



HUGS

Have you ever thought about the importance of hugging in your life and the lives of others? Hugs give us that warm and fuzzy feeling, calms us down, and just makes us feel good about ourselves. Hugs are not just a simple expression about how we feel about someone. Hugs influence healing effects within the human body and they contain many body healing qualities.

The power of hugs...

They lower blood pressure especially during anxiety because they also lower the levels of cortisol and norepinephrine (the stress hormones).

Hugs raise functioning of the immune system, increasing your resistance to viruses and promoting faster healing.

Hugs release oxytocin (the same hormone released after childbirth that promotes mother/child bonding). This further promotes relational attachments. Oxytocin primarily is made in the brain's hypothalamus and is circulated through the blood but some of this hormone remains in the brain to positively influence mood and behavior.

Hugs decrease your heart rate and have an analgesic effect, lowering pain levels. They also reduce feelings depression and anxiety.

Indeed, hugs, even intentionally sent through distance with the assistance of space and time have healing affects physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

Hugging, though, makes us take another look at our boundaries, borders, and barricades. Our lives are chock full of different types of pesky border lines. Do you let others know if they are making you uncomfortable hugging when you prefer to shake hands? We all set our personal parameters for the people around us in our lives. This is easier when you know who you are. Think about your preferences and how you look at yourself. If you are sure of what you will or will not do in certain situations with certain people and if you stay inside your authentic self you will more easily set your

comfortable boundaries and speak up if they are impinged upon. Of course this is not always an easy thing to do. Dealing with family members is a murky area and can lead to difficulties. Sometimes cultural differences need to be followed or workplace rules have to be adhered to. Be clear in expressing yourself and stand firm remaining constantly within your authentic self. You will be happier in the long run.

If you are a person who really doesn't like hugging, it's okay to tell someone "I prefer to shake hands". There's plenty of time when you are in contemplation to revisit your preferences and discover if this is a boundary preference, a firmer border line, or a barricade you built a long time ago. Analyze whether these boundaries, border lines and barricades have seen better days. Maybe the scripts written long ago by others no longer hold a place within your authentic self. Maybe you or the others have changed.

If you are an avid hugger, you still have to be mindful of other people's boundaries. Try to assess the other person's body language when looking to hug, it may be telling you "please don't". Take a wait and see attitude and follow the other person's lead; this may work better in certain situations. It is also perfectly acceptable to ask for someone's permission to hug. It's also okay to apologize if you suddenly realize your decision to hug was a mistake. A simple "oh, I'm sorry if I made you feel uncomfortable" usually makes both of you feel somewhat better. Never assume it's okay to hug someone unless this is the routine with someone you know quite well; or the other person's arms are extended outward in "ready for a hug" body language. As I stated before, respect your workplace rules, they are there for a reason. With the case of different cultural influences, some cultures rejecting a hug can be downright insulting, and in others it's looked down upon considering it a showy public display and an embarrassment. In certain situations, like weddings and funerals that have receiving lines, it's okay to copy what others are doing. Hang back a bit and watch what is being well received and what isn't. This tactic works well in those meet and greet situations.

There are occasions though when people are in need of emotional support and a person who usually rejects hugs really needs one and it is received most appreciatively. Again, let their body language lead your intuitive gut to tell you when it's okay or ask, "do you need a hug?"

Sending you hugs... *Kai*