



# Positive Relationships

Lesson workbook

Your companion guide

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## General instruction for watching all Zone Positive videos



The “Pause” button is here. If you don’t see this bar on your screen, roll your cursor over the lower left hand corner of your screen and the bar should reappear. Click on the Right Arrow ► to resume watching the video.

**Important Note:** If you want to pause the video and go to another website, open a new window in your web browser. This will enable you to return to the video lesson and resume where you left off.

# Part 1: Relationships matter

## Key Points

Compelling research that has been conducted on the benefits of positive relationships.

## Attachment Theory

Attachment theory states that the quality of our childhood relationships with our parents has been determined to have profound implications on our healthy psychological functioning as adults. Secure childhood relationships provide a safe haven from which children can feel comfortable venturing out into an unknown world. As a result, these children are more likely to explore their surroundings, acquiring greater knowledge and psychological resources along the way. Research demonstrates that these resources end up building a foundation of confidence, trust, and self-efficacy that will serve children over the course of a lifetime. In school, additional studies show that children who feel higher levels of relatedness to parents and teachers tend to perform better academically. Children with secure relationships tend to grow up to be more compassionate, altruistic, and attuned to the needs of others.

## Resilience

A secure relationship history also contributes to our resilience in the face of life's challenges. Psychology professor Richard Davidson, from the University of Wisconsin, was one of several researchers to establish a strong connection between sound relationships and resilience. His studies showed that secure relationship history endows people with the inner resources to better bounce back from emotional setbacks and losses.

## Happiness

Research demonstrates that positive relationships make us happier in the long run. Psychology professors Ed Diener and Martin Seligman have found in their studies that the very happiest people are those in long-term relationships. Their studies also show that married people consistently report higher levels of life-satisfaction than those who are single. In fact, research indicates that people with strong social networks, whether it be through family, friendships, community, or the workplace, tend to live happier, more fulfilling lives.

## Meaning

The presence of positive relationships even serves to keep our priorities straight in an increasingly materialistic world. Economist Daniel Kahneman notes that one of the best ways to escape the "hedonic treadmill," that quest for greater and greater levels of material wealth, is through a life rich in rewarding relationships. In this capacity, positive relationships help ensure that we don't get too lost in a world of desires and ambitions that can never be truly fulfilled.

*Diglet sidled up to Pooh from behind. "Pooh!" he whispered. "Yes, Diglet?" "Nothing," said Diglet, taking Pooh's paw. "I just wanted to be sure of you." ~A.A. Milne*

# Part 1: Relationships Matter

## Exercise 1: How would you describe your relationships

A simple quiz devised by psychologists Cindy Hazan and Phillip Shaver to understand how you relate to people in your life. Which answer best describes you?

I find it relatively easy to get close to other people. I am comfortable depending on other people and having them depend on me. I don't worry about being abandoned or about having someone get too close to me.

I find it difficult to trust people completely. I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others. I feel nervous when people start to get too close. Often, I feel like people want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being. I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on other people.

I find that other people are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I often worry that someone I am close to doesn't really love me or won't want to stay with me. I want to merge completely with another person, and this sometimes scares people away.

Box number 1 describes secure relationships

Box number 2 describes avoidant relationships

Box number 3 describes ambivalent relationships.

In his book, *A Primer in Positive Psychology*, Chris Peterson shares research findings about securely attached adults:

- they are more supportive of their partners in joint problem solving
- they are less upset in the wake of stress
- they are more likely to seek support from others when it is needed
- they are more likely to compromise in conflicts
- they are less likely to be depressed
- they are more likely to have good self-esteem
- they are less likely to get divorced