From the author of *How to Become Extremely Intelligent*

Loneliness Is a Choice

How to Become Extremely Intimate Through Radical Authenticity



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FikaTimeBooks.com

The Introduction and Chapter 1

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Introduction

12 Vantage Points of Radically Authentic Relationships

“For every complex problem there is an answer that is clear, simple, and wrong.” — H. L. Mencken

“There is no difference between how you treat yourself, and how you treat other people, how you treat other people and how you treat yourself. The feather and the sword point both ways.”

– Levi M. Johnson

“Let people feel the weight of who you are…and let them deal with it.” – Brent Curtis, Wild at Heart

If loneliness is a choice, so is intimacy. So if you want to walk out of loneliness and into enjoyable, beautiful intimacy with people (relatively speaking, since a spouse is ideally more intimate than a coworker), what makes relationships work? The 12 radical authenticity vantage points that transform your perceptions so you can see what’s real. Radical authenticity is as close to “nothing hidden” as possible – as it pertains to the kind of relationship it is. With God, it’s maximum “nothing hidden.” With your spouse it’s one step back from God. With your co-worker, it’s some steps back from your spouse, relative to that partnership. Make sense?

When you can distinguish between real and unreal in relationships, you correctly perceive the choices that lead to healthy and functional relationships. Without this, effort is unlikely to save your relationships with people because you can’t see what’s real, what’s dark and what’s light. When I was at one of the loneliest and most suicidal periods of my life after returning from living and working in China, it was difficult to see the light. This book is proof I found my way back. So can you.

Whether friendships or marriages, business partnerships, etc., there is a set of habits, principles, and vantage points that inform relationships of all kinds, that are authentic. Unfortunately, many

people don't fully understand what these are and how to put them to work in order to build relationships that endure for many years. This is because they make choices that result in loneliness, which contradicts their desired destination, extreme intimacy and closeness. Learning the finer distinctions in relationships will enable you to make choices that reduce the distance between you and people that causes loneliness. In this system, you will learn to see what's real so you and your relationships become real.

In my book How to Become Extremely Intelligent, I assert that intelligence is the ability to make finer distinctions. Granular distinctions two or more people express reduce the felt loneliness many people experience. When you can make finer distinctions about people in real time through the 12 vantage points, you can close the emotional and practical distance between you and them. For those of you who struggle with loneliness, this book will make you a formidable relational force of authenticity that genuine people are attracted to.

"What's the secret to a long marriage?" someone might ask, and then get back a pat answer relating to communication or something to that extent. I've asked myself over and over what it is that makes relationships work, and so over the course of my adult life, I've gone on an extensive journey to find out.

When I was about 21, I got married. I loved her at that point as much as I knew how, but it didn't last. After about a year and a half, she left me, and then divorced me. It was one of the most painful experiences I've ever gone through, and I wouldn't wish it upon my worst enemy, but it ended up being a gift in disguise.

Knowing that many people after a divorce or breakup rush back out and hop into another relationship, I was determined to avoid making the same mistake. Although I dated for the next several years off and on, I didn't end up getting remarried until I was 41. The journey I took from 23 to 41 carried me through many, many changes in my character, how I related to myself, and how I related to others and to God. You might say that at the age of 21, I was relatively inauthentic, life happened, and then at 41, I was as

authentic as ever. What happened during those 20 years is that I learned to speak truth as a habit.

1. Speak Truth

Although I wasn't intentionally living out a lie, I believed so many lies about God, myself, and other people that it was very challenging for me to speak truth. I didn't understand the truth about my boundaries, what I wanted and needed, who God really is, and who people really are.

I didn't understand the truth about my emotions, my psychology, and my personality type, etc. But over the course of the 20 or so years leading to my marriage to the woman of my dreams, 68 days after our first date, I learned how to speak the truth about myself and what I wanted, about my boundaries, preferences, hopes and dreams, and about many other things. Part of what I did during those years is go through a process of breaking agreements with lies that I believed that I in some sense thought were true but weren't, and then with help from God and people and books and paying attention to myself, came to know the truth about myself and my inner world and how it worked, and then gradually brought that awareness into how I acted and spoke, learning to speak truth. This first principle and habit radically altered the direction of my life, and it will do so for you as well, because radical authenticity makes the finer distinction between truth and lies. Speaking truth leads to interpersonal wins. Speaking lies leads to relational losses.

2. Notice and Honor Yourself

As an extension of learning to speak truth, I learned to notice how I responded to external stimuli from other people, from God, from different and varied experiences, and I learned how to honor what I noticed. My early life taught me that my feelings and emotions didn't matter, and I learned that in order to survive, I needed to minimize my inner experiences of how people treated me and to cater to the needs and wants of others over my own. While that was my training, that training didn't help me as I became an adult and left the world of young life and powerlessness behind.

When I left Northern California at the age of 31 to live and teach in South Korea, it was the first time I lived in a place where no one knew me and where I felt free to begin experimenting with who I was, trying out different activities and ways of relating to people. Since my friends and family weren't there, except for my job as a teacher, no one had any expectations of how I would or should act. Furthermore, since I was living in a foreign country and was among a completely different culture from the United States context, many of the cultural norms and values that I thought defined my identity were stripped away, and I found myself in need of a new identity. I found out I wasn't the news network I watched, or the food I ate, or even the language I spoke. My identity was something deeper, and living in a totally new foreign culture was the catalyst I needed in order to ask myself the question, "Who am I?" Asking that question of myself gave me the opportunity to find out the answers to that question in many different personal dimensions of my life.

As I discovered more and more of my true identity, that sense of clarity gradually worked its way to the outside, influencing and contributing to the quality of my relationships. This habit and chapter will give you the training you need to notice and honor who you are, and then bring this dynamic to other people, since radical authenticity distinguishes between the honor you've internalized and can impart, and the honor you haven't internalized and therefore can't give to people.

3. Love Yourself

After living in South Korea for about 3 and a half years, I next moved to Harbin, China, to teach. There, I needed to rebuild my entire social system while I was teaching and working on finishing a master's degree program. Because I spent so much more time alone in Harbin than I had in Korea, it gave me the time I needed to pay attention to how my inner world reacted to how I chose to spend my time. When I took certain actions, I could sense my self-hate growing. But when I took other actions, I could sense my self-love growing. And so I began to parse more and more those actions

that led to more feelings of self-hate or self-love. I realized through this process that my feelings and emotions are not only influenced by what I say, but also the ways I spend my time, and that those outcomes are real. Therefore, if I wanted to grow in my self-love, then I need to invest my time into certain self-loving activities rather than self-hating activities.

In chapter 3, you will learn the tools necessary to enable you to consistently notice how to love yourself and automate this habit in order to help make your inner world wealthy and healthy. When you learn how to distinguish between authentic self-love or self-hate, then you can perceive this distinction in people and make new choices if necessary.

4. Seek To Grok First, and Then to Be Grokked

Of course, this principle and habit is a play on Stephen R. Covey's, "Seek first to understand, then to be understood." This is a powerful habit, but the word 'understand' ironically can be *misunderstood*. There are several levels at which a person can understand, factually, spiritually, emotionally, etc. But to seek to grok, which means *to deeply and intuitively understand*, uncovers deeper levels of granularity leading to intimacy. As I was telling my wife today, I think it's better to shoot for the moon and hit the sky.

If I aim to grok the context I'm in, the situation I'm in, the people I'm around, the language and culture of people I'm interacting with or observing, the more intimate my grokking of the people around me and what's influencing how they think, what they believe, how they feel and more, the easier it will be for me to interact with them successfully. If I aim to grok them, but then only manage to understand at a relatively shallow level, well, that's still progress, right? And progress, not perfection, is the goal for people who value having compassion and gentleness for themselves and people. That's to say, grokking each person and situation as well as we can relative to our available time and energy, resources and context, is meaningful and gives you and me increased involvement to influence people.

Since I've taught many people, the name of the game has been influence. But the problem with leading and inspiring people to do things they may not want to do is that if they don't have buy-in to the agenda, then they won't meaningfully engage with the agenda. But if I show the people I'm leading that I deeply and intuitively and explicitly grok them, I'm showing them that I genuinely care about their well-being, that I will allow myself to be influenced by them, and as John Maxwell popularized, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

If I can show the people I'm leading that I grok them, that reality gives their hearts and their minds a good reason to buy into the place I'm leading them to, even if they don't understand it yet. That is the power of seeking first to grok, and then to be grokked. By reading and internalizing this chapter's lesson, you will gain this power too, because your ability to perceive finer relational distinctions will increase.

5. Speak the Language That People Are Likely To Understand

If you were to go to a foreign country where they didn't speak English, and then try to use English with them, would you expect to be successful in your interactions? Probably not. One of the main problems in communication with people is using a language that they do or don't understand.

For instance, you may have heard of the five love languages. The five love languages for those of you who haven't heard them are: affection, acts of service, words of affirmation, quality time, and gifts. Each person has their top one, two, or three love languages. My wife's top love languages are affection and quality time. When I implement these love languages through action, my wife feels loved. But if I were to "speak" the love language of gifts, generally speaking, it wouldn't be as effective at helping her feel loved because I'm not "speaking" the right language according to the nature of her design.

When I interact with people for any particular reason, if I want our interaction to be successful relative to my or our explicit and/or

implicit desired outcome, it behooves me to suss out what their primary personal languages are because even if I'm speaking to someone who interacts in English, their version of English isn't going to be the same as mine no matter how much I assume or expect it to be the same. Even identical twins who were raised to adulthood in the same household, and attended the same school growing up, and lived in the same neighborhood, and shared all the same activities, are STILL going to have important differences in how they each define words and phrases, interpret body language, and many other distinctive nuances in how they interact that won't be the same as their twin.

Or imagine two people who get married. Since my wife is from Sweden and I'm from California originally, it's relatively obvious that there would be cultural differences since we're from two different countries even though she speaks English as a foreign language so well, and with such an excellent United States generic accent, that unless she told people she is Swedish, they would assume she was born and raised in the United States.

But it's important to recognize that when two people interact, there are thousands of differences in the English they speak, based on their strengths, their personalities, their values, their norms, their decision-making track record, their belief systems, their psychometrically assessed characteristics, and much, much more. You could literally invest a thousand years with a person, interacting with that person every day in multiple different contexts and circumstances, and still not know everything about them. That's how deep and complex each person is. Every person is an eternity of nuance because they were created by an eternal heavenly Father.

However, there are major categories and dimensions to each individual and their respective cultures that, when you key into them, dramatically increase the likelihood of successfully interacting with them towards a desired outcome, whether that is to complete a successful business deal, find a man or woman to marry, joke and riff and laugh with, or a million other desired outcomes.

One, for instance, is how people receive and impart information. I'm a fairly intuitive man, but there are many people in the United States context who would, by virtue of their design, lean far more towards the five senses. To put it simply, intuitive people are inclined towards more abstract, conceptual language, while people inclined towards the senses like words that are concrete in nature, in order to communicate.

If I delve into my latest philosophical curiosity with someone who is sense-driven, my abstract, conceptual language isn't really going to compute with him or her, NOT because they lack intelligence, but because that's not the inner and outer domain from which they derive their words. If, however, I shift my language into concrete, sensory words that SHOW my intended messages, a sensory-oriented man or woman is going to have a much easier time relating to, understanding, and enjoying the ideas I'm communicating.

When you learn to impart messages in the major "language" domains of your interlocutor, even if it is a subdomain of English, you are far more likely to be able to effectively communicate what you really mean. And being able to effectively make yourself understood to other people, and then to be understood, meets a vital human need, leading to your increased ability to build deeply authentic relationships. In chapter 5, your ability to distinguish between multiple languages individuals and cultures use, and employ the languages that work, will expand to a sophisticated level of perception.

6. Notice Your Values, And the Values of Other People, and Talk About Them

In order to build authentic relationships with people, it's important to not only grok your own values, but also the values of other people and then use them to your advantage. When your relational perceptions increase to a sufficient level of intelligence between values, if you listen to someone for long enough, their values will become clear because their values largely determine what kinds of

decisions they make, where they spend their time, their actions, and the language patterns they are inclined to employ.

When I say, "use them to your advantage," I'm not advocating taking from people to the degree that they lose, but you win. One of my values and worldviews is that, in service of human flourishing and turning Earth into Heaven, it's incumbent upon every person to become aware that we don't live in a zero-sum reality, but a positive-sum reality. For instance, some people believe, quite falsely, that in order to win for themselves, the other person must lose. They believe they live in a dog-eat-dog world. But that is a poverty mentality based on the lie that "There is not enough," which I confronted in my first book, "Abundance: Your Path Out of Poverty."

One of the deepest fundamental truths of reality, that I value, is, "There is more than enough." And you might ask, "More than enough of what?" To which I would reply, everything, from money to energy to emotions and beyond. This life, in essence, is a positive-sum game. So when I instruct you to notice people's values and use them to your advantage, I'm coming from a win-win or abundance or positive sum worldview and chosen core value, and I want you to do the same because this approach will serve you and the people you interact with the best in the long run.

To state the obvious, every person has values. Each person has values they have chosen, but some values people hold are inherent to their design. Each person has an eternal design from God. NO ONE is a blank slate at birth by any conceivable stretch of the imagination relative to reality, and the theories that assert people are blank slates at birth are, whether they intend it or not, lying against the truth.

Since each person has indelible and chosen values, if you want to build an authentic relationship with them, it behooves you to seek to grok their values. Each personality type (think along the lines of Myers-Briggs) and identity architecture (think along the lines of Enneagram) has core values they can't materially change. For instance, my wife's Myers-Briggs personality type is ENFP, which stands for extroverted, intuitive, feeling, perceiving. NFs have

certain core values, one of which is authenticity. If you meet an NF and you interact authentically with them, it's going to resonate with them like the same note from two different guitars, and you have a higher likelihood of successful interactions with them. But if you interact inauthentically or deceptively with them, they'll sniff out your BS in about two seconds, and though they'll still be kind to you, they won't want to build a relationship with you.

I would recommend starting by seeking to grok the immutable values of the different personality types and identity architectures so that when you interact with them relative to the context, situation, and desired outcomes you share, you increase the likelihood that they feel understood by you, and then you can make yourself understood to them.

This strategic approach can be very useful in marriage, in friendship, in business, and in raising kids, since, if you aren't willing to value and respect your interlocutor's values, why should they grok your values? When you show that you're willing and able to grok their values, then they are far more likely to want to grok your values because you've given them the gift of understanding, which is a fundamental human need EVERYONE has.

7. Notice, Implement, Respect, and Love Boundaries

Understanding your boundaries and other people's boundaries, or at least working on understanding them and respecting them, is imperative to building deeply authentic relationships. A boundary in relationships is a rule about how to interact, while keeping the bad out and letting the good in. When you learn from chapter 7 how to make the finer distinctions between the good and bad, their responsibilities and your responsibilities, and beyond, your authenticity gap will close even more. Some people have set boundaries that are unreasonable, and therefore keep both the good and the bad out of their relationships. This is something you may have done, and it is called a wall. In the other extreme, you may have very little or no boundaries in one or more areas, which means in your relationships, you let in both the good and the bad,

which is going to create emotional and perhaps even identificational instability in your inner world.

A healthy and functional balance in relationships with people is to have a balance of boundaries, so that you're able to let in the good that trustworthy people want to give you, and keep out the bad. When you develop boundaries of this nature, you become attractive to people who have chosen to live the same way. When you have healthy and functional boundaries, on one level, you have developed the ability to say, "Yes" when you **mean** yes, and "No" when you mean to say no.

If you have developed healthy and functional boundaries for yourself, which implicitly means you love and respect yourself, then you are capable of giving the same love and respect to other people's healthy and functional boundaries, and it also means that your identity and emotions are largely stable and able to handle honest communication about other people's boundaries even if you don't agree with them.

In essence, when you make a habit of using and respecting your boundaries and other people's boundaries, you are far more capable of building deeply authentic relationships with willing participants. Join me in chapter 7 as we explore using and respecting boundaries in depth, so your perceptions of people transform permanently.

8. Forgive Yourself and Other People

In chapter 8, I cover in detail how to forgive yourself and how this habit frees you from shame and regret, and how this extreme authenticity sets you free. Many people struggle with self-hatred and negative self-talk, but this can come from, in part, not making the distinction between, and separating yourself from, your past mistakes, errors, and sins, from your identity. When you don't forgive yourself, you're giving shame the space in you to marry your negative past to your identity and cause you to feel worthless and undeserving of love, respect, and value. At the same time, regret will take advantage of you to pile up as many negative actions you've taken in your memory and emotions, like a giant

weight trying to drag you to the bottom of the ocean. Both shame and regret target your inner voice and try to rob you of your deeply authentic identity, and that isn't right. So in chapter 8, you will learn how to forgive yourself as a habit based on the forgiveness, blood, and name of Jesus Christ. If this bothers you, please get a refund. If you're onboard for a life of greater freedom with yourself and other people, read on.

In this chapter, you'll also learn how to forgive other people. You cannot have deeply authentic relationships with yourself and people if you don't forgive them, because no one is perfect, and perfection in a relational sense is unrealistic to expect. So this chapter will teach you how to forgive people so you can become freer to build deeply authentic relationships as an act of will, not emotion.

9. Make Deals

As Alison Armstrong has pointed out, making deals with your significant other is a way to protect in-love feelings. But making deals can also protect feelings of gratitude when it comes to the workplace and a sense of closeness between friends, parents, and children.

In authentic relationships, rather than deciding what the other person needs and then setting about to meet that assumed need, which is what many people do without **asking** if it's what the other person really wants, it's incumbent upon you to negotiate how you and the other person will navigate the way you will live life, especially when it's as intimate a relationship as marriage.

When you make deals with others, each person uses their direct and kind words to put all their cards on the table, or put a different way, to be explicit about what you really want relative to how you and the other person live and interact for the foreseeable future, or until circumstances change and another deal needs to be made.

Even though people usually can't get exactly what they want in an authentic relationship, each person can get a lot more of what they want when they realize how their interlocutor would have it if they

could have it ALL their way, and what it would contribute to them to have it all their way. Taking the time and energy to attend to these intimate distinctions is not only what dissipates loneliness, but also what increases a real sense of belonging, appreciation and love.

Many times, when others express their wishes to have things a certain way, the time isn't taken to grok WHY the interlocutor wants things a certain way. For instance, many women think men want sex for very shallow reasons, but in the marriage relationship, what sex contributes to a man often goes far deeper than what she has ever considered.

Learning to make deals when it can protect the integrity of the deeply authentic relationship and help both people feel safe to express their secrets on a deeper and more meaningful level can lead to a breakthrough in the relationship and personal fulfillment that many people don't realize is possible. I will explicate what deal-making looks like in chapter 9.

10. Interact with Minimum Necessary Force

Metaphorically, some people are born with a hammer in their hand, others are born with a feather in their hand, and still others with a screwdriver. These tools represent the natural force people bring to relationships, absent training. In chapter 10, you will learn how to moderate from your natural interpersonal force to a perceptively finer level that matches the person and situation in front of you. For instance, I was born with a hammer, and I'm naturally direct, if not blunt, while my wife was born with a feather. I've needed to learn how to bring a feather's amount of interpersonal force to bear when interacting with her because using a hammer with her is detrimental. She's needed to learn to bring a hammer to some conversations with me, like asking me directly for what she wants, because for me, directness works, is efficient for certain reasons, and usually feels comfortable to me. When you learn how to use minimum necessary force in chapter 10, you will materially reduce the messes you make with people

personally and professionally, and that precision invites people to be closer to you because their experiences with you feel smoother.

11. Attend to Bids for Attention

Every person, whether introverted or extroverted, needs attention. The amount of attention a person needs from other people can vary, but what doesn't vary is that each person, regardless of their personality type, has a need for attention, for human interaction. As you increase your ability to notice your own and others' bids for attention (which you may not even be aware of as such), you can more consistently attend to them, which powerfully reduces pain and loneliness by actually getting this need met.

No man or woman is an island, and so interacting with and getting attention from others is personally validating and reality-checking. In deep, authentic relationships, your wife or husband is putting forth bids for attention from you, and you are doing the same with them. A bid for attention can be asking a question, a simple touch, a look, or a text message, and can be relatively subtle. What we know is that in an authentic relationship, attending to bids for attention brings life to the relationship, whereas consistently ignoring bids for attention starves the relationship, helping to lead to its death, especially with people whose love language is Quality Time, or put another way, undivided attention. Chapter 11 will train you how to handle bids for attention with yourself and other people.

12. Leave People Better than You Found Them

There's a quote that goes, "People won't remember what you said, but they'll remember how you made them feel." Setting aside my dislike of the idea of "making" people feel a certain way since it implies control of another person, I think the idea and value of seeking to leave people better than we found them is extremely important. When you can perceptively meet people where they are and sincerely leave them better than you found them because you're being authentic, you give them a good reason to keep coming back for more.

When interacting with the same or opposite sex, you have an emotional bank account of sorts with every person you interact with. Since I've spent an enormous amount of time interacting with food service people, I've sought to make each interaction with them positive, even if only for a moment, because if I have a negative emotional account balance with one or more of them, they can seriously impede my ability to make money in my food delivery business and I love to leave people better off than they were as a part of my ministry. Making regular "deposits" into the emotional bank accounts of the people I interact with in restaurants makes interactions go far more smoothly (and enjoyably) than they otherwise would.

But this idea easily generalizes to other kinds of relationships. Before I met my wife, I dated to learn and have fun, and one of my values and goals of each date, usually with different women, was to leave them better than I found them, at the very least emotionally, and to some extent practically. I could take a woman out to eat, leaving her better than I found her, with more food in her stomach. Also, by seeking to understand her and her history and her interests, and positively reinforcing these things about her, I could help her feel seen, which is a rare gift for people and is very meaningful to them because the human soul needs to, in reality, feel seen and believed and grokked.

Perhaps because I didn't see a future with a woman, I would only go on one or maybe two dates with her, but if I left her better than I found her, then I considered that dating experience a successful set of interactions.

I've discussed this principle in the context of business interactions and the romantic setting, but I'll suss out more examples and nuances in chapter 12, showing you how to use this principle to build deeply authentic relationships in ways that are very accessible.

Conclusion

In each chapter of this book, I'm going to explore in more depth and breadth the 12 vantage points briefly outlined here. The heart

of this book is simple – loneliness is a choice you can stop making by letting yourself be who you really are. If you want good for other people and yourself, if you want deeply authentic relationships with the people around you, **you can** learn the finer distinctions you need to make it happen. Bear in mind, the 12 vantage points I'll be covering are a coherent system that works if you integrate them and apply them to your relationships. Think of them like 12 different mountain peaks that give you a metaphorical view of the valley that maps the terrain of deeply authentic relationships. The interweaving of these vantage points is more than a compilation of habits or principles. They move you to a new conceptual location that will quietly remake how you see yourself, and others, and even your relational history. When you see and apply what's real, loneliness becomes a bad dream you've awoken from.

Some of the ideas I'll be exploring you'll already be familiar with, but I encourage you to read each chapter even if you think you already understand the topic of focus, because it's very likely you're going to gain new perspectives on relational interactions that will enhance the probability you will enjoy the relationships you're in, or new authentic relationships you want to build.

You can have the extreme intimacy you want and need, with yourself and others, by choosing to become radically authentic. If you'll put in the time with this book, your relational perceptions will become clearer, evaporating the loneliness and negative feelings that can creep in, and enabling you and your spouse, co-workers, children, and friends to enjoy being together each day, and even for a lifetime.

Chapter 1: Speak Truth

Truth is the foundation of deeply authentic relationships, whether romantic, business, parent to child, or leader to nation. Without truth, there is no trust, and without genuine trust, there is no platform upon which love and honor can be built.

One time in Beijing, China, I had an informal mentor-mentee relationship with a young man from the church I attended. For some weeks, if memory serves me correctly, he struggled with how to relate to a young lady he was attracted to, and who also seemed attracted to him. Honestly, his struggle was annoying to me. Finally, when he was describing his struggle to me one evening at a fast food restaurant, I said, "Do you want to know how to solve this problem?" "Yes," he replied. "Speak the truth," I said.

He later told me that when I told him that, it broke something. Apparently, taking my advice, he spoke truth to her, telling her about his feelings for her. Later, I saw a photo that suggested they had started dating. To myself, I went, "Finally!"

I regularly watch Korean TV shows, and most of them hinge on multiple secrets that are being kept by one, but usually more, people. It's been a pet peeve of mine since before I started habitually watching Korean TV shows, though, that people keep secrets. It's super stupid. In stories and in relationships, people hold back their secrets, refusing to speak truth because they want to maintain control or feel afraid of rejection, or are struggling with insecurity, or, in some cases, are just plain evil and enjoy living in darkness.

Setting aside people who are actually evil, I estimate that about 99% of problems in relationships are caused because people don't speak truth. Now, I'm not asserting to speak truth under the guise that some people use to excuse being assholes. Direct truth, absent kindness, kills others' emotions and can be abusive. That's exactly what I'm *not* talking about. It took me many years to really care

about how people feel on a deeper level and to gain skills in diplomacy and tact. It took me until my 40s to really get a handle on using tact while speaking truth, and frankly, it took miracles of God to move me into a place where I became willing to use my words with sensitivity. Some people err in that they tend to interact indirectly, and although I had struggles with that, part of what I struggled with was speaking truth in kindness.

However, I eventually learned a guideline for speaking truth that has really helped me. "Minimum necessary force," and "Say what you need to say." Since I have a pushy personality and a strong need for efficiency, learning to use minimum necessary force in how I interact with people while speaking truth has been imperative to me, leaving people better than I found them, rather than emotionally injured, or worse, having burned a bridge.

When you learn to speak truth while using minimum necessary force, you are doing yourself a massive favor. As Stephen R. Covey taught, "With people, slow is fast." Or as the saying goes, "Slow is smooth, and smooth is fast." Why is this a favor to your future self? Because you live in a world where you must depend on people, and people can make it easy for you to get what you want and need, or hard to get what you want and need. Speaking truth bluntly and without kindness in a context where it's viewed as rude is a fast way to damage your name equity within your community, and that doesn't help you or other people. Not good, because people constantly want to know if you will play well with them, since society and relationships are basically one big playground, and interpersonal relationships are one of the games we play on this giant playground, and this game has rules (principles, habits, vantage points) you can learn.

When you learn to speak truth with your spouse, your co-workers, and children while being relatively measured in how much directness and emotional intensity you use, you are learning to use the right tool for the right job. My wife is the kind of woman who can be influenced with the intensity of a feather, so to speak. So the vast majority of the time when I speak truth to my wife, I can use the intensity of a feather, and she will respond well. Where I've

needed to learn how to use relatively little emotional intensity when I speak truth, she has needed to come from the other end of the spectrum.

Since my wife is Swedish, in her home culture, there is an implicit belief that "Bothering people is bad (rude)," which looks like asking a direct question. So when we got married, she was very good at hinting, which happens to be one of the ways of communicating that I despise and doesn't work with me. With me, it behooves her to tell or ask me directly for what she wants, and she, very coolly, has learned to do that. And she has learned to do that because it works for me. If she tried to use a feather with me, in some sense, it wouldn't work because I have virtually no respect for someone who doesn't speak truth vulnerably and directly, giving me an authentic, not hinted or codependent, opportunity to say yes or no or to respond genuinely.

Honestly, this is where most people err in my experience. Most people do not speak truth about a number of different areas of their lives, especially in telling or asking for what they want or need, or what's important to them, or what they are feeling, and especially in the area of speaking truth about their boundaries or where they fear getting rejected. In my opinion, about half or more of the misery and unhappiness of most people is because they do not speak truth when they NEED to speak truth, and because of this fact, their relationships don't operate in a way that would bring them the most meaning, joy, fulfillment, and intimacy.

Not Lying and Not Omitting

When you speak truth as well as you can, it involves not lying when you speak, and also expressing what you would rather omit.

If you lie, you are not only lying to your interlocutor but also to yourself, and then you are creating a rift between you and reality, and that is a particularly bad idea. When you separate yourself from reality, that is, what is objectively true, you may be using your words to guard yourself because you fear a certain negative outcome, or because acknowledging the truth would be painful, or because you're struggling with shame or the fear of rejection. The

problem is, if you use your words to lie and separate that part of yourself, and your whole self to some degree from the truth about or your past as it exists, then you are investing your emotional, physical, spiritual, and linguistic energy into the negative outcome that you are fearing, increasing the likelihood that it will take place, since your imagination is the first place you create the life that you will live. As Stephen R. Covey wrote, there are two stages of creation: first, when you imagine it, and second, when you take action to make it real in the physical space.

It's been said that worry is imagining the future without God. When you allow yourself to be taken by your imagination in a direction, towards an imagined, undesired outcome, and then use your words and/or actions to try to manipulate or control another person to endeavor to avoid that imagined negative outcome, you have implicitly communicated to yourself, God, and the other person, "I'm God." The problem is, you're not God, so if you lie, you're committing yourself to the false belief, "If I don't lie, if I speak truth about myself or my past, something bad is going to happen." No, this is a lie. You make something bad happen if you lie, since lying causes you pain and suffering. It's like instead of waiting for someone to reject you, you're pre-rejecting yourself to reduce your level of fear and uncertainty, which is not necessary.

This reminds me of the times when young men pretend that they aren't attracted to a young lady because they feel afraid that she will reject them. This is an act of pre-rejection because he preemptively rejected himself before she even had the chance to accept or reject him if he had told her the truth, perhaps by asking her on a date. Instead of taking an emotional risk and telling her how he feels, and asking her out on a date, which is a genuine emotional risk (but worth the risk), he decides to take control of her and the situation and pre-reject himself by either directly lying about his feelings for her or lying by omission. As Jordan Peterson said, "When you have something to say, silence is a lie."

Speaking truth instead of lying is the ultimate adventure because you don't know what's going to happen. But if you decide to trust the person you're talking to, God, and yourself in some sense, and

speak the truth by saying what you want or need or what's important for you to say, at work, with your spouse, with your son or daughter, or during a business deal negotiation relative to what needs to be disclosed, then at least you are giving yourself the best opportunity to get what you really want or need, and respecting yourself in the process.

Before I met my wife Ann-Sofi, I practiced dating for some years. Whether it was in person or online, I practiced asking women out on dates by saying something like, "Would you like to go on a date with me?" And I made sure to specify "date," because I wanted her to understand the kind of situation she was saying yes or no to. As one of my favorite quotes goes, "Let people feel the weight of who you are and let them deal with it."

Even though it would cause me pain if she rejected me, at least then I knew I didn't need to waste any more time or emotional energy wondering what would happen if I asked her out. I could simply go to God, tell Him about how I felt about being rejected, and He would heal me, and then I could go on my way. (God is amazingly emotionally supportive and healing when I tell Him my emotional secrets.)

I asked out and dated different women for years, with the goal of learning, having fun, and leaving her better than I found her. Usually, it was only one or two dates, but still, I was practicing speaking truth about what was important to me.

Eventually, I asked out my wife Ann-Sofi over Facebook because we had "met" through a Christian singles Facebook group by interacting in the comments section of the group. With her, I simply continued my practice of speaking the truth, in some sense, by asking her on a date when I was interested in going on a date with her and getting to know her. Could she have rejected me? Sure. But, as in many cases where people don't speak the truth by asking or telling what they really want or need, you don't get what you don't ask for.

She said yes to my request for a date, and I kept asking/reaching out to her when the timing seemed right, for more interactions.

Eventually, I basically asked her to marry me, and she said yes again. If I lied to her or myself by not asking her out when I wanted to, not asking her to be my girlfriend when I wanted to, or not asking her to be my wife when I wanted to, she wouldn't have had the chance to say "Yes." If you refuse to lie and then commit yourself to instead speak truth, you are giving yourself the best chance for the life you want to actually happen. It may not be with the man or woman you asked, it may not be the business deal you were hoping for, but many people get fixated on thinking it needs to work out with "this specific person," when it doesn't.

It is a profound act of respect and courage, honestly, to speak truth to other people and by proxy yourself, and has the added benefit of providing you a possible path to the life of your dreams.

Omission

It's one thing to lie outright, and that by itself is extremely dangerous because, again, you're separating yourself to some degree from reality, and that act will cause you pain and suffering. But omission (by silence) is not saying what you need to say, or what's important for you to say, to another person. In other words, omission is a lack of forthrightness.

Omission is an act of deception because the information you are holding back needs to be known by the other person so that they can make the choice to continue or reject interacting with you. If they continue interacting with you with the understanding of the information it's important that you share with them, then the authenticity of your relationship with them is real. Sometimes people omit information that needs to be shared because they want the relationship to continue, but just as outright lying is a dangerous path, omission can be at least as dangerous if not more so.

I'm reminded of an Asiana Airlines flight several years ago that was flying into San Francisco. Apparently, the captain of the flight made one or more major errors as they were coming in to land the flight, which the co-pilot noticed, but only hinted about, or something to that effect. Eventually, the captain crashed the plane, and it broke

apart on the runway, eventually killing three people and injuring many more.

It could be argued that by the co-pilot not directly and with appropriate intensity confronting the captain who was piloting the flight manually, he was in some sense omitting information the captain desperately needed. Although many situations of omission don't seem as serious as life and death scenarios, they do cause their own form of damage that can lead to such deadly situations, even if many people don't notice the cause and effect of the omission.

I read of a situation where a man and woman dated for some time and were really enjoying the experience. However, the lady was in a lot of debt and failed to tell the man she was dating about it, hoping that he would pay off her debt once they got married. However, he discovered her debt and, apparently, upon realizing what she was trying to do, broke off their relationship. I could argue that if she was successful in her plan to have him pay off her debt through omitting its existence to her would be husband, not only would it be a form of lying because a deeply authentic relationship of that level of intimacy requires disclosure of that seriousness of a secret, but it would also be a form of stealing a part of his life. That is the wrong way to start a marriage, and would greatly damage it, even to the point of divorce, because she didn't speak the truth when she should have.

Speaking Truth

When you speak truth, a deeply authentic relationship is possible. If you do not speak truth, a deeply authentic relationship is not possible. This goes not only for the "big" things, but it also goes for the "little" things. Authentic intimacy in a marriage, and even business or friendship, involves shades of meaning and, in some sense, distinctions. When two or more people are interacting over some common objective, spoken or unspoken, it can be challenging enough for people to work together and trust each other, even if all parties are speaking the truth kindly 100% of the time. So it is imperative for the long-term prospects of your

business, your marriage, and your community that you decide to highly value speaking truth as much as you possibly can, both in what you say and what you may prefer not to disclose.

It's extremely important to speak truth, even about the *little* things, because a person may think, "If she lied about this little thing, what else is she lying about?" If, through lying, distrust seeps into a relationship, it makes it far harder for either party to trust the other, and trust is what enables people, much of the time, to give the benefit of the doubt. Messages you or others communicate can be interpreted positively, negatively, or neutrally, in some sense. When trust is low, people can be far more exacting or negative about their interpretation of your messages, and vice versa. This can make communicating a grating experience and drastically slows down the efficiency of your interactions, and can even lead to the death of the relationship.

Radical Intimacy Generates Money

When speaking truth is low, trust becomes low, and when trust becomes low, making economic exchanges takes more and more time because neither party trusts that the other person intends the best for them. Therefore, even in the business context, not speaking truth is literally more expensive. Inefficiency caused by a lack of trust brought about because one or more people aren't speaking truth causes a mismatch in coordination between actors. In order to make even the most basic trades of money and services or products, truth is necessary. If your customer can count on you to follow through on your word 100% of the time, the economic efficiency that comes about as a result can be astounding.

For instance, since my wife and I use Bitcoin that's integrated with our social media, and Bitcoin is truth money, there is a relatively high trust culture among Bitcoiners. Recently, someone reached out to my wife on Nostr expressing interest in purchasing one of her books. Apparently, his trust in her was relatively high because he sent over the Bitcoin for the book he wanted to buy before she sent it to him. This illustrates the point that trust is upstream from money. The more trust that exists in business interactions because

you and they have spoken truth, the easier and faster it is to trade products or services for money, which leads to lower overhead, more revenue, and potentially more profits.

In an ideal world, if everyone spoke truth relative to the level of authentic relationship they wanted to have, there would be far less of a need for lawyers and contracts and far less of a litigious culture, like in California. Low-trust cultures, in some sense, develop because people don't speak truth, and this leads to many, many problems for cultures and countries.

One of the markers of atheistic societies is a dramatic reduction in the number of people speaking truth. I'm not here to go after atheists, who can be good people. But on a broader level, because removing God from the cultural and social context reduces the number of people who speak truth in a society, cultures of entire nations can go **dramatically** downhill as more and more people lie to each other. Sometimes a culture can become so overwrought with lies that almost no one speaks the truth at any time. This kind of culture, government, or nation is hell on Earth, because very little, if anything, is authentic in these contexts. These are known as low-trust cultures, and it's extremely hard for people in those contexts to build deeply authentic relations and make money.

Money is, in some sense, the abstracted byproduct of when two or more people make a trade that they both perceive as win/win, since what people economically value is subjective according to Austrian economics. Therefore, when people speak truth about what's real about themselves, and the product or service they are offering, it enhances that business person's name equity, and over time, people come to trust that person to shoot straight, even if it means losing some amount of business in the short term. In business, money follows trust, and trust follows truth. Therefore, if your business is integrated and communicates truth as much as possible, even about the small things, it increases the chances that it will succeed. If you and your business lie, it drastically increases the chances that it will fail because, without trust, a business cannot materially and sustainably make money.

Although there are many, many nuances in a business that enable it to succeed, speaking truth is a cornerstone of entrepreneurial endeavors. Without it, it's not even possible to build a real business that will materially help people and endure in the long run. Speak truth to make money.

That Which Can or Cannot Change

Since all people are sophisticated (beyond the surface), it behooves you to live life on top of your game. For better or worse, when you make it a habit to speak truth, you are giving yourself the best opportunity to perceive what's most real in any given situation with any given person. The world exists on two fundamental levels: those things that don't change, and those things that do change. In order to develop deeply authentic relationships with people, it behooves you to be able to distinguish between those things which can't change, and those things which can change, and then build your life based on those things which can't change so that you give yourself the best chance to notice what's real not only with people generally (which can be very useful), but also with those you want to build deeply authentic relationships with.

If speaking truth isn't one of your highest values, the lies you live with in your life will distort how you perceive reality, making it harder to notice what's real about yourself and other people. Being able to accurately notice and perceive what's real in the meaning another person gives to you is imperative to building deeply authentic relationships. Why? If you can't see what's real, you can't have real relationships. When you've made it a habit to speak truth as accurately as you can, then you have gone a massive distance toward enabling yourself to notice reality when you encounter it. In some sense, the truth is a kind of frequency that you become more and more attuned to when you engage in the practice of speaking it.

When you engage in the practice of speaking truth, you are simultaneously listening for the truth in your inner world. You are at any given time getting different signals, from your thoughts, your feelings, your senses and intuition, and many other

dimensions of yourself and reality. In some sense, you're categorically paying attention to the story of truth or the story of lies, since, broadly speaking, those are the two sides of reality that exist. When you have made a practice of speaking truth, and have essentially learned how to align your inner world to what's true as it pertains to you specifically and to the truth generally speaking, it gives you "eyes to see," and "ears to hear," what is true about other people, and importantly what's true about the context they are operating within.

One of the major mistakes people make when interacting with other people is assuming that other people are operating within the same context as themselves, which is not true. One of my sisters refers to different kinds of people, those you click with and those you clack with. You have likely found yourself clicking or clacking with different people at different times. If you are a personologist like I am, then you have some understanding of why you click with some and clack with others; however, it's all right if you aren't, since most people aren't as intense as I am about understanding how individuals work.

No one else is you. At most, depending on your personality type, there may be many people like you, but no one else *is* you. Since there are MANY variables that inform how individuals work, NO OTHER PERSON operates in exactly the same intrapersonal context as you do. If you assume other people operate the same as you, you are setting yourself up for many conflicts with the people around you. So the attitude necessary for you to first understand your intrapersonal context, and then the intrapersonal context of other people, is humility, which is on some level a willingness to learn and grow, because at its very basic a deeply authentic relationship is built on the truth combined with a willingness to learn about the other person, and give them opportunities to learn about you. When two or more people are willing to learn about each other's inner and outer contexts, they are able to have verbal and non-verbal interactions that invite and foster mutual understanding and an eventual grokking of how each other works.

As you and the other person grow in your inner and outer contextual grasp of how each other works, by speaking truth in a way that is comfortable for both people generally speaking, then you can gain the insights necessary to, at the very least understand where the other person is coming from when you interact with them, and if possible, affirm what the other person communicates to you and how they work beyond the surface. Learning to speak truth as a habit and guiding personal value fixes lots of problems ahead of time, and gives you and other truth speakers a powerful, perhaps immutable foundation upon which to build your relationships. Speaking truth as a way of life also attracts other authentic people because like attracts like, and repels people who don't materially hold speaking truth as a core value, unless they want to make it a core value.

Speak Truth to Sort Out the Wrong People

If you've made speaking truth one of your highest values, there are people who aren't going to like you and are going to reject you, and this is *good* news. Do you really want people in your life who aren't willing to speak truth and accept reality? The reason I ask is, if you remain in relationship with people who don't fundamentally value speaking truth, essentially you are implicitly communicating to yourself and others, "I am willing to accept inauthentic interactions." Save for a big change of heart and mind that the other person comes to on their own, you can't build a deeply authentic relationship with someone who doesn't value speaking truth. So if those people self-select themselves out of your life, then your life is going to be free of all the problems and "fires" those people carry with them, since they aren't interested in what's important. Everyone has baggage, but some people's baggage isn't worth it, and people who do not habitually speak truth are also people who are constantly putting out fires in their lives, because they aren't focused on habitually practicing what's most meaningful in life, and speaking truth is one of those significant practices.

Speaking truth is an excellent way to begin to solve, in some sense, many different problems in your life, because when you practice speaking truth every day, you are letting go of control of yourself and other people, and are giving yourself and other people the best opportunity to spend time where it counts the most. Speaking truth is one of the best ways to stop wasting your time, and the time of other people, while also showing maximum honor to everyone because by speaking truth you're implicitly communicating to others that you trust them to handle it, that is, that they are competent and mature enough to handle the truth well, having the character to observe the truth and accept it and make personal adjustments if necessary or desired.

Letting Go of Control and the Desire to be God

Speaking truth is submitting to the truth. It is a profound act of humility to speak truth kindly, because in the act of speaking truth, you are accepting and admitting the reality that you are not in control because you are not God. Frankly, not even God is in control, or else all evil would be His fault, but I digress. As you make a practice of speaking truth, including what you feel comfortable with, what you don't feel comfortable with, your authentic yes, your authentic no, your real opinions, and how you actually feel as opposed to pretending you feel or think a different way, you are letting go of what other people think and/or perceive about you which is extremely healthy to do.

"What other people think is none of your damn business," Scott told me, my previous sponsor, when I attended Co-Dependents Anonymous. People can't connect with you if you're not real with them, because you're lying to them, and lying to people, even in what some people would consider "small" ways, puts emotional and practical distance between you and the other person. This is the kind of practice that leads people to feel lonely, because loneliness is partly emotional distance between you and other people, because one or both people aren't speaking truth.

One of the best ways to solve loneliness is to speak truth to the people you want to be in deeply authentic relationships with. Speak

it kindly, but still speak it. When you speak truth to people you want to be in an authentic relationship with, it gives them the best opportunity to continue in relationship with you, to reject you, or to ask questions leading to clarity.

On my first date with the future Mrs. Johnson, I told her that I was divorced, having been previously married. Since I'd been divorced, it's obvious that it didn't work out well, and so a reasonable person would want to know why it didn't work out, and if I'd made any mistakes or errors, and what I had learned, if anything.

I was extremely open and forthright with her about the mistakes or errors I had made, the story of how my ex-wife and I had broken up, and what I learned from going through that relationship.

Since I spoke truth, openly and honestly to my future wife about my past marriage, and went some sufficient distance in the interaction to give meaningful specifics about the mistakes and errors I made and what I learned, and answered her either unspoken or spoken questions, I gave her all the information she would need to decide whether to continue dating me or not, since I wanted our dating relationship to be as authentic as possible.

I also made speaking truth kindly and openly to her a habit and core value of how I would continue to lead and interact with her, which is through vulnerability. Because I came to really want to be with her, I knew to be as thorough as I could relative to keeping the interactions generally light and fun and interesting, was going to give her the most agency to continue dating me or not, and also to demonstrate the kind of relationship I would want with her if she continued to follow me into deeper levels of commitment. Apparently, my strategy of honesty and openness worked, because we've been married since December, 2021.

Openness and Speaking Truth

Speak truth relative to the level of intimacy you want, or that is appropriate to the context of the relationship. Other than God, your most intimate relationship is with your spouse. With your spouse, I recommend aiming at something close to speaking truth with

absolute openness, where you speak truth about all your secrets, positive, negative, and neutral, with him or her. You can think of your relationships in terms of concentric circles, with the innermost circle being the maximum intimacy and openness level you have with God, where you withhold virtually nothing from God.

The next circle out is the openness, intimacy, and commitment level you have with your spouse, so you would aim to practice openly speaking the truth kindly to him or her, except for withholding only those secrets you keep between you and God. Radically speaking truth kindly to your spouse comes in different domains, spiritually, psychologically, physically, sexually, relationally, philosophically, financially, and more.

In each of these domains of human life, it behooves you to keep as few secrets as possible, generally speaking. Where you wouldn't want to immediately speak truth with your spouse is when you can't do so with kindness. Sometimes, you may find yourself in a situation with your spouse where you can't speak truth KINDLY. That is a good moment to take what you have to communicate to God or a trusted, compassionate, objective friend, and/or your journal, and communicate the "truth" you need to speak or write or communicate that's laden with the tension or pain or anger or frustration you need to exit from your system, which you do in order to parse your truth from the tension or emotion that if communicated would damage your connection with your spouse.

I'm not asserting that you don't show emotion to your spouse. But sometimes if your emotional or tension is too much relative to the connection you have with your spouse, especially as it concerns a problem you have with what your spouse is doing or has done, it can be very difficult to interact with him or her without inappropriately discharging too much tension or emotion at them, and causing them and your connection with them damage or pain.

There are certain people and relationships that use a kind of blow it out of your system approach, where raising your voice or even yelling is an acceptable way of communicating, and if you and your spouse can use that approach to interact while remaining

honorable, then more power to you. That certainly isn't how my spouse and I interact. Our interaction style is to find resolution through getting to the roots of what has caused problems, and aiming at thorough reconciliation and/or resolution instead of trying to win or best each other.

Suffice to say, when you are struggling with feelings of loneliness in your marriage because certain things you've needed to tell the truth about to your spouse have gone unsaid, speaking truth kindly and courageously is a high leverage path to reducing the emotional, spiritual, and physical sense of distance between you and your spouse if they are able to hear you out without punishing, shaming, or judging you.

Relationships Outside of Marriage

In the circles outside of God and then your spouse, are good friends, then colleagues and acquaintances, and then strangers. Speaking truth in these circles of intimacy is imperative as well, even though they probably aren't as intimate as your relationship with God and your spouse or best friends.

The degree of intimacy or lack thereof that takes place, generally speaking, in any given relationship is largely determined by how well those people respect and honor and value you, relative to the truth you typically speak and act out. For instance, my best friends are those who respect my boundaries and who value me and the kinds of topics I enjoy covering, since they often also value those topics. Since I'm a highly verbal and philosophical man by nature, who doesn't put up with nonsense, my friends are those people who value exploring topics beyond the surface while also respecting me, while I respect them.

Even though acquaintances and colleagues aren't nearly as intimate as God, a spouse, and close friends, speaking truth kindly with them as it pertains to the context and kind of person you are is still important. For instance, I've made thousands of food deliveries and taught thousands of students during my years as a delivery driver, professor, and teacher. As it pertains to our relatively shallow and in some sense short-lived interactions, it has still

behooved me to speak truth respectfully and kindly to them, and there are certain reasons for that, mainly intrapersonal, interpersonal, and strategic.

Since it will come to affect you intrapersonally, speaking truth kindly and respectfully is important because how you interact with others is simultaneously how you are interacting with your own being, spiritually, emotionally, and even physically. If you don't mind hardening your heart and mind and emotions towards people, then feel free to speak truth absent kindness, because that's what's going to happen unless you repent and make amends. As the quote goes, "If you judge others, you don't define them. You define yourself." Or, the sword you stab someone else with also stabs you. This is because, in God's universe, there is no real separation or compartmentalization. Therefore, speak truth kindly to others because then you are speaking truth kindly to yourself.

The second reason to speak truth kindly to people on the outskirts of relational intimacy, like colleagues, acquaintances, and strangers, is because of your name equity. Interpersonally and strategically speaking, you have a reputation among people. Every single interaction you have with people is programming those people with a certain amount of meaning as it relates to you and your name. "What goes around, comes around." What many people don't understand about themselves, and what you may not understand about yourself, is that you are extremely powerful. No matter what role you play in society, if you're the toilet cleaner or president of the United States, regardless of your status or skills, you and your words are extremely powerful. Your words and actions can't help but lead people. That you are a powerful leader, no matter what role you're playing in life and in public, is an indelible reality that you can't escape.

So what can happen for some people is that, since they don't understand their personal power, they end up unintentionally abusing it in how they interact with people around them. Many of them don't mean to interact abusively with others, but because they haven't appropriately esteemed their power and their words, it's how they end up acting.

Because you are the will of God, you and your words are powerful because God doesn't create powerless people, since he is powerful. Since you are powerful, be aware that your words and actions are influencing everyone you interact with, regardless of how brief that interaction might be. I used to believe that I wasn't very powerful, and inadvertently, for many years, I abused my power by interacting with them too tensely. This led to me developing, unfortunately, negative name equity with some people.

When I attended a school called Bethel's School of Supernatural Ministry, and got feedback on my behavior, it let me know that, in certain circumstances, people were coming away with negative experiences of me. With God's help, I realized that I needed to adjust how I behaved around people. It was this context, in conjunction with many experiences with people during food deliveries, which trained me to modify how I interacted with people, in essence, to realize in a deeper way and to implement the principle of minimum necessary force relative to speaking truth.

When I realized how powerful my words and behaviors were through feedback from my leadership, and humbled myself before God and people, recognizing that I don't know best, it gave me the inner sense I needed to realize that how I interact with people really matters. In all reality, if you interact with people by speaking lies, or speaking truth absent kindness, it reduces other people's willingness to interact with you, especially in a way that will help you get what you want.

The Bible tells us to live at peace with all men as far as it depends upon you. There will be some people who aren't at peace and will refuse to interact kindly, and you can't materially change those people. But for the huge majority of people, interacting truthfully and compassionately and positively, programs those people and your name with a sense of positive emotion. If you interact in this manner consistently with the people you meet, you can build goodwill with them and improve your social equity, which will make your life easier.

The most extreme example of this in my life is when I taught at a technical college in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. One of the young men I

was responsible for had a lot of hate towards learning and towards me, although it wasn't personal. I endured his mistreatment and disrespect many times while I was attempting to train him and his classmates in English, but I did my very best to remain positive and to direct positive energy and kind truth towards him over and over and over. At one point, his demeanor shifted towards me, and he actually smiled, which was a major miracle in some sense. He's not someone that I would ever really be close to, and in reality he still needed a lot of healing and training, but because I believed the best about him and understood my real power to affect change in other people, I refused to stop valuing him as a student, and it ended up healing his emotions, at least towards me.

In 10,000 different interactions, you can powerfully and truthfully and kindly interact with those people who, though you'll never be close to them, can leave them better than you found them, and that is not nothing – it's something significant that not only contributes to them, but also to your social equity. And when other people value you because you first valued them through your kindly spoken truth, you can end up with a loose-knit group of people who are willing to help you, and that is very good for you, because you need the help of other people to get what you want and need and what will satisfy you in life.

Conclusion

Fundamentally, how do you begin to speak truth? Ask yourself and God, and carry with you this question, "What is most true?" You can specify this question or generalize this question, but some version of this attitude of inquiry needs to become your pursuit. Stephen R. Covey instructed that you choose what you value, and therefore to value fundamentals or first principles. You select your core values. You have the God-given agency to select the values you are going to live by. Therefore, choose to practice valuing the truth, because what you choose to value is what you become open to receiving more of. And when you make a discovery of truth, express gratitude for it because the truth is a gift and the way you prepare yourself to receive more gifts of truth is through, 1. deciding to

value truth, 2. expressing gratitude for truth, and 3. practicing humility by accepting the reality that you don't know best, and especially, that you are NOT God.

If you want to attune yourself to the signal of the truth so that you can learn to recognize it when you "see" it or "hear" it, spiritually, psychologically, and/or physically, I would highly recommend reading my book titled "The Nature of Reality." This book will guide you through multiple encounters with what truth is, and perhaps most importantly, who truth is.

You have embarked on a powerful and transformative journey in seeking to value truth and speaking truth, in the context of who you are and how you behave and think, as it relates to building deeply authentic relationships with people (including yourself), and you will succeed.

Now let's continue on the adventure of exploring more tools that will enable you to live genuinely and intimately with people, in chapter 2.

Loneliness Is a Choice

How to Become Extremely Intimate Through Radical Authenticity

Levi M. Johnson

The whole book is here:

fikatimebooks.com/loneliness-is-a-choice/

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