

The Power of the Other: The startling effect other people have on you, from the boardroom to the bedroom and beyond-and what to do about it (Cloud, Henry)

For example, research shows over and over again that people trying to reach goals succeed at a much greater rate if they are connected to a strong human support system.

I want to shift the conversation from a focus only on you (i.e., here is how you can develop yourself) to a recognition that your own performance is either improved or diminished by the other people in your scenario.

Said another way, for us to get to the next level, we need relationships that help us develop both our brains and our minds in very specific ways. When those relationships operate in a certain way, we get better. When they don't, we don't. We either stay the same or go backward.

The structure, activities, and quality of those relationships are crucial. If the relationships are positive, attuned, empathic, caring, supportive, and challenging, then they cause positive development in the brain and increase performance capacities.

But getting better is not about just 'willing' better performance. It's about becoming someone who performs better, and performs differently. It's about changing the equipment."

The reality is that you are always in one of four places of connection. No matter what life circumstances you are going through on the outside—victory or defeat, or somewhere in between—there are only four possibilities of connection that you can be in at any given time. It is the premise of this book, and science and experience agree, that figuring out where you are is one of the most important things you can do for yourself.

True connection always means being emotionally and functionally invested in other people, in a give-and-receive dynamic. Disconnection lacks something, in one direction or the other—either in the giving or the receiving. Truly connected people do both.

Under disconnected leaders, decision making tends to be done in isolation, either solely by the leaders or in organizational silos that they build or foster.

If you want to find out where you are, just ask the people in your life who depend on you. Ask them if they feel needed, valued, listened to, and taken into your confidence.

No one delivers a great performance while lost in negative self-evaluation. Corner Number Two annihilates high performance through self-doubt and self-deprecation. You become more concerned with gaining someone's approval than with the performance itself.

Trying to measure up, trying to get someone to approve—that's playing defense in its most crippling form. You should be playing and concentrating on the game, but instead you're concentrating on what someone else thinks about how you are playing.

Kevin, now playing defense, was no longer being all of himself. He had moved into response reactive mode. He started second-guessing himself and worrying about each and every action he took. In a word, he'd lost his mojo—the edge that great leaders have. Life in Corner Number Two, feeling inferior to someone's appraisal of him, was taking its toll.

In the simplest terms, a real connection is one in which you can be your whole self, the real, authentic you, a relationship to which you can bring your heart, mind, soul, and passion. Both parties to the relationship are wholly present, known, understood, and mutually invested. What each truly thinks, feels, believes, fears, and needs can be shared safely.

There is no such thing as a self-made man or woman. Every great leader has opened up to someone who could meet a need, whatever that might have been. The range of human needs is broad, but the way to meet those needs is very narrow: it involves humbly and honestly embracing the need and reaching out to the "power of the other." There is no other way.

The true fuel of performance comes first from the experience of connectedness that is available only in Corner Four, where you experience the other as being with you, and for you. This is what neuroscience and researchers like Dr. Siegel have shown over and over. In some situations, though, refueling requires more than just a quiet, understanding listener. Sometimes it must be action oriented, as well.

He then went on to say some pretty hard things for some to hear, but it went well. It had helped that they had just talked about this very issue—that in Corner Four we care about each other and we say the truth. We take it constructively, not personally.

When a floundering team gets a new member, that person brings in new knowledge, intelligence and insights that release new energy into the group. The whole team is lifted up.

Keep the learning high, and you will keep the energy high as well.

There are simple ways to do this. Just get a good leadership book every month, have the team read it, and take a little time once a week to discuss what you all are learning. Watch the energy go up.

Self-control is a big deal in human performance. Getting better depends upon it. You cannot get better if it's not you who has to get better. You are the performer, period. You are the only thing you can control.

The answer is yes. We all are confused. The reason we're confused is that we see self-control and our individual performance as totally dependent upon ourselves and what we do, which is right, and as having nothing to do with anyone else, which is wrong. The truth is that, while our self-control and performance is totally in our control, it derives much of its sustenance from the power of our formative relationships. Yes, others, in the past and the present, help build our capacity for self-control. That is the paradox of performance.

Said another way, how much you perceive yourself as being in control of your life depends in part on how much the most significant people in your life support that ability and simultaneously hold you responsible for it.

Two things stand out in this exchange: First, Jack was able to express that ownership directly to the person who supported him the most. Second, his dad respected Jack's sense of being in control of his performance. This combination—being in control and being supported and respected in your choices even when your other disagrees with them—is one of the most powerful elements of Corner Four relationships. This combination empowers people to achieve their greatest performances, fueled by the other and set free to soar on their own.

How many people of great talent wish that their bosses, parents, coworkers, spouses, or friends could be unobtrusive rooters, giving them freedom as well as support and not withdrawing when they decide to follow their own paths?

Not only do Corner Four relationships give us freedom, but also they require us to take it and own it through responsibility.

Accountability has too often meant coming down hard on someone, and we know what that accomplishes: division without learning.

Corner Four accountability is a commitment to what is best at three levels: (1) both or all the individuals involved, (2) the relationship(s), and (3) the outcomes.

The first is the clarity of agreed-upon expectations, which have been communicated and embraced by all. Second, the timing of those expectations is early and continuous. Before anything substantive is done or not done, everyone knows the expectations and checks in with them during the process.

“Feedback is the breakfast of champions,” as Ken Blanchard says.

First, the science of feedback tells us that it is crucial to performance. Without it, you cannot achieve new levels of performance, much less get past a current limit. You must know how you are doing in order to get better

When you are in Corner Four, you know, first of all, that whoever is giving you feedback is for you and with you, as stated in the requirements of accountability above. That person is your ally and wants you to win. The one giving feedback shares an interest in your doing well.

Corner Four demands all three: caring, honesty, and results—caring enough about someone to not be hurtful in how we say things, the honesty to say them directly, and a focus on behavior change and better results.

As the research shows us, apparently the brain needs a lot of love, safety, and good feelings to be able to handle negative inputs and use them. If I’m going to own my game, I can’t be in a defensive stance, ready to flinch. That’s important to remember when you’re on the receiving end of feedback, but it’s also critical if you’re the one giving it.

Research into brain circuitry shows that new capacities grow when we have to grapple with a problem ourselves instead of hearing someone tell us how to fix it or watching someone fix it for us. We remember about 10 to 20 percent of what we read or hear or see, but 80 percent of what we experience in such a learning process. When someone provides feedback that leaves us in shape to grapple with the problem ourselves, we learn.

Corner Four relationships don’t rescue us. They hold us responsible for our performance. There are standards and there are consequences. Few things are worse for the culture of a team than rewarding or overlooking poor performance. It clearly tells the underachiever, “What you’re doing is good enough,” and tells the others, “Your efforts toward excellence, your care, and your diligence have no value.”

Facing reality can be painful and difficult, but the consequences of not confronting it are always far worse.

The amount of freedom that you will have will be equal to the amount of responsibility that you take when you have it, and that responsibility should be measured by love. The choices you make, that you will be responsible for, are to be loving. They must be good for others and for yourself. Your choices should not hurt anyone in any way—you or anyone else. That is your guide to responsibility. If you are responsible in that way, guided by love, you will get more and more freedom.

Here is the bottom line: high performers resolve that tension in very, very different ways than the people they consistently outperform. In what way? Basically this: they are fueled by the possibility of better instead of defeated by it. When confronted with failure, they are inspired to keep trying; they don't judge themselves for missing the mark. Their desire and drive are not minimized or crushed by failing.

We all do, but when the fangs have us in their grip, it feels so real; it's hard to see failure as a temporary state of affairs. We need the "other's" help to internalize it.

Indeed, neuroscience research shows that a disapproving facial expression, one that indicates a negative evaluation, signals your brain that you have done something socially undesirable and that your relationships might be in danger. Rather than focusing on possible solutions, we become overwhelmed by fears of rejection, insecurity, and failure.

When your brain detects that an important function in creativity and performance could be better, you want it thinking about how to get better, not how to avoid being rejected, feeling like a failure, or getting yelled at.

By doing so, he helps his talented, driven team see that there is a process for closing the gap, a path that will take them from where they are at the moment to where they want to go.

Some people have spent their whole lives submerged in Corner Three flattery. No one has ever told them that not every thought or idea they have is special, so when someone offers feedback, they experience it as harsh or as a sign of not being respected. We often filter current relationships through the cloudy lens of the past.

We need to say it well, and we need to hear it well, even when it's not said as well as it could be.

Fortunately, there are a few things we can do to help this process along. Central to this effort is the intentional and proactive creation of two things: 1. Standards for how we communicate that we want something to be better. 2. Monitoring how well that communication is being done.

At Pixar, for example, they all assume that there'll always be problems and they'll always be addressing them.

Another Pixar standard is peer-based collaboration. Said another way, ideas have no rank or position

Pixar also promoted a “for” culture—in that feedback was viewed as something offered in service of a greater good (i.e., making the best film). Every piece of feedback was in the service of that interest, to help everyone win. Moreover, Pixar placed equal emphasis on giving and getting feedback. That was part of everyone's job—not just to give it but to receive it in a way that would serve the greater good.

We commit to not leaving important things unsaid, and we avoid saying them to someone other than the person who should hear them.”

Four relationship, he'd given them the freedom to choose how they wanted to behave, but he'd also let them know that there would be consequences to their actions.

How are we doing in trying to help each other get better?

If you've read my other books, then you'll know that there are two ingredients essential for breaking out of the cycle of decline: new sources of energy and intelligence.

The premise of this quick exercise is that we have more potential than we know, and that the only way to know how far you can go is to try—but that requires a little helpful nudging from a Corner Four relationship. A push. . . . a stretch.

They will push you to go farther than you've gone in the past, encouraging you to develop new skills in order to reach the goal.

However, they will not stretch you to a point that will overwhelm you or take you backward.

This is why the healthiest kids come from environments that do two things: encourage them with warmth and give them high expectations.

“What is the one-sentence summary of how you change the world? Always work hard on something uncomfortably exciting” (Larry Page, University of Michigan Commencement Address, May 2009).

Great leaders and performers consistently take moments of celebration to mark small wins. They relish little victories because they see them as part of a long-term process.

Our neural wiring and circuitry are built in the context of encouragement and positive emotions.

Blind positive thinking, the research shows us, does not work, because when obviously positive thinkers encounter difficulties, they get discouraged and bottom out.

Corner Four people not only help us believe that we can get there, but they also help us see that it is really, really going to be a lot of work, with lots of obstacles. They make the difficulty normal.

In a get-better mind-set, we're always trying to improve, asking ourselves, OK, what could I do a little better? What can I learn for next time?

But it is absolutely not true. Science has shown that we can change. We do change. We do get better, but we tend to do it alongside people who believe that too and who are committed to helping us.

(This explained to me why I sometimes used to feel relief, rather than fulfillment, in the accomplishment of a goal.)

With that kind of orientation, if you don't do very well, it is much more of a disaster than for those with a mastery approach. The "be-good" group tends to see any mistakes or failings as a sign that they aren't worthy; the "be-better" group sees failure as a chance to learn and try again.

Halvorson points out another aspect of the "get-better" orientation: it leads people to ask for more help, which leads to improvement and busting through limits. People with this orientation ask for help more than the be-gooders, because asking for help proves to be-gooders that they're not as good or smart as they want to be, and others might see that as well.

I'm talking about a situation in which A should be talking to B but is talking to C about B instead. Obviously it will be impossible for A to work out his issues with B if he's not even speaking to her, but that's just the beginning of the problem with this indirect (aka passive-aggressive) style of noncommunication, which I like to call triangulation. The destructiveness of this kind of entanglement is far more troubling. Here's why.

Triangulation sets up something called the victim-persecutor-rescuer (VPR) triad, which I'm calling the Bermuda Triangle of relationships. It works like this. I'm A, you're B, and someone else is C. Let's say I'm bugged with you or disagree with you or don't like the way you recently confronted me. I feel like the victim of something you did to me, and that makes you the persecutor. Therefore, instead of talking directly to you about what's bothering me, I take my hurt feelings to a sympathetic third person, who becomes my "rescuer." I gripe about you, how mean, wrong, abusive, or attacking you were to do what you did or say what you said. I'm not talking to the rescuer for legitimate feedback about our conflict and for help resolving it. That would be a good motivation, but instead, I'm talking to the rescuer just to get validation that I'm right and you're wrong. I want C's support for my side of the argument. It makes me feel better, bleeds off the pain, and helps me avoid talking directly to you.

Talking to a trusted other can often be helpful, but in the VPR scenario, I'm not looking for truth or growth in my conversation with the third party, C. I'm instead looking for that person to rescue me from this mean person (you) and your mean comments, or at least validate my view over yours. I am looking to feel good. I'm looking for the third party to agree with me, to complain about you, and to reassure me that my feelings are valid. I want C to listen to me as I say, "Can you believe he treated me that way? What right does he have to tell me that, judge me like that?" I want C to agree with me in my hurt and join my anger about what B (you) did. I'm getting that person to be on my side against you. I'm looking for validation, not resolution or growth. I want my rescuer to say, "Wow! You're right! What a jerk he (you) was!"

Then the meeting adjourns, and what do you know? A couple of people gather in the hallway for what is commonly referred to as "the meeting after the meeting." There they are willing to say all sorts of things they wouldn't say to someone directly in the meeting. They have no problem talking trash and looking for another person to side with them when everyone else is out of earshot. They say everything there in the hallway but are never willing to bring their issues back to the room and share them with everyone else—and certainly not with the person they view as responsible for the problem in the first place. Instead, they say to someone else, "Can you believe he really believes that?"

If I'm mad at you or hurt by you or disagree with you, I (and you) really need me to talk directly to you to resolve it. That's the only way we're going to get to some resolution of the matter. In the absence of that kind of give-and-take, bad feelings fester and spread infection—poisoning not just this one relationship but the mood and positive connections for everyone else involved.

The reason is that triangulation has also now created division between B and C, who haven't even had a conflict! Person C now has a one-sided perspective about what happened. Who knows what Person B actually did! C got only one side, which



painted B as entirely in the wrong. A's complaints might even be valid, but C can't know without hearing the other side.

Maybe B actually was wrong or hurtful, but because A didn't talk to him, he may not even know why or how he's upset A, so there's no chance that he can address that hurt or change his behavior. Moreover, because A skipped the direct process, he now feels absolutely zero inclination or motivation to look at his part in the conflict or to ask how he might also be wrong or maybe could do better. C has "rescued" him from having to consider that possibility by endorsing A's version of what happened and making him feel better.

A is totally innocent, according to the rescuer, and therefore A has no impetus to look inward. Even more fixed in his position than before, A's exchange with C also makes him feel morally superior to B.

See what I mean? This is so destructive. Divisiveness is one of the most destructive forces in teams, companies, families, marriages, friendships, and any other relational systems. It not only prevents resolution, growth, and forward movement, but it also makes problems worse by pitting one person against another and creating further splits throughout the team, family, or organization.

Persons who use rescuers for validation seldom look at themselves and change. As a result, they repeat the same pattern over and over, destroying relationships, teams, and organizations.

Divisive people cause more harm than whatever the good things they bring are worth.

The real issue is that people who habitually do this are not willing to look at themselves and try to resolve things. Instead, they prefer to get people to side with them and agree with them rather than create unity and resolution.

First, name the problem. Start by talking about the disease of triangulation with the people that it might be affecting.

Third, here's where the rubber really meets the road. You and all the other people in your relationship should agree that, if someone does begin to gossip to you about someone else, you will decline to join in. Promise instead to ask A, "Have you talked to B about this?" If so, ask what happened, and if you continue to listen, help A work through the issue and form a plan to resolve it.

Tell A, "I don't feel comfortable talking about B when he's not here. I don't like saying things about someone that I wouldn't say to his face." (As long as it is safe!)

I also like to suggest this sometimes: “Why don’t we both go talk to him about it together? I’ll offer to help you two think this through. I think that would get us closer to a solution than just talking about it behind his back.”

I like team members to promise to include everyone. Often all it takes is a sentence. “Let’s make sure we bring this point up with the whole team” or “Let’s make sure everyone’s in the room.”

I love the example Jim Blanchard set at Synovus by telling all employees to come see him if they have a problem with a boss and can’t resolve it.

Trust can be defined as a confident expectation. downward flow of gravity. Without it, the heart is compromised, blood volume is reduced, muscles begin to atrophy—even bone mass is adversely affected.

There are two elements of the spirit, or purpose, in which kaizen plays an essential role: service and gratitude. As John Wooden, the legendary UCLA basketball coach, expressed it, “You can’t live a perfect day without doing something for someone who will never be able to repay you.”

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others?” —  
Martin Luther King

Recall the last day or two of your life—all the people you interacted with, those under your roof, those in other cars on the highway, people who cared for you in restaurants or grocery stores, people in the