



Colorado Lawyer Assistance Program

5 Simple Tips for Improving Any Relationship

- 1. Really, Truly Listen:** Most of us are busy trying to monopolize the conversation or, when the other person is talking, figuring out ways to change the topic back to ourselves or problem solving for the other person. However, true listening occurs when we stop thinking while someone else is talking. Give yourself permission to listen, rather than thinking, when someone is talking.
- 2. Ask for What You Want:** Too many of us assume that other people should inherently know our unspoken desires. We must verbally express our wishes, feelings, instructions, and requests. After you verbalize your wishes, make the effort to ascertain if the other person heard what you said. Communication only takes place when one person communicates something, and the other person heard and understood them.
- 3. Express and Accept Gratitude:** Having appreciation and gratitude for the positive aspects of our lives improves our own emotional and mental health. Human beings enjoy helping and caring for others. If someone in your life does something that you appreciate, tell them. And, conversely, if you do something kind and loving for someone else, and they thank you, be sure to accept and acknowledge their gratitude.
- 4. Slow Down:** We live in a fast paced world, and we work in a fast paced profession. When our minds are racing about what we need to accomplish on the “never ending to-do-list” and our bodies are running around like the proverbial “chicken with the head cut off,” we believe that we don’t have time to focus on cultivating meaningful relationships with the people in our lives. Slowing down our thoughts, our speech, and our movement signals to the brain that we are safe to be present in our environment and with those around us.
- 5. Don’t Argue to Win:** This is counter-intuitive for lawyers, because arguing to win is the bedrock of the legal profession. In our personal relationships, however, mature conflict resolution requires cooperation and compromise. If we focus on who is to blame (“it was your fault”), or our goal is to be right rather than to resolve the issue, we damage our relationships. Within the context of interpersonal relationships, the need to be right can be a sign of narcissism, which is a result of deep insecurity. People with secure self-esteem and self-worth don’t argue to win; they resolve conflicts collaboratively.