

Improving Your Relationships

Jim Tamm & Ron Luyet

In previous articles we've addressed the five essential skills for building successful collaborative relationships. We've shown that paying attention to these five skills can pay big dividends for both individuals and companies. A little improvement in these five skills can result in measurable improvements to your bottom line. Communications improve, trust goes up, and relationships become much more effective. In a six-year study, individuals felt they were 45% more effective at getting their interests met. A separate three-year research project documented an average 67% reduction in the rate of conflict in 94 organizations studied.

The Five Essential Skills

1. **Collaborative Intention:** Maintaining a non-defensive presence and making a conscious



Jim Tamm, a former judge, is on the faculty of the International Mgmt. Program at the Stockholm School of Economics, The Leadership Academy of the University of California, and MBA programs in Lima Peru, Panama City and Mexico City.



Ron Luyet is a Senior Consultant for Business Consultants Inc., an international training company. He has worked with Fortune 500 companies for over 35 years in the areas of building trust, engagement and collaboration at work.

personal commitment to seeking mutual gains in your relationships. We call this being in the Green Zone, as opposed to being in the Red Zone which is a more adversarial attitude that we can slip into unconsciously.

2. **Truthfulness:** Committing to both speak and listen to the truth, and the ability to create an atmosphere where it feels safe enough to raise difficult issues.
3. **Self-Accountability:** Taking responsibility for the full range of choices we make either through action or inaction, and taking responsibility for both the intended and unintended or unforeseen consequences of those choices.
4. **Self-Awareness and Awareness of Others:** Committing to know yourself deeply and showing a willingness to deal with difficult interpersonal issues.
5. **Solving Problems and Negotiating:** Skillfully negotiating your way through the conflict that is inevitable in any long-term relationship.

These five skills are lifelong tasks, but it is possible to start anew each day.

We've tried to give you new insight into navigating your way into more successful long-term collaborative relationships. We urge you to practice these skills each day because there is no better way to improve relationships than to jump in and keep practicing. These five skills are lifelong tasks, but it is possible to start anew each day. Your power is in

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choosing not to be overwhelmed, but to ask, "How can I take a few little steps on this journey today?" If you do that, then tomorrow will take care of itself.

So we end with action you can take today to improve your ability to be in a successful relationship.

Fifteen things you can do TODAY to improve your ability to be in a successful relationship.

1. **Tell your truth.** Don't be afraid to let yourself and others know what your personal truth is.
2. **Realize that you choose.** Eagerly accept responsibility for what is happening in your life. Accept that you are responsible for your own happiness, and that only you can make yourself whole.
3. **Seek deeper self-awareness.** Reflect, read, discuss, meditate, or involve yourself in any activity that aids your awareness of your old programs and deeper levels of being.
4. **Respond emotionally.** Allow yourself to "feel." Have your feelings rather than letting your feelings have you, or numbing out. Realize that all emotions are acceptable, but not all actions are acceptable.
5. **Give up blame and postpone judgment.** We're all trying our best to get by. Seek to understand what is happening and how you contributed to that. Attempt to listen and clarify one another's viewpoints and interests before defending yourself or making others wrong.
6. **Seek to not consciously hurt others.** Living in the Red Zone causes others pain and takes a severe toll on the quality of our own life. Consciously living in the Green Zone daily and respecting others adds to our lives.
7. **Take time to envision yourself as you want to be.** Motivate yourself by thinking about your future, rather than letting yourself be shoved through life by your past. Start being whom you want to be.today.
8. **Consciously change your limiting beliefs.** Don't wait for experience to change them for you.
9. **Assert yourself.** Be aware of your boundaries and stand up for yourself. If you don't, who will?
10. **Be as sincere and as vulnerable as possible.** Explore being "present" rather than being "right."
11. **Be in touch with your body and its wisdom.** Seek alignment and connection with the head, heart, and belly. They have much to tell you if you listen.
12. **Seek a higher meaning or purpose in your life.** Explore ways to collaborate with others by doing something you are passionate about, in the service of others.
13. **Treat your personal growth with respect, excitement, and patience, rather than judgment.** Personal growth is a lifelong job. It requires commitment and compassion. Focus each day on becoming your best cheerleader rather than your worst critic.
14. **Give to give.** Give yourself away daily to purpose, people, places and things you love. Stop waiting for others to love first, accept you, or make it safe for you.
15. **Laugh a little.** Some things are much too important to be taken seriously. ■