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## *developing positive time together*

### *introduction*

In the previous chapter we saw that one aspect of building friendship with another was developing the capacity for emotional intimacy. The achievement of intimacy usually requires a major effort and involves taking risks and being more vulnerable on a personal level. Now we want to examine another aspect of friendship — having fun with and enjoying your partner.

### *the concept of conflict-free time*

One aspect of being a friend has to do with spending positive, enjoyable time with the one you love. To have a happy relationship you have to enjoy being with your mate and doing fun things together. A prerequisite to spending time enjoyably, either alone or with someone, is the absence of problems in your life at that particular time. Thus, neither of you is experiencing any present difficulty in your personal life (i.e., you are not bored, sad, depressed, worried), and each of you finds the other's behavior acceptable (i.e., neither is doing anything to interfere with meeting the other's needs). At such a juncture, a relationship is *conflict-free*. Conflict-free time occurs when neither of you has a problem and both feel good about each other. Conflict-free time is the key to having good times together.

## *types of conflict-free time*

The time couples can spend enjoyably, experiencing no problems and meeting their needs for fun/play and leisure, falls into three categories: Individual Time, Qualitative Time, and Diffused Time.

**Individual Time.** Individual Time refers to those times when you are by yourself, separate from others. It is time **ALONE**, away from other people, devoted to activities that are enjoyable, relaxing, and rewarding. This time is structured differently by each person. Some activities might include reading a book, going for a walk, engaging in a craft, having a coffee break, daydreaming, drawing, or jogging. Individual-time activities can run the gamut from activities that are just plain fun to something involving personal growth and self-fulfillment. The significant aspect of Individual Time is that you meet your need for time alone, away from your mate and other people. The main characteristics of Individual Time are:

1. Individuals are fulfilled by doing something enjoyable away from others.
2. During this time, there is little or no contact between partners.
3. This lack of contact is acceptable to both partners.

The major benefit of Individual Time is that it is an opportunity to avoid interaction with other people. Since much of life is spent in complex human interactions, momentarily retiring from this constant interaction can be enjoyable and regenerative in nature. Engaging in adequate amounts of Individual Time also meets a basic need to understand yourself, to process the day's activities, to enjoy yourself, and to relax.

It appears that getting adequate amounts of Individual Time is necessary for mental well-being. When you don't have enough Individual Time, you may begin to feel tense, unable to relax, or overwhelmed by occurrences in your environment. Also, insufficient time alone may result in increased impatience, irritation, or anger at others. Finally, lack of Individual Time for solitude and reflection may minimize the opportunity for you to get to know yourself better.

Unfortunately, few people deliberately provide many opportunities for themselves to engage in Individual Time. It might help to understand Individual Time better if you jot down five to ten things you like to do alone, all by yourself. Then ask yourself, are you getting enough Individual Time for these activities? Also, are there other possible ways of spending some Individual Time that you have not tried or have not done lately because you have been too busy? It's important to remember that Individual Time is something everyone needs on a regular basis.