

The Five Keys to Powerful Partnerships

There are five keys necessary to unlock the potential of your most important relationships, turning them into powerful partnerships.

by **Layne and Paul Cutright**

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Partnerships are intentional relationships between two or more people who want to create a future together.

That future could be anything from a life long marriage to a business partnership to a short-term project. Your partnerships are among the most important relationships you will ever have. And, like all our relationships, they are vulnerable to misunderstandings, miscommunications, upsets and breakdowns. It's just that there is often much more at stake in our partnerships.

There are five keys necessary to unlock the potential of your most important relationships, turning them into powerful partnerships. They are:

1. Practicing "High Performance" Communication
2. Having a working knowledge of the 5 Stages of Relationship
3. Using a "Design Model" for your partnership
4. Practicing "Radical Personal Responsibility"
5. Committing to using your partnership for conscious evolution

High Performance Communication

Our definition of “high performance” communication is communication that is honest, compassionate, direct, and honors the dignity of everyone involved.

Relationships live in language.

That means that the quality of your regular, everyday communication determines the quality of your relationships.

Your communication is not just the words you say; it is how you say those words. The result you get in your communication with others is determined by your intention. Your intention is the superior force in any communication because your intention, conscious or unconscious, is the “carrier wave” for the words. People will usually respond to the energy with which you say something more than the words you say.

Powerful communication is congruent, meaning the words you say are consistent with your emotions and your intention.

Another, often overlooked, part of communication is listening. As the listener, you have the power to influence the quality of a conversation by how you listen. Have you ever been in a conversation in which the person to whom you were speaking was not listening, or distracted, or thinking about something else entirely — like what they wanted to talk about?

How did that make you feel? Have you ever done that with anyone? How does it feel to have someone’s complete and undivided attention when you are speaking? How you listen to another, especially your partner, can have a direct affect on their self-esteem and their sense of value. The

quality of your communication determines whether you feel connected or not.

We have written an entire book about “high performance” communication called *Straight From the Heart*. You can have a look at it at our website at www.PaulandLayne.com/bookstore/communication.htm.

Have a Working Knowledge of the Five Stages of Relationship

The second key to powerful partnerships is having a working knowledge of the five stages of relationship.

The five stages are Attraction, Power Struggle, Cooperation, Synergy and Completion.

The most problematic stages for most people are Power Struggle and Completion. People often ask us if the Power Struggle stage is necessary. Who wouldn't want to avoid power struggle? People don't exactly jump up and down with excitement when they enter that stage, like they might in the attraction stage!

The Power Struggle stage is necessary in that it is all about building trust. And trust is necessary if a relationship is to mature. Power Struggle isn't bad; it's just inevitable, predictable, unavoidable and recurrent. That is, it happens more than once in any long-term relationship. Why? Because each time you increase the commitment in a relationship, e.g., investing more time, money, emotion, etc., more trust is required. Whenever more trust is required, you will temporarily revisit Power Struggle.

The other problematic stage is completion. Everything that is created has a beginning, middle and end. And that includes your partnerships.

There are four ways partnerships end:

1. death
2. slowly drifting apart
3. abrupt expulsion

4. consciously

The first is obvious, as when one of the partners dies. The second is when partners may be separated by geography, time, interests or what-have-you. They find little in common to sustain the partnership. The third occurs with an apparently irreconcilable upset and the partnership is abruptly ended, usually with very bad feelings.

Obviously, the most desirable of the four is consciously, but most people don't know how to do that.

Conscious completion involves acknowledging what you have learned from the partnership, what you have contributed to the partnership, making any apologies that might be necessary and asking for and extending forgiveness.

Often, completion is about changing the form of the partnership, as in parents who are divorcing. They will no longer be in the form of marriage, but they will continue to be partners at some level in co-parenting their children. In this case, conscious completion is very important for developing or maintaining mutual respect, dignity and caring in the partnership.

There are particular skills to learn and master for each of the five stages and specific things to avoid. We suggest you download and print out the five stages article and read through the skills for each stage, checking off the ones you know you need to work on. This will give you a personalized curriculum for being able to master relationships and help you to create powerful partnerships.

Using a Design Model

Would you even consider building a house without an architect and a blueprint? You wouldn't get some wood, nails and a hammer and just start putting something together and hope it turned into a house you would want to live in, would you? People do the equivalent with their partnerships all the time. They "believe" it will work out because it just "feels" right. Most people leave the success of their most important relationships up to chance and luck, in the hope that it will turn out. But, of course, it seldom does and then they are left wondering, "What did I do wrong?"

Clearly, love and/or good intentions are not enough to guarantee success in your partnerships.

In addition to those things, you also need a strong measure of education and skill — education about what it takes to have relationships succeed, and skill in standard practices of success. It also helps to have a good coach to help you out along the way in applying your knowledge and developing your practices.

Here is a simple 3 part model we have found to be extremely effective for designing partnerships.

Purpose – Results – Form

First, be clear on the purpose of your partnership. You can get to that by asking "**why?**" – Why are we in this partnership?

Purpose determines the direction you are going in.

Purpose statements are best kept simple and general. Then, write out the results you want to accomplish. Those could be feelings, experiences, products or services, depending on the nature of the partnership. This is where you get specific. Results are the "**what**". Look to see if the results you want in your partnership are consistent with your purpose. If they

aren't, then you know you will have trouble down the road. Last, determine the best form to serve your purpose that will help you achieve your desired results. Some examples of forms of relationship are friends, teammates, business colleagues, business partners, dating, engagement, marriage.

Form is tied to the roles you play in your life.

Form is all about “**how**” you will achieve your desired results and ongoingly fulfill your purpose.

Here is an example of what this might look like. Take two people who are attracted to each other romantically and are falling in love. They start talking about building a future together. If they were to use this design model, they would have deep conversations about the purpose of their relationship. They may decide their purpose is simply to bring out the best in each other. The kinds of results they want to experience in their relationship could include fun, laughter, deep, heart-felt sharing, travel, time apart, creativity, sexual pleasure, intellectual stimulation and community involvement. They would then have conversations about what the best form might be to accomplish those results, given their purpose.

One of the important things to remember about form is that form changes. If the couple in our example is having these conversations as the level of serious dating, they may look at “going steady” and being monogamous. Or if they are further along in their relationship, they may consider being engaged. All of these are forms, and they change over time as commitment deepens and trust is developed.

Practicing Radical Personal Responsibility

Here is something that is very important to understand. Upsets, disagreements, misunderstandings, miscommunications and breakdowns are inevitable, predictable and unavoidable in your partnerships. Now, why in the world would we say something like that? What about positive thinking? Just look into your own experience. Haven't you had upsets and disagreements despite your best intentions and despite your positive thinking? Unfortunately, good intentions and positive thinking are not enough to avoid or prevent upsets and misunderstandings. They are a

fact of life in human relationships at this stage of our development. What is really required is a new way of interpreting these events. And that requires the knowledge and skill necessary to truly use them as opportunities for healing and spiritual growth.

It is extremely important to have a mutually agreed upon, pre-determined means for handling these things when they occur. If you wait to see how you resolve your upsets when you actually have them, you will be setting yourselves up to lose and possibly making the situation even worse.

We have written a best selling book on this subject called *You're Never Upset for the Reason You Think: Secrets and Strategies for Resolving Any Upset Quickly and Easily*. You may learn more about it www.PaulandLayne.com/bookstore/conflict.htm.

Now, the fourth and fifth keys work closely together, so we will talk about both of them here. The fifth key is:

Using Your Partnerships for Conscious Evolution

What does "conscious evolution mean"? Simply put, it means that you recognize that your partnerships provide you with a powerful opportunity for your personal and spiritual growth. And you can truly take advantage of the opportunities present in your partnerships if you share a commitment to use your relationship with each other for your mutual growth and evolution.

The greatest opportunities for conscious evolution lay in your upsets with others and how you handle them.

Practicing radical personal responsibility means not blaming your partner or yourself.

Rather, you look together to see how you can learn from the upset. This is based upon the idea that you are never upset for the reason that you think, and there is value in looking deeper than the obvious. It is the recognition that most present time upsets are simply an activation of unresolved pain and hurts from the past and that this current upset is truly a healing opportunity.

When you practice high performance communication, when you know where you are within the five stages of partnership, when you are using a proven model to consciously design your partnership to be the way you want it to be, when you can use your present time upsets to help you resolve your unresolved issues from the past, and you and your partner have an agreement to be allies with each other in that process, then you are practicing conscious evolution and living in a powerful partnership.



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.

Paul & Layne Cutright
Coaches, Consultants, Trainers, EFT Master Practitioners

PaulandLayne.com

Secrets and Strategies for Successful Relationships
at Home and in Business

<http://www.PaulandLayne.com>

partners@paulandlayne.com

Vox - 505-474-6018

Fax - 505-212-0083