

Relationships, Machiavellian Perspective

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1) Exchange of Value:

Every relationship is nothing more than an exchange of value. In every relationship, each party gives certain benefits and inflicts certain costs upon the other.

One cost that both parties inevitably impose on the other is lost time and energy. Other possible costs include annoyance (cortisol/stress), lost money, and risk of negative events occurring. Possible benefits include money gained, information, and favors or assistance that could range from trivial to life saving. For non-psychopathic readers, enjoyment of the other person's company or affection also counts as a benefit.

With every relationship in your life, mentally map out the benefits you derive from it and the costs you incur because of it. End any relationship where the cost exceeds the benefit. Yes this sounds obvious, yet many people waste decades of their life maintaining relationships they'd be better off without.

Some people are easily satisfied; the standards you must meet and the costs you must incur for the sake of keeping them satisfied are reasonable. Others are difficult to satisfy; the standards that must be met to satisfy them are rigorous, and ever more numerous, and ever more not straightforward.

Generally speaking, those who are difficult to satisfy are more trouble than they are worth; you'd be better off without them.

Beware of exceptions; occasionally there will be someone who is difficult to satisfy, but who is worth it. The costs they impose are immense, but the benefit they give is even more immense.

You will likely find that the person who yields the most benefit to your life and the person who imposes the greatest cost upon your life are the same person.

Keep the costs you impose upon others (the time you take from them and the headache you inflict upon them) to a bare minimum. If you subject a person to unnecessary annoyance, it is inevitable that sooner or later they will end their relationship with you because they sense you are more trouble than you're worth.

If they are vengeful, their annoyance and resentment will fester. Sooner or later they will explode in rage, or even worse they will passively aggressively sabotage you. If they are calm and rational (a rare type), they will simply cease association with you.

2) High Value Narcissists:

Very few people can handle being in a position of very high status without becoming an annoying narcissist. This is more than just a philosophical musing; the practical consequence is that the most powerful people in your contact list (your most valuable contacts) are going to disproportionately be annoying narcissists.

This minor annoyance is simply something you must tolerate; refusing to associate with any man who has narcissistic tendencies would mean giving up a majority of your most powerful contacts, an unacceptable sacrifice.

3) Ending Relationships:

When you end a relationship with someone, do so as gently and as politely as possible. If logistically doable, don't formally end the relationship; simply cease contacting them. Never end a relationship rudely or harshly; there's no reason to make enemies unnecessarily.

Beware of closing costs. When you end a relationship, there may be costs you get hit with *because* you ended the relationship. A common closing cost is ill will motivating the party you are ceasing association with to seek revenge.

Every person in your life should have a clear purpose; if they have no clear purpose, eliminate them from your schedule; as a person on the quest to seize power you can't afford to waste time on people who don't matter.

4) People as Tools:

People are like tools; you must use them for their correct purpose. If you use a tool for the wrong purpose you will experience disaster. Similarly, if you use a person for the wrong purpose you will also experience disaster.

Examples:

The correct purpose for your co-workers, bosses, subordinates, and all business contacts: making money

The wrong purpose of your business contacts: friendship and 'emotional support', romance

If you look for emotional support from your business contacts they will at best think you are awkward, and most likely think you are pathetic.

If you become romantically involved with one of your business contacts you are headed for disaster (see the 'MeToo Movement').

The correct purpose for your girlfriend/wife:
Romance

The wrong purpose for your girlfriend/wife:
Rigorous Logical Reasoning. Talking about controversial topics.

If you talk to your girlfriend/wife about controversial topics, or even an intellectual topic that isn't all that controversial, you will find that she has no interest in it and considers you bringing up the topic to be weird and annoying.

On the off chance she is smart enough to understand what you are talking about, she will be enamored with whatever the dominant ideology of your society is, and if you say anything against the dominant ideology of the society you live in she will be disgusted by you.

If you live in a society where Christianity is the dominant ideology, and you point out that believing there is a god with a son named Jesus is as delusional as believing that Santa Clause will climb down your chimney on Christmas, she will dislike and ostracize you.

Business contacts and girlfriends/wives are used as examples for a simple reason; they are the two groups that most men will screwup with. Many foolishly go to their business contacts looking for emotional support when times are tough, causing their contacts to

view them as pathetic (see the essay 'Life as a Man'). Others will attempt to engage their girlfriend/wife in deep intellectual conversation, only to find she is too dumb to understand what they're saying, or smart enough to understand what they're saying but enraged whenever they say something politically incorrect (something that contradicts the dominant ideology of the society they live in).

5) Know What You Want:

Consciously calculating what it is you want from someone, what the purpose of your relationship with them is, makes it immensely easier to know how to interact with them and what precise words to say.

6) Power Imbalances:

In most relationships, the power dynamic is governed by dependency; whichever party needs the other less is the party that wields power.

If you need them more than they need you, they wield power over you. If they need you more than you need them, you wield power over them. If you both need each other intensely, or you both have little or no need for each other, your power levels are equal.

The power dynamic being governed by dependency is true of almost all types of relationships; business, romantic, even friendship (see Law 11 for details).

Do what you can to minimize the degree to which you are dependent on others, and maximize the degree to which they are dependent on you.

6A) Financial Dependency:

Financial dependency (one party needing another for money or other financial resources) keeps together far more relationships than anyone would care to admit.

Most employees hate their employers, but continue to associate with them because they need their wages in order to survive.

Many women throughout history have despised their husbands, but continued their marriages because they were economically dependent on their husbands (in America from 1970 - 2020, this has no longer been the case since the legal system has allowed women to divorce their husbands and continue extracting money from them via alimony and child support).

Financial dependency keeps many parent-child relationships together; it seems to be the case that children who have plenty of money are far more likely to become estranged from their parents than children who are poor, because financial necessity does not compel them to continue association.

Perhaps the most bitter pill is this; the game of power never stops, and indeed there are power struggles even between those who love each other.

7) Loyalty:

"...besides your closest friends and loved one's, it's every man for himself in this world." -Felix Dennis

Most contacts have zero loyalty to you; if they calculate that the benefits you deliver to them is less than the cost you impose upon them, they will abandon you without hesitation. They care about their own interests, not your well being.

The number of people who will stay loyal to you and continue helping you even when they have nothing to potentially gain from doing so is less than 5; if you were to carry out suicide tomorrow, there are less than 5 people on the planet who would actually care.

Be good to these people; they are worth more than any worldly wealth you might ever gain. There are many things money can buy, but real loyalty is not one of them.

You might think the only way to find out who is truly loyal to you is to experience catastrophe and see who continues to stand by you, but you would be wrong.

7A) Loyalty Testing, Simulate Your Downfall:

"Simulate your downfall to see who folds and sells you out. Loyalty is gauged in the face of failure, not success." -Illimitable Man

It is often possible to *simulate* your downfall; make it look like everything is falling apart, when in reality everything is perfectly fine.

Do this, see who stays loyal, and who abandons you.

The appearance of catastrophe has to last for at least a few months. With most of the mercenaries surrounding you, it is unlikely that they will abandon you the day after your downfall comes; for most it will take at least a few weeks.

If a person stays loyal even after 3 months of you appearing to have been destroyed, you can safely assume their loyalty is real.

This may sound like a drastic and unnecessary exercise in deception in return for nothing. In reality, it is a deception that serves a critical purpose; finding out who the real loyalists are.

You cannot build an empire on the backs of mercenaries. History is filled with kings who were destroyed by their closest allies abandoning or outright backstabbing them.

Betrayal from your allies is far more dangerous than any attack from an enemy. In the case of backstabbing, the closer someone is to you the easier it will be for them to destroy you since they are more familiar with your vulnerabilities than anyone else. In the case of abandonment, the closer someone is to you the more you depend on them, and so it is all the more damage that their disappearance will cause.

It may be a hassle, but it is necessary; simulate your downfall to test and verify the loyalty of those closest to you. A man seeking power who doesn't know who the loyalists in his contact list are is like a man building a house without first ensuring the foundation is secure.

There is one limiting factor; the downfall you simulate must be *easily reversible*, so that you can make everything appear normal (good) after you are done with the simulation. Make sure that when initiating a simulation of your downfall, you don't inadvertently cause your *actual* downfall.

Until you have done a thorough simulation (or experience an actual downfall), assume that everyone is disloyal unless proven otherwise. Continuing association with them is perfectly fine (practical necessity will always demand it), however you must always be consciously aware of their disloyalty; don't trust them too much, and tactically prepare yourself as much as possible for the possibility of them suddenly abandoning you.

In the event you attain incredibly high status and simulating your own downfall without making it an actuality would be practically impossible, then the only people you can consider loyalists are those who were loyal to you *before* you attained high status. If you go from rags to riches, the only people you can fully trust are those who were loyal to you even when you were wearing rags.

If you have verified that a person is loyal to you then keep them around forever, even if they're completely useless. Incredibly few people are trustworthy; if a person *is* trustworthy that alone makes them very valuable, even if they have no other notable skills or assets.

Note that when someone abandons you, they usually won't give the real reason why; instead, they will give a manufactured reason that makes them look good, or at least not as bad as a selfish mercenary. For example, if you suddenly lose

your job or business, your girlfriend/wife is likely to leave you since your status in the hierarchy has dramatically dropped (you no longer appeal to her hypergamy). She won't say "I am leaving you because I am convinced I can find another man with higher status than you." Instead, she will say something like "The 'spark' isn't there anymore. I just don't think we're right for each other."

8) Pareto Distributed Importance of Contacts:

Within your contact list, there will be a pareto distribution of how useful people are. Say you have 1,000 contacts. You will find that over the course of a lifetime, 10 of them will be absolutely critical, 90 will be somewhat useful, and 900 of them will give very little benefit.

How much time you are willing to allocate to maintain a relationship with a person should be proportional to how useful they are likely to be. Obviously there is the risk of spending too little time with a person, them forgetting your existence, and then thinking it weird when you ask them for a favor. On the other hand, if you spend too much time with a person it may annoy them.

There is a delicate balance to maintain; the more powerful the person, the greater the danger is that you will annoy them by spending too much time with them.

How much energy you spend on analyzing a person's psychological profile should be proportionate to how important they are to your life. Cold reading is enough for people who are inconsequential to your life, however for your most critical contacts (say the top 10) you must do *extensive* warm reading.

For your boss or a potential spouse, spend hours listing out on paper aspects of their personality that are unusual. For the janitor who cleans the floors of your office, spend zero energy analyzing their personality; they don't matter.

9) No Losers:

As a man on a quest for power, you cannot afford to waste time maintaining relationships with people who are useless; do not allow losers to occupy space in your contact list or schedule.

The only exception is if you know a loser who is loyal to you; someone who you can trust. This alone makes them exceptionally valuable (see the 'Loyalty' section above).

Disclaimer: You are likely to drastically overestimate how much you should trust a person who has far less worldly wealth (money, power, status) than you. That 'trustworthy loser' in your contact list may put a knife in your back. They will be prone to envy you, and may actually be more likely to harm you than a stranger

who knows nothing about you. Joe Orton learned this the hard way (see Law 46 for details).

10) Further Reflections:

10A) Illimitable Man:

"Give people plenty of opportunities to betray you. Extend trust they haven't earned over not so trivial but tolerable losses, and wait to see if they honor your trust, or dishonor it.

If they cut and run and betray, what you lost was the price paid to ascertain who they are."

10B) Baltasar Gracian:

"Few are the friends of a man's self, most are merely the friends of his circumstances."