

Fact sheet – Stress in/on relationships

Quality time – do you have enough of it?

Are you spending enough time with the people you love most? If you have the work/life balance right then your answer will yes. For many the answer is no. Especially in economically bad times, when jobs are under threat and cutbacks are looming.

"Quality Time" means the time we spend with someone who matters to us. We might go to dinner, on a walk, camping, play tennis or simply sit down and talk together, the critical thing is to spend time with the people in our lives who are special to us. Being with them talking listening to them is vital.

I want it yesterday – a common lament! The pace of our society is frantic. Work drives us as it never has before, with email, blackberry's, mobile phones and the need to travel, all invading our private 'quality' time it's no wonder we cry "give me time!"

Interestingly the explosion of innovative ways to communicate is actually the key element that has destroyed our personal communication. In this life style we arrive home late and exhausted, we slump in front of the television until bedtime, we sleep and then we rush off early to work again.

Some of us even watch TV during meals rather than talking to each other. So those we love get neglected, it's not that we want to neglect them in fact in most cases are work pays the bills and keeps are family secure doesn't it?



The awful truth is though with so much else on our plate we just cease to nurture firstly ourselves and then those closest to us. Are kids grow up around dashing from one club to the next whilst we work late and sadly in a lot of cases miss the vital feelings of security, safety, self esteem and understanding that comes with conversation and with simply being together.

We don't get chance to chat through are worries and pressures so they grow. We all need support and encouragement and without quality time we can feel alone and worry more than perhaps we need to.

As they say "Those who play together stay together" giving each other time creates understanding and love that builds and strengthens our relationships. In our partnership or with our family when we face problems together we face them with confidence knowing that the person who matters most to us has understood and is supporting the steps we plan on taking.

The demands and pressures

With everyday problems such as financial pressures, sexual and emotional problems, complications of second marriages, issues of childcare or sickness it's not hard to see why people experience relationship problems. Let's face it pressure from home along with the longer working hours, increasing demands on workloads, tight deadlines, careers progress and worry of redundancy we can see how we lose that quality time.

Sure, the rewards can be great, the lovely house, good healthcare and excellent educational prospects for our kids, if we are that lucky - but the long-term cost can be devastating. Family relationships can breakdown, and the mental and emotional bank account of our family can be left sadly lacking.

Often people who suffer from relationship stress tell themselves "As soon as I finish this project, that piece of work or lose weight, get surgery, get a partner, have kids, get the kids to school, then i'll be able to relax and be happy. That is not true, what will happen is life will present you with a new set of challenges.

Now is the time for change

Now is the time to spend "quality time" together, laugh, play, hug and make love (if you are in an adult relationship) all great stress reducing activities which we tend to stop doing when we are stressed – just when we need them most!

They all boost the body's immune system and reduce the amount of hormones, such as cortisol, that your body produces during stressful times as well producing the body's natural 'happy hormones' such as serotonin.

Practice:

- Plan to at least one hour per school/work day checking in with your family and spending time together.
- Try to get home to share in bath or story time with the kids or enjoy a romantic meal with your partner at least twice a week.
- Spend at least 6 hours over the weekend doing activities together.
- Most importantly talk, listen to and appreciate those most special to you.

For more about well being at work and a healthy stress free lifestyle visit our website at www.smartfoundations.co.uk