

PEDAGOGICAL INPUT

for the adventure of family life



02_Ingredients for successful relationships

Who among us does not wish for good interpersonal relationships?

For a good reason! Brain research confirms it: "People's key motivation is affection and successful interpersonal relationships. We are beings designed for social resonance and cooperation. The core of all human motivation is to find and give recognition, appreciation, attention or affection", writes psychiatrist and neuroscientist Joachim Bauer in his book „Prinzip Menschlichkeit – Warum wir von Natur aus kooperieren“ ("Principle of Humanity - Why We Cooperate by Nature").

Our brain "rewards" us for healthy relationships.

Then it releases messenger substances that make us happy, relieve stress, alleviate fear and pain, promote relaxation and trust. These messenger substances are feel-good forces that are downright addictive! They are called dopamine, endogenous opioids and oxytocin. They are always released when we feel connected, recognised, loved, liked and valued, or when we have loving physical contact.

If we live in stressful relationships, if we are rejected, excluded or lose relationships, pain, fear and stress are the result. The brain does not distinguish between mental and physical pain, because mental pain can also be felt physically since the messenger substances mentioned are no longer released. "From a biological point of view, attachment and social acceptance are just as indispensable as sufficient food and the absence of physical pain," Bauer adds.

What makes good relationships?

Books can be filled about this subject. Here are a few of the most important components according to Bauer. Even a failure of one of these elements puts a strain on relationships, not only in the family and circle of friends, but also at work and school.

- ➔ **See and be seen:** That sounds banal, but it isn't. It means you perceive other people with their feelings, thoughts and experiences, that you see them and take them seriously. It also means you show yourself with your own feelings and thoughts. "Disregard is a relationship and motivation killer as well as the starting point for aggressive impulses", says Bauer.
- ➔ **Shared attention to externalities:** It's about giving the other person attention for what's on his or her mind, dealing with it together.
- ➔ **Emotional resonance:** That means empathising with the other person, engaging with his or her mood to a certain extent. When someone is sad and I just ignore it and pretend nothing is happening, it creates emotional distance.
- ➔ **Acting together:** "Doing something concrete together is something that is often completely underestimated, but in fact strengthens a relationship", writes Bauer.
- ➔ **Understanding motives and intentions:** This is not the case if I am convinced I know why the other person is doing something, that is, if I interpret his or her behaviour without asking. In order to understand the other person, we have to go into dialogue again and again and take an open interest in one another.

If we succeed in this, in the family or partnership, neighbourhood, community, work or school, then we will have successful encounters, which are the basis for supporting, trusting relationships.

Text: Astrid Egger | www.familie.it

Source: „Prinzip Menschlichkeit – Warum wir von Natur aus kooperieren“ ("Principle of Humanity - Why We Cooperate by Nature") by Joachim Bauer