



Kidnapped by useless contacts, by people who do not interest us, by constant Whatsapp, e-mails and messages of all kinds and style, we are neglecting our true relationships.”

Thus, begins the book “More friends and less *likes*” by Ferran Ramon-Cortés (*Conecta*), academic collaborator at ESADE and director of the Institut 5 Fars (www.5fars.com) on relational and communicative skills.

Just as consciousness spreads in the west that you have to have fewer things at home, and less occupations, and tend to more simplicity, the same thing begins to happen with relationships.

What gives happiness? Good quality relationships

Ramon-Cortés recalls that the most important factor in explaining why people are happier than others (according to “the greatest study on happiness done in the world by Harvard University”) is one: the quality of their relationships.

It has always praised both deep friendship and maintaining many cordial relations and contacts with many people. The Book of Proverbs, in the Bible, collects many about the value of friends.

But our time with iphones and social networks is different: “We have never so far connected with so many people. We have never had the means to keep in touch with so many people, wherever they are. Never before could anyone find us — and contact us — so easily. And this makes that in many moments we are dedicating our time and energy to the wrong people.”

The mere contacts distract us from the true friendships.

We are wasting time attending dinners, meetings or associations... They don't really feed us or help or make happy, simply because it was easy for them to

contact us. And we lose hours on the nets without having meaningful real relationships. “We either cancel meetings, or organize them, out of sheer fatigue.” The unimportant, even annoying, relationships make it difficult for us to cater to valuable relationships, which would cause us to grow and improve.

“It's time to take control over our relationships. To order them. To decide what we want and what we get out of, and to think about what we do to care for and reinforce what we really want,” explains the author.

Ramon-Cortés insists on differentiate between what are only “contacts” (even if they are polite, pleasing...) and what are “relationships”, that is, relevant and important people in our lives.

“Contacts come and go, while relationships have to be built, and either you take care of them or they die. When we devote too much time to contacts and too little to relationships, we begin to have a problem,” he warns.

The fact is that we always tend to cancel meetings with friends, relatives, children and spouses (who are true relationships) to attend the “urgent meetings” or “by surprise” of work contacts, which are not really that important.

The ones you invite: to your kitchen, to your dining room, to a restaurant

Ramon-Cortés establishes a “non-scientific but functioning” rule: those people who invite to our kitchen, to chat, lose their level of relationship if we do not do it every two weeks. The ones we invite to dinner at home every two months. Those of us who stayed in a restaurant, every two years. At least we have to give life signs at this time.

And scheduling encounters: Relationships require conscious attention, and that implies spending time.

The book gives several ideas to strengthen relationships and optimize time. It ends with 5 basic rules:

1-Thank

It is easier for us to criticize than to give thanks and praise the good things of others. Without falling into flattery, it is good, to stay with our relationships, to praise and to thank their gifts and the things that they do well and that we like. Ask for “a real thank you” beyond the pat on the back. In addition, sincere and frequent gratitude in good things will make us credible when, in a serious case, we express a reasoned critique.

2-Getting ahead

“If I care about you, I think of you. And if I think of you, I can come up with things that could help you. Before you ask me.” To get ahead is to propose to do something together, to call before the other, to be interested in the problem of the other before you tell me, to present at home if you feel discouragement...”

Many times, we come up with things to do, anticipating, but by laziness or lack of discipline, we leave them undone. We have to organize and act.

3-Tackle the cafes pending

“A pending coffee is a conversation that we have not had but that is there, very present. For something that has happened that has gone wrong, or by something positive that we have not yet thanked.”

Every time we see or remember that person, we think: “We should stay, we have that coffee pending...” It doesn't go out of your mind even if it's years and years.

And it requires coffee because “it must be a quiet, calm conversation, in which we can share the feelings. Expressing what I have felt, in the first person, without accusations.”

But the pending coffee is only with the people I really care about, valuable relationships. “It is not worth killing caffeine with people who will not understand us or with whom there is nothing we can regenerate, because the relationship is not tolerated anywhere.”

4-Being present in adversity

The Book of Proverbs already says in the Bible: “At all times he loves the friend, and he is like a brother in time of adversity.” In hard times, comforts to be really accompanied by people, and more friends. In our time, before the moments of adversity of the friends, “we are overwhelmed by the laziness of being, because we don't know how to be.” In reality, the important thing is to be there, not to speak or compare between adversities.

5-The 3 magic phrases: You have to say a lot

Ramon-Cortés, like Pope Francis, insists that you have to repeat again and again

these words that reinforce relationships: “Thank you”, “Sorry” and “It’s ok”. (Francisco speaks of “Thank you”, “pardon” and “Will You allow me?” or “Please”).

These days we struggle to call on the phone or meet someone to say thanks, we postpone and becomes “pending coffee.” We also find it hard to ask for forgiveness without accompanying a “but it is that...” And the “it’s ok, doesn’t matter” is important to overcome the grudge. It is not always necessary to tell the other: it is often enough that we tell it to ourselves. It's actually a forgiving.

“We can, and we have, to use them daily” insists the author.

More friends and less likes (*Conecta*), of Ferran Ramon-Cortes is worth 16.9 euros, is a book of easy reading that can help many to better organize their interpersonal relations.