of others around them. Blame everyone for anything that goes wrong and will be the first one to take the credit of every success. Such people can never remain calm and satisfied as they are very well aware about their own limitations and capabilities. In fact, it's because of inferiority complex and their incapability. They play blame game to hide their inabilities.

One needs to understand the fact that we are not here to judge everyone around us. We can't always be the judge passing on the judgements. It is painful for the other person to always

listen to the negative statements and comments and it is harmful for the relation in long term. Our attitude towards any relation should be positive, open and respectful. Any relation is a mutual responsibility and one should be responsible for any action taken to strengthen the relations. This understanding is the key for managing effective and healthy relationship.

6. Prejudices

Dealing with individuals with pre-determined attitude or based on past experiences with someone else, is always harmful. It is unjust to judge a person with preconceptions. Just like punishing someone for something he/she has not done. This attitude spoils our image and the person decides his/her behaviour pattern about us, based on our behaviour. Hence, it is necessary to know, understand the individual before jumping to conclusion.

Responsibilities in relationship

We have seen that the interpersonal relationship is nothing but the behavioural pattern and it involves more than one person. The major issue about any relationship is that we all try to control the behaviour of other members in the relationship. Instead of thinking and taking responsibility of our own behaviour, we focus mainly on behaviour of other people and then try to justify our behaviour as a reaction to the behaviour of others.

It's not difficult to understand that it is impossible to forcefully control the thoughts or behaviour of other person. Change them as per our expectations.

What can be controlled? Our behaviour or the behaviour of others? One can control only our own behaviour. Our entire focus should only be on our behaviour. While shaping our own behaviour we can be an ideal for others in shaping, channelizing the behaviour of others indirectly.

Hence, it's important to understand that in any relationship, one is responsible only for his/her own behaviour. Once it is understood, people start taking responsibility of their behaviour, every damaged and bitter relation will revive and even can turn to be very positive and healthy relation.

Our brain records experiences, events, behaviour etc. It records all these things with the emotions we go through, suffer in that particular situation. Whenever, we think about the person, situation, experience, we remember everything along with emotions and pains. This leads to further damage to the relationship.

Dealing with relations is also a skill. There are few relations that are treasured even though they turn sour because of some misunderstandings or miscommunication. In long term they are remembered whereas there are few relations that we don't even remember in the course of time.

Even when it is an important relation for one, it still remains spoiled because one is focusing more on the pains, emotions resulted due to behaviour of other people. Instead of doing this, one needs to focus on healing the relations. Here are 6 steps / skills required for managing / improving upon important interpersonal relations

1. Analyse the situation of the relationship (without mainly focusing on the behaviour of other people, emotions, and pains). Understanding what exactly went wrong. What triggered the damage.

2. Establish realistic objective. What exactly we need from the relationship. Do we wish to continue with the pains and regrets or do we want to try and change the things around. Once the objective is set, deciding actions is much easier.
3. Once we understand the situation and decide the objective, it becomes easier to decide our ways of behaviour and the course of action to strengthen our relations. Our focus should be on our behaviour.
4. The next step is controlling self-behaviour. It should be assertive. Being aggressive will not help in achieving the objective and being submissive might lead to doormat syndrome. Which is even more risky than having a sick relationship. We need to be clear with our behaviour and actions.
5. As we have seen above, focusing on the step number 3 and 4 will help us in indirectly shaping the behaviour of other person. If the intentions and efforts are honest, we can be successful in shaping the behaviour in terms of having healthy relationship.
6. In the last step, its essential to monitor our behaviour and also the behaviour of the others. This is useful for repeating the mistakes or avoiding the problems which might occur in the relationship and maintain healthy and happy relationship.

For healthy, happy and positive relationship, one should acquire few key skills. They are:

1. **Social Assertiveness:**

How does one feel while interacting with others? Does (S)he sustains in crucial social conditions? Is (S)he assertive about his/her social needs? We all have limited social energy. Being assertive about social needs, help us to understand and use social energy with more focus. This leads to clarity in interactions.

This skill is also useful for creating a strong first impression and develops a great, lasting presence.

2. **Communication:**

Communication is not only a skill, it's a need in any relationship. Constant, healthy and quality communication builds foundation for interpersonal relationship. It's a necessity. Conquering communication skills will help in being more witty, having presence of mind , expressive and most importantly it will make one confident and comfortable enough to connect with people. It enhances quality of interpersonal relations.

3. **Develop Trust:**

People having good relations are the ones who are trusted most. For being able to be trustworthy, one needs to know oneself, understand oneself. Self-realization will help in knowing and most importantly accepting one's strengths and then work on one's weaknesses. It brings self-confidence, which reflects in one's behaviour, body language, interactions and in the way one treats people. Such person can gain trust of people and lead healthy interpersonal relations.

4. **Self-motivation:**

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We often don't realize; how important it is to be self-motivated. Especially, in circumstances, when we are surrounded by people who are more interested in pointing out mistakes and weaknesses. It's a great quality to be self-motivated. Being self-motivated requires faith and confidence in self and own abilities. For this one needs to know oneself really well. The biggest blessing is being able to know thyself. This eliminates doubts about self and own abilities. There is no need of thinking about what others are thinking or saying. One should be focused, happy, energetic and influential. The moment one stops doubting oneself, it becomes easier to trust people, build relations and have healthy interactions.

5. **Empathy and sympathy –**

One must have sympathy and empathy for others. It's an ability to understand people, getting into their shoes. In short, understanding their situation, circumstances and judge them. The relationship built with empathy and sympathy is long lasting . sympathy doesn't mean pity. It's connecting with other's feelings and emotions. Understanding mentality of a person one is communicating. The interpersonal bonds are strong if one builds them in empathy. One never thinks of taking disadvantage of the same if the interpersonal relations are strong.

Interpersonal Intelligence

Interpersonal Intelligence can be defined as ability to deal with people, manage relationship. It is an ability to understand and interact with people effectively. It involves effective verbal and non-verbal communications. Ability to observe and differentiate the behaviour, to understand the moods and temperaments of individuals around.

Inter-personal intelligence mainly involves:

- **Emotional Intelligence** – This deal with emotions of self and others. It speaks about how instinctive and empathetic one is. This works on ability to understand, control and channelise emotions for better results, interactions and relations.
- **Social Intelligence** – This speaks about how one manages to translate your emotions to others and at the same time, how well one is being responsive to the emotions of others.
- **Intra-personal intelligence** – Though this is a very prevailing concept but it is used in the modern era with modern annotation by Howard Gardner in his book, 'Multiple Intelligences: New Horizons in Theory and Practice'. In this book while speaking about Interpersonal Intelligence, he has quoted an example of Anne Sullivan. Anne Sullivan, is a teacher who taught Helen Keller.

Sullivan was nearly blind and received very little formal training for teaching children with special needs. Still, she took the task of teaching Hellen Keller a little 7-year-old, blind and deaf girl.

According to Gardner, Sullivan displayed very high interpersonal intelligence, in dealing with Hellen Keller. That's why she could efficiently understand Keller's special needs, moods, temperament and motivations. It was through her Interpersonal Intelligence, Sullivan could help Hellen Keller, who became one of the leading authors and lecturers of 20th Century.

According to Gardner, It's easier for people with interpersonal intelligence to empathize with other and are exceptional in dealing with people. They have the ability to look at situations differently and take adaptive approach.

In this tough time of pandemic , the world had turned upside down. The so called practical and business approaches have changed their colours. People realized the importance of being humane and having strong interpersonal relations. Recently , a survey was conducted in the field of marketing where the marketing executives have to undergo a training for promotion (this includes hike in salary as well as some responsibilities) 95% employees denied to do the training as they wanted to spend their time with family , they were happy with the salary they were getting. They didn't want additional salary or responsibilities. They realized that they can curb on their additional wants and live happily. The most important thing is human relations.

Conclusion:

In short, it is nothing but focusing on oneself. This deals with knowing thyself. Understanding one's abilities, strengths, weaknesses, needs and limitations. Knowing oneself is one of the essential pillars for healthy interpersonal relationship. The journey begins with oneself and ends in being peoples' person. Managing interpersonal skills is an essential feature of any successful person. Interpersonal intelligence and interpersonal skills are considered as the most desirable skills in all walks of life. It's a need of time. It's a 'mantra' for healthy, happy and positive relationships.

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