

HOW TO LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

(Your friends, coworkers, fellow citizens, etc.)

God designed and created each person to be very different and each lacking in certain characteristics and abilities so they would need each other. Some people are shy while others are outgoing; some are organized and others unorganized; some work well with other people while others work well alone; some are leaders and others are followers; some are self-motivated while others need to be encouraged; some like helping others while others don't. We need to depend on each other, but it usually takes time for people to develop trust and respect for each other.

If people do not trust or respect you, it is because they do not know you well enough yet or you have demonstrated reasons for them not to. To earn respect from others, you must show respect to others. If you lie to people, steal from them, talk bad about people behind their back, sneakily do things to people behind their back, or take advantage of others, you will not be trusted or respected. When others treat you that way, it makes it uncomfortable and difficult to be around them too. Why do people treat others unfairly, say or do mean things to others, or take advantage of others? They are usually selfish and expect to get their own way. When problems arise between people they are usually a result of selfishness or poor communication.

Good communication with each other is the key to any relationship. **Do not assume others know** what you want or you know what they want. You cannot expect each person to have the same abilities and thought processes. **Don't expect others to know** what you are thinking. Realize that no one can read minds and don't assume that you know what others are thinking either. Making wrong assumptions causes problems and hurt feelings. Also **respect the views of others**. Others are not necessarily wrong if their way is not your way. There is often more than one way to take care of a problem. Arguments often arise when people do not get their way. They fail to be sympathetic and understanding of the other persons point of view.

Avoid complaining to others when you have a problem with someone else. Try to confront the person you have a problem with. Before or when you present a complaint to others, **try to see their point of view** and be ready to calmly discuss possible solutions. Try to go through a problem solving process before you confront them. Identify the problem and possible causes, and think of possible solutions. When you discuss things with them, **avoid distractions** as TV, radio, and other people. Do not yell and avoid hurtful words. Give each other time to think.

If someone has a complaint, be honest with yourself - is it a valid complaint? If it is not, ask "why do they think that way?" Try to uncover misunderstandings and defuse rumors. For someone to see your point of view, understand the problem, and decide to make a change, it takes time, desire and effort. To maintain strong relationships, people must be willing to admit their mistakes and be willing to change. Those who are wronged must be willing to forgive too.

Remember "**The Golden Rule**" - treat others as you want to be treated. Get used to apologizing and saying "**I'm sorry**" when you have done something wrong. We all make mistakes and we should take responsibility for them. On the other hand it makes it easier for others to apologize if you will listen and try to accept their apology. Although it may be embarrassing to you, others will appreciate you admitting to your mistakes and sincerely apologizing for them and your making an effort to correct the problem and making an effort to avoid making the same mistake in the future. This can improve trust, appreciation and respect for you and open communications between you and others. It is easy to go back to the same old habits if you do not work hard to develop good healthy habits. If you have difficulty remembering certain things, decide how you would like to be reminded without getting upset then discuss it with others. Figure out ways to remind yourself as with notes, acronyms, calendars, a friend, string on your finger, rubber band on your wrist, alarms, list on door knob or car seat, etc. whatever works.

Learn to appreciate others. Put yourself in their shoes for a day or more. Let your spouse or a coworker take a day, weekend, or week long trip while you do their chores. Could you do all that they do for you? What would your life be like if they were no longer with you? What do they do to make your life easier and more enjoyable? Stop and really think about these questions. Begin helping each other and share more chores.

We often begin to take others for granted and fail to appreciate what they do for us. Show appreciation for even the little things others do for you. It is much easier to complain and find fault in others than to look for the good in people and compliment them. **Thank others** often and find ways to **compliment them every day** -how they look, how good a job they are doing, etc. Don't wait for them to make the first move. Start showing appreciation for them and thank them and see how they begin to react. Something will eventually change.

Treat your friends like you would when you first meet someone. If this were a new friend and they did things for you, wouldn't you be thankful and want to show them your appreciation. This is why many friendships end. When a person no longer feels appreciated or loved, they will eventually gravitate toward others who treat them with respect, compliment them, make them feel appreciated and loved. The next thing you know they want to be with others instead of you. Relationships are like plants, if you take time and feed them they can grow but if you neglect them they will die.

