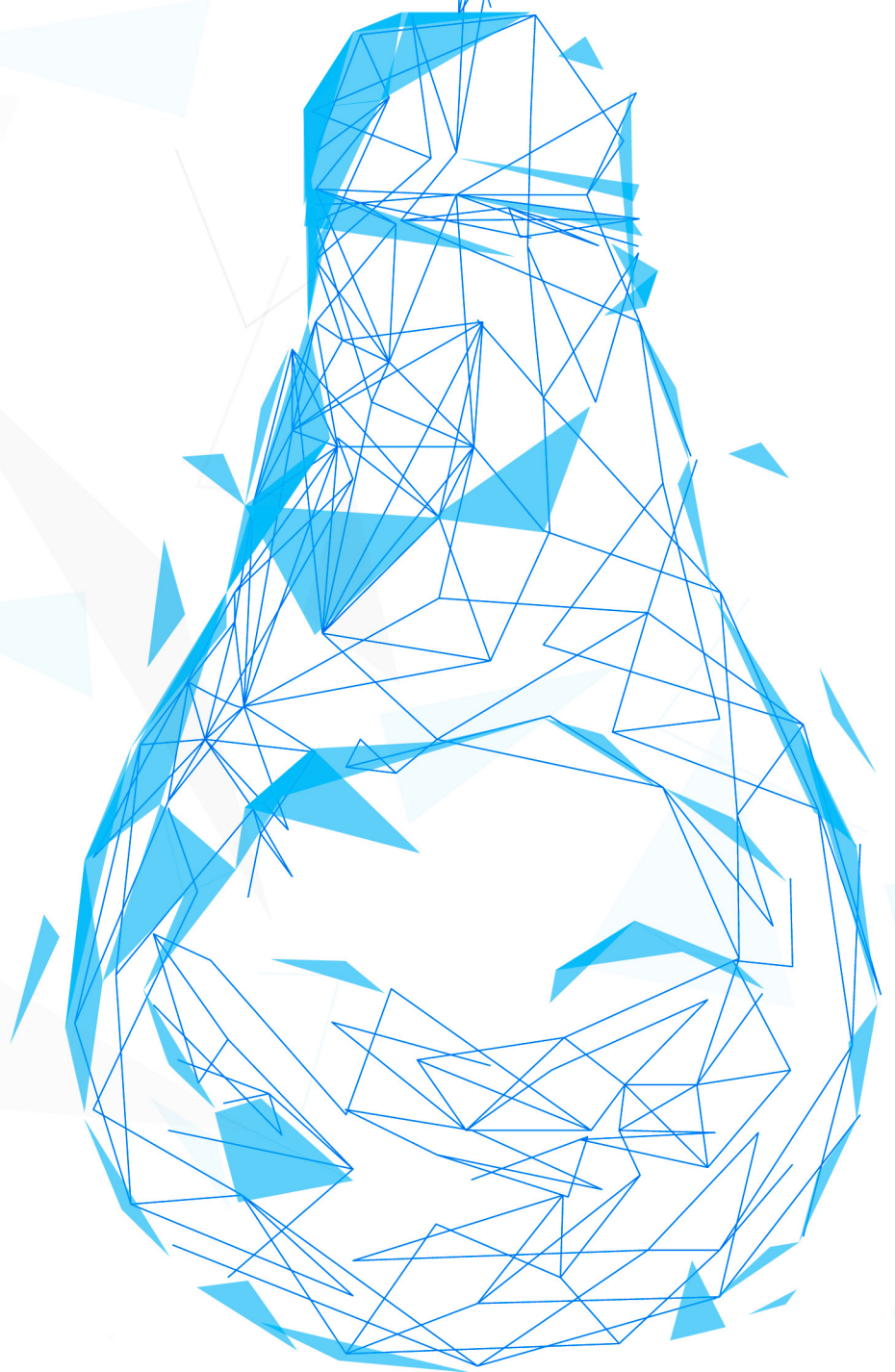


LIFE COACHING CERTIFICATE COURSE



THE RELATIONSHIP PRINIPLES

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The amount of trust in a relationship determines how much we are capable of influencing people. Trust isn't a constant value once it has been established: every interaction we have within an established or new relationship adjusts our level of trust to some degree, either positively or negatively. We can trust the person we're married to, but one day they can say something which breaks our trust, the next they can do something which exceeds it. The same goes for every relationship we have, be they familial, parental, platonic or romantic.

THE TRUST EQUATION IS:

CAN I TRUST YOU? = ARE YOU CREDIBLE? + ARE YOU RELIABLE? + LEVEL OF INTIMACY



SELF-ORIENTATION

Let's break down this equation. **Credibility** relates to competency. A person should be able to do what they proclaim they are able to do? How can people determine your credibility? This is all about separating talkers from doers. Certification is a symbol of learning but not experience. **Reliability** is about being able to consistently deliver on what you promise to deliver, be that professional, personal or metaphorical. **Intimacy** is all about boundaries: how confident am I in you in order to share myself with you? Boundaries do not always have to be defence mechanisms. Boundaries tell other people how they should treat you and what is and is not acceptable to discuss. Boundaries are not about keeping other people out but about keeping ourselves in. When we know that someone is more for you than against you and is more invested in understanding you than judging you, it becomes easier to open up to them. This is why we must prioritise building trust with our clients and self-evaluate whenever a client is seemingly closed off to us.

The coaching relationship is one of self-orientation: we must be constantly adjusting ourselves so that we are ready to modify ourselves for them when appropriate. Life coaches must always practice and allow our clients to experience our unconditional acceptance of them and our willingness to adjust according to where they're at.

THE SEVEN PILLARS OF HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Human relationships can be one of the most valuable, meaningful, and satisfying human experiences. Yet we frequently do them poorly. Where are we going wrong and what can we do to forge strong relational connections?

It seems so simple: boy meets girl, they fall in love. Perhaps they have to overcome barriers such as disapproving parents or nefarious love rivals, but when they finally get together everything is complete and they live happily ever after. Or not. That's the part of the story that the movies usually leave out. It's too complicated, too messy, but it also happens to be the real challenge.

Falling in love is the easy part, pretty much all of us have done it. Staying in love is a challenge. The former can be done by children with no maturity required, the latter is rarely accomplished by the immature; it requires people willing to build a relationship and acquired wisdom.



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As we start out on our journey to adulthood and fall in love for the first time we're unlikely to have too much wisdom. The seven pillars of relationships represented below take their inspiration from the book of Proverbs:

"Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn her seven pillars" - Proverbs 9:1

Successful, mindful relationships require wisdom. In the Buddhist tradition that gave us mindfulness practice, wisdom is a process of comprehension that comes through the transformation of learning into lived experience. This is represented in our 'right understanding' and 'right thought'. Applied to our meaningful relationships, this means we are on a quest to understand ourselves and our partner and to train our minds to think appropriately in the context of that relationship. Mindfulness is a practice that allows us to see clearly how we are thinking and behaving within our relationships.

A relationship is an endeavour undertaken by two people, and as such represents for most of us our best efforts to overcome the barriers that exist between people. We will never try harder than in our most significant relationships. The success of our efforts will depend on both parties committing to the journey, love, the pursuit of wisdom and understanding and unconditional acceptance. If one is committed and the other not, the relationship is not going to thrive.

If building a relationship is the pursuit of wisdom and commitment to values and principles that underpin it, it is also the perfect example of the expression of love. We who speak English, use the term 'love' as an all-encompassing term, from the sensual to the paternal/maternal, while other languages, including Pali (the language of many Buddhist texts), has multiple words to cover different kinds of love. When considering the pillars of a healthy relationship, we could consider them all to be expressions of these various kinds of love, which we'll consider more deeply below.

1) THE PILLAR OF LOVE

We understand that love is the foundation of any relationship. We all have an experience of love where we feel we would do anything for that other person. This is the beginning. The first kind of love identified by Buddha is 'Metta' is variously described as 'loving kindness' or 'a true friend in need'. It is a giving love that seeks no reward, a responsible love, a love that nourishes the giver and receiver. Couples too often keep a score in relationships, 'I do this for you therefore what do I get in return?' This is conditional giving and, therefore, not really love as love needs no repayment. The second kind of love is 'Karuna' or compassion. This expresses a kind of empathy and understanding. When our loved one suffers, we are able to understand that suffering without judgement. We support without trying to 'fix'. Even in a close relationship, it is not our place to disempower our loved one by trying to fix them - that is their right to achieve for themselves - but by empathising, listening and supporting, we enable our loved ones to progress past barriers in their life.

Partners or loved ones are often tempted to 'order' their loved ones onto a better path. They think they know best and become frustrated if the loved one does not act on their good advice. This demonstrates a desire to control and an unwillingness to accept their loved one. The third kind of love is 'Mudita' or happiness at others' success. Many a relationship has been poisoned by resentment of one partner to the other's success. If we truly love someone, we will be joyful at their every success. The fourth kind of love is 'Upekkha' or equanimity. It is our ability to remain steadfast in the face of all the travails that life throws at us.



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2) THE PILLAR OF HONOUR

"The greatest way to live with honour in this world is to be what we pretend to be." - Socrates
To be honourable in relationships, we must be authentic. We must be who we pretend to be. It is a different concept to respect, which is something we develop over time by observing or receiving the value someone else has to offer. To honour is to consider how your thoughts, actions and speech will impact the person with whom you have a significant relationship. By mindfully assessing our thoughts, actions and speech, we avoid causing pain and suffering, and we prioritise this over the desires of our own egos.

The immature person without a sense of honour may tell their partner what they think they want to hear whilst secretly thinking and believing something contrary. This is one way to lie. If we honour our partner, we are congruent, so we do not deceive or use truth as a weapon. Sometimes truth must be handled sensitively and communicated gently and with love - this is honourable.

3) THE PILLAR OF SELF-CONTROL

To be loving in a relationship we have to learn self-control. To practice self-control is to become the master of our minds and our emotions. To lack self-control is to be their puppet. If we react to every feeling and emotion without control, we can hurt the ones we love. Through mindfulness, we learn to slow down and put emotions and feelings in perspective. Through mindful awareness, we learn self-control, the ability to reflect maturely on our thoughts and therefore our actions. We take responsibility and show strength and reliability. This, in turn, builds trust and allows a loving relationship to flourish.

4) THE PILLAR OF RESPONSIBILITY

What we think informs our actions and how we act has repercussions in the world and in our personal relationships. If we act without thought, or we react to situations, then we are liable to cause harmful effects. By learning to take responsibility, we can act maturely and we can respond rather than react.

Mindful self-reflection is a path to responsibility. When we take responsibility for our thoughts, we take responsibility for our actions and relationships. 'Young love' can be full of thoughtless reaction because we react to perceived rejection or judgement. As we mature and take responsibility we move beyond such reactions, we can see cause and effect more clearly and respond with wisdom. Such character will serve us well when relationships get 'tough' or we experience hard times. Our ability to appreciate a bigger picture will allow us to ride out hard times and enjoy the fruits of responsible commitment.

5) THE PILLAR OF TRUTH

"I'm not upset that you lied to me, I'm upset that from now on I can't believe you." - Friedrich Nietzsche

Unless we are dedicated to truth, we allow our relationships to be built on uncertainty. It should be self-evident that to lie to a loved one is to tell them that we are not to be trusted which will have an inevitable negative consequence for the relationship.



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Maturity helps us face the truth. Through the application of mindful self-reflection, we learn to know the difference between beliefs, feelings, opinions and truth. If at the moment you consider your partner to have wronged you, the mature person will consider the larger picture; perhaps their partner is suffering for some reason and they are being 'hurtful' because they really need you. The mature person recognises this and responds compassionately. The immature reacts in defence of their fragile ego.

Those who are not yet mature will use deceit to cover their own immaturity; they fear the truth because it can be scary or burdensome. The mature have no need for deception: they can be truthful and authentic without being hurtful or uncompassionate. Truth can be hard, but dealt with sensitively it establishes real trust.

6) THE PILLAR OF FAITH

"Gamble everything for love, if you are a true human being. If not, leave this gathering. Half-heartedness doesn't reach into majesty." Rumi

A loving relationship is an act of faith. If we can not commit to faith, we can have a truly fulfilling relationship. Faith is born of the commitment, love and work that two people put into that relationship. If they are devoted to the other pillars, then faith can take root. If you truly trust someone, you put your entire faith in them. This is why the end of relationships can be like experiencing death because faith has been betrayed, a 'given' in life has suddenly been removed. It is a truly devastating experience. Equally, faith maintained can be a truly fulfilling experience. It is life's most singular and vital gamble.

Many are never willing to take that gamble and so they can not display faith. They cannot be truly honest or authentic and they can never have a truly fulfilling relationship; they are governed by fear and believe that not having a true connection is better than risking pain. Yet to truly live is to be mature and accept the potential of pain. To demonstrate faith is to believe in a transcendent quality of life more significant than the individual.

7) THE PILLAR OF VISION

Vision enables you to move forward. To have a vision is also an act of sacrifice, for we must sacrifice other choices in life in pursuit of a vision. When two people come together, they share their vision. They learn one another's passions, their true selves and their calling, perhaps even help one another discover these things. And so there is mutual self-sacrifice as two people move forward together toward a shared vision.

Having this shared vision encourages mutual accountability. With maturity, we take responsibility for our daily actions and how they contribute to a shared vision. The immature will hide from vision, pursue sensation or immediate gratification. The mature will sacrifice in the knowledge that fulfilment comes through sacrifice in pursuit of an authentic vision.

If you wish to develop relationships of deep quality and fulfilment and bring greater richness to your life and the lives of others then mindfully pursue of the establishment of these seven pillars in your own life with those you love.



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Examine your attitude towards each of these seven areas and ask yourself;

1. "Can my partner and friends be themselves around me?"
2. "Do I conduct myself in a way that honours other people?"
3. "Do I tell people the truth about what's in my heart?"
4. "Do I respond maturely in tight situations, or do I react and blame my attitudes and behaviours on other people?"

Remember, nobody can control your choices but you. Nobody can maintain your honour but you. Nobody can manage your truth but you. Nobody can maintain your self-control or responsibility but you. And nobody can execute your vision and faith but you. The quality of the relationships that you go on to build is ultimately up to you.

THE THREE PERCEPTUAL POSITIONS

Perceptual Positions is an excellent technique and can be very useful in shifting a person's perceptual filters of experience. This unique process allows us to experience three separate sensory perspectives of an event, from that of our self to another and an objective observer.

Perceptual positions can be used to help an individual to step back from their limited perspective to get distance from their emotional interpretation of any given situation. You can use this technique as a life coach to better understand and empathise with your clients, for it will help you gain valuable insights into another individual's experience of the world.

We've all had an experience that annoyed or frustrated us long after the event occurred. Attached to this negative experience are feelings and, perhaps, some relevant images and sounds. The same process occurs for extremely positive experiences too; the internal feelings, images and sounds of holidays, special events, etc., can stay with a person long after the event. When you are fully in an experience like this, it's called '**first position**'.

Have you ever found yourself walking, talking and using body posture and gestures similar to that of someone else? Almost as if you had become just like this person? Have you ever learned a new skill by acting as if you were the person who you know embodies the skills you are practising? In your mind's eye, you became this other person. Young children learn in the same way: by mimicking those around them. Actors also step into the shoes of another individual when playing a role. When you assume another person's perspective like this, it's called '**second position**'.

Do you ever mentally step back from interaction and get the sense that you can see and hear yourself in those that you are interacting with? Almost as if you were watching events unfold on a cinema screen, and you were a character on the screen? When you step back and are able to observe yourself as a person outside of yourself, this is called '**third position**'. This is a very powerful technique for improving the quality of our relationships: at home, socially or even at work. It allows us to understand another person's viewpoint — from their 'perspective' — which then allows you to use this insight to improve/adapt the way in which you communicate with them.



You can use the Perceptual Positions Technique to:

- Develop a better understanding of others.
- Think more creatively and be more flexible.
- Give yourself the opportunity to stand back and consider issues objectively.
- Better understand the impact of your verbal and non-verbal behaviour on others — and the impact of their behaviour on you.
- Review an interaction you've had with another person, or prepare for an important conversation.

Self-Reflection Exercise: Perceptual Positions

Take some time to complete the following exercise to better understand perceptual repositioning. Consider a situation involving someone else that has caused you frustration or a problem in your life.

Step 1. First Position:

Firstly, consider this situation from your own perspective. Imagine that you are witnessing the situation with your own eyes, looking at this other person. What do you see? What do you hear? Is this your own voice, your own self-talk? What is this other person saying to you? How are you behaving and reacting? How are you feeling?

This will give you information about the situation from your own perspective. Once you've gathered all the insights from Position 1, step out of that position.

Step 2. Second Position:

Now become the other person. Step into this other person's shoes and experience the situation completely from their perspective. What do they feel? Describe this situation as if you were the other person. Having gathered all the information from the other person's perspective, now step out of that position.

Step 3. Third Position:

This is where you reimagine the scene, and collect information from an objective, observer's stance. Imagine that you're a neutral, third party looking down at the situation. Gather information and describe what the situation's like according to the neutral third party observer. What does it look like when you consider things from this perspective?

Step 4. Now consider what you've learned in second and third position and take these new learnings back to Position 1 and Position 2. How has your perspective changed in light of your new learnings?

This is a great (and very simple) technique to help either yourself or your clients, to become more mindfully aware of perspectives that are different from their own. Try it on someone (or, try it on yourself) and see!



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Answer the following self-reflection questions to help you consider the ideas presented in this workbook in the context of your own life:

1. How has your appreciation of perceptual positions and the concept of looking at your experiences from other perspective has helped you become more relatable? Give some examples.
2. Can you identify any unhelpful thinking patterns which have become your default way of perceiving certain situations?
3. Can you think of any times when your unwillingness to consider other people's perspectives have cost you a connection?
4. Think of a relationship you've lost. What part has your communication played in the breakdown of a relationship?
5. If you put yourself in the other person's shoes, how do you think they would have perceived the relationship and how did they experience you? This isn't about guesswork - how do you know they experienced you?
6. Now imagine yourself being a fly on the wall watching your relationship - how would an objective outsider view your relationship? What would they think the people wanted and what would they think they were choosing - connection or disconnection?

