



# BEING RELATIONAL

**The Seven Ways  
to Quality Interaction  
& Lasting Change**

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**Health Communications, Inc.  
Deerfield Beach, Florida**

*[www.hcibooks.com](http://www.hcibooks.com)*

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**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
is available through the Library of Congress**

© 2015 Louise Phipps Senft and William Senft

ISBN-13: 978-07573-1880-1 (Paperback)

ISBN-10: 07573-1880-0 (Paperback)

ISBN-13: 978-07573-1881-8 (ePub)

ISBN-10: 07573-1881-9 (ePub)

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Publisher: Health Communications, Inc.  
3201 S.W. 15th Street  
Deerfield Beach, FL 33442-8190

*Cover design by Larissa Hise Henoch, Louise Phipps Senft, and Amber Shriver  
Interior design and formatting by Lawna Patterson Oldfield*

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## Chapter Nine

# Being Kind

Being kind might not seem so difficult when you think about it casually, but when you *look harder* at it, as you know to do in being grounded, you see that challenges to your kindness present themselves to you daily. It's easy to underestimate how challenging it is to be kind partly because kindness is not very clearly defined. It is often discussed very broadly and mixed with other qualities such as generosity and humility. It is considered kind to be generous, but giving to others is not the essence of kindness if it is to be considered separate and distinct from generosity. Kind and generous are not synonymous. Similarly, it is considered kind to act with humility, not placing yourself over, above, or in front of others, but, while humility might be essential to being kind, there is more to being kind than just being humble.

Being kind also is associated with a quality that is even more vague, being *nice*. Are they the same? Maybe, maybe not. Kind

certainly seems to have more gravitas. Maybe it's just a more adult version of nice. Most would say there are differences, but everyone seems to be able to agree that if you are *mean* then you are neither nice nor kind. So they do have in common, like other aspects of being relational, the characteristic that it is easier to define what the quality **is**, by stating what it is **not**.

You are *not* kind when:

- You use force to get your way.
- You respond to force with force.
- You lie to get what you want.
- You respond to lies with lies.
- You let anger drive your desire to harm another and you act on it.
- You beat the crap out of someone, anyone, literally or figuratively—even in something that is *just a game*.
- You twist someone's arm to get them to go along with you.
- You use fear and threats of punishment or harm to motivate others to follow or obey you.
- You punish others long and hard, so they learn a lesson when they do wrong.
- You roll over the interests of others because there isn't time to deal with them.
- You ignore the suffering or needs of others because you are not responsible for them.
- You do something, or neglect to do something, in order to get back at another person.
- You are passive aggressive saying yes and doing nothing because you didn't want to or didn't feel like it.

- You further the suffering of others by taking advantage of their weakness.
- You further the suffering of others by enabling it actively or even passively.
- You run away from trouble with another or quit when trouble becomes *not worth it*.

Perhaps we are just splitting hairs in defining kindness, but we want to get to the root of what it is to be kind and to offer you a clear vision of how you can meet the challenge of being kind so that you can be a force for lasting positive *change*, and therefore be a relational leader.

At its core, being kind is about your **power** and how you use it.

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## Look Harder at Your Power

Everyone has power. As a winner you have lots of power. You may not realize all of the power that you have because you take it for granted and often you don't choose to use it. But let's hold off on looking at why you might not use your power and instead first **look harder** at your power and its sources.

The sources of your power are referred to as *currencies*.<sup>18</sup> Like economic currencies—money—your power currencies increase, decrease, and flow between you and others. As with economic currency, your power currencies are spent and gained according to some value placed on them by others. Your power in relation

<sup>18</sup> See Wilmot, William and Hocker, Joyce, *Interpersonal Conflict*, 7<sup>th</sup> Ed. (New York, 2007)..

to another person depends on what they need or want from you and the value they place on that need or want. Without getting too abstract here, the point is that if nothing you are, if nothing you can do, if nothing you have the potential to be or do, has *value* to another person, then you have *no power in relation to* them. From this perspective, you might think that you have little power in many relationships or little power in many interactions. But you would be wrong—because you are not consciously aware of all of the power you have. Everyone has multiple sources of power, in varying amounts, in relation to other people. This is a premise

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of Transformative Conflict Theory. The first step in understanding what it means to be kind is to clearly understand your power in relation to another person and their power in relation to you.

Here's a baker's dozen of power currencies:

First, you have **physical power**. This is the most basic form of your power. It's about size and strength. You use your body and extensions of it—such as tools and weapons—to affect others positively or negatively. Maybe you can knock someone down, hit them, or throw a rock at them. Or maybe you can extend your hand to help someone up, or use your hands and skills to fix something or feed someone. You, in a car, can run someone over or give them a ride. You, with a gun in your hand, can shoot someone down or lay your gun down. The other with a gun in their hand can shoot

you down or lay their gun down. You can overpower them or you can collapse. You can walk up to someone who has a gun in their hand and stand before them defenseless. How do you use your personal physical power? How do others use their personal physical power in relation to you? Physical power is also about how companies, organizations, and governments use *muscle* to advance their interests—boots on the ground, weapons of all kinds. How do you use your physical power then? How do others use their physical power in relation to you?

You have **sexual power**. You are attractive. You are desirable. Others want to be with you sexually, or maybe they just want to be around you because your desirability will enhance theirs. You can use your sexuality to give pleasure, show love, create unity, and potentially make new life. Others want those things from you and you know that. You can use your sexuality or withhold it—to influence someone or get money or satisfaction and other things valuable to you. How do you use your sexual power? How do others use sexual power in relation to you?

You have **emotional power**. Your emotions affect others. Your anger intimidates. Your happiness radiates. Your anxiety makes others anxious. Your suspicion and mistrust breeds the same in others. When you feel embarrassed, ashamed, powerless, confused, victimized, betrayed, sad, guilty, depressed, disgusted, or offended—to name just a few powerful emotions—others get sucked into your emotional state. When you feel joyful, euphoric, secure, content, satisfied, confident, cheerful, relaxed, hopeful, or energized—or

all these things at once (maybe, maybe not!)—others are elevated by your mood. You may or may not be able to control your emotions, but your thinking and how you focus your attention has a lot to do with that control, and if you are grounded and centered, you can use your emotional power positively—or not. It's your choice. How does your emotional power affect others? How does theirs affect you?

You have **spiritual power**. There is power in your mere presence. Who you are as a being projects power. Your heart and mind and soul are felt by others and affect them. Your intentions, held in the secrecy of your heart, or shared only in your private thoughts and prayers, affect those around you. You don't have to do or say anything to have power. You have it by your very presence. Others can feel your essence and know its value. Hold a baby in your arms and you know its spiritual power as a totally vulnerable, dependent creature, yet one for whom you would make great sacrifices. Others know when they wound you and when they bring joy to your spirit. They crave a spiritual connection. You can use your spiritual power to wound or bring joy to others. You can put your spiritual power on the shelf, bury it in worldly concerns, and withhold your spirit from others who need and want your presence or you can wake up, show up, and let others feel the difference your presence makes. How do you use your spiritual power? How do others use their spiritual power in relation to you?

You have **relationship power**. You're popular. You know people. They like you and you have built their loyalty to you. You have contacts, social currency. You have circles

of influence. Others look to you to help them gain credibility with and acceptance by the people you know. Others want to be with you in order to be more popular, accepted, and trusted. You can use your relationship power to help others join a group that you are part of or you can use it to exclude someone from the group. You can use your relationship power to build bridges between groups of people or drive them apart. You can use your relationship power in destructive triangling or in unitive triangling. How do you use your relationship power? How do others use relationship power in relation to you?

You have **cooperative power**. You have free will. You can go along with others or not. You can support an idea or not. You can cooperate with authority or not. You can follow the law or not. Others want you to cooperate with them. They don't want you to resist or refuse to comply. You can use your cooperative power to support something. You can refuse to cooperate and use that power to undermine support for something. How do you use your cooperative power? How do others use cooperative power in relation to you?

You have **communicative power**. You speak well. You write well. You have a command of language. You are aware of your voice and you use it. Your voice is clear and strong. You can express your thoughts clearly. You have a good sense of humor and can make people laugh. Maybe you can speak several languages. You can think on your feet and respond quickly. You are engaged. You can patiently listen to others and help them express their thoughts clearly. You

can ask questions to get a clear understanding. Your communication skills give you power in many situations, and others respect that power and want you to use it to help them. You can use words to persuade others, help them see different perspectives, and appreciate complexity in situations that they might not have seen. You use words to show others love, care, and compassion. You can use words to entertain, inform, and amuse others. You also use your communicative power to nag and complain, deceive others, provide them bad information, verbally abuse and belittle them, or incite their anger. You can use your communicative power, along with emotional power, to incite and inflame others or assure and inspire them. How do you use your communicative power? How do others use communicative power in relation to you?

You have **broadcast power**. Building on communicative power, you may have the ability to get your messages out to a great number of people. You have a lot of followers on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. You may be a regular on television or radio. You may be a newspaper columnist or reporter. You may be the owner of a media company. You may have a lot of readers of your blog or just be a person who regularly puts your opinions out there through comments on what others write. You are a regular contributor to Amazon and eBay ratings. Others want you to use your broadcasting to help them. You can use your broadcast power to amplify the positive or negative aspects of your communicative power. How do you use your broadcast power? How do others use their broadcast power in relation to you?

You have **knowledge power**. You have expertise that another person values and can't easily get from another source. You know something that another person does not know that might be important to them. You have experience that has taught you valuable lessons. You have spent 10,000 hours becoming a master in something. You can use your knowledge to make a living and serve others or you can use it to exploit their lack of knowledge to your advantage. You can withhold your knowledge or give it freely. How do you use your knowledge power? How do others use knowledge power in relation to you?

You have **talent power**. You can do something exceptionally well. You do it in a way others can't. You do it with a certain style that others like. Whether or not you have spent 10,000 hours honing your skill, your talent is organic, it is yours alone. It is a gift you have as part of your DNA that no matter how much effort others may exert to be like you or to do what you do, your talent is unique to you. Others want you to use your talent in some way that serves them—for entertainment, economically or otherwise. Others want to be around you because they admire your talent. They may want to be close to the positive attention that your talent attracts. You can use your talent to make a living—or maybe even get rich. You can use it to build your personal celebrity status. You can use your talent to create, pursue excellence, and enrich your life and the lives of others. You can use the attention that your talent attracts, with its attendant broadcast power, to promote yourself or to support a worthy cause and inspire others. How do you

use your talent power? How do others use talent power in relation to you?

You have **economic power**. You have control over economic resources that others want. You have access to and authority over resources of time, finances, services, and raw goods. You have money to spend, you have money to save, you have money to invest, and you have money to give away. You have the ability to decide who gets paid and how much they get paid. You can decide which projects, causes, or organizations are supported and which ones are not supported. Your economic power influences others' economic futures. Others want you to use your economic power in ways that benefit them or that support organizations they have an interest in. You can use your economic power to gain more economic power. You can use it to maximize your benefit in any transaction. You can use economic power to enrich or to exploit. You can be generous, or not. How do you use your economic power? How do others use economic power in relation to you?

You have **positional power**. You are part of some larger entity—your family, community, company, nation, or club, including your pinochle club—that has vested you with some authority over others and control over resources or systems. You're a boss in some way, shape, or form. You have positional power because *you* chose it: You are a parent. You have positional power because someone chose it *for you*: You have been elected or appointed to lead others. You have created a business that employs others. They want you to use your authority—and its attendant power

to control rewards, gifts, punishments, penalties, preferences, and prices—to benefit, or at least not harm, them. You can use your positional power to oppress others, keep them down. You can use your positional power to gain more power and serve your ambition to climb to a position of higher authority. You can wield your positional authority like a whip and motivate others with fear. You can hold a position and enjoy its benefits while doing the minimum to get by and protecting your backside. You can use your position to inspire, motivate, care for, and lift up others. You can disempower others or you can empower others. You can turn a blind eye to your rank and plunge forward until your time is up, or you can consider the future of others with thoughtful succession plans. You can use your position to seize immediate gain and attention for yourself or build lasting value that will serve others for many years to come. How do you use your positional power? How do others use positional power in relation to you?

You have **temporal power**. Your attitudes about time, your perceptions of the pressures of time, and its scarcity in relation to all of the things you want to happen or get done, affect others. Others want you to give your time to them and to their needs and demands. They want you to respect their deadlines and their urgency. You can do something now or you can put it off until later. You can slow down a difficult conversation or you can speed it up. You can be early, on time, late, or absent for work, for appointments, and for meetings. You can let time constraints create great anxiety or you can let things happen at their own pace. You

can be driven by artificial deadlines or you can create realistic deadlines. You can adhere to reasonable deadlines or you can let them pass. You can avoid doing something because you don't have the time, or you can stop and make time. How do you use your temporal power? How do others use temporal power in relation to you?

*That's a lot of power.* There are more sources, but we hope you will think this is a pretty good power inventory, our **baker's dozen** for you to consider. Look at power currencies closely in connection with relationships where you believe you have a great deal

Understanding your sources of power helps you identify your options. Having options gives you power in your dealings with others

of power and those where you think you don't have much.

Understanding your sources of power helps you identify your options—paths of action you can choose. Having options

gives you power in your dealings with others, but you have no power unless you are aware of your options. Chances are you have more power than you think in many situations where you assume you have little or no power. Chances also are that in relationships where you think you have a great deal of power, others have more power than you think they do. Winners like you have many power currencies to draw upon.

For each source of power, we ask, "*How do you use it?*" because every power currency can be used to be relational or in ways that are purely transactional. Every form of power can be used in ways that are kind and in ways that are unkind. You can also be kind or unkind in the ways you choose *not* to use your power, positively in

exercising restraint or forbearance, or negatively through indifference or neglect. Let's take a look at kindness and how you use your power.

Every form of power can be used in ways that are kind and in ways that are unkind.

## Being Kind is Respecting Self-Determination

We have a fundamental tenet in our work as mediators, to respect self-determination. That means that we *do not try to force any decision* on another person, even if we think it is in their best interest, and, with very limited exceptions related to safety, we do not try to “get” someone to *do or not do* anything. Our role as mediators gives us special insight into the power of respect for self-determination in achieving lasting and satisfying outcomes to conflict situations. When you are acting as a neutral in any conflict between others, promoting others' self-determination is usually a very helpful frame for your role, however in situations where you have a stake in the matter, where you *do* want to get somebody to do or not do something, you might want to toss the idea of respect for self-determination out the window.

*We would urge you not to.* Respecting others' self-determination in many ways is the essence of kindness. You can use your power to force others, against their will, to do what you wish, but it is unkind to do so. It is also unwise. What is your reaction when you are forced to do something against your will? Resentment? Blaming? Maybe even desire for revenge. And so it is

Force or coercion of any kind, fuels a cycle of conflict. Perhaps not immediately, but definitely in time.

with others. Force or coercion of any kind, fuels a cycle of conflict. Perhaps not immediately, but definitely in time. It sows the seeds of discontent. It is bad karma. In truth, it is a failure on your part to use all your non-coercive power to persuade the person to make a different decision.

We know this well as mediators. In that role, we are proactive about process, which means we safeguard our clients' self-determination. Mediators, guided by the Transformative Theory

Mediators, guided by the Transformative Theory of Conflict, believe deeply that people, even in conflict, have what it takes to be both strong and responsive to the other, for when doing so, a new opening is created for what is possible.

of Conflict, believe deeply that people, even in conflict, have what it takes to be both strong and responsive to the other, for when doing so, a new opening is created for what is possible. When

people are given the opportunity to engage in meaningful ways fostered by the mediator's presence and relational interventions, amazing things happen. The mediator doesn't have to *get* or *force* people to do anything. Their own clarity will emerge and their experience of empowerment will pave the way forward for better interactions and more informed decisions that are natural byproducts of this kind of dialogue—the kind of dialogue that happens when people are given the chance to engage in centered, grounded, and clear ways. A mediator's continued belief in others' self-determination is an act of kindness since a mediator must constantly exercise forbearance and neither shut down nor get in the way of meaningful interaction. You, as winners, potential relational leaders, are what we like to call “little m” mediators all

the time. While you are not invested with the professional ethical standards and indeed you may have a stake in the outcome yourself, you too can foster quality interaction. When people are given the chance and encouragement to interact in relational ways, from a place of personal strength and connection to others, whether they agree or disagree, they have a much better chance of being open and kind.

So, respecting self-determination means that you let the other decide what to do and you do not use force to get them to do your will. What does that mean? Let's start with **violence**. We will talk about self-defense later, but using physical force that can harm another person is not kind, is it?

Similarly—*threats* of violence—*not kind*.

Coercion through deception, discussed above in being clear—*not kind*.

Coercion through the use of any of the baker's dozen types of power discussed above—*not kind*.

You can probably think of many examples of how the abuse of power through coercion takes place, but for the sake of illustration, consider the classic **Bully**.

We will refer to the Bully as just that. However, let us say that we hold the belief that people who use bullying tactics do not at their core want to be bullies. Bullying actions are often learned or are defense responses to a past where they themselves were or felt bullied. For the sake of shorthand, we will refer to those who engage in bullying tactics as bullies, but we hold the belief that they are more than their bullying behavior and we do not want to label them as bullies. We will focus on the type of behavior they trade on and ways to be relational.

The bully—male or female—uses physical power to harm and harass; uses emotional power to intimidate and create fear; uses sexual power to extort; uses communicative power to demean and belittle; uses broadcast power to spread false rumors and insults; uses relationship power to demonize and exclude; uses economic power to oppress and squeeze the last dollar out of a deal; uses temporal power to create stress and anxiety; uses positional power to stonewall, punish and control. The *bully's goal is domination, control of others, avoiding responsibility for wrongdoing or failures, and gaining resources* such as special treatment or money.

The institutional bully also uses size to harm and harass. Taking advantage of the weakness of others, putting out slanted truths, covering up their weaknesses as they exploit others. The goal is the same: power over others.

As a winner, you have many opportunities to be the bully. Being kind means *you are not the bully*. But it also means that you don't respond to the bully by using power in any of the ways the bully uses power. As a winner you might not have been bullied. The

How you respond to a bully is essential to being relational.

bully didn't bother with you, they found easier, weaker targets. Maybe, maybe not. But how you respond to a bully is essential to being relational.

## **Being Kind is Being Strong and Brave**

So how does kindness respond to the bully? *With kindness*. But that's not weakness or cowardice. Rather it is kindness in strength and with courage. You don't ignore the conflict; you engage with

it. You engage with dialogue, not with violence or coercive power. You stay centered, grounded, and clear. You seek to *persuade*, but you respect the bully's self-determination. You seek change through conversion, not coercion.<sup>19</sup>

You are brave because you are **vulnerable**. You are strong enough to be vulnerable. Which is more brave? Stopping a bully by beating them up, or facing a bully without resorting to violence? Being kind means you expose yourself to possible harm—be it physical, emotional, economic, reputational, temporal, and so on. You take the risk. You refuse to use the ways of the bully in response to the bully. You also don't run away from conflict with a bully unless it is just to buy some time, to retreat temporarily, in order to organize, consider your options, and find your sources of power. You don't passively submit to the bully.

The classic advice is to *stand up* to a bully. Being relational means you don't stand up to a bully by returning the bully's violence with violence, intimidation with intimidation, lies with lies. You *sit down* with a bully—if possible. If need be, you *wear them out* with dialogue—relentless engagement. When you are afraid or angry, that might be the hardest and bravest thing you ever do.

You are strong because you *know* that, even in your vulnerability and refusal to use coercion, you have many other sources of power. Being kind in response to the bully does not mean you don't use your power. In fact you might need to use all your power currencies more fully than you ever have. Let's look at how you do that.

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<sup>19</sup> See Gandhi, Mahatma, *The Essential Gandhi*, L. Fisher Ed. (New York, 2002)

## Self Defense— There's no such thing as "Just War"

You might be saying, "Kindness is good when you are dealing with reasonable people, even if they are bullies, but what about when you or those you care for are in real *danger*? Isn't force used in self-defense or in defense of innocent others okay?" Legally—Yes. Morally, in many faith traditions—Yes. But the real

The challenge is to use our intelligence, creativity and imagination to conceive the means to defend against aggression without resorting to coercion.

answer if you are being relational is—**No**. Why? Because you have *options* and you have many more sources of power. You don't *need* to use force. If you are not absolutely required to use force, it is unacceptable to use force. The challenge is to use our intelligence, creativity

and imagination to conceive the means to defend against aggression without resorting to coercion.

We hear all the time in our mediation work praise and support from many who speak about how important dialogue and engagement is—for **other** people. But when those same folks experience their **own** conflicts, they will often change their minds and say "Dialogue is good in all those other situations, but not this one; the other person is impossible." Or, if they are attorneys, they may say "Mediation is all fine for everybody else's cases, but not mine; I deal with crazy people or people on the other side who are totally unreasonable." Just because the other is viewed as unreasonable or impossible, the quickly-decided shift is to litigation—a civil form of war—often won by the winners—those with the most resources

and ability to wage the battle. War is abandoning kindness in favor of coercive power based solutions.

In justifying the use of military force there is the concept of *Just War*. There are different versions of its formulation, but all basically provide conditions under which it is considered just and morally acceptable to go to war and use military force against an enemy. It might seem like we are getting far afield from our discussion of being kind here, but we would ask you to hang with us as we trying to make a point about kindness, the use of force, and self-defense.

Under Just War doctrine, as with any definition of the circumstances where force is considered justified in response to aggression, in self-defense or in defense of others, a person (or nation) using force must conclude that *all other means* of responding to the aggression are “*impractical or ineffective*.”<sup>20</sup> It is the idea that war should be a *last resort*. The same goes with any use of force. Being relational, being kind, means you take that very seriously and you *use every bit of your wit and energy and power to meet conflict with kindness and make the conscious decision not to use force and coercion*. If you do make such a conscious decision, you will find many other ways to persuade, convert, and achieve your goals of lasting positive change. So, in reality, in our world today, there is no such thing as Just War.

There are well known examples in history for you to draw upon—the struggle for independence in India led by Mahatma Gandhi, the civil rights movement in the United States led by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. How did Gandhi and King and the millions

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<sup>20</sup> See Catechism of the Catholic Church ¶ 2309.

of people who joined them creatively use their power currencies? Today there are millions of people engaged in nonviolent efforts to bring about lasting positive change. Witness the work of the Nonviolent Peaceforce, a group which sends unarmed civilians into foreign conflicts to foster dialogue and provide a protective presence for threatened civilians.<sup>21</sup> It is work. It takes great commitment, but they are making a difference in places where conflict is chronic like South Sudan and Myanmar. They are reducing fear and giving confidence to threatened people who find themselves living in harm's way. We would say they are advocates intentionally being relational, even in the face of grave danger.

In thinking about efforts to resolve conflict without resort to violence and coercion, the first thing that comes to mind is *diplomacy and negotiation*. Yes, negotiation is at the heart of a response that respects self-determination, but it is negotiation in a very broad sense, *not just formal talks* that might **break down** and **fail** thus justifying resort to the use of force because all other means are **impractical or ineffective**.

Negotiation with an aggressor, in the broad sense, would include many possible uses of power. Let's look again at our baker's dozen through an individual lens, looking at what you might personally, individually do, but *asking you to also consider how such individual action might also be representative of and analogous to actions possibly taken by groups of people organized into political parties, corporations, or nation states*.

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<sup>21</sup> See [www.NonviolentPeaceforce.org](http://www.NonviolentPeaceforce.org)

## Using Your Power with Kindness

In responding to bullying or to others using coercive power against you, you can employ other power currencies. You have options in responding with kindness. Lots of them.

You could increase your physical power. Get stronger physically? Work out? Maybe, maybe not an option for you. You could get a weapon even though you have no intention of using it. “Speak softly and carry a big stick,” as Teddy Roosevelt famously preached. You have heard it said that if you are armed and dangerous no one will mess with you. Maybe, maybe not. That might be true, but isn’t that just using a form of coercion—the threat of violence? Besides, you might just set off an arms race of sorts—escalating power and threats, raising the stakes of the conflict. Ultimately, *increasing your physical power puts you in great risk of having to use it*. How will you justify having invested so much in being stronger if you won’t use your strength? But you know your use of physical power will only inflame the bully’s desire for revenge—even if you are perfectly justified. Maybe the bully will leave you alone, but maybe not. Maybe they will just go pick on someone else. You don’t want that, do you? Maybe it sounds good in the short run, but what about the longer run? You don’t know when they might choose an opportune moment for retaliation. Sounds like a focus on increasing your physical power might be a bad option, right?

In responding to bullying or to others using coercive power against you, you can employ other power currencies. You have options in responding with kindness.

You could use your sexual power to seduce the aggressor, merge with them, and try to make their desire for you overcome their aggression or resistance to your persuasion. But that would force you to compromise yourself in ways that are completely unacceptable to you, right? You risk great harm to your spirit and sense of integrity. You would be in bed with a bully. This is not being kind to yourself. Another bad option.

Look hard at your emotional power. Don't hide it. What you feel is important. Being strong enough to be vulnerable means that you are not afraid to show your emotions. The actions of the bully hurt you, may make you sad, angry, afraid, and frustrated. You feel pain. Show these emotions to the bully. Express these emotions. Use words. Your authentic tears are okay. Projecting your emotions through physical power is not. Let the bully feel what you feel. It might touch their interior sense of decency and compassion. It might not. They might feel some shame in ways you will never know. They might not. But you have nothing to lose and

Having emotions is not weakness. It is human.

you both have everything to gain relationally. Having emotions is not weakness. It is human. We have been given a full spectrum of emotions as part of our humanity. Experience them and articulate them. Even anger can be relational if channeled in a centered and grounded way. If all you do is put on the brave, strong face, do you show the bully that they have harmed a real person with a soul? A person who might be their brother or sister?

Look hard at your spiritual power. You remain optimistic in adversity. You are sober about the situation, you are grounded in reality, yet your hope never wavers. You let the bully know that they

can hurt you, but they can't take away your dignity. You stay solid in your sense of yourself as a person worthy of respect. You stay centered in your belief in a better future. You are clear about bringing good intentions for the bully in your thoughts. You pray for the bully. You pray for yourself. You pray for wise and compassionate interactions, actions, and reactions in relation to the bully. You stand firm in your faith that your kindness will not be in vain. You believe *good will always triumph* over evil in the end. Indeed, all evil is temporary. You engage. You express these truths to the bully.

Now you are feeling **stronger** aren't you?

Look hard at your relationship power. You use your connections with others and your cooperative power with them to let the bully know that *you don't stand alone*. You aren't triangling against the bully and demonizing them, but you do let the bully know that ultimately their actions will isolate and alienate them from relationship with many people. You build your coalition with integrity and truthfulness.

Look hard at your cooperative power. Your *nonviolent non-cooperation*, as espoused by Gandhi, is powerful. It can take many forms in response to a bully. You don't play by their rules. You don't make it easy for them. You don't submit. You don't go along. You resist actively, but not with physical force. You withhold the power of your knowledge and talent from service to their goals. You organize a boycott. You won't pay their taxes. You won't be part of their system. You organize and cooperate with others to help you in your resistance. You get in the way of their efforts to achieve their goals. You might end up injured, in jail or worse, but you won't cooperate with the bully. You always hold open the invitation to dialogue. You are exhausting to deal with. There is

There is no honor or glory for the bully in crushing and defeating you if kindness is your response to bullying.

no honor or glory for the bully in crushing and defeating you if kindness is your response to bullying.

Look hard at your communicative and broadcast power. These are perhaps your greatest sources. You use them to persuade and engage the bully as much as possible—relentlessly. You use them to persuade and inform anyone who might support or enable the efforts of the bully. You know that bullies trade on weaknesses and false or hidden information. You communicate your emotions, your spiritual strength, your injuries, and the injustices you have suffered. You tell someone with authority over the bully. You file a formal complaint. You use words, images, music, video, whatever media you can get your hands on, to change hearts and minds in your favor. You use the biggest megaphone you can find to get your message out—television, Facebook, Twitter, whatever—but you do it with *integrity*. You remain centered, grounded, and clear. If you and the bully are both within an organization, you might need to be discreet and sensitive to the damage your communications might do to the organization. You are not waging a war of words. You are not demonizing the bully. Your goal in conflict is quality dialogue. If you file a formal complaint, you find the right advocate who understands your intentions to bring the bully to the dialogue table, for face-to-face interactions. Your intent is not to stir up litigation and use coercive threats. From quality dialogue, you believe that positive outcomes can emerge. You are always willing to sit down with the bully in a safe, confidential setting, with a mediator if possible—a mediator trained to respect fully rights to self-determination.

Look hard at your temporal power. Time is on your side. You can slow things down. The longer you persist in your efforts, the

more likely the bully is to give up, realize the loneliness of the isolation their aggression has caused, or maybe have a change of heart. You just *don't give up* and you *don't give in*. You have staying power. You have perseverance to stick it out and continue to remain open, grounded in reality.

Sometimes, *in the moment, you may be forced to make a choice* to try to protect yourself or others from an aggressor—the *archetypical self-defense situation*. In these cases, time truly is not on your side at all. You might have to act in a split second. You might be able to run away. There is no shame in that if you are not abandoning others. In fact, it is the preferred course. It buys you time to marshal resources to deal with the aggressor. *But if harm to others is an immediate risk, you can stand and fight to protect them.*<sup>22</sup> There is no shame in that if your intentions are only to use as much force as needed to stop the immediate threat. Once the immediate threat is gone, your focus shifts to care for anyone wounded, even the aggressor. If you harm them, you will need to work to heal the wound you created. You don't want your injury of another to lead to their resentment and desire for revenge on you, or on the group you represent, in their eyes.

For winners, these situations are rare. We hope you are never in one. Slow things down if you can. Engage the aggressor in dialogue if you can. Kindness doesn't mean you just submit to harm,

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<sup>22</sup> We don't want to get too wrapped around the axle here in discussing self-defense, but we would acknowledge that there is a difference between standing and fighting in the moment when a threat to others emerges and you too are present versus going out of your way to swoop in and *intervene* physically and forcefully in a violent exchange between others to defend someone from the perceived "aggressor." The latter is much more problematic, for instance where force is used to intervene in a foreign civil war. In such situations, the course of kindness demands that all forms of power other than physical force be used to deal with the situation no matter how urgent. Intervention in urgent conflict between others might require urgent action, but violence would remain unnecessary just as it would in less urgent situations.

but in these emergent situations where you face grave harm, it might mean you surrender rather than fight. *Think about what the aggressor's goal is*—getting money or property? Inflicting harm or asserting power to serve some twisted criminal intent that is most likely a manifestation of some mental illness or injury? Having fully considered what it means to be kind in the face of aggression,

Being kind means you don't believe that alternatives to the use of force are impractical and ineffective.

think now about what you might do. It is up to you to judge the appropriate course.

In the end, being kind means you don't believe that alternatives to the use of force are impractical

and ineffective. You have lots of power that is not coercive. You just have to have the will to use it. Resorting to violence and force is a *failure to use your imagination and creativity* to explore fully and be serious about using *alternative* sources of power.

Being relational calls you to do that and also calls you to use your power to influence the families, businesses, organizations, communities, states, and nations of which you are a part to follow the same course of kindness. It is the wise course. It is the course to lasting positive change. Being relational might mean you join a peace protest. Maybe, maybe not. It's your choice.

## Being Kind is Actively Caring— The Compassionate Impulse

Having looked at kindness in your interactions with those who have power over you (or at least they are *trying* to have power over you!)—the bullies—now let's turn our attention to how you

use your power in relation to those over whom *you* have power and those you encounter whom you perceive as having less or equal power in relation to you. The bully is coming at you with aggression. Most people in your life aren't doing that. You meet them in many different postures: as equals, as people serving you, as anonymous people you encounter, as people presenting their needs to you. Being humble means that you meet them as a brother or sister—just like they were a member of your family. How do you treat someone as family? With kindness. That means you are *actively caring in relation to them*.

There are two parts to that—active and caring. Active means that when you encounter someone in need, you *do something*. Easy to say, hard to do. If you live in a large urban area, you encounter people in need all the time. The rational approach is to say, “I can't help everybody, so I will just go about my business and take care of my friends and family.” This is the same dilemma you face in being generous. You might think your personal resources are scarce and you need to reserve and preserve them.

You don't. There is no limit to your kindness. You can be kind all day, every day, to everyone. That doesn't mean that you go around trying to rescue everyone and giving away all your resources. Although you might. You might see ten people in a day, you might see hundreds, but as you encounter someone, *you do something kind*. That could be as simple as a friendly look in the eye, a smile and hello. That could be a much more significant act of generosity. There are thousands of ways—check out [www.RandomActsofKindness.org](http://www.RandomActsofKindness.org). You are not passive in your kindness. You're not a bystander. It's not just kind thoughts in your head and good intentions. When you feel a caring impulse toward another person,

you act. You *don't do the sensible, reserved, thing*—just passing by, eyes set straight ahead, fixed on the horizon, not giving attention to what is happening right around you.

You might think, “I don't have the time for all that!” Yes, you do. Time pressure is the enemy of caring. Most of it is only in your mind. You stay grounded and try not to let your thoughts about time scarcity drive your actions. Indeed, sometimes it might take more time to be kind, but you think of all the good will that you are generating, the good karma that you are creating. You **believe** that there is always enough time to be kind and so there always is. Being kind means that time constraints are never your excuse not to be actively caring.

The second part of kindness when you are being relational is the *core—caring for others*. You are polite. You are considerate of others according to the sense of etiquette that you were raised in. But kindness is deeper. When you see suffering and pain, you feel compassion. You can empathize—connect with the emotional state of another. Brain science supports this phenomenon. When you are alert and awake and notice and enter into the same experience of another, mirror neurons fire in the brain. A flow of oxytocin brings a feeling of warmth in your body, your immediate experience of the other person's condition affects you, and you have the urge to be responsive.<sup>23</sup> You have a *compassionate impulse*.

Compassion is a complex emotion. Your capacity to feel it might not be well developed. As a winner, you might not have a lot of experience with pain and suffering—at least not on a deep level—to draw upon empathically. Maybe, maybe not. Recall our discussion

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23 See Goleman, Daniel, *Social Intelligence* (New York 2006).

of conflict transformation at the very beginning of this book. Conflict places you in a state of relative self-absorption in relation to another person. You may experience that as suspicion, defensiveness, being self-protective, or just being stuck in your narrow point of view, your own frame—unable to step into the perspective of another. Compassion is that emotion that allows you to shift from self-absorption to being attentive to the other person. That manifests as *more openness, willingness to accept the other's good faith and less concern about your vulnerability* in relation to them.

Compassion is that emotion that allows you to shift from self-absorption to being attentive to the other person.

You reflect back exactly what someone reports as their experience—using their words, not yours. It is an act of kindness when you choose to use your power to foster empowerment rather than to dominate or control. In the everyday moments of interaction, we can use our power so easily in ways that are not kind with the result that the opportunities presented for quality dialogue are stunted, stolen, diluted, or torn down. Being kind means you are willing to be vulnerable when you encounter others in pain or suffering, willing to risk rejection when you extend your kindness to them. You have the courage to be compassionate. You have the strength to find that courage.

In the everyday moments of interaction, we can use our power so easily in ways that are not kind with the result that the opportunities presented for quality dialogue are stunted, stolen, diluted, or torn down. Being kind means you are willing to be vulnerable when you encounter others in pain or suffering, willing to risk rejection when you extend your kindness to them.

You can develop that courage and increase your capacity to feel compassion. You are attentive to your *own* suffering and pain. You don't numb it out, run from it, or suppress it. Being grounded, you know that much of your suffering comes from your thoughts and your attachment to an idea about how things *should be* instead of how they are. You have learned to relax into that and to love the way things are, just as they *are*. You have learned to pay attention to where the attachment is lodged in your body and to be curious about it. You have learned to focus on resourcing a part of your body that is not caught up in the attachment or experience. You

Being in tune with your own suffering and how you cope with it will help you be in tune with the suffering of others. You will be primed to respond with compassion.

know that your suffering is temporary and will pass. But you are willing to attend to it in the now. Being in tune with your own suffering and how you cope with it will help

you be in tune with the suffering of others. You will be primed to respond with compassion.

How do you know it's compassion? Your body, your heart, your head give you cues. You feel welling within you the desire to be responsive to others with their suffering and you *think*, "How can I respond in a relational way?" or, if they are right there with you, you *ask*, "How can I help you?" You can't predict the response, but *you can make the offer*. Your offer matters. Then you prepare to make good on your offer—by being generous and by being patient, forgiving, and gentle.

While being relational embodies seven ways of being in our everyday lives and interactions, each of the seven ways needs the other ways, and all of the seven ways are interdependent on each

other. To engage, you are centered and grounded and clear. To be clear, you need to be grounded in reality and truth. To be centered, you need to be clear about what is important to you. To be generous, you are clear about your power currencies. To be humble, you stay centered for authenticity. When you are relational, you use your power currencies in ways that are kind. You don't rob others of their means to engage meaningfully with others. You don't steal others' opportunities for empowerment and responsiveness. Being relational believes in amazing outcomes, ones you may not even imagine but that you know are possible, and you are patient.

While being relational embodies seven ways of being in our everyday lives and interactions, each of the seven ways needs the other ways, and all of the seven ways are interdependent on each other.

## Being Kind is Being Patient

Kindness has a lot to do with generosity. Acts of generosity, offered in humility, are invariably kind. We don't want to get too caught up in definitions; as we have seen, many of the ways of being relational blend and overlap. But, to us, being patient, forgiving, and gentle seem especially within the realm of being kind.

*Again, kindness is about your power and how you use it.*

Patience draws upon your humility and groundedness. If you have a child you probably have developed patience.

It is good to call upon your experience with children in cultivating your patience with others. Being kind means *you do not rush*

Patience draws upon your humility and groundedness.

*others*. Earlier we talked about time pressure as the enemy of caring. Being patient means that you don't let time pressure get the better of you especially when you are dealing with people over whom you have power. You might have the power to push and hurry them, but you don't. If there is something that is creating time pressure for you, you engage with the other person and let them know what is going on. You explain what is creating your urgency and you look harder at whether or not that urgency is real.

Often the urgency only exists in your *mind* because of something that you believe *must* happen within some time frame. You might be afraid of the consequences if the thing doesn't happen in the time you think it should. Are those consequences real or are you just assuming the worst? Maybe, maybe not. Are you concerned because a delay might cause you to have to re-think your plans or extend yourself and give more effort than you want to? Being patient means that you are *willing to accept inconveniences* for the sake of kindness to others.

Sometimes inconveniences come because of your failure to prepare and manage others and a situation. Pause. Being kind means relaxing and forgiving yourself. This almost immediately brings ease to an otherwise impatient situation. Sometimes inconveniences come to you because of something another person has done or failed to do. Maybe they were late, maybe they forgot, maybe they weren't paying attention or really even trying. Pause. When your patience is tested by the failures of others, being kind means being forgiving.

## Being Kind is Being Forgiving

How you respond to an injury or inconvenience is an important choice for you and for the other who injured you. Your response can set off a cycle of acrimony and revenge or start the process of healing and possibly lasting positive change. Forgiveness is at the heart of conflict transformation and quality dialogue is often the path to it. A common impulsive reaction when you are injured is to focus on your pain and become self-absorbed in a way that shuts down your ability to see the other as anything but “the offender who hurt me.”

The degree to which you experience the injury might be related to a prior injury and the way that it was experienced and resolved, or not resolved. Regarding an injury that stuns you or stops you in your tracks, often it is because you have never experienced anything like it before and it throws you off center because you have no frame of reference. You might just move on. The memory you store about the event is one held more in the vein of wonder or curiosity than anything else. Or perhaps after a moment, you regain your center and let the other know how totally unexpected or surprised you are and ask if what you experienced is what they actually intended. They might be largely unaware of their impact on you.

On the other hand, the injury you find hard to shake might be related to a prior injury that was never fully attended to, never

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Forgiveness is at the heart of conflict transformation and quality dialogue is often the path to it.

healed. When the new injury happens, it's as if an old scab is ripped off, as if the energy that went underground to be expended on tamping down, scabbing over, and forgetting the old injury is inflamed again. So your reaction can seem too big, out of proportion to what actually happened. You are having a conflict experience.

A common conflict reaction is to blame and heap on more, whether silently or noisily, out of revenge or in self-defense. Another common conflict reaction is to pretend everything's okay, escape, leave, get far away—whether mentally, emotionally, or physically. The impulse to push back as well as the impulse to retreat are very much rooted in your lower brain stem as a way of survival. It is a very human response. It is however, your most primitive response. It is a reaction often disconnected from the person you really are, the evolved person you want to be, the person you want to be when relating to others. And you know that, as primitive as your striking back or shutting down might be, or as the other person's assault or abandonment was, you both have other choices.

It just takes one of you to make a different choice, even after the fracture has occurred. Perhaps even especially after the injury has occurred. It only takes one, perhaps you, strong enough to invite dialogue. Through quality dialogue—being engaged, centered, grounded and clear—you have the best chance at reconnecting to your best self, and the other person has the best chance of reconnecting to their best self. Together you both can attend to the fractures in your interaction. Whether the other emerges from their self-absorption, *you* can emerge from your self-absorption, recognize the other's situation, and possibly both of you will see the other as more human. It only takes one person to initiate the dialogue.

So, if there is a chance for dialogue with the other person, you might want to take it. If the other person offers you an opportunity to dialogue, you might want to take it. Maybe, maybe not. The timing might not be right for you. Your injury might need more time for healing. You might have other demands on your time that are more pressing. Sometimes it is just not possible—the person who injured you is someone you probably will never see again. But if you have the opportunity and you can make the space in your life for dialogue with one who injured you, being relational means that you take that opportunity—even in dealing with a bully as we discussed above, but also *especially* in situations where you are in a position of greater power in relation to the other. It can be a momentary exchange, taking seconds when the inconvenience was not a deep injury.

If you have the opportunity and you can make the space in your life for dialogue with one who injured you, being relational means that you take that opportunity—even in dealing with a bully

Let's go back to your experience of being hurt by someone else. All relationships experience these moments—especially those relationships that are long term. So what happens in that moment? There is a natural cycle of personal conflict transformation that is familiar to you. You have experienced this many times. After the injury event, whether you fought back or shut down, you then retreat. It is a primitive instinct as part of our survival. You take a break from the person, you retreat to the cave to lick your wounds. This can be momentary or this retreat can be hours, or weeks, or years.

How long you disconnect from the other often depends on the messages being given to you by those that you surround yourself

with. The messages may be dismissive: “Kiss and make up,” or “It’s not that bad,” or “Move on, it’s not worth it.” The messages may feed your resentment: “Get your revenge—an eye for an eye,” or “I told you so,” or “How could you let them do that to you?” or “What did you expect?” The messages may be supportive and relational: “Sounds like you are really hurt by them; I wonder what they are thinking?” or “That’s rough, is there anything I can do to help?” You choose to surround yourself with others who are supportive. Supportive of what? Supportive of your well-being and the well-being of the other person.

In the natural cycle of conflict transformation, you take the time to look hard at deeper vulnerabilities. You determine the meaning of your vulnerabilities and how they informed your interaction. Being forced by others to do or say anything prematurely robs you of this discernment. Your regained sense of personal strength naturally emerges, however, when you take or are given the chance to have a new meaningful interaction with the person who harmed you. Through relational dialogue, facilitated or on your own, you become strong again, the grip of the suffering lessens, you are able to soften the urge to strike back, the clutch that wants to attack. You experience the beginnings of forgiveness. Forgiveness of yourself and of the other person. It is often difficult, but always kind to both you and the other person. You release without bypassing. Your forgiving does not mean you forget. But you are no longer attached to the injury.

Being kind means forgiving injuries, but it is not always clear how to do it. It is highly personal and depends a great deal on the nature of the injury. Is it a minor inconvenience? Even if minor, does it touch an old nerve of a prior unhealed injury involving

someone else? Has it happened enough times to now be serious? Or is it a serious injury with lasting consequences? Forgiveness has several elements and, like other aspects of being relational, it is helpful to get clear about what it is *not*.

Being forgiving does not mean you are lenient and tolerate injury just to avoid conflict with others.

Being forgiving does not mean you are lenient and tolerate injury just to avoid conflict with others. You aren't a doormat.

You aren't a doormat. You don't make the injury smaller than it is. You do not engage in bypasses such as "I'm fine" when you are not. You also don't make the injury larger than it is. But injuries have consequences, and you hope, and maybe insist, that someone who injures you takes responsibility for their actions. You don't *condone* bad behavior or abuse. You aren't an *enabler* to someone in their behavior that is harmful to you or to themselves in ways that affect you. You are grounded, so you take your concerns directly to the other person and you engage with them in dialogue if possible. But you don't just say, "It's ok; I'll get over it," while allowing someone to continue hurting you without consequences. Your *tolerance* has limits, even as your *kindness* does not. Being forgiving, while it obviously does not mean that you impose retributive punishment and correction, it also does not mean that you just let things slide. If you have the power to impose a consequence, you do so with kindness.

Finding the balance between compassion and healthy boundaries can be hard, especially with people you care about. Ask any parent. Recall our discussion earlier about being grounded and having healthy boundaries. You have options and you get clear about them. Being kind means that, in making a decision about how to deal with the person who injured you, you ask a few questions:

- “Is my response going to injure *them*?” (If yes, then you keep thinking about *better* ways to use your power to promote healing)
- “Is my response likely to influence them not to injure *me* again?” (Hopefully the answer is yes, if not, then look harder and keep thinking more creatively about your response.)
- “Is my response likely to influence them not to injure *someone else*?” (Hopefully you answer yes because being relational means you are concerned not only about yourself, but also others who may be affected by your decisions. If not then, again, keep thinking more creatively about your response.)

*You have power and you use it creatively.* You use your power to promote your own healing in body, mind, and spirit. You use it to connect with the other in a way that allows them to see you as a person who has been wounded. You use it to help you see the other as a person—a person who might have a story that helps you understand their actions. You use your power to influence the other not to harm you or others like you again. That is kindness and a relational use of power. The outcome might not be as you wish—the person may not show any remorse, they may not say they’re sorry, they might not change as quickly as you want—but you will give a sincere *effort to foster healing and reconciliation*. That is positive transformation of conflict—it is the essence of victim-offender reconciliation and restorative justice<sup>24</sup>, whether or not the injury is serious or the consequences are lasting. Being relational embraces the belief that people have capacity to change,

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<sup>24</sup> See [www.RestorativeJustice.org](http://www.RestorativeJustice.org) and the work of Ron and Roxanne Claassen—<http://Peace.Fresno.edu> and [www.DisciplineThatRestores.org](http://www.DisciplineThatRestores.org).

whether in that interactional moment or later when you may or may not see it, hear it, or experience it.

You might be saying, “That sounds nice, but how do I actually influence someone not to harm me or another again?” You can do it in many ways—especially when you are in a position of greater power—as you often are as a winner. The injury represents *a break in the trust relationship* between you and the other. There was something you *expected* from the other, you did not get it, and you were harmed. Your goal is to *reestablish that trust*. You have a desire to trust them again, and being kind means you take an active role in helping them provide a new basis for your trust and trust from others. So think about how you could trust them again. *How can they earn your trust back?* How can you be strong enough to be vulnerable enough to help them earn that trust?

Being relational means you help others build trust by *building their capacity to care for and desire not to harm* others. In some situations, the other might be you. This capacity is *not based on fear of punishment*. Forget about *doing justice*. Imposing harsh punishment and motivating the other to stay in line based on coercive fear is the easy way out. While it can be effective, it is often only short term. You choose instead to take the more difficult path of engagement with the other, *educating* them about how to build trust, *showing* them you care about bringing

Being relational embraces the belief that people have capacity to change, whether in that interactional moment or later when you may or may not see it, hear it, or experience it.

You help others build trust by *building their capacity to care for and desire not to harm* others.

them back into your trust and your community. You might have to do that from a safe distance through correspondence or face-to-face dialogue facilitated by a mediator. You don't leave yourself in a harmful relationship. You create healthy boundaries. You can make *incremental agreements to rebuild* confidence—small steps to reestablish trust. You praise success and, when there are failures, you take a step back and ask them to work harder.

The other might not come along with you on this journey to rebuild trust, but you offer it. You *persist* in offering it. They make their choice. It might take a long time. They may have many barriers to overcome—anger (at you or themselves), shame, fear,

Being relational means you believe that, for lasting positive change to occur, wrongdoing is healed only with a loving response.

mistrust, insecurity, physical or mental illness, past wounds (physical, mental and spiritual), excess testosterone, and even cultural norms favoring aggression. Being relational means you believe that,

for lasting positive change to occur, wrongdoing is healed only with a loving response. So you stick with it.

Along the way in this journey, as a conscious choice, *you release yourself and the other from the ongoing effect of the injury*. You release your need to hold on to the experience of the injury. You don't let an injury define you as a person. You don't let an injury define your group. Being a victim is not your identity and, while you don't deny your suffering, you don't choose it. You allow it, but then you let go of it. It is like the grieving process. Maybe you go through all the stages: denial, anger—at the other and yourself—bargaining, and depression. Maybe you cycle through them more than once. Maybe not, depending on the nature and severity

of your injury. You talk to people who care for you, knowing that a path to your healing is through their empathy and connection with you. Your injury is not a secret you hold privately, even if you think that you are partly responsible for it. You are humble and know there is no shame in sharing your hurts or your failures. And *you get there somehow*, knowing that your release of the injury is *essential* to your healing and happiness.

With that release you can begin to treat the other as a trusted brother or sister again. You are also open and trusting as you go forward and encounter others whom you might view with mistrust because of the injury you suffered. You *live without prejudice* toward others who, in your mind, are like the one that hurt you. You reject labels. You are centered and grounded. You don't triangulate and generalize your injury by applying it to a group.

If you struggle with this process of releasing your feelings of resentment, you can *think about how you do it with people close to you*. In a similar way as we discussed earlier with being generous, use your imagination. For us, the easiest example is our children. How does it feel when we forgive them? How does it feel when they forgive us? It is gentle, connected, with a smile that says, "It's okay, I still love you," knowing their internal well of goodness is deep and our internal well of goodness is deep. Forgiving or being forgiven by someone you are not as close to may not be exactly like that, but you can start there to move toward seeing the other as someone who can forgive you, someone you can forgive. Hold onto that thought, build on it. Find a place for peace within you. Allow for the quality of being open to emerge, a change in your experience with the other that makes room for the possibility of a better future interaction.

## Being Kind is Being Gentle

Forgiving is a gentle way of dealing with injury and being kind means you are gentle in all the ways you deal with others. As we talked about earlier, you are strong and brave and you don't use your power to harm others. In being clear, you are honest—in a gentle way. You are not brutally honest. You are also not soft or a push-over. You don't crumble and cave in. You find a *middle way of being*, between the extremes, that is good for both you and others. That way is gentle. The Seven Ways of Being Relational are your how-to for that middle way. They create a bridge, an opening, to something new in the interaction that did not exist before.

*For winners like you, lasting positive change in your family, workplace, community and world starts with you—being gentle in how you use your power because what you do affects others.* You want that effect to be positive. You want to maximize well-being for both self and other. Competition that crushes and oppresses others is not positive. There is a time and a place for competing—in sports, in games, in business, in sales, in donations, in votes—but even in these arenas there are limits. Using your power to get all that you can for yourself out of an interaction with another might seem good in the **short** run, but in the **long** run it leaves them poor and bitter and you rich and hollow. So you choose to be gentle in your dealings with others—embodying everything that is positively transformative—being generous, humble and kind.

It goes back to where we started, being relational versus being transactional.

You consider your interactions, all of them. You are aware of your power currencies and the many temptations to maximize

your own self-interest over another or at the expense of another. You are discerning and you consider how it feels for you when others maximize their self-interests over yours. You know that maximizing self-interest in the short run might get you what you think you want. Maybe not.

Being relational, you consider yourself and the impact on the other. You believe you can get what you want without disadvantaging others. You are thoughtful and discerning. You put effort into quality engagement. You have the ability to both look back and to imagine forward, and you have the capacity of self-observation in the moment. You practice being relational in every interaction. When you do, you enter into a sense of connectedness with others. A sense of *ease*. Being relational brings ease to interactions. Others feel it too. You maximize well-being. You are inspired and you inspire others to become more open. You create openness. With openness comes potential. You anticipate that something good will happen when you engage relationally. It is unknown exactly what that is or will be. You are okay with that. You know you can positively expect the unexpected.

Be relational. You know how to do it. We hope we helped you with that.

It's a very good way to be—for you, for others, for everyone.

## Questions for Your Consideration

In exploring Being Kind, consider the following questions. If you are not sure about your answers, go back and visit the chapter.

- What are your main sources of power in relation to others?  
How do you use them?
- What uses of power do you consider “out of bounds?” Why?
- How do you respond to a bully?
- What sources of power do you call upon when dealing with a bully?
- What is the consequence of forcing people to do things that they don’t want to do?
- Is it good to “Speak softly and carry a big stick?” Why? Why not?
- How do you use your power in relation to people over whom you have power and in relation to people you perceive as having less or equal power in relation to you?
- What is your response when you encounter people who need help?
- Do you agree with the statement “There is evil in the world that can only be dealt with through force, and violence if necessary.” Why? Why not?
- How does compassion require courage?
- How do you deal with time demands in deciding how to deal with other people?
- How do you respond to an injury or inconvenience caused by another person?
- How can you help people who injure you to earn back your trust?