

# Five Stages of Partnership

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All partnerships, and all relationships for that matter, go through five predictable stages. Knowing these stages is like having a map that will help you to accurately assess where you are in your partnerships, see where you have been and where you can go. This will also allow you to deal effectively with the particular concerns of the stage you are in. For example, upsets, disagreements, miscommunications and misunderstandings are a predictable, inevitable and unavoidable part of the second stage. If you don't know that, you could easily misinterpret what is going on in the relationship, make inappropriate choices and miss important learning and growth opportunities. Each stage requires a different yet overlapping set of skills. Mastering partnership is about mastering these skills.

## STAGE ONE – ATTRACTION

This stage of relationships is characterized by a fascination with another person, organization or project and a desire to learn more about them, as well as a desire to share yourself. It's fun and it feels good. This is the time when positive possibilities are sensed and explored. This is the stage people wish would last forever.

### *ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR SUCCESS IN ATTRACTION:*

1. Be interested, not merely interesting.
2. Look for and focus on the best in others.
3. Acknowledge/compliment others on the good you see in them and their accomplishments.
4. Help people to relax with you – put them at ease.
5. Know what the most important things are for people to know about you and weave those things into your conversations so you feel they "get" who you are.
6. To simply "be" with others without an agenda.
7. Keep your word to build trust.
8. Be authentic.

9. Look good and smell good!
10. Speech acts to learn and master:
  - o Greeting
  - o Making requests
  - o Declining requests
  - o Making promises
  - o Making apologies
  - o High performance listening

*AVOID:*

1. Lying.
2. Jumping to conclusions.
3. Moving too quickly into a commitment conversation.
4. Expecting people to read your mind and anticipate your conditions for satisfaction.
5. Stereotyping or categorizing.

**STAGE TWO – POWER STRUGGLE**

This is the stage where people start testing each other. It is one of the most difficult stages for people. Who is going to get whose way and how? Distrust from your unresolved past manifests and there is often a fear of loss of control and heavy judgments of the other person start to show up. Many relationships never move beyond this stage and many end here. This stage is really about building trust.

*ESSENTIAL SKILLS:*

1. Know and identify your feelings.
2. Speak congruently with your emotions.
3. Communicate without blame.
4. Self-reflection – observe your thoughts, feelings and behaviors without judgment.
5. Own/take responsibility for your mistakes without self- invalidation
6. Observe your automatic interpretations of others and events.
7. Be present to someone else's upset without defense.

8. Know and articulate your requirements for trust.
9. Be able to restore trust when broken.
10. Use current upsets to resolve the past.
11. Ask for help.
12. Forgive yourself and others.
13. Make correction without invalidation.
14. Don't control others or make their choices for them.
15. Don't sacrifice – be generous.
16. Practice spiritual attunement to find the highest path.
17. Take the initiative – be responsible for your own needs.
18. Turn your complaints into requests.
19. Be clear-headed and rational while feeling intense feelings or while in the presence of others intense feelings.
20. Control your temper.

*AVOID:*

1. Giving ultimatums.
2. Blaming others.
3. Gossiping or participating in gossip.
4. Being mean, attacking, hurtful or hypercritical.
5. Saying things you'll regret.

### **STAGE THREE – COOPERATION**

This is the stage where you learn to trust one another and to resolve upsets to your mutual satisfaction and benefit. You learn to share power and appreciate each other's unique abilities and gifts. However, it is still self oriented — "What can I get out of this relationship?" rather than "What can we create with this relationship?" Beware of false cooperation in which one person acquiesces to the other in order to "keep the peace". This is still Power Struggle, only in a more subtle form.

*ESSENTIAL SKILLS:*

1. Know and articulate the essence of your desires.
2. Expand your capacity for compassion.
3. Read others emotions.

4. Assess trustworthiness in others and assume trust rather than suspicion.
5. Inspire high level of trust from others.
6. Care deeply about others.
7. Feel connected with others.
8. Generate enthusiasm.
9. Find and define a common path.
10. Know and articulate how others affect you, e.g., their losing/winning, problems/thriving.
11. Make choices for long-term gain – overcome the need for instant gratification.
12. Competency with creation techniques, e.g., visualization, goal setting, etc.
13. Know and articulate your changing conditions for satisfaction.
14. Neutralize competition while inspiring cooperation.
15. Ability to articulate higher path, especially during stress.
16. Be diplomatic and cordial even when worried, upset and during stress.
17. Facilitate conversations for:
  - o Speculation and possibility
  - o Planning and design
  - o Commitment and action

*AVOID:*

1. Making assumptions.
2. Sacrifice – it always leads to resentment.
3. Withholding important communication out of fear.

## **STAGE FOUR – SYNERGY**

This is the stage where there is a realization of a power greater than that of each individual. There is also a commitment to a specified focus and use of the power. Extraordinary satisfaction, intimacy, and a deep sense of mutual trust, empowerment and ease characterize this stage. It is a highly creative, high performance relationship. It also possesses a high level of acknowledgment and

appreciation. The relationship emanates joy and power in this stage.

*ESSENTIAL SKILLS:*

1. Regenerate creativity.
2. Balance work and play.
3. Be alert to and neutralize complacency.
4. Fine tune and evolve specific talents.
5. Dance and surrender during the times of chaos before new beginnings.
6. Let go of ego and attachments.
7. Be as committed to the larger process you are involved in as you are to your own individual part.
8. Practice letting the relationship "breathe".
9. Anticipate temporary Power Struggle when you uplevel commitment and prepare for it.

*AVOID:*

1. Taking the relationship and people for granted.
2. Becoming overly intoxicated with the glory of synergy and get out of balance in your life.
3. Expecting synergy to last without nurturing the relationship.

**STAGE FIVE – COMPLETION**

This is a stage many people fear and avoid dealing with altogether. There are four ways relationships can be completed: drifting apart, expulsion/ejection, conscious completion or death. Sometimes completion is only about changing the form of the relationship, not necessarily the end of the relationship altogether.

*ESSENTIAL SKILLS:*

1. Accept and flow with change.
2. Acknowledge and integrate the value and learning from the relationship.
3. Spiritual attunement.
4. Own up to mistakes without self–invalidation.

5. Make apologies.
6. Redefine your common path – change form.
7. Articulate the highest spiritual thought about the relationship.
8. Know what you need to feel complete.
9. Generate a safe space and a conversation to make sure everything that needs to be said or done to feel complete is communicated in a spirit of love and dignity for all parties concerned.
10. Allow for a healthy expression of fear, anger, grief or any other emotion.

*AVOID:*

1. Feeling victimized.
2. Taking things too personally.
3. Resisting change.
4. Misperceiving that others are the source of your good or happiness.

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