Insights Into Building Effective Relationships

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What is an effective relationship? It is a relationship that has synergy; the participants are more effective, more productive, and happier than they would be without the relationship.

Relationship building forms the core of our everyday lives and all our success in life comes from these interactions. We seek to build a life-long relationship with a partner, with family members, and with certain members of our community. We interact daily with our colleagues and clients, and a good working relationship is foundational in our success. 85% of our problems come from interactions with people…so does 85% of our joy!

Effective relationships come through truly valuing others and respecting the fact that their view is different from ours. It is fair to say, “we reap what we sow” in our relationships. They can be hard work to establish and even more challenging to maintain, but the more you give to build relationship the more you receive.

What about your relationships?

Stephen Covey, in his book ‘The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People’, talks about the continuum of maturing from dependence to independence to interdependence. As children we start out dependent on others and then reach independence in adulthood, but we seldom achieve success without attaining a level of interdependence with others.

- **Dependence:** Physically, intellectually and emotionally dependent individuals need other people to think for them and their self-worth comes from the opinions others have of them.

- **Independence:** Physically, intellectually and emotionally independent people form their own opinions from their own knowledge and their self worth is derived from within.

- **Interdependence:** Interdependent people are self reliant and capable but have the realisation that working with others can help them to achieve their goals more successfully than by working alone.

Think about the relationships that you have had in your life. Some of these relationships will be...
dependent, some independent and others interdependent. You started out 100% dependent on your parents. They coached you and taught you the technical skills and the knowledge that you needed for life. You then discovered independence and, as you got older, you probably enjoyed and valued the excitement of it all. It is only when you understand the value of *interdependence* that you can multiply your ability.

**Which colour energy are you?**

Consider the Insights® model depicted here. Do all these descriptors sound more like you, or are you particularly like one or two of the colour energies? Perhaps having read these adjectives you really can identify a mix of one or two that give a better understanding of you.

Now consider someone that is the “opposite” of you. Look at the colour energy directly opposite to the one that most represents you.

Read the adjectives that describe your “opposite type”. Think of someone in your life that these adjectives might describe. What is your relationship, and your communication, with this “opposite type” person like?

**The Impact of your behaviour and communication on relationships with others**

Achieving interdependency in relationships is vital to their success and communication is a key element of this. You communicate all the time – either verbally or through your body language. Therefore your behaviour and communication has a huge impact on your interactions and to truly achieve success it is best to understand yourself and your impact on others.

Your colour energies go some way to describing the person you are. If you are developing and growing through your life experiences, you may become increasingly aware of the gifts you bring to a relationship. These gifts make you feel strong, for you are on the firm ground of your own perception, values and beliefs. However, these are gifts in your perception and may not be valued by others in the same way. They view you from the firm ground of their perception, values and beliefs.

**“My Mountain Your Mountain” Model**

One useful metaphor for examining relationships compares the perspective we take i.e. our viewpoint and perception to that of a mountain. The perspective of somebody else we are forming a relationship with is represented by another nearby mountain.

From the top of “Your Mountain” you see a very similar vista as your colleague on the top of “Their Mountain.” Much of the view will be the same terrain, but viewed from a different angle. Some aspects will be visible to you, but not the other person and visa versa.

The solid base of each mountain is built upon the many different life experiences you have had. Rising up the mountain, you will have selected out certain experiences and chosen to ignore others. On these selected experiences, you will have drawn conclusions. From the conclusions
you will have constructed views and beliefs. By the time you are at the top of the mountain, you have formed your well-honed points of view.

The size of the valley between you, and which separates you, will be in direct proportion to the height of your mountain or the strength of your point of view. The greater the distance between you and your opposite, the deeper the valley. The learning point from this is to understand that for each person, where they are, is "Their Mountain" – it will be based on their life experiences, the conclusions they have drawn and the values and beliefs adopted.

Valuing the differences in people

Everyone is different! There is no right or wrong type of person to be and no right or wrong combination of colour energies to have. It is easy to remember this when the pressure is off, but when the pressure is on it is all too easy to express more of our dominant energy and become increasingly intolerant of people who express the opposite colour energy. The result is that the differences become more extreme - "My Mountain" gets higher and the valley deeper, and the potential for conflict increases. Let's explore the colourful differences for a moment.

Colourful Differences

- **Cool Blue:** If Cool Blue is my dominant colour energy, it is easy for me to view Sunshine Yellow energy as frantic, indiscreet and hasty.
- **Earth Green:** If Earth Green is my dominant colour energy, I may see Fiery Red energy as aggressive, driving and overbearing.
- **Sunshine Yellow:** If Sunshine Yellow is my dominant colour energy, I can be quick to see Cool Blue energy as cold, indecisive and stuffy.
- **Fiery Red:** If Fiery Red is my dominant colour energy, I may tend to judge Earth Green energy as docile, bland and plodding.

When these views exist relationships can break down and conflict can prevail. "Behind every strength is a weakness" - this is true. However, the opposite is also true - "behind every weakness is a strength". It is vital to understand this if you are really going to be committed to valuing the differences of those people who are not like you. Whenever somebody is behaving in a way that you perceive to be negative behaviour, take a mental step back and focus on the associated positive behaviour before reacting. Sounds simple but you will not always find it easy.

### Examples of Negative Behaviour

- Controlling
- Aloof
- Nit picking
- Defiant

### Associated Positive Behaviour

- Taking Charge
- Self-sufficient
- Factual
- Challenging

There are **four steps** to think about when you start working to value the differences in people.

1. Accept them for what, and where, they are. Try to remember that there is no good or bad, only differences.
2. Appreciate them. Value their opinions and realise that their skills complement your own.
3 Then approve of what they do. First seek to understand. Look for the good.
4 Finally, listen actively; be accepting, appreciating and approving of them.

Building trust in relationships
Trust is extremely important to the generation of successful relationships.
It is the all-important foundation stone upon which to build the most solid of structures. Without trust you cannot communicate all the important details, or involve others in your decision-making. This results in you keeping people at arm’s length. It is also important for you to earn trust from others and the importance of this is reflected in the large amount of time spent in building trust in relationships.

In relationship, trust is created through openness. This includes being open about who you truly are, what you value and what you desire. This enhanced level of openness creates a heightened level of understanding between the participants in the relationship. Trust is created from the level of understanding that is built up in the relationship over time.

Building rapport and communicating in effective relationships
The psychology says we like people who are like us. When two similar colour energies positively meet we have rapport, communication between people who are tuned onto the same wavelength. The basis of rapport is that the more similar people are to you the more you may like them and the easier you will find it to communicate with them. The less like you that person is, the less you will like them and the harder it will be to communicate and build rapport with them.

To build successful relationships you need to be a highly effective communicator.

Six elements of rapport
1 Match the “sensory modality” of the person you are communicating with.
Listen for words or phrases the person is using and then use them yourself, for example:
   - visual words- “see”, “show”, “perspective”
   - auditory words - “hear”, “tell”, “resonate”
   - kinesthetic words - “feel”, “touch”, “concrete”

You have the ability to use all of these words but you will tend to have one that is your dominant thinking process. You will be able to recognise these thinking processes in people when you are talking to them by the verbal clues above. If you meet a person who uses visual indicators then it will be easier to explain your point using a diagram or painting a mind picture. Matching your communication of issues to the other systems above will make you much more effective.

2 Match and Mirror the physiology of the person you are communicating with.
Physically copy their gestures, facial expressions and posture. Their brain will unconsciously pick up on these and will feel rapport
3 Match the voice of the person you are communicating with.
This includes tempo, tone, timbre and volume. Also, work to match their key words.

4 Match the breathing of the person you are communicating with.
You will be able to pace someone’s breathing by breathing at exactly the same time as they do.

5 Match the detail level of the person you are communicating with.
Does the person deal in the big picture? They will be bored with details. Or, does the person like detail? They will need more information.

6 Match your common experiences
Take the time to find common interests or backgrounds.

Connecting with people who are our opposite types and then building effective relationships with them can be one of your hardest tasks. It can be a challenge because they will not always see things your way. They will have different preferences for decision-making and use their energies in a way that can seem alien to you.

Many people pride themselves on being able to adapt to others but it is only their perception of adaptation. In your relationships you must be prepared to go the whole way.

Remember the “My Mountain - Your Mountain” illustration. We may think we have adapted and leapt across to the top of the other mountain – but from the other person’s perspective, we may have landed short. It can be a long way down your Mountain and a steep climb up theirs to meet them.

Make a commitment to yourself that you will climb to the very top of your opposite’s Mountain in an effort to connect with them more successfully.

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