

Your Unisa studies & your relationships

Negotiating your way to balance and success

Define tomorrow.

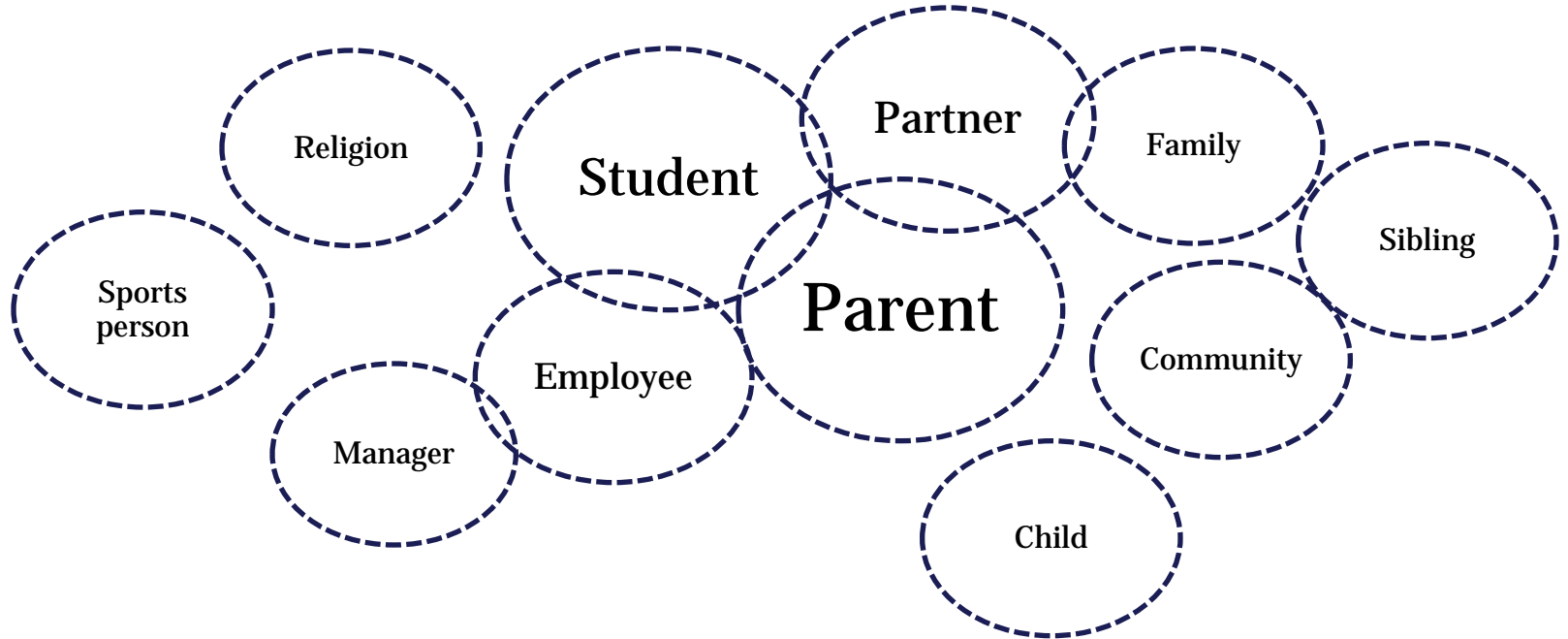
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How to use this presentation

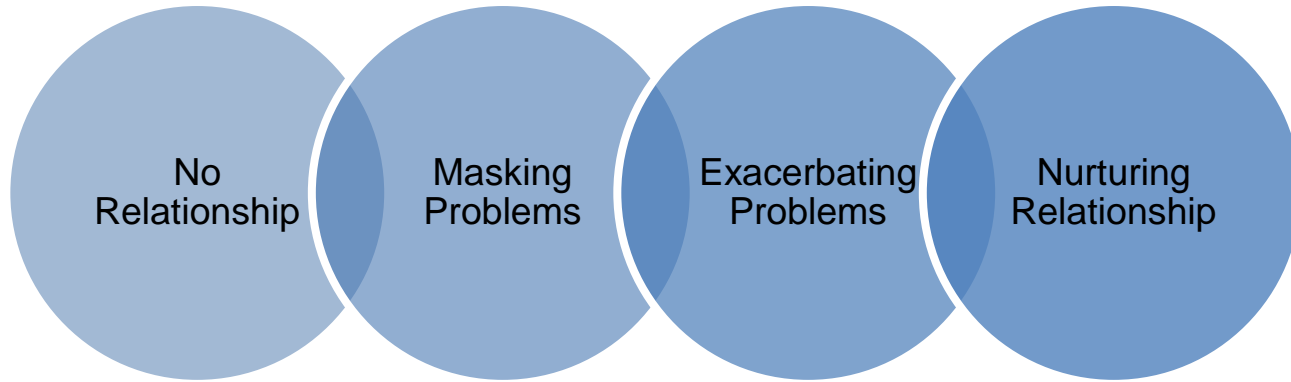
1	Get an overview	look through the slides to see what it is about
2	Read through it carefully	paying attention to the areas where you need to improve your skills
3	Make notes	as you read
4	Listen to the podcasts	to strengthen your skills
5	Contact us	should you need to have a further conversation about your studies

Which are your most important relationships?

(The greater role they play in your life, the larger and closer to the center the circle!)



The continuum of relationship health



In which section(s) will you place your most important relationships?

The Positive and the Negative

Relationships can be both a **building block** and a **stumbling block** in the student experience

- Our well-being is linked to the quality of our relationships at home, work, university, and in our community.
- Life can easily get out of balance in terms of relationships and self-care.
- When challenges arise in our relationships with others, we normally would call it a “conflict situation”.
- These situations lead to emotional discomfort and impact on our relationships with others.

Activity

Complete the conversation sheet “*I need to resolve a challenging relationship situation*” to reflect on a conflict situation that you’ve experienced. If you wish, you can then have a further conversation with a counsellor.

http://www.unisa.ac.za/contents/faculties/service_dept/bcccd/docs/RelationshipProblemSolving.pdf

When you embark on a new goal...

1. You may feel uncertain and you want to rely more on others
2. You may expect constant and full support from others

Realistically, others:

- may not have the capacity to give you the support you need
- experience too much pressure from you and your goals
- may well not be within their ability to help you

Stumbling blocks

- **Students who have to balance their studies with family life often feel they choose to study they are neglecting family and friends; and if they choose to socialise they are neglecting their studies – either way they constantly are feeling inadequate.**
- **To the partner, child, parent or friend of the student it may seem as if studies has replaced them, and they feel neglected and unappreciated, especially when they take on more of the student's responsibilities as their own.**
- **If you and your partner are both students, you might be in a better position to understand the demands of academic life, but struggle to find time for each other.**

Sources of friction

Time – not enough time to get to everything; too much time wasted on what's not urgent or not important

Responsibility/Priorities – too many responsibilities to attend to; clash between what's your responsibility and what's your priority

Unclear Boundaries – uncertainty about what you can or cannot afford to do in your different roles; exceeding expectations from the various spheres of living

Role Reversal/Adjustment – unequal division of household tasks; struggling to cope with new demands

Finances – where does financing come from; what do you use it for

Crisis – unexpected events that make even more demands on your time and energy

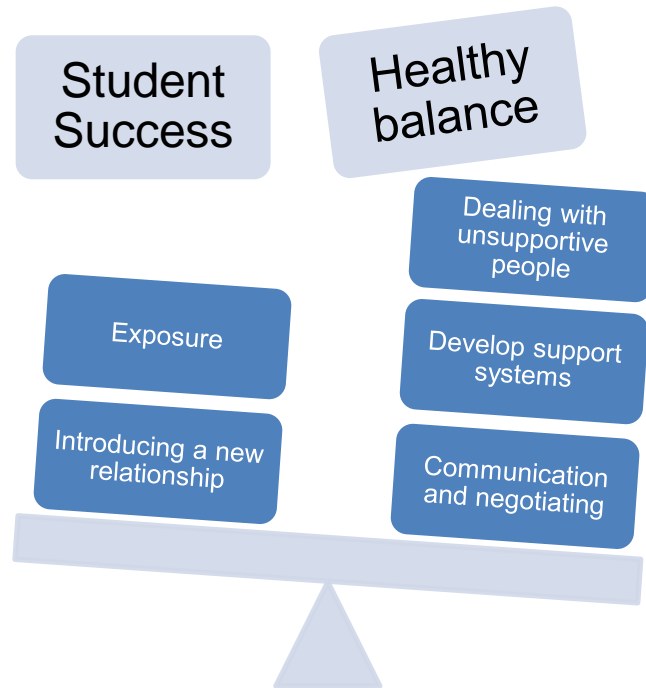
Activity

Write down the possible sources of friction you are experiencing in your relationship challenge. If there is more than one challenge you would like to address, do the same for all of these.

Are there any patterns in the problems you are experiencing?

Building blocks

Practical relationship strategies for problem-solving



Introducing a new relationship

How do you tell your support network that you intend to study?

Two strategies

**Share
positively**

**Plan ahead
and prepare**

Share positively

Say why your studies make you feel happy

If people in your system (your children/partner/parents) see that you are happy and more fulfilled by your studies, they are likely to be happy/accepting too.

Strive for balance

Many priorities, little time. Jealousy can arise if you become too preoccupied.

Share interesting facts

What inspires you? Try not to be offended if they don't seem keen straight away, it can be quite a daunting prospect for some.

Prepare and plan ahead

Talk about what will change

Talk to your family about what will be changing and how it will change, before the change takes place.

Consult

Discuss the possibility of studying with your others – they may tend to be less resistant if they feel that they have been somehow consulted in your choice.

Research and preparation

Take time to do the required research – the better your planning, the more likely you'll be able to overcome difficulties without too much fuss.

Create a schedule

Work out a schedule that takes both you and your partner's needs into consideration.

Activity

How can you use this information to make your relationship transitions smoother?

Familiarise yourself with Unisa support systems that can help you manage your new responsibilities effectively

Listen to the podcast on preparing for a successful study year
<http://podcasts.unisa.ac.za/dccd/CEMSSuccessfulstudyyear.mp3>

Communicate and negotiate

Key development areas

**Communicate
your motivations**

**Negotiate your
responsibilities with
your family**

**Communicate
your needs**

**Sometimes you
can just say
“sorry”**

Practical strategies for the STUDENT

Avoid tunnel vision:

Don't focus exclusively on your needs. Ensure that you consider and attend to your partner's feelings and concerns, even if you cannot resolve it immediately.

You may quickly become defensive:

Sometimes all that is necessary (and more constructive) is just listening.

Time management:

The multiple roles you have may have constantly conflicting demands; be sure make time for family and friends.

Supportive network:

Find people in your networks who can support you, (your children, church members or a close friend.

Do your chores:

Keep up with your share of the home responsibilities such as washing the car and packing lunches.

Remember to Celebrate:

After the exams and the holidays and occasions that are important to you.

Practical strategies for the NON-STUDENT PARTNER

Academic life may have hidden demands:

Be aware and accept that your partner will need to engage in academic life outside the hours spent studying to further his/her career – May it be volunteer work, study groups, online activities or tutorial classes.

Do something new as well:

Get involved in new activities – Volunteer, take a class, engage more often in a loved or neglected hobby. It promotes your positive outlook - when you appreciate the time you have for yourself it has a nurturing effect and allows for growth.

Express your needs:

Negotiate to have them met – whether it's chores that don't allow you much free time or funds from a tight budget for cleaning services or a babysitter.

Join the Unisa crowd:

If you can't beat them, join them – maybe consider studying something yourself.

Practical strategies for the COUPLE

Chaos rules ...

Plan ahead for difficulties and anticipate challenges (sometimes it means accepting that which you cannot change ...)

Change is unavoidable:

Recognise when situations and needs transform and discuss together how to adjust and take care of your relationship in addition to your family responsibilities.

Keep communication pathways open:

Recognise that there will be times when you both are tired, frustrated and overwhelmed.

Remember that you're a team:

and teams need team-building exercises (date night, seeing friends and family, sharing a hobby like hiking).

Be flexible ...

Ask for help from your partner or others in your support system.

Reconsider your situation:

Ensure that your provisional adjustments and roles do not become permanent – be appreciative of your partner if he/she takes on more.

Practical strategies for the CHILD

Offer help:

May it be to make dinner, assist with something on the computer or with certain subjects - especially if its has been longs since your parent has studied – or simply surprise them with a cup of coffee or special treat.

Keep up with your chores 😊

[Less stressed = more happy = better family life]

Communicate your needs:

If parents do not know they cannot help you

Exposure

Share the Unisa experience

Does it influence your views if you experience it yourself?

What could change if you expose those who matter to you to your new student experience?

Being included reduces the feeling of neglect, unimportance and/or abandonment in your family.

Exposure

Where is Unisa?

Physically

Have your family explore the campus with you – it should be a friendly place, not one of negativity because you have less time; include your children in your trip to the university library

Online

Spend some time browsing the Unisa webpage with them.

Share knowledge

Share with them interesting facts about what you are learning.

Branding

Buy them a Unisa T-shirt or any memorabilia that makes them part of your experience.

Accept invitations for Unisa events

Make university events a family outing – such as the Technology Learning Festival or Careers Fair for example.

Develop support systems

What/who is it? What/who is it not?

Enhance what you have



**Defining
support
systems**



**Developing
support
systems**

A support system is...

A pool of resources...

to be drawn on selectively...

to support me...

whilst I am moving in the direction of my choice.

It leaves me stronger...

and I undertake to give back to my pool of resources as soon as I can

Developing support systems

How to maintain good relationships

1. Be able to *identify good characteristics* in those you meet.
2. Determine *who in your life is supportive*.
3. Learn how to *deal with non-supportive people*
4. Realize how critical it is to *have supportive friends* in your studies.
5. *Develop better relationships* with your family.
6. Make sure *close relationships are academically supportive*.
7. *Be who you are* - don't try to be someone you are not.

Make a list of all the **supportive** people or institutions in your life – what can you do to **develop** them? How can you **give back** to make them stronger?

Dealing with unsupportive people

What/who is it? What/who is it not?

How will you manage?

What does
being
'unsupportive'
look like?

Things to
consider...

What is unsupportive?

What do you perceive as an unsupportive person?

Is it a person who:

- (a) discourages you from pursuing your goals, perhaps actively so?
- (b) is neutral, perhaps slightly nonchalant about what you are doing, and doesn't actively render help to you?
- (c) sabotages your efforts to complete assignments on time or prepare for the exam?

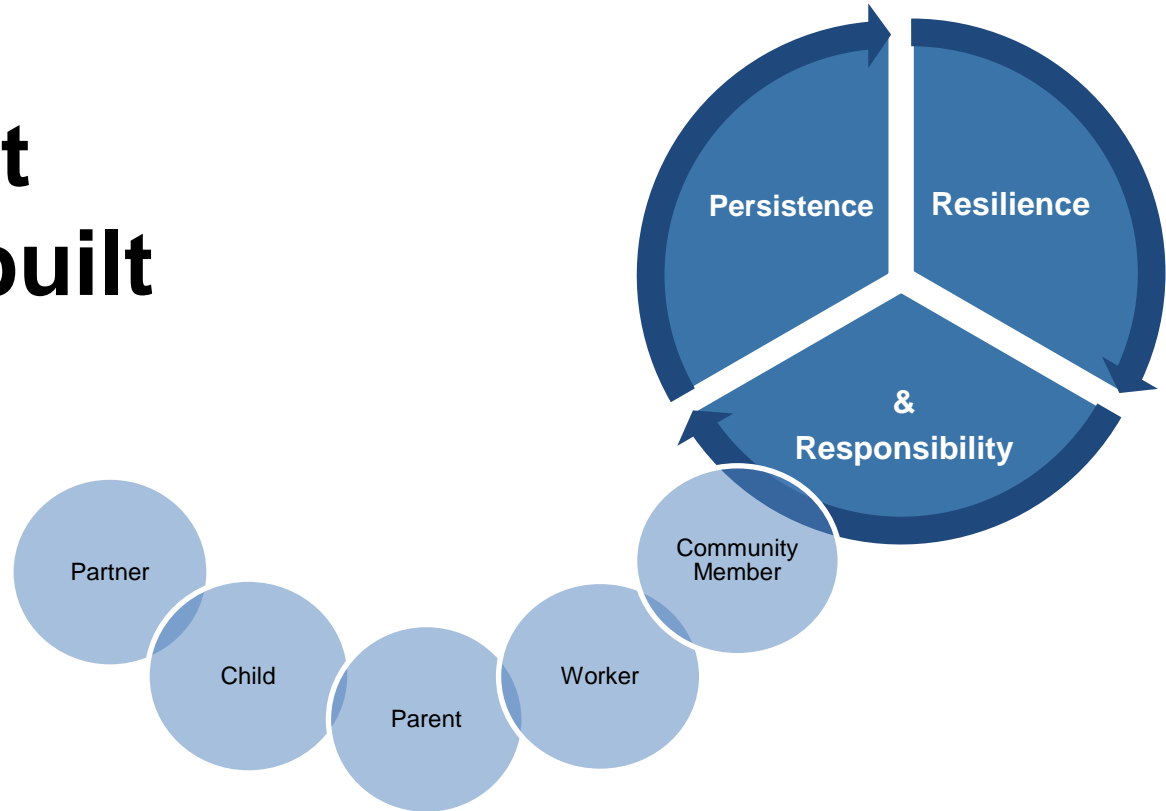
Things to consider...

Follow the following steps and reflect on the process:

- Assess their reasoning
- Discuss your primary motivation with them
- Determine their role in your life
- Create a motivation list
- Find more supportive people
- Is it time to let go of a specific person or relationship?

Now that you have managed your relationships

Your student success is built upon:



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