



Module #8 of 10—*Short Version*

UK Extension's  
*Universe of*  
**Possibilities™**

**SKILLS FOR CREATING HAPPINESS AND BLESSING OTHERS**

## *Healthy Relationships*

**F**riendship is the basis of all healthy relationships. To befriend another is to see worth and beauty in that person. In friendship we nourish and, in turn, are nourished. In a very real way, the kindness we give to others we also give to ourselves. Friendship thrives on respect, heartfelt caring, and open, honest sharing of dreams, concerns, and values. With a trustworthy friend, there's no need to hide any part of who you are. You can be your true self and say what's on your mind and in your heart. You are free to share happy times as well as moments of sadness and confusion.

Remember, friendship is always an adventure, for each person is a marvelous, unfolding mystery. Even in the closest of relationships, respect the mystery and maintain a degree of reverence. Give those dear to you space to breathe and change and make mistakes.

If a relationship drags you down or frequently leaves you feeling hurt, angry, or unappreciated, it's probably not based on real friendship. If you can't heal the relationship, you might need to back away.

We can also enjoy a special type of friendship with animals, birds, trees, and nature in its many other forms—a kinship with all of life. We are interconnected by the web of life so that the health of each part of the web benefits the well-being of us all.

**Target of Life.** Look at the Target of Life symbol that appears at the upper left side of this page. Put yourself on the Target in the center of the heart. Notice that the heart of the Target is clear, unobstructed, full of light. From there, you see clearly and make choices that are good for you and those around you. You feel peaceful, energetic, creative. Your reflexes are sharp, your immune system strong. You stumble and fall less often, and you handle life's inevitable challenges with more confidence and skill. You are naturally more sensitive to others—more patient, generous, and understanding. The more deeply centered you are in the heart of the Target of Life, the more love you feel and share. You are at your best—physically, mentally, and spiritually.

However, when difficulties arise and things don't go your way, you're likely to be pulled off center into the darker areas of the Target. You say and do things you regret. Your immune system weakens and your productivity declines. You lose touch with what's really important to you. Unhealthy stress increases and your sensitivity toward others decreases. And the further away from the center you move, the worse it gets! You experience more heaviness and darkness, more fear and negativity. That's why it's so important to catch early signs of stress and to use all of your creativity to stay as centered as possible.



## 7 Core Principles



- 1** Be thoughtful of others and take good care of yourself because the more balanced, healthy, and mature you are as an individual, the more richly you can give to all those around you.
- 2** Particularly in close relationships, do not assume you know a person's current thoughts, feelings, needs, and dreams; ask, and then listen carefully with a fresh mind and an open heart.
- 3** Conflict, which is inevitable, can be a wonderful and healthy opportunity to stretch yourself, to see the wisdom and value of other viewpoints, and to open up to new and potential-filled possibilities.
- 4** Since we all make mistakes and have regrets about the past, the willingness to forgive intelligently and wholeheartedly is a basic part of thriving, happy relationships.
- 5** Like radar, learn to zero in on specific actions and qualities that you like in those around you, and be creative in regularly expressing your genuine appreciation.
- 6** Lightheartedness, playfulness, humor, and the sharing of spontaneous pleasures add sparkle and depth to relationships.
- 7** Remember, the more centered you are on the Target of Life, the greater your well-being, the wiser your choices, and the more effective you are in everything you do.

**F**riendship is the magnetic attraction of one heart to another. One of the deepest cravings and greatest joys a person can experience, friendship is at the core of every healthy relationship, whether between husband and wife, parent and child, teacher and student, life partners, siblings, close friends, co-workers, or any other association, including the casual involvements of daily life.

We are not suggesting, for example, that a parent should abdicate his or her role in raising a child and become the child's friend in the popular sense of the word. In addition to applying wisely the principles of true friendship, being a parent includes acting as a protector, teacher, and loving authority figure. Still, regardless of the particulars, any relationship can be immeasurably enriched by practicing the core skills of true friendship.

### WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US

The research is clear: Healthy relationships are firmly linked with happiness, success, and physical well-being. Even relationships with pets and plants can nourish our well-being. The quality of relationships is more important than their number or frequency.

Physician Dean Ornish, speaking of the healing power of loving relationships, said, "I am not aware of any other factor in medicine—not diet, not smoking, not exercise, not stress, not genetics, not drugs, not surgery—that has a greater impact on our quality of life, incidence of illness, and premature death from all causes." To thrive, not only physically but also mentally and spiritually, supportive relationships are a must. As George Bernard Shaw put it, "We are all dependent on one another, every soul of us on earth."

# The Path of Friendship

*The following 12 guidelines universally nourish healthy relationships and thriving societies.*

**Judge Not.** If we knew the past experiences of those around us, if we knew their hurts and fears, their hopes and dreams, we would be far more compassionate. Whether your friend is a newborn baby, your spouse of 30 years, or a difficult co-worker, try your best to understand what life is like from his or her perspective.

**Listen Wholeheartedly.** Temporarily put aside your own concerns and listen with total receptivity to your friend, knowing that he or she is a person of incredible worth and capability.

**Show Appreciation.** A sincere compliment, often requiring no more than a few well-timed and honest words, can do wonders in lifting the spirit of another. As Mark Twain put it, "I can live for two months on one good compliment." Focus on the positive qualities of those around you, and freely express your appreciation.

**Have Fun.** Bring a gentle joy to all your relationships—a warmth that comes from your heart, sparkles in your eyes, and lights your face with pleasantness. As appropriate, play, laugh, share good times, and enjoy adventures together. Celebrate life's blessings.

**Be Authentic.** Don't pretend—to yourself or to others—to be any different from who you really are. Don't hide any part of yourself. Simply be the beautifully unique and wonderful soul you are. Never lie, but do use good judgment and sensitivity in telling the truth.

**Give Love.** The giving and receiving of love is at the very heart of all healthy relationships. In a casual interaction, an expression of love may simply consist of a warm smile in passing. The possibilities for showing affection and thoughtfulness in deeper friendships are endless. Love is a boomerang; the more you give it away, the more it comes back to you.

**Embrace Growth Opportunities.** When a disagreement arises, when your patience is tried, or when you find yourself or your friend feeling hurt, angry, or fearful, welcome these events as opportunities to learn and grow. Strictly avoid blaming; focus instead on changing yourself in positive and creative ways. Of course, don't allow yourself to be mistreated, and know when to ask for a helping hand.

**Forgive.** We all make mistakes; it's part of learning. Be quick to forgive those around you and to forgive yourself. Forgiveness doesn't condone wrong behavior; it simply allows for fresh starts. Through the gift of forgiveness, you free yourself from resentment and negativity.

**Follow Your Heart.** Healthy friendships thrive on a keen sensitivity and fresh spontaneity that comes from trusting your heart's intuitive wisdom. Follow your heart's intelligence and lovingly encourage your friends to do the same.

**Respect the Mystery.** Every individual is an unfolding mystery, rich with magnificent possibilities. Don't box people in with limited expectations. Stand in awe of their potential, and welcome new growth and positive changes. Always maintain a degree of reverence.

**Care for Yourself.** Make it a priority to richly nourish your body, mind, and spirit. Your example will bless your friends, and you will have a much greater abundance of energy, kindness, creativity, and love to share.

**Feel the Oneness.** As modern science has confirmed, we are not separate from one another. We are intimately connected in a single web of life. What we give to others we give to ourselves. First, feel your oneness with dear ones, then gradually learn to include all souls in your circle of compassion and love.

## HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY

Surveys tell us that the vast majority of Americans lie regularly both at home and at work. Our culture is troubled because so much of it is built around deception and the need to look good. A personal commitment to authenticity is a great way to help turn around this epidemic of dishonesty.

To be authentic means to be real, genuine, and without pretense. To help us become more authentic, workshop leader Patricia Sun offers this powerful nugget of advice: ***“From this moment on, imagine that everyone you meet can instantly read your mind.”***

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*Let your best be for your friend.  
In the sweetness of friendship let  
there be laughter and sharing of  
pleasures. For in the dew of little  
things the heart finds its morning  
and is refreshed.*

Kahlil Gibran

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## THE GIFT OF FORGIVENESS

Therapist and author Roberto Assagioli wisely noted, “Without forgiveness, life is governed by an endless

cycle of resentment and retaliation.” Forgiveness is a decision to give up resentment. It’s a gift that you give to yourself. It neither condones the behavior of those who caused suffering, nor does it keep us from preventing future abuse. It’s not a way to avoid pain that must be faced or to short-circuit the healing process.

Among the innumerable benefits of forgiveness, staying centered on the Target of Life becomes easier. You become a healthier, more alive person; wounded relationships begin to heal; fear decreases; you feel a deeper connection with others; and you experience the joy of living in the flow of the present moment.

## EXPANDING YOUR CIRCLE OF LOVE

Each relationship, however brief or in-depth, is part of a lifelong curriculum in the science of unconditional love. At first, we learn to return love for love. Then we advance to giving love to dear ones when they are irritable or fearful. Next, we respond to ill will with good will. Eventually, we stretch ourselves to the max, feeling deeply for all people and learning to return love for hatred. Out of such love comes boundless peace, compassion, strength, and joy.



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## 10 Educational Modules

**UK Extension's Universe of Possibilities™: Skills for Creating Happiness and Blessing Others** is an educational series containing 10 modules. Each module is accompanied by a Macromedia Flash® movie, a PowerPoint® presentation, and other teaching tools. All these resources, along with a Facilitator's Guide, are available free-of-charge in camera-ready format at the following website: [www.ca.uky.edu/fcs/possibilities](http://www.ca.uky.edu/fcs/possibilities).

1. **Your Vision Map**
2. **Making the Growth Choice**
3. **The Way of Peace**
4. **Heart Intelligence**
5. **The Freedom of Self-Discipline**



6. **Embracing This Present Moment**
7. **Accepting and Loving Your Body**
8. **Healthy Relationships**
9. **Unleashing Your Creativity**
10. **Gifts of Gratitude and Blessing**

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