Part Three

Public Victory

Paradigms of Interdependence

There can be no friendship without confidence, and no confidence without integrity
-- *Samuel Johnso*

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Before moving into the area of Public Victory, we should remember that effective interdependence can only be built on a foundation of true independence. Private Victory precedes Public Victory. Algebra comes before calculus.

As we look back and survey the terrain to determine where we've been and where we are in relationship to where we're going, we clearly see that we could not have gotten where we are without coming the way we came. There aren't any other roads; there aren't any shortcuts. There's no way to parachute into this terrain. The landscape ahead is covered with the fragments of broken relationships of people who have tried. They've tried to jump into effective relationships without the maturity, the strength of character, to maintain them.

But you just can't do it; you simply have to travel the road. You can't be successful with other people if you haven't paid the price of success with yourself.

A few years ago when I was giving a seminar on the Oregon coast, a man came up to me and said, "You know, Stephen, I really don't enjoy coming to these seminars." He had my attention.

"Look at everyone else here," he continued. "Look at this beautiful coastline and the sea out there and all that's happening. All I can do is sit and worry about the grilling I'm going to get from my wife tonight on the phone.

"She gives me the third degree every time I'm away. Where did I eat breakfast? Who else was there? Was I in meetings all morning? When did we stop for lunch? What did I do during lunch? How did I spend the afternoon? What did I do for entertainment in the evening? Who was with me? What did we talk about?

"And what she really wants to know, but never quite asks, is who she can call to verify everything I tell her. She just nags me and questions everything I do whenever I'm away. It's taken the bloom out of this whole experience. I really don't enjoy it at all."

He did look pretty miserable. We talked for a while, and then he made a very interesting comment. "I guess she knows all the questions to ask," he said a little sheepishly. "It was at a seminar like this that I met her when I was married to someone else!"

I considered the implications of his comment and then said, "You're kind of into 'quick fix,' aren't you?"

"What do you mean?" he replied.

"Well, you'd like to take a screwdriver and just open up your wife's head and rewire that attitude of hers really fast, wouldn't you?"

"Sure, I'd like her to change," he exclaimed. "I don't think it's right for her to constantly grill me like she does."

"My friend," I said, "you can't talk your way out of problems you behave yourself into."

We're dealing with a very dramatic and very fundamental Paradigm Shift here. You may try to lubricate your social interactions with personality techniques and skills, but in the process, you may

truncate the vital character base. You can't have the fruits without the roots. It's the principle of sequencing: Private Victory precedes Public Victory. Self-mastery and self-discipline are the foundation of good relationships with others.

Some people say that you have to like yourself before you can like others. I think that idea has merit, but if you don't know yourself, if you don't control yourself, if you don't have mastery over yourself, it's very hard to like yourself, except in some short-term, psych-up, superficial way.

Real self-respect comes from dominion over self, from true independence. And that's the focus of Habits 1, 2, and 3. Independence is an achievement. Interdependence is a choice only independent people can make. Unless we are willing to achieve real independence, it's foolish to try to develop human-relations skills. We might try. We might even have some degree of success when the sun is shining. But when the difficult times come -- and they will -- we won't have the foundation to keep things together.

The most important ingredient we put into any relationship is not what we say or what we do, but what we are. And if our words and our actions come from superficial human-relations techniques (the personality ethic) rather than from our own inner core (the character ethic), others will sense that duplicity. We simply won't be able to create and sustain the foundation necessary for effective interdependence.

The techniques and skills that really make a difference in human interaction are the ones that almost naturally flow from a truly independent character. So the place to begin building any relationship is inside ourselves, inside our Circle of Influence, our own character. As we become independent -- proactive, centered in correct principles, value driven and able to organize and execute around the priorities in our life with integrity -- we then can choose to become interdependent -- capable of building rich, enduring, highly productive relationships with other people.

As we look at the terrain ahead, we see that we're entering a whole new dimension. Interdependence opens up worlds of possibilities for deep, rich, meaningful associations, for geometrically increased productivity, for serving, for contributing, for learning, for growing. But it is also where we feel the greatest pain, the greatest frustration, the greatest roadblocks to happiness and success. And we're very aware of that pain because it is acute.

We can often live for years with the chronic pain of our lack of vision, leadership or management in our personal lives. We feel vaguely uneasy and uncomfortable and occasionally take steps to ease the pain, at least for a time. But the pain is chronic, we get used to it, we learn to live with it.

But when we have problems in our interactions with other people, we're very aware of acute pain -- it's often intense, and we want it to go away.

That's when we try to treat the symptoms with quick fixes and techniques -- the band-aids of the personality ethic. We don't understand that the acute pain is an outgrowth of the deeper, chronic problem. And until we stop treating the symptoms and start treating the problem, our efforts will only bring counterproductive results. We will only be successful at obscuring the chronic pain even more.

Now, as we think of effective interaction with others, let's go back to our earlier definition of effectiveness. We've said it's the P/PC Balance, the fundamental concept in the story of the Goose and the Golden Egg.

In an interdependent situation, the golden eggs are the effectiveness, the wonderful synergy, the results created by open communication and positive interaction with others. And to get those eggs on a regular basis, we need to take care of the goose. We need to create and care for the relationships that make those results realities.

So before we descend from our point of reconnaissance and get into Habits 4, 5, and 6, I would like to introduce what I believe to be a very powerful metaphor in describing relationships and in defining the P/PC Balance in an interdependent reality.

The Emotional Bank Account TM

We all know what a financial bank account is. We make deposits into it and build up a reserve from which we can make withdrawals when we need to. An Emotional Bank Account is a metaphor that describes the amount of trust that's been built up in a relationship. It's the feeling of safeness you have with another human being.

If I make deposits into an Emotional Bank Account with you through courtesy, kindness, honesty, and keeping my commitments to you, I build up a reserve. Your trust toward me becomes higher, and I can call upon that trust many times if I need to. I can even make mistakes and that trust level, that emotional reserve, will compensate for it. My communication may not be clear, but you'll get my meaning anyway. You won't make me "an offender for a word." When the trust account is high, communication is easy, instant, and effective.

But if I have a habit of showing discourtesy, disrespect, cutting you off, overreacting, ignoring you, becoming arbitrary, betraying your trust, threatening you, or playing little tin god in your life, eventually my Emotional Bank Account is overdrawn. The trust level gets very low. Then what flexibility do I have?

None. I'm walking on mine fields. I have to be very careful of everything I say. I measure every word. It's tension city, memo heaven. It's protecting my backside, politicking. And many organizations are filled with it. Many families are filled with it. Many marriages are filled with it.

If a large reserve of trust is not sustained by continuing deposits, a marriage will deteriorate. Instead of rich, spontaneous understanding and communication, the situation becomes one of accommodation, where two people simply attempt to live independent life-styles in a fairly respectful and tolerant way. The relationship may further deteriorate to one of hostility and defensiveness. The "fight or flight" response creates verbal battles, slammed doors, refusal to talk, emotional withdrawal and self-pity. It may end up in a cold war at home, sustained only by children, sex, and social pressure, or image protection. Or it may end up in open warfare in the courts, where bitter ego-decimating legal battles can be carried on for years as people endlessly confess the sins of a former spouse.

And this is in the most intimate, the most potentially rich, joyful, satisfying and productive relationship possible between two people on this earth. The P/PC lighthouse is there; we can either break ourselves against it or we can use it as a guiding light.

Our most constant relationships, like marriage, require our most constant deposits. With continuing expectations, old deposits evaporate. If you suddenly run into an old high school friend you haven't seen for years, you can pick up right where you left off because the earlier deposits are still there. But your accounts with the people you interact with on a regular basis require more constant investment. There are sometimes automatic withdrawals in your daily interactions or in their perception of you that you don't even know about. This is especially true with teenagers in the home.

Suppose you have a teenage son and your normal conversation is something like, "Clean your room. Button your shirt. Turn down the radio. Go get a haircut. And don't forget to take out the garbage!" Over a period of time, the withdrawals far exceed the deposits.

Now, suppose this son is in the process of making some important decisions that will affect the rest of his life. But the trust level is so low and the communication process so closed, mechanical, and unsatisfying that he simply will not be open to your counsel. You may have the wisdom and the knowledge to help him, but because your account is so overdrawn, he will end up making his decisions from a short-range emotional perspective, which may well result in many negative long-range consequences.

You need a positive balance to communicate on these tender issues. What do you do?

What would happen if you started making deposits into the relationship? Maybe the opportunity

comes up to do him a little kindness -- to bring home a magazine on skateboarding, if that's his interest, or just to walk up to him when he's working on a project and offer help. Perhaps you could invite him to go to a movie with you or take him out for some ice cream. Probably the most important deposit you could make would be just to listen, without judging or preaching or reading your own autobiography into what he says. Just listen and seek to understand. Let him feel your concern for him, your acceptance of him as a person.

He may not respond at first. He may even be suspicious. "What's Dad up to now? What technique is Mom trying on me this time?" But as those genuine deposits keep coming, they begin to add up. That overdrawn balance is shrinking.

Remember that quick fix is a mirage. Building and repairing relationships takes time. If you become impatient with this apparent lack of response of his seeming ingratitude, you may make huge withdrawals and undo all the good you've done. "After all we've done for you, the sacrifices we've made, how can you be so ungrateful? We try to be nice and you act like this. I can't believe it!

It's hard not to get impatient. It takes character to be proactive, to focus on your Circle of Influence, to nurture growing things, and not to "pull up the flowers to see how the roots are coming."

But there really is no quick fix. Building and repairing relationships are long-term investments.

Six Major Deposits

Let me suggest six major deposits that build the Emotional Bank Account

Understanding the Individual

Really seeking to understand another person is probably one of the most important deposits you can make, and it is the key to every other deposit. You simply don't know what constitutes a deposit to another person until you understand that individual. What might be a deposit for you -- going for a walk to talk things over, going out for ice cream together, working on a common project -- might not be perceived by someone else as a deposit at all. It might even be perceived as a withdrawal, if it doesn't touch the person's deep interests or needs.

One person's mission is another person's minutia. To make a deposit, what is important to another person must be as important to you as the other person is to you. You may be working on a high priority project when your six-year-old child interrupts with something that seems trivial to you, but it may be very important from his point of view. It takes Habit 2 to recognize and recommit yourself to the value of that person and Habit 3 to subordinate your schedule to that human priority. By accepting the value he places on what he has to say, you show an understanding of him that makes a great deposit.

I have a friend whose son developed an avid interest in baseball. My friend wasn't interested in baseball at all. But one summer, he took his son to see every major league team play one game. The trip took over six weeks and cost a great deal of money, but it became a powerful bonding experience in their relationship.

My friend was asked on his return, "Do you like baseball that much?"

"No," he replied, "but I like my son that much."

I have another friend, a college professor, who had a terrible relationship with his teenage son. This man's entire life was essentially academic, and he felt his son was totally wasting his life by working with this hands instead of working to develop his mind. As a result, he was almost constantly on the boy's back, and, in moments of regret, he would try to make deposits that just didn't work. The boy perceived the gestures as new forms of rejection, comparison, and judgment, and they precipitated huge withdrawals. The relationship was turning sour, and it was breaking the father's heart.

One day I shared with him this principle of making what is important to the other person as

important to you as the other person is to you. He took it deeply to heart. He engaged his son in a project to build a miniature Wall of China around their home. It was a consuming project, and they worked side by side on it for over a year and a half.

Through that bonding experience, the son moved through that phase in his life and into an increased desire to develop his mind. But the real benefit was what happened to the relationship. Instead of a sore spot, it became a source of joy and strength to both father and son.

Our tendency is to project out of our own autobiographies what we think other people want or need. We project our intentions on the behavior of others. We interpret what constitutes a deposit based on our own needs and desires, either now or when we were at a similar age or stage in life. If they don't interpret our effort as a deposit, our tendency is to take it as a rejection of our well-intentioned effort and give up.

The Golden Rule says to "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." While on the surface that could mean to do for them what you would like to have done for you, I think the more essential meaning is to understand them deeply as individuals, the way you would want to be understood, and then to treat them in terms of that understanding. As one successful parent said about raising children, "Treat them all the same by treating them differently."

Attending to the Little Things

The little kindnesses and courtesies are so important. Small discourtesies, little unkindnesses, little forms of disrespect make large withdrawals. In relationships, the little things are the big things.

I remember an evening I spent with two of my sons some years ago. It was an organized father-and-son outing, complete with gymnastics, wrestling matches, hot dogs, orangeade, and a movie -- the works.

In the middle of the movie, Sean, who was then four years old, fell asleep in his seat. His older brother, Stephen, who was six, stayed awake, and we watched the rest of the movie together. When it was over, I picked Sean up in my arms, carried him out to the car and laid him in the back seat. It was very cold that night, so I took off my coat and gently arranged it over and around him.

When we arrived home, I quickly carried Sean in and tucked him into bed. After Stephen put on his "jammies" and brushed his teeth, I lay down next to him to talk about the night out together.

"How'd you like it, Stephen?"

"Fine," he answere"

"Did you have fun?"

"Yes."

"What did you like most?"

"I don't know. The trampoline, I guess."

"That was quite a thing, wasn't it -- doing those somersaults and tricks in the air like that?"

There wasn't much response on his part. I found myself making conversation. I wondered why Stephen wouldn't open up more. He usually did when exciting things happened. I was a little disappointed. I sensed something was wrong; he had been so quiet on the way home and getting ready for bed.

Suddenly Stephen turned over on his side, facing the wall. I wondered why and lifted myself up just enough to see his eyes welling up with tears.

"What's wrong, honey? What is it?"

He turned back, and I could sense he was feeling some embarrassment for the tears and his quivering lips and chin

"Daddy, if I were cold, would you put your coat around me too?"

Of all the events of that special night out together, the most important was a little act of kindness -- a

momentary, unconscious showing of love to his little brother.

What a powerful, personal lesson that experience was to me then and is even now. People are very tender, very sensitive inside. I don't believe age or experience makes much difference. Inside, even within the most toughened and calloused exteriors, are the tender feelings and emotions of the heart.

Keeping Commitments

Keeping a commitment or a promise is a major deposit; breaking one is a major withdrawal. In fact, there's probably not a more massive withdrawal than to make a promise that's important to someone and then not to come through. The next time a promise is made, they won't believe it. People tend to build their hopes around promises, particularly promises about their basic livelihood.

I've tried to adopt a philosophy as a parent never to make a promise I don't keep. I therefore try to make them very carefully, very sparingly, and to be aware of as many variables and contingencies as possible so that something doesn't suddenly come up to keep me from fulfilling it.

Occasionally, despite all my effort, the unexpected does come up, creating a situation where it would be unwise or impossible to keep a promise I've made. But I value that promise. I either keep it anyway, or explain the situation thoroughly to the person involved and ask to be released from the promise.

I believe that if you cultivate the habit of always keeping the promises you make, you build bridges of trust that span the gaps of understanding between you and your child. Then, when your child wants to do something you don't want him to do, and out of your maturity you can see consequences that the child cannot see, you can say, "Son, if you do this, I promise you that this will be the result." If that child has cultivated trust in your word, in your promises, he will act on your counsel.

Clarifying Expectations

Imagine the difficulty you might encounter if you and your boss had different assumptions regarding whose role it was to create your job description.

"When am I going to get my job description?" you might ask.

"I've been waiting for you to bring one to me so that we could discuss it," your boss might reply.

"I thought defining my job was your role."

"That's not my role at all. Don't you remember? Right from the first, I said that how you do in the job largely depends on you."

"I thought you meant that the quality of my job depended on me. But I don't even know what my job really is."

"I did exactly what you asked me to do and here is the report."

"I don't want a report. The goals was to solve the problem -- not to analyze it and report on it."

"I thought the goal was to get a handle on the problem so we could delegate it to someone else."

How many times have we had these kinds of conversations?

"You said..."

"No, you're wrong! I said..."

"You did not! You never said I was supposed to..."

"Oh, yes I did! I clearly said..."

"You never even mentioned..."

"But that was our agreement..."

The cause of almost all relationship difficulties is rooted in conflicting or ambiguous expectations around roles and goals. Whether we are dealing with the question of who does what at work, how you communicate with your daughter when you tell her to clean her room, or who feeds the fish and

takes out the garbage, we can be certain that unclear expectations will lead to misunderstanding, disappointment, and withdrawals of trust.

Many expectations are implicit. They haven't been explicitly stated or announced, but people nevertheless bring them to a particular situation. In marriage, for example, a man and a woman have implicit expectations of each other in their marriage roles. Although these expectations have not been discussed, or sometimes even recognized by the person who has them, fulfilling them makes great deposits in the relationship and violating them makes withdrawals.

That's why it's so important whenever you come into a new situation to get all the expectations out on the table. People will begin to judge each other through those expectations. And if they feel like their basic expectations have been violated, the reserve of trust is diminished. We create many negative situations by simply assuming that our expectations are self-evident and that they are clearly understood and shared by other people.

The deposit is to make the expectations clear and explicit in the beginning. This takes a real investment of time and effort up front, but it saves great amounts of time and effort down the road. When expectations are not clear and shared, people begin to become emotionally involved and simple misunderstandings become compounded, turning into personality clashes and communication breakdowns.

Clarifying expectations sometimes takes a great deal of courage. It seems easier to act as though differences don't exist and to hope things will work out than it is to face the differences and work together to arrive at a mutually agreeable set of expectations.

Showing Personal Integrity

Personal integrity generates trust and is the basis of many different kinds of deposits.

Lack of integrity can undermine almost any other effort to create high trust accounts. People can seek to understand, remember the little things, keep their promises, clarify and fulfill expectations, and still fail to build reserves of trust if they are inwardly duplicitous.

Integrity includes but goes beyond honesty. Honesty is telling the truth -- in other words, conforming our words to reality. Integrity is conforming reality to our words -- in other words, keeping promises and fulfilling expectations. This requires an integrated character, a oneness, primarily with self but also with life.

One of the most important ways to manifest integrity is to be loyal to those who are not present. In doing so, we build the trust of those who are present. When you defend those who are absent, you retain the trust of those present.

Suppose you and I were talking alone, and we were criticizing our supervisor in a way that we would not dare to if he were present. Now what will happen when you and I have a falling out? You know I'm going to be discussing your weaknesses with someone else. That's what you and I did behind our supervisor's back. You know my nature. I'll sweet-talk you to your face and bad-mouth you behind your back. You've seen me do it.

That's the essence of duplicity. Does that build a reserve of trust in my account with you.

On the other hand, suppose you were to start criticizing our supervisor and I basically told you I agree with the content of some of the criticism and suggest that the two of us go directly to him and make an effective presentation of how things might be improved. Then what would you know I would do if someone were to criticize you to me behind your back?

For another example, suppose in my effort to build a relationship with you, I told you something someone else had shared with me in confidence. "I really shouldn't tell you this," I might say, "but since you're my friend..." Would my betraying another person build my trust account with you? Or would you wonder if the things you had told me in confidence were being shared with others?

Such duplicity might appear to be making a deposit with the person you're with, but it is actually a withdrawal because you communicate your own lack of integrity. You may get the golden egg of temporary pleasure from putting someone down or sharing privileged information, but you're strangling the goose, weakening the relationship that provides enduring pleasure in association.

Integrity in an interdependent reality is simply this: you treat everyone by the same set of principles. As you do, people will come to trust you. They may not at first appreciate the honest confrontational experiences such integrity might generate. Confrontation takes considerable courage, and many people would prefer to take the course of least resistance, belittling and criticizing, betraying confidences, or participating in gossip about others behind their backs. But in the long run, people will trust and respect you if you are honest and open and kind with them. You care enough to confront. And to be trusted, it is said, is greater than to be loved. In the long run, I am convinced, to be trusted will be also mean to be loved.

When my son Joshua was quite young, he would frequently ask me a soul-searching question. Whenever I overreacted to someone else or was the least bit impatient or unkind, he was so vulnerable and so honest and our relationship was so good that he would simply look me in the eye and say, "Dad, do you love me?" If he thought I was breaking a basic principle of life toward someone else, he wondered if I wouldn't break it with him.

As a teacher, as well as a parent, I have found that the key to the ninety-nine is the one -- particularly the one that is testing the patience and the good humor of the many. It is the love and the discipline of the one student, the one child, that communicates love for the others. It's how you treat the one that reveals how you regard the ninety-nine, because everyone is ultimately a one.

Integrity also means avoiding any communication that is deceptive, full of guile, or beneath the dignity of people. "A lie is any communication with intent to deceive," according to one definition of the word. Whether we communicate with words or behavior, if we have integrity, our intent cannot be to deceive.

Apologizing Sincerely When You Make a Withdrawal

When we make withdrawals from the Emotional Bank Account, we need to apologize and we need to do it sincerely. Great deposits come in the sincere words

"I was wrong."

"That was unkind of me."

"I showed you no respect."

"I gave you no dignity, and I'm deeply sorry."

"I embarrassed you in front of your friends and I had no call to do that. Even though I wanted to make a point, I never should have done it. I apologize."

It takes a great deal of character strength to apologize quickly out of one's heart rather than out of pity. A person must possess himself and have a deep sense of security in fundamental principles and values in order to genuinely apologize.

People with little internal security can't do it. It makes them too vulnerable. They feel it makes them appear soft and weak, and they fear that others will take advantage of their weakness. Their security is based on the opinions of other people, and they worry about what others might think. In addition, they usually feel justified in what they did. They rationalize their own wrong in the name of the other person's wrong, and if they apologize at all, it's superficial.

"If you're going to bow, bow low," say Eastern wisdom. "Pay the uttermost farthing," says the Christian ethic. To be a deposit, an apology must be sincere. And it must be perceived as sincere.

Leo Roskin taught, "It is the weak who are cruel. Gentleness can only be expected from the strong.

I was in my office at home one afternoon writing, of all things, on the subject of patience. I could hear the boys running up and down the hall making loud banging noises, and I could feel my own patience beginning to wane.

Suddenly, my son David started pounding on the bathroom door, yelling at the top of his lungs, "Let me in! Let me in!"

I rushed out of the office and spoke to him with great intensity. "David, do you have any idea how disturbing that is to me? Do you know how hard it is to try to concentrate and write creatively? Now you go into your room and stay in there until you can behave yourself." So in he went, dejected, and shut the door.

As I turned around, I became aware of another problem. The boys had been playing tackle football in the four-foot-wide hallway, and one of them had been elbowed in the mouth. He was lying there in the hall, bleeding from the mouth. David, I discovered, had gone to the bathroom to get a wet towel for him. But his sister, Maria, who was taking a shower, wouldn't open the door.

When I realized that I had completely misinterpreted the situation and had overreacted, I immediately went in to apologize to David.

As I opened the door, the first thing he said to me was, "I won't forgive you."

"Well, why not, honey?" I replied. "Honestly, I didn't realize you were trying to help your brother. Why won't you forgive me?"

"Because you did the same thing last week," he replied. In other words, he was saying. "Dad, you're overdrawn, and you're not going to talk your way out of a problem you behaved yourself into."

Sincere apologies make deposits; repeated apologies interpreted as insincere make withdrawals. And the quality of the relationship reflects it.

It is one thing to make a mistake, and quite another thing not to admit it. People will forgive mistakes, because mistakes are usually of the mind, mistakes of judgment. But people will not easily forgive the mistakes of the heart, the ill intention, the bad motives, the prideful justifying cover-up of the first mistake.

The Laws of Love and the Laws of Life

When we make deposits of unconditional love, when we live the primary laws of love, we encourage others to live the primary laws of life. In other words, when we truly love others without condition, without strings, we help them feel secure and safe and validated and affirmed in their essential worth, identity, and integrity. Their natural growth process is encouraged. We make it easier for them to live the laws of life -- cooperation, contribution, self-discipline, integrity -- and to discover and live true to the highest and best within them. We give them the freedom to act on their own inner imperatives rather than react to our conditions and limitations. This does not mean we become permissive or soft. That itself is a massive withdrawal. We counsel, we plead, we set limits and consequences. But we love, regardless.

When we violate the primary laws of love -- when we attach strings and conditions to that gift -- we actually encourage others to violate the primary laws of life. We put them in a reactive, defensive position where they feel they have to prove "I matter as a person, independent of you."

In reality, they aren't independent. They are counter-dependent, which is another form of dependency and is at the lowest end of the Maturity Continuum. They become reactive, almost enemy-centered, more concerned about defending their "rights" and producing evidence of their individuality than they are about proactively listening to and honoring their own inner imperatives.

Rebellion is a knot of the heart, not of the mind. The key is to make deposits -- constant deposits of unconditional love.

I once had a friend who was dean of a very prestigious school. He planned and saved for years to provide his son the opportunity to attend that institution, but when the time came, the boy refused to go.

This deeply concerned his father. Graduating from that particular school would have been a great asset to the boy. Besides, it was a family tradition. Three generations of attendance preceded the boy. The father pleaded and urged and talked. He also tried to listen to the boy to understand him, all the while hoping that the son would change his mind.

The subtle message being communicated was one of conditional love. The son felt that in a sense the father's desire for him to attend the school outweighed the value he placed on him as a person and as a son, which was terribly threatening. Consequently, he fought for and with his own identity and integrity, and he increased his resolve and his efforts to rationalize his decision not to go.

After some intense soul-searching, the father decided to make a sacrifice -- to renounce conditional love. He knew that his son might choose differently than he had wished; nevertheless, he and his wife resolved to love their son unconditionally, regardless of his choice. It was an extremely difficult thing to do because the value of his educational experience was so close to their hearts and because it was something they had planned and worked for since his birth.

The father and mother went through a very difficult rescripting process, struggling to really understand the nature of unconditional love. They communicated to the boy what they were doing and why, and told him that they had come to the point at which they could say in all honesty that his decision would not affect their complete feeling of unconditional love toward him. They didn't do this to manipulate him, to try to get him to "shape up." They did it as the logical extension of their growth and character.

The boy didn't give much of a response at the time, but his parents had such a paradigm of unconditional love at that point that it would have made no difference in their feelings for him. About a week later, he told his parents that he had decided not to go. They were perfectly prepared for his response and continued to show unconditional love for him. Everything was settled and life went along normally.

A short time later, an interesting thing happened. Now that the boy no longer felt he had to defend his position, he searched within himself more deeply and found that he really did want to have this educational experience. He applied for admission, and then he told his father, who again showed unconditional love by fully accepting his son's decision. My friend was happy, but not excessively so, because he had truly learned to love without condition.

Dag Hammarskjold, past Secretary-General of the United Nations, once made a profound, far-reaching statement: "It is more noble to give yourself completely to one individual than to labor diligently for the salvation of the masses."

I take that to mean that I could devote eight, ten, or twelve hours a day, five, six, or seven days a week to the thousands of people and projects "out there" and still not have a deep, meaningful relationship with my own spouse, with my own teenage son, with my closest working associate. And it would take more nobility of character -- more humility, courage, and strength -- to rebuild that one relationship than it would to continue putting in all those hours for all those people and causes.

In 25 years of consulting with organizations, I have been impressed over and over again by the power of that statement. Many of the problems in organizations stem from relationship difficulties at the very top -- between two partners in a company, between the president and an executive vice-president. It truly takes more nobility of character to confront and resolve those issues than it does to continue to diligently work for the many projects and people "out there."

When I first came across Hammarskjold's statement, I was working in an organization where there were unclear expectations between the individual who was my right-hand man and myself. I simply did not have the courage to confront our differences regarding role and goal expectations and values,

particularly in our methods of administration. So I worked for a number of months in a compromise mode to avoid what might turn out to be an ugly confrontation. All the while, bad feelings were developing inside both of us.

After reading that it is more noble to give yourself completely to one individual than to labor diligently for the salvation of the masses, I was deeply affected by the idea of rebuilding that relationship.

I had to steel myself for what lay ahead, because I knew it would be hard to really get the issues out and to achieve a deep, common understanding and commitment. I remember actually shaking in anticipation of the visit. He seemed like such a hard man, so set in his own ways and so right in his own eyes; yet I needed his strengths and abilities. I was afraid a confrontation might jeopardize the relationship and result in my losing those strengths.

I went through a mental dress rehearsal of the anticipated visit, and I finally became settled within myself around the principles rather than the practices of what I was going to do and say. At last I felt peace of mind and the courage to have the communication.

When we met together, to my total surprise, I discovered that this man had been going through the very same process and had been longing for such a conversation. He was anything but hard and defensive.

Nevertheless, our administrative styles were considerably different, and the entire organization was responding to these differences. We both acknowledged the problems that our disunity had created. Over several visits, we were able to confront the deeper issues, to get them all out on the table, and to resolve them, one by one, with a spirit of high mutual respect. We were able to develop a powerful complementary team and a deep personal affection which added tremendously to our ability to work effectively together.

Creating the unity necessary to run an effective business or a family or a marriage requires great personal strength and courage. No amount of technical administrative skill in laboring for the masses can make up for lack of nobility of personal character in developing relationships. It is at a very essential, one-on-one level, that we live the primary laws of love and life.

P Problems are PC Opportunities

This experience also taught me another powerful paradigm of interdependence. It deals with the way in which we see problems. I had lived for months trying to avoid the problem, seeing it as a source of irritation, a stumbling block, and wishing it would somehow go away. But, as it turned out, the very problem created the opportunity to build a deep relationship that empowered us to work together as a strong complementary team.

I suggest that in an interdependent situation, every P problem is a PC opportunity -- a chance to build the Emotional Bank Accounts that significantly affect interdependent production.

When parents see their children's problems as opportunities to build the relationship instead of as negative, burdensome irritations, it totally changes the nature of parent-child interaction. Parents become more willing, even excited, about deeply understanding and helping their children. When a child comes to them with a problem, instead of thinking, "Oh, no! Not another problem!" their paradigm is, "Here is a great opportunity for me to really help my child and to invest in our relationship." Many interactions change from transactional to transformational, and strong bonds of love and trust are created as children sense the value parents give to their problems and to them as individuals.

This paradigm is powerful in business as well. One department store chain that operates from this paradigm has created a great loyalty among its customers. Any time a customer comes into the store with a problem, not matter how small, the clerks immediately see it as an opportunity to build the