

SMY
books

STEVEN M.
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RELATIONSHIPS BUILT TO LAST

Societal norms enable toxic relationships leading to disparaged marriage and disillusioned divorce.

RELATIONSHIPS BUILT TO LAST

Forging
Healthy
And
Reliable
Friendships
You
Can
Trust



US
\$19.40
Canada
\$21.40

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Featured Reviews

Lori, a fifty-one year old engineering professional and married mother of three teenagers

Bravo! Finally a book with down to earth yet inspirational relationship advice for all ages: For teenagers and young adults so that they can learn and practice the recommended relationship skills; for adults who think they are ready to commit to marriage so they can access the true strength of their relationship; and, finally, for divorced adults so they can avoid the emotional and financial trauma of yet another failed marriage.

I wish I had this information before my first engagement - I might have seen the **red flags** in my relationship, especially erroneously thinking that since my fiancé and I never argued it was meant to be!

This book covers a crucial topic for teenagers - one that is rarely or never discussed at the dinner table - and will encourage early thinking and conversation on a most important subject. This book - especially if read together by parents and their teenagers or young adults - will facilitate open and genuine two-way conversations about relationship skills and dating advice. It is more critical than ever for teenagers to discuss the keys to successful relationships early since they are exposed to so much more at a younger age than previous generations.

Relationships Built to Last is for college students and young adults who think they are on the right path in love - but, are they? And, for older adults who have **been there and done that** and are now recovering from a failed marriage and are so very determined to avoid the same mistakes the second time around.

Both parents and schools alike need a tool like this with which to open the door to relationship discussions with their teenagers and students. So many times we understand **all-to-late** that it's not enough to meet someone, feel a strong physical attraction, think we share the same values, only to find out later that even all this confirmed is not a sufficient foundation upon which to build a lasting relationship. The author helps us understand that it's

crucial to challenge the health of your relationship in order to make it strong enough to last.

Don't forget to take time to examine your own needs and the needs of your partner! Trying to hide or ignore a real issue won't make it go away! I wish someone had shared this knowledge, advice, and insight with me before my first marriage but, unfortunately, kids don't want to hear relationship advice from their parents - ***too bad, so sad, this book can fill that gap!***

Real, sound, solid, insightful relationship advice - for before, during, and even after the establishment of such relationship!

Anecdotal, great real life relationship case studies, examples and specific situations. Many young couples think that ***it's all about them*** but really, for long-term success, they must have the support and buy-in from parents, friends and family.

A great book to encourage discussion between teenagers and their parents or between two adults in an evolving or committed relationship - or, for that matter, an already married couple.

Relationships Built to Last allowed me to easily start a conversation with my two young teenagers about what they had read - a very hard subject to discuss with teenagers who think they already know everything and don't want to admit otherwise. It would be prophetic to read this book with your teenagers and discuss as you go - it provides a great way to encourage and enable discussions about relationships without having the kids feel like you are preaching to them.

Lori is a self-described 50 year old divorcee whose first marriage was aborted after massive failure to effectively communicate with her former spouse. Her remarriage has enabled more open communication and freedom to be herself with her husband, three step-children and one golden retriever. **Lori** was a former high school valedictorian and honor graduate from the University of Colorado (Boulder) in Electrical Engineering & Computer Science who served her country for four years in the United States Air Force. As former founder and owner of

Rocky Mountain Snowboards, Lori is now learning first-hand the rewards of *dedication and hard work* in helping to raise three step-children while maintaining a loving married relationship built to last. A friendly, outgoing, athletic professional juggling a very demanding career (IT Project Manager and Systems Engineer for **Raytheon Defense Contractor**), **Lori** cooks, cleans, launders and runs a household while staying active in a multitude of sports and sporting events not only for herself but, most importantly, for her family as well. **Lori** currently lives in Littleton, CO with her husband **Andre**, step-daughters **Krista** and **Jessica**, one step-son **Dane** and the family dog **Piper**.

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Christine, a fifty year old Doctor of Pharmacy and married animal lover

A new relationship or even a marriage proposal in an established relationship can create a level of excitement that causes even the most practical person to make decisions based more on emotion than rational thought. *Most of us are not prepared for the pitfalls associated with trying to establish healthy, close relationships in spite of years of education and socialization. Relationships Built to Last* provides that often needed stabilizing force to keep us grounded while making critical decisions about our most important relationships. This book not only helps to prepare teens or adults just starting to date, but also serves as a valuable resource for those in more established relationships by identifying unexpected difficulties to avoid as well as providing insightful guidance on how to build solid and lasting relationships. *More importantly, Relationships Built to Last provides that often needed gut-check that let's us know it's time to end an unhealthy relationship, learn from our mistakes, and begin to forge new relationships that enrich rather than sabotage our lives.*

Christine is a self-described independent, self-starter who loves new challenges. She has been a pharmacist

for 24 years, but has also pursued other interests such as racquetball, horseback riding, stock trading, and real estate investments. **Christine** currently lives in Tampa, FL with her second husband **Brent** and their two rescued cats **Baily** and **Shasta**. **Christine** also owns an Arabian horse, **Czopin**, whom she has ridden regularly for over twenty years.

70 ... 70... 70 ... 70 ... **James** ... 70 ... 70 ... 70 ... 70... 70

Relationships Built to Last is an excellent primer filled with examples that gives a ***quick read*** on points to consider to those seeking to forge a strong relationship. There are examples of all the types of interactions that have the potential to develop into relationships - good, bad, harmful, short, toxic and every other description imaginable, including good and meant to last. The work is obviously composed by a mature writer, and should be enjoyed knowing the experience of relationship-building has practicality as its prime basis as opposed to reliance on the IT world of unreality.

James is a 70 year old married MD who has been a licenced health care provider for over 30 years.

DEDICATION

To my best friend, **Tracy**, who shares her physical beauty on the front cover, but whose inner beauty, courage and resolve have strengthened our own marriage of over fifteen years.

To our adult children, **Lori, Christine, Chris, Jeff**, and **Alex** and their families who, together with their own partners and children, encouraged our relationship over the years.

To our many friends who, over so many years, have contributed to our well-being and who bare much of the responsibility for our growth and happiness.

To all parents and young people who have the *courage* to inculcate such values while taking the time to invest in the self-regulating model herein - *form ... norm ... storm ... reform* - towards responsible choices of their own.

PROLOGUE

A. Introduction

There is no *animal on earth* as wide and disparate, as potentially dangerous, nor as wonderfully blissful than a human relationship. A relationship built to last is, at once, a struggle to be admired and a result with which to enrich our prospects towards happiness.

Nor do relationships happen overnight. Nor are books written about relationships either a short-term project, nor a whim of the imagination. Such endeavors require many years of experience in both good and circumspect relationships, as well as many years of study in the art and science of psychology and human behavior.

The author must also carefully define the terms about which the subject evolves. Additionally, an essential ingredient, *in the view of this author*, is to select for analysis a certain number of case studies - *actual accounts of real people in a variety of relationships* - in order to bring-about some degree of reliability to readers who have the requisite interest in slowing things down to ensure a potentially better outcome. It was also important to discuss selected topics as physical development, dating and sexual interests with a variety of young teens, both male and female, to ensure some degree of current-generational authenticity. Many of those either interviewed and/or who have read selected portions of the manuscript are acknowledged herein.

To be certain, young teens and their parents must be involved, have each other's trust, and openly discuss ideas that may provide some degree of improvement over an historically high American divorce rate.

Nor are the ideas herein expressed meant only for young people and young relationships. To the contrary, many mature adults in *relatively short* (five to ten years), *middle-life* (ten to twenty-five years), or *life-time commitments* (thirty years or more) may benefit just as much as the starry-eyed kids whose stiff, young, hormone-plagued bodies and need for constant sexual gratification outweigh any known human tendencies for reasoned judgment.

RELATIONSHIPS BUILT TO LAST FORWARD

In the late fall of 1961, as a rising junior at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington, I was working on the second story of an ROTC Homecoming Booth with a couple of my fellow cadets. As the new incoming freshman class casually mingled through the area, I spotted down-below one of the prettiest girls I had ever seen. Nudging the guy next to me, I said - without a hint of fright - *see that girl down there - I'm going to marry her.* Full of bravado, I asked one of my friends to *quickly* hit the COG - the university dining facility and the hub of social activity - to get me the best *red-delicious* available. On his return, with apple in hand, I intercepted Donna and, as the saying goes, the rest is history. In spite of her parent's objections - I was both popular and unruly, actually a bit *footloose* - I graduated with an AB in Psychology and was commissioned in the United States Army Infantry in mid-May, 1963 and, one month later, we were married and on our way to Fort Benning, Georgia, for Infantry Officer Basic and airborne training.

We had known each other less than two years. More importantly, we saw not so much of each other the first year, owing to school and after-school work. And, to my surprise, Donna's parents moved her to the University of Washington in Seattle for her sophomore year. Accordingly, during our friendship and beyond, we were unable to invest enough time in our relationship to learn who we were, one with the other. We had great respect for each other, cared deeply for one another, and throughout what became a committed relationship, we refrained from sexual intimacy in the best traditions of the Catholic church. Unfortunately, we failed to develop a sense of comfort and openness necessary for a healthy relationship. Although my parents adored Donna, we were unable, during our early years together, to meet and interact with her parents, nor her seven brothers and sisters. We seldom discussed important stuff like sex, pets, children, religion, politics, work, money, and the use of free time. In many respects, we were not unlike other young couples of our generation who religiously abstained from sexual intimacy, choosing

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to find faith in God and the church. And, in so doing, everything would be alright.

Yes, our faith and determination to raise our children to respect authority produced three wonderful adults. But, we were two young people whose backgrounds were fundamentally different. For example, I was a three-sport athlete - a jock - who began to play organized football at thirteen years old in the sixth grade. At fifteen, my dad sent me to Chicago for the summer to watch my favorite player three games in a row, number 24 for the visiting New York Giants. A star baseball player in high school who also played for Gonzaga University. A kid who fanatically followed the Yankees and the M&M boys in the early sixties. This lifestyle would portend an over-active life in athletics and associated outdoor activities: Skiing - 30 years; handball - 30 years; golf - 30 years; fishing and hunting - lifetime; SCUBA diving - 25 years. You get the picture? Donna was not athletic - she liked to sew, cook, clean and shop. She was, indeed, the consummate homemaker and the best mother for whom young children might hope. Consequently, we were apart a lot - not necessarily in a bad way but, nevertheless, unable to be with each other doing things together we both enjoyed. We were miles-apart as to how best to manage our coins - she was frugal, and I wanted to have fun and spend it all. And, addressing one of the most important ingredients for a successful marriage, sexual intimacy, found us at polar opposites. Nevertheless, we were good to each other, respected one another, faithful to each other, and were married for thirty years.

The lessons I learned from this experience enabled me to make better choices about friendships and the establishment of a relationship. After living alone for nearly five years, during which time I started a home projects business, I met Tracy, the love of my life - my one-and-only soul mate. We openly discussed important issues with a sense of comfort previously unknown to me. Our commitment and eventual marriage rested easily on a solid foundation we both experienced on a daily basis. We were comfortable, one with the other, this made possible owing to time and our willingness to explore our inner-

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most thoughts and desires.

We dated for four and one-half years, becoming the best of friends. Yes, there was spark, ignition, and fire. However, throughout, we did not take each other for granted, nor were we predisposed to rush into marriage. Tracy had the opportunity to become acquainted with my children, and me with hers. There was *compatibility* that neither of us had before experienced, both families coming together in a most-positive way. Our children liked and respected one another, which is one of the conditions we often discussed as paramount.

In the late summer of 1999, I proposed to Tracy during a family reunion at Lake Couer d' Alene, Idaho, in front of fifty-six family members who experienced immense joy and our sense of happiness. I felt like the luckiest guy on the planet, and she looked radiant. Together, we forged a relationship built to last. We were married on 24 September, 1999, now having been married for over fifteen years. Given the willingness to be ourselves, we often invite the kinds of storms requiring adjustment and reform. In fact, our marriage is in a constant state of reform.

Our children, who were a great source of strength when we most needed their support and understanding, are better-off for the changes. Today, Donna and Tracy are good friends who easily interact with one another on a social basis. *Life is interesting.*

During my twenty-six year military career, I was fortunate to build on my degree in psychology with the completion of a Master's Degree (M.Ed.) in Student Counseling from Loyola University (Chicago) in 1970; and, an Education Specialist Degree (Ed.S.) From George Washington University (Washington, DC), in Human Resource Development (HRD) in 1990.

My life experiences and educational background provide a sound basis for any legitimate discussion about relationships and the kind of investment which may be required - particularly for young boys and girls. **Bottom Line?** It may take *three to five years* to establish and maintain a relationship built to last. *First*, you will need to forge healthy and reliable friendships you can trust.

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So, for whom is the book intended? *Anyone* who wants better friendships, more-promising relationships, a committed relationship filled with openness and trust, and a solid marriage. Especially, young teens and their parents, college students, and older adults who may be experiencing regretful discomfort in a current relationship worth saving, or not.

An example of what I mean - an eventual outcome, if you will - is discernable in my *Twelve @ Home* Anniversary note to *Cindy* from her *Prince Charming*, which I have included in it's entirety herein.

TWELVE @ HOME

Dear Cindy

On our *twelfth anniversary*, it seems important to convey to you just how much our life together means to me. There are many ingredients that constitute life's virtual *bowl of soup*. Herein are but twelve - as in the *twelve things I like about you* - why I feel *at home with TWELVE*:

- * I like that *you love me enough to be yourself*.
- * I like that *you feel comfortable* enough to express your own opinions knowing that - while at times, even with disagreements - our decisions will rest on a solid foundation of mutual caring, understanding, and love.
- * I like that you *respect* my life's experience, work, and accomplishment.
- * I like that *others* - old and young alike - *so easily interact with you*, often modeling their own lives on what you say and do.
- * I like that you always seem to come down on the side of what is *right and good*.
- * I like that you can *cook*, and that our meals are usually the result of careful planning and expert culinary execution.

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- * I like that you are *honest and open*, even when I am being most difficult.
- * I like that we can *openly share* our uncomfortable thoughts and actions without remorse.
- * I like that you are *beautiful*, but don't judge others by the way they look.
- * I like that you are *funny* - that we enjoy one another, and spend much time together.
- * I like that you *play no favorites* - treating all adults and children with love and respect.
- * I like that you *love me* enough to endure my faults.

Love Always,

Prince Charming

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INTRODUCTION

One of the advantages of writing about relationships when you're older is that, well, you're older. You've either experienced the ins and outs of a long-term relationship and/or seen the same in the relationships of many of your friends. So, what's the skinny?

Relationships built to last. Forging healthy and reliable friendships you can trust. I know what you're thinking - **no relationships are built to last.** Right? But, what if there was a way - *a fundamental roadmap* - that might obviate the statistics about committed relationships ending in divorce, enabling we humans to build relationships that first work? And are possible to maintain?

Based on research and personal experience, most of us make life-changing decisions that, unfortunately, are not predicated on sound judgement, nor are the endings we see plausible. Our early choices simply reflect our desire to get into the game - any game, before we are ready to play. Something like trying a heart transplant before going to medical school. Or, attempting to hit a major league curve before playing little league.

No need to satisfy your curiosity at this point reciting the overwhelming number of committed relationships - including marriages - that eventually end up in the scrap heap while leaving emotional scars that reside within the deep recesses of our minds - forever. Failed relationships are, indeed, the norm as we humans *tend to see in others, those things we see, and fear, in ourselves.* Unconsciously, or not, we tend to project onto others those ingredients we most lack - and, least like about ourselves - in our daily lives. Accordingly, is it any wonder that we are unable to build relationships that last? However, herein are some ideas for change worth consideration.

Historically, the United States auto industry built a dynasty featuring a strategy known as planned obsolescence. Building cheap cars with known failure points would accommodate a willing public nurtured with slick advertisements to trade-in the declining model for yet another production deemed to again fail. It became a vicious cycle, until the Japanese, perhaps hurting from the

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A-bomb, decided that excellence was more than a word in the dictionary. Now, of course, cars are better made with stronger parts, are more safe and reliable, look nicer, and cost more. Why? Because the market wanted - needed - improvements based on a new strategy.

We humans, often without knowing, create our own failure points to a healthy relationship.

Can you say starter-marriages - the outgrowth of relationships, including shack-jobs, that have little, if any, chance to succeed in the real world? Or, kids having kids - whose kids, of course, have few chances for a healthy life? Where and how do relationships start? Are there certain stages upon which, if known and well executed, promote relationships built to last? Or, are we talking about the lottery - don't think so.

So, let's be honest here - what's this guy trying to sell? What are these platitudes about doing things differently to both start and maintain a healthy relationship? What's the start-up cost? How much of an investment must I be willing to make to secure a much better and more reliable outcome? I know it takes four years, give or take, to graduate high school. If fortunate, and financially able, another four to six years to obtain a college degree from a recognizable institution of higher learning - and, perhaps a masters. And, this is only education about which we are talking. So, how much time, and what kind of effort - what's the delay on some future reward - are we in for to better secure our future relationship with someone for whom we care, and possibly love?

Relationships need to be healthy and transparent. If you are dating someone and, after a few months have not met his family or friends, are only meeting at designated places while he sleeps over from time to time and, even though he says he's an attorney, take some simple advice. *Stop it!* This is not a healthy relationship, nor is it transparent. It is nothing but a dead-end road to misery, disillusionment, disenchantment, and despair. Get out now! While you can.

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Three to Five years!

Yes, three to five - that's what it's going to take to successfully negotiate the four stages - *form*, *norm*, *storm*, and *reform* - of a healthy relationship in search of a reliable outcome. Disappointed? Fair enough. Does this investment in my future - this three to five - pertain to everyone seeking companionship, commitment, and perhaps marriage itself? Is there relief for those who have been married once - twice - or more? What about middle-aged adults who have been around the block a few times and, certainly, have more experience? Perhaps, but understand, if you have failed once or twice, this does not obviate a total dispensation - nor, a release on reality - from making the same kinds of mistakes, over and over again. Just ask or observe some of your friends and, of course, the difficulties they are experiencing in search of a reliable relationship they can trust.

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Steven M. Yedinak retired from the United States Army as a lieutenant colonel in 1989 after twenty-six years of service. Married to his own *Cinderella*, **Tracy Ellen**,

Yedinak has three grown children, two step-children and seven grandchildren. In a career encompassing two tours to Vietnam and coveted assignments with the Army's elite *Special Forces* and five years with the *101st Airborne Division*, his combat awards include the Combat Infantry Badge and four Bronze Stars.

A 1958 graduate of *Gonzaga Prep* in Spokane, Washington, **Yedinak** earned his infantry commission upon graduation from *Gonzaga University* with an *AB* degree in *Psychology* and a minor in *Sociology* in 1963.

While serving as an ROTC Instructor at *Loyola University* in Chicago from 1967- 1970, **Yedinak** completed requirements in a three-year program in *psychology and human behavior*, earning his *M.Ed.* in *Psychological Counseling*.

Following his retirement from active duty, **Yedinak** again studied *human behavior* as a post graduate student, earning an *Ed.S.* in *Human Resource Development* in 1991 from *The George Washington University* in Washington, D.C..

Steve & Tracy currently live in Newport News, Virginia.