

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS AND COMMUNITY

Student Counselling Unit Mental Health Awareness Series



Why Are Positive Peer Relationships Important?

- **People develop in relation to other individuals, communities and systems.** It becomes important for emerging adults to maintain growth-fostering relationships.
- Peer relationships are especially central to healthy **development of young adults.**
- Research has found that peer support is a consistent **predictor of adjustment for university students.** Peer support and friendship influence one's sense of belonging. It can be daunting to be in a new environment and it is therefore beneficial for university students to foster healthy peer relationships.

Ways to Connect with Peers and Community

- Volunteer - Volunteering for an organisation you're interested in will help you meet people who may have similar interests
- Join a UP sports group - Engaging in sports is a great way to meet people in a university setting.
- **Reach out to people in your classes - Whether your classes are online or in-person** try to get to know the people you study with, send them a message or greet them the next time you see them.
- Connect via social media - People's schedules are busy and there is limited time to visit each other. A quick call or sending a funny meme can help you maintain connection with your friends.

Factors for Healthy Peer Relationships

A growth-fostering relationship includes four factors which can lead to healthy development

- Mutual engagement - This is perceived as mutual involvement, commitment and attunement to the relationship.
- Authenticity - the process of knowing oneself and the other and feeling free to be genuine in the context of the relationship
- Empowerment - The experience of feeling personally strengthened and inspired to take action.
- Conflict Tolerance - The ability to deal with difference or conflict by expressing, working through and accepting differences respectfully.

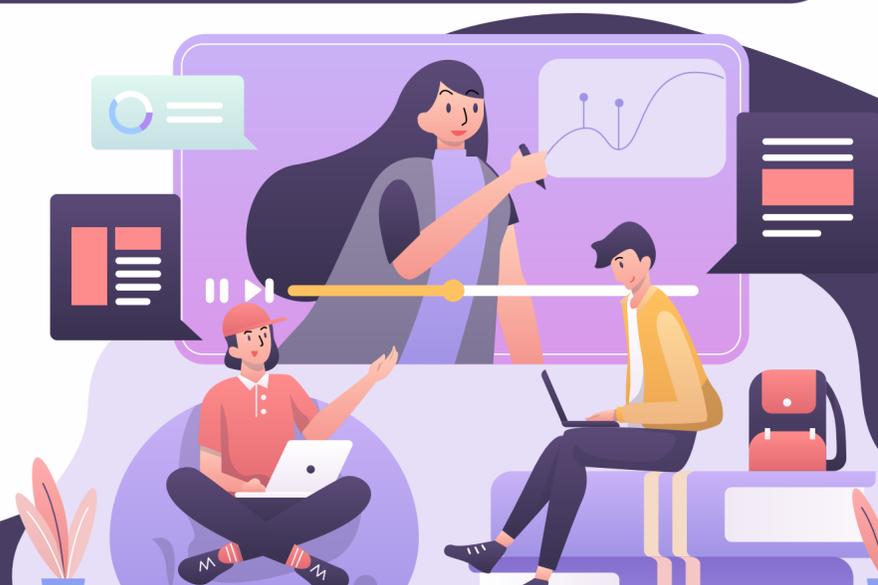
Benefits of Growth-Fostering relationships

- 1.Zest - Promotes a sense of vitality and being alive.
- 2.Action - Inspires further dialogue and positive behaviour.
- 3.Clarity - Can increase knowledge and understanding.
- 4.Sense of Worth - Can help one to feel accepted and acknowledged.
- 5.Desire for Further Connection - seeking to remain within or to re-experience relationships.**

Did You Know

UP has a free online peer support group every second Tuesday @ 6pm (Zoom). for more info call

0800 747 747 or email Vuyi:
supportgroups@anxiety.org.za



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- For more info or self-help resources, check the Student Counselling Unit's website <https://www.up.ac.za/student-counselling>
- For 24 hr support, call the UP Careline 0800 747 747
- For academic support consult with your Faculty Student Advisor: <https://www.up.ac.za/teaching-and-learning/article/2494904/faculty-student-advisors-fsas>
- For therapy/counselling, email: studentcounselling@up.ac.za

Reference

Liang, B., & West, J. (2011). Relational health, alexithymia, and psychological distress in college women: Testing a mediator model. *American Journal Of Orthopsychiatry*, 81(2), 246-254. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-0025.2011.01093.x>