PARTNERSHIP | PERSONAL GROWTH | RELATIONSHIP

Creating agreements that work

If you create agreements that reflect the authentic motivation of each person and you plan for predictable breakdowns in a way that fosters accountability you can relax into a new certainty and trust in your most important relationships.

by **Layne and Paul Cutright**

1510 words | 6 pages

People yearn for relationships they can trust. They want to be able to depend on people. They want relationships characterized by ease, clarity and harmonious cooperation. But, is there any adult who hasn't felt let down or betrayed by someone who didn’t live up to his or her agreements?

What Is an Agreement?

What is an agreement really?

> ***An agreement is a method for coordinating action between two or more people.***

It is supposed to smooth the way for efficient harmonious interaction. But why do people so frequently not live up to their word? Usually an agreement fails because it does not reflect the true desire and motivation of all the people making the agreement. People who agree to something because they are afraid of what will happen if they don’t agree, will more than likely not follow through, unless they are pressured to do so.

It is important to know that agreements alone will not secure the safety and dependability we all yearn for. For an agreement to be effective the internal motivator that drives it should be so compelling that the people involved are aroused to fulfill their part, of their own volition. In other words, an agreement you can count on has to come from the right place.

Why Am I Agreeing to This?

That means that each person must answer the question, “For the sake of what am I agreeing to this?” This reason needs to be explicit. You can’t assume the same thing motivates everyone. You have to question, discuss and clarify.

> ***Successful agreements are always driven by a clear purpose that inspires action.***

There are two very important things that need to be part of a process for creating agreements that will work; a clear and inspiring purpose for your agreements and a process for restoring trust when an agreement has been broken.

A good purpose statement for sharing household chores might be something like; “We agree to share in household chores so that we can enjoy a relationship that is free from resentment and filled with trust, intimacy, passion and fun!” For business agreements something like, the purpose of the following agreements is to ignite an unstoppable force for imagination, creativity and collective accomplishment.” It is also a good idea to post this declaration in a place where it will be seen frequently by the participating members, e.g., refrigerator, coffee room, bulletin board.

Once you have crafted an inspiring purpose statement for your agreements and you have listed the agreements, make sure they are consistent with your purpose. Then you need to determine a protocol for handling the inevitable broken agreement. This protocol needs to be something everyone accepts and is willing to use.

Agreements Aren't Always Kept

Yes, it may be sad but true that even with the best intentions, sometimes agreements aren’t kept. You agree to be on time and you get a flat tire. You agree to pay a special project bonus and your biggest account defaults on a payment. The best kind of protocol is one that quickly restores trust and completely neutralizes any disappointment or hard feelings. This is important because we want to make sure the memory of

the event doesn't carry forward any resentment, blame or guilt. Any of these feelings are toxic to a harmonious future.

> ***We have found that using amendments to restore broken agreements is a stellar solution.***

When someone does not keep an agreement for whatever reason, they offer an amendment to the other person. It is much better if someone does not have to ask for an amendment, but the person who did not keep the agreement readily offers it.

Apologies and Amendments

An amendment is different from an apology. An apology includes saying, "I'm sorry", and how you will handle things differently in the future.

> ***An amendment is something you do to make up for whatever disappointment or bad feeling happened when the agreement was not kept as promised.***

An amendment is not a punishment. It is an opportunity to restore trust. What you offer for an amendment depends on the intensity of inconvenience or distress the other person experienced because you did not keep the agreement as promised.

Imagine someone who is late for a meeting and says upon arrival, "I apologize for being late. I'm sorry you were kept waiting and wondering. How about I bring flowers for the front desk tomorrow to make up for it?" Offering an apology and an amendment is a winning combination. It is a very grown up move that rekindles trust and allows everyone involved to bounce back to a very high level of teamwork.

Amendments work best when they are pleasurable for everyone involved. Treating someone to lunch is a better amendment than cleaning their car,

unless of course you enjoy cleaning cars. Buying flowers tomorrow is better than doing a big thing in two or three weeks.

No Big Deal?

Sometimes people want to pretend that the agreement being broken was “no big deal” and an amendment is not necessary. We caution you against this consistent reaction. It sends the wrong message.

> ***It is important for people to keep their word, to be accountable for their promises.***

The ill feelings that come from broken agreements can build up over time. Using amendments is a great way of averting the kind of disastrous blow-ups that happen when people get fed up.

It is a good idea to bring a light heart, a sense of humor and your creativity to the amendment process. Remember the purpose of an amendment is to restore trust and harmony to a relationship.

Written Agreements or Verbal Agreements?

Sometimes people balk at the idea of written agreements. It seems like too much trouble. But if you take a step back and look at most of the failures in your relationships you will probably notice most of them came from lack of clarity and alignment.

> ***The hallmark of an enlightened partnership is intentional design.***

Great relationships don’t just happen, mediocre ones do.

The process of clarifying purpose and agreements is a necessary part of the design process for relationships. The conversations you will have will illuminate what is truly important to each person. This knowledge is essential in creating relationships that work well over the long term. If you create agreements that reflect the authentic motivation of each person and you plan for predictable breakdowns in a way that fosters

accountability you can relax into a new certainty and trust in your most important relationships.

Paul and Layne Cutright have been in a romantic and professional partnership since 1976. It's not hard to do the math and figure that's 30 years! In that time they have taught tens of thousands of people in their seminars, workshops, trainings and private practice. They have trained many therapists, coaches, teachers and trainers in the unique methodologies they have developed for helping people create successful, fulfilling personal and professional relationships.

Paul and Layne have taught intimate groups in living rooms and conference rooms filled with thousands of participants, and everything in between. They work with both individuals and businesses and have worked with senior and mid-level executives from New York to Tokyo. They have also presented at the *International Conference on Conflict Resolution* in St. Petersburg, Russia to attendees from over 20 countries.

From 1977 to 1984 Layne and Paul conducted an experiment in radical personal transformation by creating the *Intensive Personal Evolution Program*, a six-month immersion experience which met over 20 hours per week! The program, developed in Hawaii where they lived, was a magnet that attracted people from all over the world to participate. Their "experiment" was wildly successful and provided the seminal foundation from which their current work has evolved.

Above all, Layne and Paul are committed to providing practical, proven tools based on solid principles that anyone can learn to create, heal, improve and transform their relationships. They are unique in their field, having created the first "systems" approach to relationships coaching, consulting and education.

Paul and Layne also are prolific writers and have written *"Straight From the Heart"*, a book on high performance communication, "*You're Never Upset for the Reason You Think*", their best seller about "radical personal responsibility" and conflict resolution. They have authored multiple courses and training programs including Secrets and Strategies for Successful Relationships and their latest creation, Paul and Layne's Ultimate Relationship Success System.

In 1998 they took their business to the Internet creating a "virtual" knowledge and coaching enterprise that reaches people worldwide.

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