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**Relationships**

Relationship is the way in which two or more people are connected. Relationships don’t necessarily have to be boyfriend and girlfriend, or husband and wife; it can be friends, family, and even community. Researchers have found that people with strong social connections have less stress-related health problems, lower risk of mental illness, and faster recovery from trauma or illness. People are happier when they are with other people than when they are alone. Our close relationships give us greater meaning and support. Friends and family are important throughout our lifespan, because they help us feel more connected, increasing our sense of belonging and self-esteem. "There is only one happiness in this life, to love and be loved" (George Sand). Belonging to a group or community gives us a sense of identity. It helps us understand who we are and feel part of something larger than ourselves. “A good friend is a connection to life, a tie to the past, a road to the future, the key to sanity in a totally insane world.” (Lois Wyse). You don’t need a certain number of friends, you only need a number of friends you’re certain of.

Studies show that friendship and family increases well-being, has positive benefits for health and for how long we live, and of course it decreases loneliness, which is a major source of unhappiness. Telling people about good events increases our day-to-day happiness. Sharing the good things not only helps our well-being but it also does our relationships good by bringing us closer to others. They help us to re-live the positive experiences we've had. Researchers have found that happiness is contagious. “We found a statistical relationship not just between your happiness and your friends' happiness, but between your happiness and your friends’ friends’ friends’ happiness.” (Psychologist James H. Fowler)

I know that I can always count on my friends and family to give me support when needed. I can relate to this, because I have a sister and an amazing friend who I can always talk to no matter how stupid it is. My sister is someone I can never replace, for she is one of a kind. She is someone you can laugh with until tears come out; she is someone who always makes me smile even when I’m sad. She always tells me the truth, and never judges me or talks bad about me. We go through so much together in the so little time we share. We always stay up late and talk. Even though we fight, she is someone who makes me happy. I know that friends may not always be there for you, but family will always be there for you no matter what. I’ve learned that it’s not what I have in my life, but who I have in my life. For some people, family isn’t always blood, it’s the people in your life who want you in theirs; the ones who accept you; the ones who would do anything to see you smile and who love you no matter what. It is someone who you can share beautiful moments with. They say that true friendship is rare, that a good friend is hard to find, harder to leave, and impossible to forget, and I agree with this.

“Family and Friends.” *Action For Happiness.* Web. 29 April. 2014.