



ROTARY INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT RTN. GORDON MCINALLY IN CONVERSATION WITH RTN. RITA AGGARWAL, EDITOR, MIND MATTERS

In a groundbreaking move for Rotary International, President Gordon McInally has made mental health his top priority during his tenure.



Mind Matters had the honor of conducting an exclusive interview with President McInally, where he discussed his vision for prioritizing mental health and the crucial role of Rotary in destigmatizing the topic. The interview sheds light on the importance of open conversations about mental health and the need for support within and beyond the Rotary network.

In response to a question regarding **his vision of prioritizing mental health and the rotary network**, he stated, "The first thing we want to do is we want to remove the stigma. **We want to make people feel as comfortable talking about mental health as they do about physical health.** I think we have to be prepared and we have to be willing to discuss mental health just as freely as we do physical health. **It's not enough just to ask the question, how are you? It's more important to ask the question, how are you really? And then hope that that will encourage people to open up. And of course, if you ask how are you really? You have to be prepared to receive an answer and be ready to help support the person who might need some help.** And that really is the second part of our three-pronged strategy. That is to help support people to find suitable ways of addressing their poor mental well-being. Then the third strain and the third strand of the initiative is to support them through their journey to wellness. That covers people within the Rotary as well as people out with the Rotary. In an organization of 1.4 million people around the world, there will be a great many people in Rotary at any time in need of emotional support, in need of support to improve their mental health. In addition to looking to find ways to do it in our communities, we also need to help support each other. **I think one of the great strengths of an organization like Rotary is that we are, or at least we should be, a safe place where people can come together and talk freely about how they feel and get the support they will need."**

President McInally also believes that the Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives is the key to realizing his vision and commended the members' efforts in curating these initiatives. He stated, **"I would encourage everybody to look at the Mental Health Initiative's Action Group to consider forming district chapters to**

strengthen the group and to offer what resources they have to the group to allow it to continue to flourish and to continue to support this worthwhile initiative. And in actual fact, I think perhaps going forward into the future, that action groups will be a great way of supporting presidential initiatives, presidential focuses, call them what you will because it's the action groups that have the expertise, the expertise that we so desperately need. And that is why I think this is a real changing point for Rotary in that not only are we getting into the mental health space, we're actually making use of one of our strongest, most robust action groups to help."

On being told about the inception of Mind Matters and the newsletters' endeavors so far, President McInally expressed sincere enthusiasm in encouraging its growth. He says, "One of the first things I would suggest is that as of the first of July, through the Presidential Initiative section of the RI website, there will be a Rotary showcase. I could see no reason why Mind Matters couldn't be posted into the Rotary showcase whenever it's produced to allow people to go in and read more about this important matter. I will certainly take every opportunity to promote it as I move around and as I speak. I will certainly promote it personally. I can promote it through my social channels as well. Let's see if we can get more people to come along and grow it so that it becomes a worthwhile thing for the entire Rotary world."

Finally, President McInally shared his **love for nature and connecting with the environment as his way of maintaining balance and mental well-being on a day-to-day basis.** He says, "I love spending time in my garden. Whichever month of the year it is, there's always something to be done in the garden. I find that is extremely therapeutic. You can lose yourself in the garden and you very quickly find that you are relaxing. But I just like being outdoors. When I'm in Chicago, I love walking down by the side of Lake Michigan. It's very easy to access the lake from Rotary's office. Even at lunchtime, you might find me down there, even for 30 minutes, just getting some fresh air and some outdoor therapy."



DG ASHA VENUGOPAL: THE FIRST LADY GOVERNOR OF DISTRICT 3030

It is our pleasure to introduce the first lady governor of District 3030, Asha Venugopal. District Governor Asha Venugopal is a joint director of Zenith group of companies and a woman of high merit.



She is a certified reiki healer who strongly believes in **value systems and joint families.** Asha and her husband are blessed with two children who are second generation entrepreneurs. They are grandparents to four lovely girls and take immense pleasure in spending time with their family. For her, **familial support is of utmost importance as there is no substitute for family.**

DG Asha has been supporting DAGMHI 3030 since its inception. She strongly believes that a stigma around Mental Health exists and mental well-being should be a topic of open discussion.

Her course of action to combat the stigma would be a **district training seminar** which will be done at 5 regions of the district simultaneously. She would promote all the rotary clubs to form a **Mental Health Committee** and conduct projects. She also proposes **intercity and interdistrict projects.**

She is proud that DAGMHI 3030 happens to be the inaugural chapter of RAGMHI and is a role model for upcoming chapters. She offers support to promote Mind Matters to other districts.

Together we hope to change the number one cause of disability worldwide, **mental illness to mental wellness.** And, to Asha, we offer our best wishes.

-Dr. Aabha Pimprikar
Co-Editor.

Rtn. Gordon McInally
R.I. President
2023-24

District Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives
RID 3030

Rtn. Asha Venugopal
D.G. RID-3030
2023-24

“मेरोल्लेख 3.0”

Mind Your Mind

Online Poetry Writing competition open for all

Write a poem on any mental health topic

- Language- Hindi/English
- Poem in regional language - conditions apply.
- Word limit- 150-200 words

Last date of submission - 1st October 2023 (9 PM)

Result day- 10th October

Contact: Rtn. Dr. Aabha Pimprikar -9922825999

For Registration

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RELATIONSHIP SPECIAL



EDITORIAL

"RELATIONSHIPS—CONNECTION OF LIFE!"

Rotary International President Gordon McInally besides prioritizing mental health as his Presidential Initiative, talks of **creating hope**. He also talks of the value of care, compassion, kindness, well-being, **human bonds and interpersonal connections in maintaining good emotional health**. Incidentally, our theme is in congruence with what he is talking about.

Literally, all research studies on emotional well-being conclude, the one important component required for mental health is that of **good interpersonal connection**. This connection or the special bond, the way with which two or more people connect and behave with each other, is the **essence of good mental and emotional health**.

The closer the bonds are, the **higher influence and impact** they can have on a person. These bonds touch us at all three levels - conscious, subconscious and unconscious, and influence the development of our personalities.

Therefore, it is important to choose our relationships wisely and make efforts to nurture them properly and keep them stable as well as evolving.



-Dr. Aabha Pimprikar
Co-Editor.

"FOSTERING HEALTHY BONDS THROUGH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE"

A healthy relationship is characterized by mutual respect, trust, effective communication, support, and emotional well-being.

Emotional intelligence is a vital yet often overlooked skill when it comes to cultivating healthy relationships. Expressing emotions allows us to comprehend and convey our feelings about ourselves and our surroundings. Expressing emotions is an integral part of our interactions with others.

Often, we express our emotions in our own unique ways, failing to consider whether the other person perceives them in the same manner. Everyone has their own language of expression, and recognizing and understanding that language strengthens the relationship. Understanding and validating each other's emotional needs becomes crucial in maintaining a healthy connection.

Expressing emotions goes beyond sharing positive feelings like care and love. It also involves effectively communicating what hurts us, what makes us sad or angry. In relationships, it should never be a battle of "you vs. me." Instead, it should always be "you, me vs. the problem." Rather than engaging in a fight to prove who is right, validating each other's emotions becomes an essential part of every relationship. It's crucial to understand that all emotions are valid and questioning someone's feelings with phrases like "how can you feel this way" can make your partner feel dismissed or unacknowledged.

Another important thing is creating a safe space for your partner to express themselves. They should feel heard, acknowledged, and understood when they share their thoughts and emotions. Both partners should actively listen to each other without judgment and offer support and empathy.

Emotions play a fundamental role in relationships, shaping the way we connect, communicate, and experience love and intimacy. In a relationship, emotions provide a window into our inner world, allowing us to express our feelings and desires, and understand those of our partner. Building emotional intimacy and being emotionally available for each other helps foster a healthy and fulfilling relationship.

-Aditee Bhargave
Clinical Psychologist

"THE BEAUTY OF ROMANCE"

In healthy relationships, romance is a crucial component that deepens the connection and maintains the flames of love. Making your partner feel recognized and valued requires more than just the initial wooing. The true beauty of romance lies in its development from wooing to a sustainable force that nurtures a relationship.

In the early stages of a relationship, romance frequently takes the form of wooing. Grand gestures, thoughtful surprises, and the thrill of learning about someone else's hobbies and interests are all part of it. Wooing captures the attention and arouses interest and intrigue. It entails going above and beyond to make your partner feel unique, whether via romantic dates, unexpected presents, or sincere expressions of love.

The early wooing may naturally develop into a more constant sort of romanticism as a partnership develops. Maintaining a happy and rewarding relationship requires this shift. Understanding your partner's needs, wants, and love language requires constant work. It entails being aware, sympathetic, and helpful in both significant and insignificant circumstances. True romance is making your partner feel seen, heard, and valued. Small gestures like offering a comforting hug after a long day or actively participating in their hobbies and interests can go a long way in making your partner feel understood and appreciated.

An essential component of maintaining passion in a relationship is effort. It shows your dedication and desire to put effort into fostering the relationship. Small gestures of compassion like writing love notes, organizing surprise dates, or just blocking off time to reconnect and converse may show this. Consistent effort lays a solid groundwork for a long-lasting romance by developing a sense of security, intimacy, and emotional connection.

Romance is not confined to the initial stages of courtship. It evolves and thrives when partners make consistent efforts to understand, support, and cherish one another. From the enchanting moments of wooing to the lasting commitment of making your partner feel seen, romance serves as the lifeblood of a thriving relationship. It requires ongoing dedication, empathy, and a genuine desire to deepen the bond. By nurturing romance, couples can create a love story that withstands the test of time, bringing joy, fulfillment, and lasting happiness into their lives.

-Shreya Mudliar
B.A Psychology

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“TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS”



A toxic relationship threatens your well-being emotionally, psychologically, and physically.

It damages your self-esteem, happiness, and perception of yourself and the world. Initially healthy relationships can become polluted by negative feelings, past issues, or unfulfilled needs, altering the individuals involved.

Toxic relationships greatly affect mental health. Harmful behaviors like criticism, manipulation, jealousy, possessiveness, and control lead to emotional distress and mental health issues. Examples of toxic conditions include domestic violence, marital rape, and obsessive and demanding behavior.

Individuals in toxic relationships are at an increased risk of developing:

- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Depression
- Anxiety disorders
- Eating disorders
- Substance use disorders
- Suicidal ideation and attempts
- Insomnia
- Paranoid personality disorder

In a toxic relationship, constant fights take place which do not resolve the situation but keep adding on to the trauma and the emotional abuse. Warning signs of a toxic relationship should not be ignored, some of which are:

- Not feeling safe and your partner feeds on your negativity
- Emotional, financial dependency, codependency, and not allowing growth
- Playing the victim card and no respect for the partner
- Walking on eggshells around your partner
- Gaslighting- Doubting yourself, when you cannot be honest with your partner
- Threats of leaving, ultimatums, and use of sex as a weapon
- ‘Sorry’ has become your favorite word

Staying in a toxic relationship causes increasing damage. It's important to acknowledge and understand the toxicity, and although you may try to work things out, sometimes leaving is necessary. Often, the realization of being in an unhealthy relationship comes late, as it becomes normalized and downplayed. Getting accustomed to it can lead to feeling paralyzed.

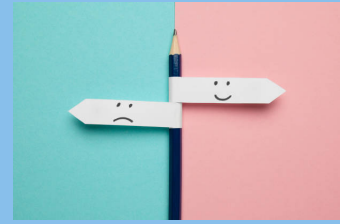
HANDLING TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS

- Accept the situation and seek help
- Tell the other party in the toxic relationship how you feel
- Set boundaries. Both for toxic people and yourself
- Forgive, learn, and grow
- Look for stress reduction practices
- Be ready to walk away from the situation

Love shouldn't sacrifice your peace, joy, or happiness. If the negative outweighs the positive, change is necessary. Holding onto something that doesn't reciprocate will lead to ruin. Sometimes, the best choice is to gracefully let go and move forward.

- Dr. Sahithyaa Raghu
Positive Psychologist, Kerala

“PAIN AND PLEASURE IN INTIMACY”



Intimate relationships are complex webs of emotions, experiences, and connections. They are a source of immense pleasure but also have the potential to inflict pain. The intertwined nature of pleasure and pain in these relationships can be attributed to the fundamental elements of trust and vulnerability. Trust serves as the bedrock upon which healthy intimate relationships are built. It allows individuals to feel safe and accepted in the presence of their partner. Trust is not an innate quality, but rather something that is cultivated over time through open communication, honesty, and consistency.

Pleasure thrives within the realm of trust where couples can fully surrender themselves, both physically and emotionally, which allows for deep connection, closeness and satisfaction. Pleasure is experienced through intimate moments, shared laughter, and a profound understanding of one another's needs and desires.

In intimacy, vulnerability reigns supreme. Being vulnerable requires courage. It is the act of revealing our fears, insecurities, and past wounds, allowing our partners to witness our true selves.

However, vulnerability can also pave the way for pain. When we entrust our rawest selves to another, we grant them the power to hurt us. It is in these moments of profound openness that we become susceptible to disappointment, rejection, and betrayal.

At the same time, the act of sharing our vulnerabilities allows our partners to reciprocate, leading to mutual empathy and emotional support. In this delicate balance, pain can be transformed into opportunities for healing, and strengthening the relationship.

When pain emerges from breaches of trust, it serves as a signal for self-reflection and repair. Pain illuminates the areas that require attention and prompts individuals to reassess their own actions and emotions. It challenges couples to communicate, seek understanding, and work toward resolution.

Intimate relationships are a complex tapestry of pleasure and pain. Trust creates a foundation for pleasure, fostering a deep sense of connection and satisfaction. Simultaneously, vulnerability exposes individuals to the potential for pain, testing the strength of the relationship. However, it is through healing and growth that pain can inspire that couples can transcend their vulnerabilities and build stronger, more fulfilling partnerships.

-Shreya Mudliar
B.A Psychology

“THE FAÇADE OF VIRTUAL INTIMACY”

Like any other innovation, digital platforms have revolutionised the trend of intimate relationships. Let us look closely at how the internet and social media are deeply intertwined with relationships in our day-to-day lives.



Our recent tryst with the pandemic-imposed lockdown made us present the many benefits of digitalization; staying connected with estranged loved ones, to say the least. It was evident that online connections help dampen the dullness of isolation, creating an almost surreal experience of spending time with a loved one through the video interface. It helps to bridge geographical gaps in a relationship and in most cases, save it from emotional gaps of silence or spaced conversations. We could simply appreciate how a small text or voicemail from our partner could brighten our day or make us feel like we matter.

The first things that anyone especially those seeking to form a new relationship would notice about media platforms are their attractive features and quick-paced interactions. The popular filters in reels and various applications help beautify new-age netizens in their desired way and make them feel comfortable in their skin. How far this takes them, is the real question though.

It would not be alarming to find that someone on the other end of a digital conversation turns out to be deceitful or fraudulent, and not who they posed as in an online profile. The nature of the interface is such that it allows the dark side of an individual to play roles devoid of accountability or actual investment. Someone who is vulnerable and emotionally available could be the most likely target of hurt and exploitation, like meeting in non-public places or blackmail, from untrustworthy elements. It could be very easy to generate unreasonable expectations from lofty promises made online, only to find them unfulfilled. Thus, virtual reality could never replace the intuitive judgments which can be made in real-life face-to-face interactions.

One also needs to consider the risk of emotional, if not actual infidelity. The digital interface could be equally hazardous for a relationship that entails one or both partners seeking ventilation. The thin line of emotional infidelity carries equivalent risks of emotional and overt trauma to an individual.

In a nutshell, digital media brings the basket of good, bad, and ugly to our relationships, but knowing to spot red flags and draw lines to ensure safety could turn it into an advantage. The responsibility would be tremendously higher when forming new relationships online, as compared to maintaining it with someone you already trust.

-Dr Bhakti Murkey
Psychiatrist, UK

PSY-BER MATTERS

“THE REALITY OF CYBER CONNECTIONS”

- Anonymous digital identities can be created and presented selectively. This selective self-presentation can sometimes lead to misrepresentation and deception, as individuals may create idealised versions of themselves or engage in catfishing.
- As individuals have control over what information they share, potentially leading to different levels of intimacy and trust compared to face-to-face interactions. However, it's crucial to be cautious about sharing personal information online and to consider the potential risks associated with online privacy and security.
- The absence of physical presence can contribute to the online disinhibition effect, where people may exhibit behaviours they wouldn't typically display offline. This phenomenon can result in candid expressions of thoughts and emotions, forming strong emotional bonds quickly. It's important to maintain awareness of this effect and exercise discretion and judgement when forming online relationships, as individuals may be more prone to impulsive or inappropriate behaviour without face-to-face consequences.
- Hyperpersonal communication is a characteristic of online relationships, where the absence of non-verbal cues and careful message composition intensify feelings of closeness and intimacy. However, it's important to recognize that online communication can also lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations due to the lack of non-verbal cues, leading to potential conflicts and relationship challenges.
- Additionally, online relationships can offer social support and a sense of belonging through virtual communities, particularly benefiting those who feel isolated offline.
- Understanding the psychological dynamics of online relationships emphasises the importance of maintaining healthy boundaries, balancing online and offline interactions, and critically evaluating the authenticity and depth of virtual connections for overall well-being. It's crucial to exercise caution, practise digital literacy, and prioritise self-care in the context of online relationships.

- Dr. Geetanjali Jha
Coeditor Mind Matters,
Digital Parenting Expert & Cyberpsychology Researcher.

“PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS”

In today's competitive and interconnected business world, professional relationships play a pivotal role in achieving success. Building and maintaining strong connections with colleagues, clients, and industry peers is essential for career growth and personal development.



Professional relationships are the foundation upon which successful careers are built. They offer numerous advantages, such as opportunities for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and mentorship. Strong relationships create a supportive network that can provide guidance, advice, and referrals, opening doors to new prospects and career advancement. Moreover, these connections foster a sense of belonging, boost motivation, and enhance job satisfaction. By cultivating professional relationships, individuals gain access to diverse perspectives, ideas, and experiences that broaden their horizons and contribute to personal growth.

In order to cultivate meaningful professional relationships, one must prioritise effective communication and active engagement. Actively listen to colleagues and clients, demonstrating genuine interest in their ideas and concerns. Regularly connect with individuals through meetings, networking events, or virtual platforms to maintain regular contact. Show appreciation for others' contributions and accomplishments, celebrating their successes. Additionally, be reliable, trustworthy, and supportive, as these qualities are crucial for building long-term connections. Remember, building relationships takes time and effort, so be patient and persistent in your interactions.

Poor professional relationships have detrimental effects on employees. Negative interactions can lead to decreased morale, low job satisfaction, and increased stress levels. It can hinder productivity, collaboration, and innovation. Employees may feel undervalued, unsupported, and disconnected, ultimately impacting their overall well-being and career progression.

Professional relationships extend beyond immediate career benefits. They provide opportunities for personal growth, fostering lifelong friendships, and a sense of community. Networking with like-minded professionals allows individuals to stay updated on industry trends, find mentors, and explore new career possibilities. These relationships can also bring about collaborations on passion projects or create a positive work environment that encourages innovation and success.

By prioritising effective communication, active engagement, and fostering meaningful connections, individuals can unlock a world of opportunities, personal growth, and job satisfaction. It requires consistent effort in being proactive in networking activities. Additionally, embracing diversity, inclusivity and being open to new perspectives can enrich professional relationships and contribute to personal and professional development.

- Dr. Geetanjali Jha
Co-Editor

“LIFE SKILLS IN RELATIONSHIPS”

Life skills play a key role in building healthy relationships, some of which are:

Communication: Relationships depend on effective communication, both verbal and non-verbal.

Empathy: empathy helps foster understanding of other people's emotions, and helps to accept the differences in opinions which in turn helps build healthy relations.

Problem-Solving: thinking of workable solutions and developing appropriate strategies for resolution.

Decision Making: making appropriate choices, weighing pros and cons while working with others, and understanding which decisions are important and workable.

Managing stress: managing stress using methods like goal setting, time management, and seeking help at the right time will help in maintaining and also building relations while working together.

Managing Emotions: Dealing with negative emotions, and being sensitive to other's emotions will help in developing the relations in the long run.

Life skills are an important part of our daily life. However, when we give proper attention to each one of them, work towards becoming better, and are aware of which life skills we need to consciously work on, only then can we build positive and healthy relationships.

-Arundhati Shrikhande Salaskar
Counseling Psychologist