

# Work / Life

Support as  
Necessary To Change  
Your Relationships  
as Systems

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## NAVIGATOR

By Ric Giardina

When folks go through my Life Balance Workshop, as some did recently at NASA Headquarters, they are surprised to discover that much of the workshop is devoted to ensuring that each participant sets up a system of support appropriate to the life changes he or she plans on making.

Years ago, I learned a simple but inescapable truth about making changes in my life: If I don't get people to support me in changing, they will support me in staying the same!

When you think about it, you will realize that this is not surprising; indeed, it should be expected and—more importantly—planned for.

We need to understand that our relationships are systems and, as such, subject to general systems theory and dynamics. Moreover, we ourselves are the ones who create and maintain those systems. For the most part, we have little inducement to change a relational system already in place and neither do the people in a relationship with us.

Here is one way to think about the concept of relationships as systems. In our relationships with others—spouses, domestic partners, family members, friends, housemates, neighbors, coworkers, and so on—each of us is like a unique puzzle piece. As we move into a relationship with another person, we “negotiate” the shape of the border between our puzzle piece and theirs so

that it works for both of us. We may adjust the shape of our puzzle piece a bit; they may adjust theirs a bit.

At some point, a subconscious arrangement is made in which each party understands how his puzzle piece fits with the other. This “negotiation” takes place using many parameters, including conversation, observation, interaction, past experience, and reputation. The resulting border may not be optimal for either party because it takes into account elements, such as the underlying basis for the relationship itself or the actual or perceived power level of each individual, and personal traits and idiosyncrasies, such as each person's degree of confidence, self-image, level of self-esteem, and so on. For example, I may submit myself to a relationship with my manager that allows him to yell at me “because he's the boss,” when I would not allow that in my relationship with anyone else.

We do this with everyone in our lives. You can begin to think of yourself as the central puzzle piece in a system of such relationships. Each relationship has been subconsciously negotiated with you so the other person knows the parameters of how to respond to you, and you understand how to respond to the other person. The longer any relationship is in existence, the more “set in concrete” the border between your puzzle pieces becomes.

We train others to respond to our behaviors in a particular way. Why do we all choose this method? First, because it's easy, and second, for the most part, because it works. Predictable responses allow us to rely on some level of consistency in our relationships that permits us to keep life and its necessary projects moving forward.

Problems occur, however, when one member of a relationship suddenly changes his or her habitual behavior. The people whose puzzle pieces border on that person's don't like it, and in some instances, they won't allow it! In the world of interpersonal relationships, this is like removing a central piece from a completed puzzle and attempting to replace it with a differently shaped piece. It won't work! Indeed, from the perspectives of those puzzle pieces bordering on the now-missing piece, the shape of the removed piece is still there albeit only as defined by the pieces that border on it.

What happens is that people get pictures of how we routinely operate stuck in their heads—indeed, how we have trained others to think about us—and the urge to continue to respond as though there have been no changes is strong. There is an unconscious effort to “hold” us in place. Upset, frustration, anger, and sabotage are likely results.

You are not likely to succeed if you attempt to make core-level life changes without the support of the people around you. In short,

you cannot do this alone, and it would be foolish to try.

The only solution is to renegotiate the borders. That can result in the people around you supporting your intention to change, rather than resisting your attempts to change and subconsciously undermining you.

Since we train the people around us to respond to us in particular ways, it's really up to us to retrain them when we choose to change. First, it will be necessary for you to discover those people who are relying on you not to change and then enroll them in the change you want to make. You must use both communication and repetition. ("Remember? This is how it is now.")

There is also an important side benefit to discussing your proposed changes with the people in your life—accountability. I am a big believer in being held accountable by others. It's amazing how much I can accomplish when I know that someone is going to ask me if I did what I said I was going to do.

The people in your life who would have naturally resisted your attempts to change can instead be enrolled to assist you in achieving your goal. Tell them what habitual behavior you want to change and the new behavior you want to implement. Then, give them permission to tell you when you aren't doing what you said you wanted to do. You can even give them the exact words to use as a signal to tell you that they are doing what you asked.

By bringing those around you into roles that support your intended change, you eliminate the possibility that they will become obstacles to your success. Rather, you have made them part of the process that will ensure that you succeed.

"Wealth amounts in not having great possessions but in having few wants."

—Epicurus

## STRESS MANAGEMENT

### Three Rules for Turning Stress into Success

By Denis Waitley

**1. Accept the Unchangeable**—Everything that has happened in your life to this minute is unchangeable. It's history. The greatest waste of energy is in looking back at missed opportunities, lamenting past events, grudge collecting, getting even, harboring ill will, and any vengeful thinking. Success is the only acceptable form of revenge. By forgiving your trespassers, you become free to concentrate on going forward with your life and

succeeding in spite of your detractors. You will live a rewarding and fulfilling life.

Your enemies, on the other hand, will forever wonder how you went on to become so successful without them and in the shadow of their doubts.

**Action Idea:** Write down on a sheet of paper things that happened in the past that bother you. Now crumple the paper into a ball and throw it in the wastepaper bin. This symbolizes letting go of past misfortunes.

**2. Change the Changeable**—What you can change is your reaction to what others say and do. And you can control your own thoughts and actions by dwelling on desired results instead of the penalties of failure. The only real control you have in life is that of your immediate thought and action. Since most of what we do is a reflex, subconscious habit, it is wise not to act on emotional impulse. In personal relations, it is better to wait a moment until reason has the opportunity to compete with your emotions.

**Action Idea:** Write down in your diary one thing you will do tomorrow to help you relax more during and after a stressful day.

**3. Avoid the Unacceptable**—Go get out of the way of potentially dangerous behaviors and environments. When people tailgate you on the freeway, change lanes. If they follow you at night, drive to a well-lighted public place.

When there are loud, obnoxious people next to you at a restaurant or club, change tables or locations. Also, be cautious of personal relationships developed via the Internet. With the massive number of individuals surfing the net, the number of predators increases in like proportion. Always be on the alert for potentially dangerous situations involving your health, personal safety, financial speculation, and emotional relationships.

**Action Idea:** What is one unacceptable behavior you have or allow others to do (for example, the way you drive, being around negative people, walking down dark streets alone late at night) to you that you will avoid starting tomorrow?

(Source: Productivity Consultant and Keynote Speaker, Denis Waitley. <http://www.waitley.com>)

## HUMOR

### Found on Real Headstones

In an Albany, New York, cemetery:

"Harry Edsel Smith of Albany  
Born 1903-Died 1942

Looked up the elevator shaft to see if the car was on the way down.  
It was."



In a Thurmont, Maryland, cemetery:

"Here lies an Atheist  
All dressed up  
And no place to go."

In a London, England, cemetery:

"Here lies Ann Mann,  
Who lived an old maid  
But died an old Mann.  
Dec. 8, 1767"

In a Ribbesford, England, cemetery:

"Anna Wallace:  
The children of Israel wanted bread,  
And the Lord sent them manna.  
Old clerk Wallace wanted a wife,  
And the Devil sent him Anna."

In a Ruidoso, New Mexico, cemetery:

"Here lies Johnny Yeast.  
Pardon me  
For not rising."

In a Uniontown, Pennsylvania, cemetery:

"Here lies the body of Jonathan Blake.  
Stepped on the gas  
Instead of the brake."

In a Silver City, Nevada, cemetery:

"Here lays The Kid.  
We planted him raw.  
He was quick on the trigger  
But slow on the draw."

## HEALTH TIP

### How Much Caffeine Is Too Much?

Common question . . . good question . . .

By Dr. Deborah Baker-Racine

It's usually presumed that a regular cup of coffee contains 100 mg of caffeine, but it may range between 40 and 176 mg (Starbucks can be over 200 mg!), and the mean is closer to 85 mg. There's probably less caffeine in a cup of tea—one study showed a median of 27 mg per cup, with a range of 8 to 91 mg . . . but of course tea has many antioxidant benefits, which coffee does not. An ounce of sweet chocolate may contain between 75 and 150 mg of combined methylxanthines (a class of stimulants that includes caffeine), and a cup of chocolate or chocolate milk may contain 150 to 300 mg.

The principal dietary sources of caffeine are overwhelmingly coffee and tea. Coffee accounts for some 54 percent of ingested caffeine, while tea accounts for some 43 percent. The remaining 3 percent consists mostly of caffeine ingested in the form of cocoa and chocolate products, various fabricated soft drinks, and maté (a tea drunk in South America).

In Australia, a 375-ml can of Coca Cola or Pepsi Cola contains about 40 mg of caffeine.

Regulations allow a maximum of 145 mg of caffeine per kilogram of cola-type drink (54.5 mg per 375-ml can). Jolt Cola—said to have “twice the caffeine”—actually contains the permissible legal limit of around 54 mg per bottle.

In the United States, the permissible limit of caffeine in cola drinks and other carbonated beverages is 200 mg per liter. U.S. drinks also have higher levels of sugar. Caffeine’s bitter taste acts as a flavoring agent to counteract the sweetness of the sugar.

Caffeine is absorbed rapidly into the bloodstream from the gastrointestinal tract. It reaches maximum concentration within about 1 hour. The blood distributes it throughout the body. It even manages to pass through the blood-brain barrier.

The half-life of caffeine in the human body varies between 3 to 7 hours. Throughout the body, it increases the metabolic rate by around 10 percent. Females metabolize caffeine 20 to 30 percent more quickly than males. However, it will take women on “the pill” twice as long to metabolize caffeine as women who are ovulating.

Early experiments showed that low concentrations of caffeine may produce small decreases in heart rate, whereas higher concentrations may make the heart beat abnormally fast.

In the brain, it constricts the cerebral blood vessels. If you’re used to drinking several cups of coffee a day but then you quit, those blood vessels will dilate, maybe enough to give you a powerful headache. It’s one of the best known withdrawal symptoms. If you are quitting, try the homeopathic coffee remedy (dosage of 12C) three to four times per day. It truly helps.

Many people know that caffeine is a strong diuretic. Apparently, this side effect is due to the increased blood flow through the kidneys. Therefore, those who drink large amounts of coffee could be looking at dehydration, even at a low level, which is definitely unhealthy.

Caffeine can produce insomnia—delaying the onset of sleep and reducing total sleeping time. It has a small effect on respiration by increasing blood flow through the lungs and increasing the supply of air by relaxing the bronchiolar and alveolar smooth muscle. That’s why it’s proving to be effective in treating the breathing problems of some prematurely born infants.

Some people experience tremors after drinking coffee and tea. That’s thought to be due to overactivity in the central nervous system.

Studies show that people who suffer from anxiety and tremors have higher levels of

lactic acid in their blood, and caffeine is one of the major perpetrators of this problem (along with alcohol, sugar, B vitamin deficiency, calcium/magnesium deficiency, and, sometimes, food allergens). So if you are susceptible to anxiety, caffeine should definitely be avoided.

And as far as drinking coffee to sober up? Forget it! It makes you a little brighter, but it does NOT remove alcohol from your bloodstream or breath.

So, bottom line, caffeine is a drug and, as such, is not a necessary nutrient. Having said that, one to two cups per day do not seem to hurt most people provided they don’t interfere with other supplement protocols and don’t create symptoms like feelings of anxiety, tremors, and other problems.

(Source: Dr. Deborah Baker-Racine.  
<http://www.y2khealthanddetox.com>)

## WEB SITE PICKS

<http://metrofreefi.com>

(Lists free nationwide wi-fi cafes and other hotspots)

The world is full of free wi-fi locations so why pay for them? Skip Starbucks and other paid-access locations and support local businesses and your community for free. Stop into your local free hotspot, buy a mocha, and let them know how much you appreciate the free wi-fi!

## WORDS FOR REFLECTION

### Giving the Freedom To Live Accepting the Journeys of Others

Each of us, in life, walks on the special path that the soul is destined to undertake. Our journeys are very different, and we progress at different rates. The pitfalls and blessings we encounter are unique, yet we are all learning and no one form of knowledge is more important than any other. Even so, when we observe others, it can be easy to pass judgment on their decisions and to assume their actions will correspond with what we feel is right. But for every problem there are a multitude of solutions. Everyone makes mistakes, and while watching others stumble can be frustrating, it is important that you accept each person’s unique way of doing things. Giving others the freedom to act in the way they feel is best (without the fear of harsh judgments) honors the capacity for growth that all people possess.

It is helpful to practice accepting others as they are. Never judge the decisions of others

based on the path you would have taken because every person lives by different values and experiences. Challenge is a universal concept, but we all deal with difficulties in our own way. Give others the space to fail, but don’t harden your heart against their experience. It isn’t wise to try and fix people or control situations. You may feel compelled to intervene when difficulties arise, but it is important only to offer guidance when asked, unless the person is involved in a truly dangerous situation or cannot act for him or herself. Failure to choose the right path or to make enlightened decisions is simply another step on the journey. It is a means to experience and wisdom. Letting go of the need to influence others does not discount offering loving support, and it does not mean that you need to stop caring. It does mean stepping back, dissolving judgment, and gracefully allowing others to live their own destinies.

Giving others the freedom to blossom in their own journeys gives you the freedom to take more notice of your own. You may not condone the actions you see taking place, but your reactions will be more loving by letting them be. And you will be able to focus on just being yourself, confident that the path you take is as right, valid, and special as any other.

(Source: <http://www.DailyOm.com>)

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT



### The Turning Point

The turning point takes just a moment,  
Though I can see its roots in years long past,  
The time had come when I must choose to be.  
And not to do. And not to have.

This choice, when made,  
    will close me off forever  
From a place I never cared to be,  
    though drawn there,  
Time and time again.  
A single moment’s clarity  
    Of light.  
    Of vision.  
    Certainty. Seeing how  
My life has changed  
    and knowing how that life  
Will change again. But only by this choice.

How many times  
    came I to this same crossroads  
Its landscape so disguised  
    I noted little I can see today?  
How many times that other choice?  
    That subroutine,  
    The loop that carries me a long, far way,  
    But then returns me  
Here, bedraggled, wasted,  
    not having learned,  
    But asked to choose again?

But somehow, just now, this once I see it all so clearly.  
Past choices made and consequences  
falling  
out

Like beads at a bazaar. In retrospect, with clarity,  
I cannot fail to see what blinded me before.

Yes, this time I can see the road. The choices  
And the certainty of each result attached like light  
Bent through a prism. One and the same.

I make my choice this time with more at stake, but  
With less risk, for I can see all I can see.  
For now.

—Ric Giardina

“How are you going to respond when the Clock-Radio of Challenge emits the Irritating Buzz of Opportunity? Are you going to roll over and hit the Snooze Button of Complacency? Or are you going to wake up and, after performing the Bodily Functions of Preparedness, boldly grasp the Toothbrush of Tomorrow?”

—Dave Barry

## THOUGHT DU JOUR

### U.S. Statistics for 1905, One Hundred Years Ago

The average life expectancy in the United States was 47 years.

Only 14 percent of the homes in the United States had a bathtub.

Only 8 percent of the homes had a telephone.

A 3-minute call from Denver to New York City cost \$11.

There were only 8,000 cars in the United States and only 144 miles of paved roads.

The maximum speed limit in most cities was 10 miles per hour.

Alabama, Mississippi, Iowa, and Tennessee were each more heavily populated than California.

With a mere 1.4 million residents, California was only the 21st most populous state in the Union.

The tallest structure in the world was the Eiffel Tower!

The average wage in the United States was 22¢ an hour.

The average U.S. worker made between \$200 and \$400 per year.

A competent accountant could expect to earn \$2,000 per year, a dentist \$2,500 per year, a veterinarian between \$1,500 and \$4,000 per year, and a mechanical engineer about \$5,000 per year.

More than 95 percent of all births in the United States took place at home.

Ninety percent of all U.S. physicians had no college education. Instead, they attended medical schools, many of which were condemned in the press and by the Government as “substandard.”

Sugar cost 4¢ a pound.

Eggs were 14¢ a dozen.

Coffee was 15¢ a pound.

Most women only washed their hair once a month and used borax or egg yolks for shampoo.

Canada passed a law prohibiting poor people from entering the country for any reason.

The five leading causes of death in the United States were as follows:

1. Pneumonia and influenza
2. Tuberculosis
3. Diarrhea
4. Heart disease
5. Stroke

The American flag had 45 stars.

Arizona, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Hawaii, and Alaska hadn't been admitted to the Union yet.

The population of Las Vegas, Nevada, was 30!!!

Crossword puzzles, canned beer, and iced tea hadn't been invented.

There was no Mother's Day or Father's Day.

Two out of 10 U.S. adults couldn't read or write.

Only 6 percent of all Americans had graduated high school.

Marijuana, heroin, and morphine were all available over the counter at corner drugstores.

According to one pharmacist, “Heroin clears the complexion, gives buoyancy to the mind, regulates the stomach and bowels, and is, in fact, a perfect guardian of health.” (Shocking!)

Eighteen percent of households in the United States had at least one full-time servant or domestic.

There were only about 230 reported murders in the entire United States.

. . . and I forwarded this from someone else without typing it myself and sent it to you in a matter of seconds! Try to imagine what life may be like in another 100 years. It staggers the mind.

—Unknown



## FINANCES

### Beneficiary Checklist

You need to name beneficiaries for your IRAs, life insurance policies, annuities, trusts, and other financial accounts. Here's how to do it.

Think before naming beneficiaries. Check the tax angles with a professional.

Name “contingent” (backup) beneficiaries, too. This action prevents the assets being included in your taxable estate if your primary beneficiary dies before you. If you name more than one beneficiary, spell out the percentage of the assets each one will receive. There's no rule that each beneficiary must get an equal share.

Determine whether your beneficiaries can manage the asset. If not, you may need to create a trust to hold the asset after your death.

Review your beneficiary designations periodically. You may need to change them in cases of birth, death, divorce, remarriage, incapacity, or other life-altering situations.

(Source: <http://www.fedweek.com>)

### Questions/comments to:

Evelin Saxinger, Work/Life Program Manager, [esaxinge@hq.nasa.gov](mailto:esaxinge@hq.nasa.gov) or 358-1311.

An online version of this newsletter may be found at [http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/codecc/Pages/navig\\_09\\_05.pdf](http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/codecc/Pages/navig_09_05.pdf)