



Book Who's Got Your Back

The Breakthrough Program to Build Deep, Trusting Relationships That Create Success – and Won't Let You Fail

Keith Ferrazzi
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Recommendation

Achieving lofty personal and professional goals in life isn't easy. And, as consultant and author Keith Ferrazzi argues in this compelling team-building manual, it's nearly impossible to do alone. But find three like-minded, experienced and tough people who care about you, who tell the truth and who understand accountability, and you'll attain your goal a lot easier – whether it's losing 20 pounds, climbing to the top of the sales chart, avoiding conflict or giving up a detrimental habit like bragging. Ferrazzi details how to create a “dream team” to push you to the next stage – finding the right people, building solid relationships, setting goals and dodging pitfalls. Filled with relatable don't-do-what-I-did stories from Ferrazzi, the book makes the whole process sound easy – perhaps a bit too easy. Still, this recipe for success seems to include all the right ingredients. *BooksInShort* suggests this persuasive book to any ambitious soul who is looking to reach the stars with the backing of a dedicated team.

Take-Aways

- Success is not a one-person job, no matter how much you already have achieved.
- Reaching your highest potential takes a team, but not just any team. Create an inner circle of people with whom you share “lifeline relationships.”
- You need three “trusted advisers” in your life who will tell you the truth, help you set goals, pinpoint what's holding you back and make sure you reach your targets.
- Your relationships with these advisers require “generosity, vulnerability, candor” and “accountability.”
- Deep relationships don't develop quickly or easily. Begin by ensuring a secure, welcoming environment where vulnerability and candor can flourish.
- Create your “dream team” once you have a clear vision of where you're going and what you want to achieve. Without that, no group of advisers can help you.
- Try unrushed conversations out of the office to get to know possible team members well.
- Don't be afraid to “spar” with your advisers so you can grow and learn.
- Work daily to reach your goals, even if that means just going through the motions.
- Make a promise to yourself to grow.

Summary

Changing Your Life with “Lifeline Relationships”

Weight Watchers founder Jean Nidetch didn't plan to launch a million-dollar business back in 1961. She just wanted to lose weight. After losing the first 20 pounds, she realized she needed more than a diet; she also needed encouragement. When she sought support from an “inner circle” of friends who provided insight and held her accountable for adhering to her eating plan, she lost 72 pounds and started Weight Watchers. Current CEO Dave Kirchhoff says the organization still relies on Nidetch's basic message of weight loss through “support and accountability.”

“A lifeline relationship is one between equals, between peers, between individuals who can be intellectual sparring partners and confidants.”

This message isn't unique to weight loss. All kinds of success come easier and faster with a small group of reliable, honest and trusted advisers, your core supporters,

people with whom you share mutual, supportive “lifeline relationships.” Finding them requires knowing your own strengths and weaknesses, and accepting that you cannot do everything alone. It means relying on strategies like those used by Weight Watchers to stay focused, accountable and efficient, regardless of the goal. These enduring relationships will help you define success and long-term goals, set up the best strategy to reach those goals quickly, figure out what’s holding you back and maintain the changes you make. You need just three people to improve your life, although probably not the first three people you’ll think of including.

Four Attitudes You Need to Build a Supportive Group

Discovering and building trusting relationships relies on intimacy. Being open and honest builds strong connections and lets others trust you. In fact, supporting other people and sharing come naturally and feed the soul. Intimacy and vulnerability aren’t weaknesses. They’re the openings to finding lifeline relationships. These richer connections won’t evolve, however, without an emotional environment that allows both parties to talk, debate, criticize and give advice respectfully. Establishing the safe space is your responsibility. It might feel risky but it will pay off in the long run. To create an atmosphere where these supportive relationships can flourish, try to develop these four attitudes:

1. “Generosity”

Most people want to give to others, even though many don’t know what they have to offer. Consider bestowing something of yourself as you build your support team. Emulate Austrian neurologist and psychologist Viktor Frankl, who managed to perform regular acts of charity as a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp. He survived, in part, because he shared his tiny bits of bread with those hungrier than himself. Helping others allowed him to sustain his humanity through horrible suffering. To understand generosity better, consider two kinds of gifts – either your natural ability to connect with others through listening, caring and encouraging, or a personalized present, based on figuring out what others need and determining how to help them get it. The second choice requires being close enough to hear another person’s hopes, dreams and trouble spots so you can intuit their needs. The flip side of giving help is receiving it, which can be difficult, but powerful. When you accept help, you let others feel needed and you create an environment of mutual kindness.

2. “Vulnerability”

Most people avoid exposing their true thoughts. But vulnerability isn’t a weakness; it takes guts. Telling others about your fears and then asking for help in conquering those fears requires courage. Vulnerability actually is the “secret ingredient” in establishing honest connections and building a close team of people who “have your back.” Putting it into practice might not come naturally. Take it slowly. Perhaps have lunch with a trusted co-worker, and tell him or her about a genuine concern. See how it changes your relationship. Your colleague will probably offer advice or at least commiserate. Work on the “eight steps to instant intimacy”:

1. **Keep it real** – Know who you are, and stay true to yourself. Relate honestly to others.
2. **Avoid preconceived ideas about people** – Making assumptions about others is natural and usually serves you well. But when meeting new people, shake off any biases.
3. **Stay upbeat** – Even if you have to manufacture positive energy, muster it to face challenging situations or people. Maxine Clark, founder and CEO of Build-a-Bear, used to look into the eyes of tough businessmen and imagine they had the warmth of close family friends. She pictured two of her uncles, big guys with bigger hearts.
4. **Tell stories about what you love** – This will bring down emotional walls, because passions unite people, whether they share those passions or not.
5. **Share objectives, hopes and desires** – Discussing goals makes them more real and easier to attain, and the conversation solidifies the relationship.
6. **Explain where you’ve been** – This step toward greater intimacy is tough because it means revealing your struggles, how you beat them and how they affect your behavior.
7. **Talk about what concerns you** – Move on to your current struggles. The members of your trusted group need to hear about your real problems, whether with a spouse, finances, a boss or your health. This is not for new acquaintances.
8. **Consider the future** – Talk about your fears of the unknown – the really scary stuff.

3. “Candor”

Candor means communicating and criticizing in a useful, kind and respectful way. Most people don’t want to hear the truth, fearing they’ll get hurt, but that fear lets the lack of candor cripple businesses and relationships. Without candor, a group of lifeline relationships can’t serve you well because they’ll never tell you what you really need to change, so you’ll never know. Whether you hear it or not, the truth doesn’t change. Eventually, it will cause you problems. Once you embrace candor, use it in the right places – not in exit interviews or anonymous reviews. Work up to it slowly. Candor also requires that you quickly confess any mistake with an apology and, ideally, with an idea for correcting the problem. Candor has potential downfalls, including the ricochet, when you respond to someone’s honest candor with your own truths about them, rather than listening and focusing on your need to change. Other possible trouble spots with candor include prefacing criticism with compliments, thus putting listeners on edge as they worry about what’s coming next, or not being candid to avoid hurting someone – which is really conflict avoidance, not consideration.

4. “Accountability”

Once you are accountable to your lifeline supporters for working toward your goals, they can help you make permanent changes. That’s because they are close enough to you now to earn “butt-kicking rights,” the obligation to help keep you on track. This is how Weight Watchers members support each other and help with the hard part: sustaining change over the long haul. Give yourself a goal, and ask a friend to continue to hold you accountable for working toward it until you’re done. Offer to do the same for your friend. Make the process enjoyable for both of you. Emphasize that you are serious and need help. Be grateful. Making this process work is your job, whether you are quitting smoking, losing weight or changing a workplace behavior.

“Performance goals are seductive – think New Year’s resolutions! But without the proper approach they can also do us harm.”

One lifeline relationship group, The Billionaires Club, connects members to each other as accountability partners. They set monthly goals for each other and stay in daily contact. Another group keeps a book of members’ commitments, checking in weekly. “Formalize” the agreement to keep on task. A regular schedule for meeting,

connecting and checking in makes it work.

Putting Your Team Together

Recognizing that you need to change sometimes happens slowly and sometimes doesn't happen at all. You may need to set priorities or re-evaluate existing priorities. You won't always see when it's time to change, but a trusted group of close advisers – the ones who meet you with candor and hold you accountable – will help. This process is good for you, your business, even your personal relationships. But it is not an easy journey. With time, dedication and hard work, plus a willingness to hear the truth, you can follow these nine steps for creating lifelong relationships and building your support team:

1. **“Articulate your vision”** – You want to reach your potential and not waste your life, so take risks, take advantage and set some real goals. Ask tough questions to be sure you know yourself and where you want to go. Then set your goals and reach for your vision.
2. **“Find your lifeline relationships”** – Start by looking outside your close family and friends; you have too much history with them to enlist them first. Choose someone who feels more “risky,” someone you'd work hard to avoid disappointing. Seek people with similar expectations who will push you. Consider co-workers, past or present, or perhaps a fellow student or someone from a conference. Don't overlook professional coaches or even strangers. Once you find possible lifelines, consider how they rate in terms of generosity, vulnerability, candor and accountability. Then, check them against the four C's: “commitment, comprehension, chemistry” and “curiosity.” To learn unique perspectives, seek team members with diverse backgrounds and experiences.
3. **“Practice the art of the long slow dinner”** – If that sounds like dating, that's intentional. A long slow dinner, which doesn't have to be dinner per se, gives a relationship time and space to deepen. No one rushes to figure out how to help each other and then zooms back to work. Dinner is simply time to share dreams and goals in a relaxed atmosphere. Treat someone like a lifeline, and see how he or she responds; use candor, ask for feedback, try a mutual accountability test and set another time to meet.
4. **“Broaden your goal-setting strategy”** – Enlist your partners in helping you rethink your goals. Use goal-setting strategy sessions to figure out how to improve yourself. Set “learning” and “performance” goals. A performance goal has a defined outcome, such as dropping 25 pounds or improving sales by a certain number. A learning goal focuses on developing new expertise to help you reach a performance goal or to increase your knowledge. That might mean learning to choose better food or learning to perfect your sales technique. Simply announcing your goals helps you reach them by forcing you to refine your ideas, allowing others to point out possible pitfalls, and by helping you reinforce to yourself what you're going to do.
5. **“Create your personal success wheel”** – Take all your goals – personal, professional and otherwise – and put them into a pie chart or on some other visual representation. A pie chart lets you increase or decrease how much time you plan to spend on each goal. Goals can be spiritual, intellectual or physical, focused on family and friends, or on giving back to the community. Set short- and long-term goals in each category, then ask your group of advisers to keep you accountable by helping you track your progress.
6. **“Learn to fight!”** – No need for boxing gloves. “Sparring” is simply verbal jousting. There's no winner or loser. It's designed to teach new skills to both competitors and ideally helps both partners in a lifeline relationship. It means taking on an issue, listening and looking for the lesson you can learn. Sparring can be emotional and can upset people. Consider setting ground rules in advance. Emphasize listening skills. The best kind of listening occurs when you're engaged and when you share the speaker's feelings.
7. **“Diagnose your weaknesses”** – Accept that you have weaknesses and behaviors that are holding you back, just like everyone else. Insecurity can make these faults worse. Start by acknowledging them, first to yourself and then to others who will help you change. Begin by addressing one problem behavior at a time.
8. **“Commit to improvement”** – Don't get alarmed. Just promise to yourself to grow. Sharing your commitment with your advisers and writing it down gives it extra power and makes it hard to abandon: It's a quick, invigorating road to intimacy. Talk with your team and get feedback. Seek accountability.
9. **“Fake it till you make it – then make it stick”** – These principles establish starting points only. Now comes the tough part, maintaining the changes, feeding the relationships and keeping the process going so you see results. Success hinges on daily practice. Use that to replace the fear of failing, the most common cause of giving up. Then, act as if you've already achieved your goal; for example, if you are trying to overcome shyness, be outgoing. Use the same techniques with your mutual support team. Pick a small goal, work on it every day and check in for feedback often.

About the Author

Consultant **Keith Ferrazzi**, CEO of Ferrazzi Greenlight, wrote the bestseller *Never Eat Alone*.
