



7 Steps On The Path to Partnership

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Partnership is a life skill that nobody teaches us in school. I've never seen any Partnership 101 classes in college, either. The concept of partnership is one of those things we are just expected to know how to do. But instead, we are left to figure it out on our own, using trial and error. In some ways, our parents, teachers, and ancestors (also muddling through in their own relationships) have tried to help us along by telling us things they'd learned such as, "relationships take compromise," "be a good friend," "pick your battles," "what's good for the goose is good for the gander," and "do unto others as you'd have them do unto you." Unfortunately, following this clichéd advice is not what creates partnership.





Partnership is one of those words that we think we know the meaning; that is, until we are asked to define it. Go ahead and try. Not so easy, is it? The dictionary comes in handy at times like these. One definition describes it as *a relationship between two people carrying on a joint venture with a view to profit, each incurring liability for losses and the right to share in the profits*. Doesn't sound very romantic – or is it?

Let's take a closer look at it. *A relationship between two people (you and me) carrying on a joint venture (doing something together) with a view to profit (aiming to be better off) each incurring liability or losses and the right to share in joint profits (both losing when there is a loss, and both winning when there is a gain)*. Thus, we are on the same side, helping and supporting each other towards some common goal. Beautiful things are possible here when we are working together as a team.





When you are in a relationship with someone you care about, and you keep score, you play the tit-for-tat game, you try to be right, you try to make sure everything is equal or fair, or you are generally antagonistic with each other, you are not in a partnership. **You are in survival mode:** when you win, they lose, and when they win, you lose. That is definitely not romantic!

Healthy partnerships don't happen by chance or by fate; they are consciously created moment by moment, day in and day out. Unfortunately, you aren't likely to be able to create a healthy partnership with anyone until first you get clear for yourself about what you're already doing that's not working. You can start to do this by following the seven steps outlined below.





1 Change your point of view

If you're in a relationship that's making you miserable, no matter what your circumstances are, no matter your situation, no matter your partner, *how it is occurring to you* is what is making you unhappy. It's not the relationship, the circumstances, the situation, and it's not even your partner; it is your point of view.

If your point of view makes your partner look like a jerk and that's upsetting to you, change your point of view. What you see depends on where you stand. Figure out a way to give your partner the benefit of the doubt that they are not trying to be a jerk.





2 Explain your anger

When something doesn't go our way, our initial response is for a survival mechanism to kick in as we react to a perceived threat. In other words, we get defensive. The trouble is defensiveness looks and sounds to others like anger, which proceeds to cause a predictable downward spiral of results (which begins with triggering the defensiveness of your partner). Unfortunately, this only produces unhappiness and dissatisfaction for everyone involved.

Rather than express your anger, learn how to explain it. You'll get better results, and as a bonus your partner will appreciate and respect your self-control and your honesty.





3 Let go of unrealistic expectations

*M*ost of the time we get upset, the upset comes from an unfulfilled expectation. Unfulfilled expectations can be described as things you thought would happen but didn't. Or, things you thought wouldn't happen, but did.

Consider the possibility that technically, you are not upset over the thing that did or did not happen; that thing you're blaming on your partner is not what has you being upset. Your expectation is. You made it up; learn how to let it go.





4 End the vicious circles

Do you and your partner go around in circles? Do you have the same arguments again and again and nothing ever seems to change? Albert Einstein said insanity was doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. Recognize that arguing in circles is not only insanity, it's useless. In addition, trying to change someone or their behavior is useless. Knock it off.

Quit wasting your time and theirs. Find a way to do something different to get better results.





5 Tell the truth

*I*t's easy to let yourself become a victim because that often happens automatically. We are quick to write a story about what happens to us, and we believe that the story is the truth.

*A*dmit to yourself that there is a difference between what happened and what you say about what happened. Be honest about which is which. Remember that you're not upset about what happened; you're upset about your interpretation of what happened. Learn to distinguish between the facts and the story you made up about the facts.





6 Go for results

*I*t's easy to complain and blame others when your needs aren't being met. But guess what? You'll never get your needs met unless and until you know what they are. And, if you don't know what you need, how can you expect others to know? People can't read minds (and they don't take hints either) despite how much you wish it were true.

*B*e clear and specific with yourself first. Find a way to figure out exactly what it is that you need.





7 Get agreement

*L*earn how to communicate exactly what you need in a way that works, meaning in a way that gets you results. Very likely, your partner is willing to give you what you need, but they have never been asked.

Consider that despite what you think, up until now you have not yet communicated your needs to them; you've been doing something else. Find out what works and do that.





By following these seven steps as a practice, you take yourself out of survival mode. You are on the path to partnership – now your relationships have the chance to become partnerships. You distinguish what is your self from what is your partner in a very healthy way. By getting clear about where you stand, what you need, and what's really going on, you allow yourself to be your best self. You give yourself the opportunity to communicate in a way that allows you to be heard and understood.

In addition, you give your partner the space they need to be their best self. You no longer trigger their defensiveness and you open the door that allows the possibility of intimacy, connection, happiness, and all of the rewards partnerships make available.

Congratulations!

Want to find out more?





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