

Work / Life

Put a Little
Z.I.P. Into Your
Relationships!

By Chris Widener

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NAVIGATOR

Let me give you an acronym I have used to keep my mind on three important elements of relationships in my own life. It is the acronym Z.I.P. This stands for Zest, Intimacy, and Purpose. Here are some thoughts on how to put a little Z.I.P. into your relationships!

Through the years I have spent hundreds of hours working with people in their relationships: marriages, friendships, working relationships, and social relationships. Through it all I have seen some wonderful things and some terrible things. It truly is the good, the bad, and the ugly!

But I have been able to find three core elements of successful relationships. These are things that, when done over time, begin to create for you the kinds of relationships that you truly desire.

The key to remembering these three items is the acronym Z.I.P., which stands for three things you can do—and begin to do immediately—to improve any and all of your relationships. They are as follows:

Put some Zest into your relationships.

By Zest, I primarily mean fun. Relationships were meant to be fun! We wouldn't have been made with the capacity to have fun if relationships weren't supposed to have a little zest in them!

Think about it: Don't you usually start out most healthy relationships with a lot of fun times? Whether it is going out to dinner or a

ballgame, or spending time playing a game, you usually have fun as a major part of the relationship. Fun is some of the glue that bonds the relationship.

But in all relationships as life goes on, specifically in a marriage, the fun starts to go by the wayside. More and more it is about getting the job done, whatever the job may be. To restore the relationship, to put a little zip into it, we need to reintroduce the idea of Zest.

What can you do to get it back if you have lost it? Think of a specific relationship you have: What were the fun things you did at the beginning of the relationship that bonded you together? Now, commit to doing those again and see if your relationship doesn't begin to soar again! If you can, develop new fun things to do so you can both start an adventure of fun together!

Cultivate more Intimacy in your relationships.

I don't just mean intimacy in the common term of sexual intimacy. I mean for all intents and purposes, taking your relationship to a deeper level.

What I do mean is that every relationship that is mutually satisfying has a level of depth to it that provides meaning. This is really what the search is for in our relationships—meaning.

Remember when you first started your relationship, whether with your spouse or friend.

All of that time was spent opening up, telling who you are, where you were from, and about your likes and dislikes. There was a deep sense of satisfaction with the relationship, which is why it continued. You liked who they were, and you enjoyed being known by them.

But then something happens. We get to a certain level, and the pursuit of depth ends. We stop sharing joys, dreams, and fears. Instead, we settle into routines. The daily grind takes over, we stop knowing one another, and we simply exist together. Now don't get me wrong, every time you get together doesn't have to be deep. But there is a need for regular times of intimate connection where we go deeper with others.

True meaningful relationships come when we are loved and accepted for who we are at our core, not simply for acting in such a way in our relationships to keep the other person in it.

Think about the relationships in which you would like to see improvements. Take some time in the coming weeks and months to spend time just talking and getting to a deeper level in your relationship. Specifically, let the other person deeper into your world. Perhaps this will be the catalyst for them doing the same.

Develop a Purpose in your relationships.

The most meaningful relationships we have are those that are held together by a common purpose and vision for what the relationship can accomplish.

When people have a common purpose they feel like they are part of a team, and they feel bound together in that relationship. Even when people may be disappointed in those with whom they have a relationship, if they have a purpose, such as raising children, they are much more likely to stick it out. Purpose creates bonds.

Think about your strongest relationships. Aren't they centered on at least one area of purpose or a common goal?

What about a relationship that has cooled? Think back and see if perhaps you used to have a common purpose, but it has gone by the wayside.

And what of your desire to see a relationship grow? Take some time to begin to cultivate a common purpose. Sit down with that person and tell them that you would like to have some common goals and purposes that you can pursue together. As you develop these, you will see your relationship strengthen in ways you never imagined.

Questions for Reflection:

- Q. What do you think about the distinction between love and like? How can you love everyone, even if you may not like him/her? Do you feel like you love others? How so?
- Q. Are you a person who is characterized by serving others? How? What would others say about you in regard to this question?
- Q. How are your communication skills? Do they hurt or hinder your ability to develop and maintain positive relationships? In what area do you need to grow most?
- Q. Would you describe yourself as a person of patience? Or do you lose it with people? What things really make you blow your patience? What can you do to change that?
- Q. Are you having fun in your relationships? How? What can you do to cultivate more fun?

Action Points:

Think of a person you interact with regularly who you neither like nor love. Now, this week, make every effort to love that person by treating him or her right and honorably, no matter how they act.

Make it a goal to serve two people each day selflessly without expecting anything in return. Just do something for them that they would appreciate.

Think about one area of your communication skills that needs improvement. Now, each day this week, work on it. If it is listening, for example, tell yourself as you go through the day, "Don't speak yet. Listen. Really listen."

Only after you have disciplined yourself to grow in this way should you then speak.

Think of a relationship that used to be more fun. It may be with a spouse or a friend. Now plan something fun for this week and DO IT! Get out and enjoy that other person!

(Source: By Chris Widener. Excerpted from *The Fifth Pillar of Success: Relationships, Part One—Basics of Healthy Relationships* by Jim Rohn. www.jimrohn.com)

WEB SITE PICKS

<http://www.techsupportalert.com>

This is a useful tech support site with a lengthy list of free "how-to" guides plus many links to other sites offering free technical support. This site also points you toward the best free utility programs available on the Internet.

INTERESTING FACT

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When you make it your goal to create the perfect relationship between you and your body, you are learning to have a perfect relationship with anyone you are with, including your mother, your friends, your lover, your children, and your dog.
—Don Miguel Ruiz

HEALTHY FOOD TIPS

(1) Grapes for Cardiovascular Protection

The simple consumption of grapes not only increases overall blood vessel performance, but also completely prevents the harmful effects that result from a high-fat meal, demonstrating that consuming a favorable food can influence the effects of unfavorable ones.

A single high-fat meal can wreak havoc, but grapes protect against the harm, helping to prevent the initial development of cardiovascular disease.

Chronic and moderate consumption of grape products has been associated with decreased risk of myocardial infarction, stroke, and high blood pressure/cholesterol because they improve endothelial vascular function. This refers to a layer of cells that line blood and lymphatic vessels. In the presence of vascular endothelial dysfunction, coronary artery disease is initiated.

Despite our gains in cardiovascular disease treatment, it remains the leading killer of men over 45 and women over 65.

[Foods that offer health value beyond their nutrient content are referred to as "functional foods." I like to think of them as "medically valuable." Grapes are such a food. Try to purchase organic varieties, because inorganic grapes are often heavily sprayed.]

(Source: 2003 Pediatric Academic Societies' Annual Meeting, May 2003. Printed in *Nutrition Hints* by Betty Kamen, Ph.D., and Michael Rosenbaum, M.D. <http://www.bettykamen.com>)

(2) Cranberry Juice Lowers Cholesterol

Cranberry juice consumed daily can favorably affect your cholesterol levels.

The reason that cranberry juice can significantly raise HDL (good cholesterol) levels in those who have high cholesterol is most likely because it contains more phenol antioxidants than 20 commonly consumed fruit juices.

LDL (bad cholesterol) levels can drop with 2 servings of cranberry juice per day (8 ounces per serving), and HDL cholesterol levels increase significantly with 3 servings per day.

[Because sugar increases triglycerides, be careful to buy unsweetened varieties, and try to get the brands that are not from concentrate.]

The increase of about 10 percent in HDL levels translates to a 40-percent decrease in heart disease risk. Participants in the research study that led to these conclusions also lost about 2 pounds during the study period, probably because of the polyphenols, which affect metabolism.

Free radical damage decreases after only one serving of cranberry juice a day.

(Source: 25th Annual Meeting of the American Chemical Society, New Orleans, March 2003. Printed in *Nutrition Hints* by Betty Kamen, Ph.D., and Michael Rosenbaum, M.D. <http://www.bettykamen.com>)

"When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be."
—Lao Tzu



HUMOR

Even More Great Headlines

- War Dims Hope for Peace
- If Strike Isn't Settled Quickly, It May Last a While
- Cold Wave Linked to Temperatures
- Enfields Couple Slain; Police Suspect Homicide
- Red Tape Holds Up New Bridge
- Typhoon Rips Through Cemetery; Hundreds Dead
- Man Struck by Lightning Faces Battery Charge
- New Study of Obesity Looks for Larger Test Group
- Kids Make Nutritious Snacks
- Chef Throws His Heart into Helping Feed Needy
- Arson Suspect Is Held in Massachusetts Fire
- Ban on Soliciting Dead in Trotwood
- Lansing Residents Can Drop Off Trees
- Man Minus Ear Waives Hearing
- Steals Clock, Faces Time
- Prosecutor Releases Probe into Undersheriff
- Hospitals Are Sued by Seven Foot Doctors
- Some Pieces of Rock Hudson Sold at Auction
- Sex Education Delayed, Teachers Request Training
- Include Your Children When Baking Cookies

WORDS OF WISDOM

Wisdom for the Soul

1. No one can ruin your day without your permission.
2. Most people will be about as happy as they decide to be.
3. Others can stop you temporarily, but only you can do it permanently.
4. Whatever you are willing to put up with is exactly what you will have.
5. Success stops when you do.
6. When your ship comes in, make sure you are willing to unload it.
7. You will never have it all together.

8. Life is a journey . . . not a destination.
Enjoy the trip!

9. The biggest lie on the planet: "When I get what I want I will be happy."

10. The best way to escape your problem is to solve it.

FOR REFLECTION

Lao Tzu wrote in his marvelous Tao Te Ching:

If you stand on tiptoe, you don't stand firm.

If you rush ahead, you don't go far.

If you try to shine, you dim your own light.

If you define yourself, you can't know who you really are.

If you have power over others, you can't empower yourself.

If you cling to your work, you will create nothing that endures.

So to be in the Tao, just do your job, then let go.

INSPIRATION

"Time"

It had been some time since Jack had seen the old man. College, girls, career, and life itself got in the way. In fact, Jack moved clear across the country in pursuit of his dreams. There, in the rush of his busy life, Jack had little time to think about the past and often no time to spend with his wife and son. He was working on his future, and nothing could stop him.

Over the phone, his mother told him, "Mr. Belser died last night. The funeral is Wednesday." Memories flashed through his mind like an old newsreel as he sat quietly remembering his childhood days. "Jack, did you hear me?" "Oh, sorry, Mom. Yes, I heard you. It's been so long since I thought of him. I'm sorry, but I honestly thought he died years ago," Jack said.

"Well, he didn't forget you. Every time I saw him he'd ask how you were doing. He'd reminisce about the many days you spent over on 'his side of the fence' as he put it," Mom told him. "I loved that old house he lived in," Jack said.

"You know, Jack, after your father died, Mr. Belser stepped in to make sure you had a man's influence in your life," she said.

"He's the one who taught me carpentry," he said. "I wouldn't be in this business if it weren't for him. He spent a lot of time teaching me things he thought were important. Mom, I'll be there for the funeral," Jack said.

As busy as he was, he kept his word. Jack caught the next flight to his hometown.

Mr. Belser's funeral was small and uneventful. He had no children of his own, and most of his relatives had passed away. The night before he had to return home, Jack and his Mom stopped by to see the old house next door one more time. Standing in the doorway, Jack paused for a moment. It was like crossing over into another dimension, a leap through space and time.

The house was exactly as he remembered. Every step held memories—every picture, every piece of furniture. Jack stopped suddenly. "What's wrong, Jack?" his Mom asked. "The box is gone," he said. "What box?" Mom asked. "There was a small gold box that he kept locked on top of his desk. I must have asked him a thousand times what was inside. All he'd ever tell me was 'the thing I value most,'" Jack said. It was gone. Everything about the house was exactly how Jack remembered it, except for the box. He figured someone from the Belser family had taken it.

"Now I'll never know what was so valuable to him," Jack said. "I better get some sleep. I have an early flight home, Mom." It had been about two weeks since Mr. Belser died. Returning home from work one day Jack discovered a note in his mailbox. "Signature required on a package. No one at home. Please stop by the main post office within the next three days," the note read.

Early the next day Jack retrieved the package. The small box was old and looked like it had been mailed a hundred years ago. The handwriting was difficult to read, but the return



address caught his attention. "Mr. Harold Belser" it read. Jack took the box out to his car and ripped open the package. There inside was the gold box and an envelope.

Jack's hands shook as he read the note inside. "Upon my death, please forward this box and its contents to Jack Bennett. It's the thing I valued most in my life." A small key was taped to the letter. His heart racing, as tears filled his eyes, Jack carefully unlocked the box. There inside he found a beautiful gold pocket watch. Running his fingers slowly over the finely etched casing, he unlatched the cover. Inside he found these words engraved: "Jack, Thanks for your time! Harold Belser."

"The thing he valued most was my time."

Jack held the watch for a few minutes, then called his office and cleared his appointments for the next two days. "Why?" Janet, his assistant, asked. "I need some time to spend with my son," he said. "Oh, by the way, Janet . . . thanks for your time!"

(Source: Dr. Rickey Honea, www.BeyondYourImagination.com)

"I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand."

—Confucius

FINANCES

Practical Money-Saving Secrets from Bottom Line Readers

For more than 23 years, *Bottom Line/Personal* has been filled with useful, money-saving advice from leading experts. Recently, subscribers were asked to share their own ideas. Taken together, they make an impressive and very valuable compendium.

SPEND LESS . . . SAVE MORE

Round up when registering checks. Round down when recording deposits.

"Since starting this system several years ago, I have been able to pay off several bills with this hidden money. I save even more by periodically transferring the money into my savings account."

"I accumulated enough to pay for an eight-day trip to Orlando with my daughter. My rounding money covered airfare, theme park entrance fees, food, and souvenirs. The hotel and rental car were the only items I had to put on my credit card."

Double coupons—sometimes even triple coupons—for values up to \$1 are available at most supermarkets.

"I like nothing more than to have a 75-cent coupon tripled and applied against a sale item."

"I put the money saved with coupons into a jar. Once a month, I deposit the savings into a bank account. Ultimately, I use the funds to buy U.S. savings bonds."

Off-season bargains. Buy fall items in the spring and spring items in the summer.

Prepare meals ahead. Freeze and use them throughout the week. It doesn't take much time. You will be less tempted to eat at pricey restaurants and fast-food joints, and it's good for your health.

Purchase a good used car and invest the money saved in stocks, etc. That is better than buying a new car that depreciates substantially as soon as you take it off the lot.

Go to discounted matinees rather than evening movies.

Don't buy anything to eat or drink at the theater; it's much too expensive.

Bring your lunch to work. It is a money saver in itself, but even more savings come from not shopping during your lunch hour.

Keep your weight down so clothes fit for a long time.

Buy as few dry-clean-only clothes as possible.

Pay yourself first. "One reason my wife and I are looking forward to a comfortable retirement is that I took half of the net pay raises I received in the last 40 years and used them to increase my monthly deposits to our mutual funds." You can't miss what you never had.

BIG BILL SAVINGS

Ask your credit card issuers for lower interest rates.

"When I did this, the issuers actually reduced my rates. They would rather lower my rates than lose me to a competitor."

Use an online bill presentment account; it saves time and money on stamps and checks (e.g., www.paymybills.com).

Use e-mail rather than the phone to keep in touch with family and friends. A paragraph or two and about five minutes is often all it takes to keep in touch, compared with an hour a week on the phone.

ESPECIALLY FOR FAMILIES

Learn to sew. "That is how I saved a lot over many years (I am 76). I took lessons so I could have nice clothes for my two daughters and myself. I even made drapes and coats."

Attend local festivals and 4-H fairs instead of expensive amusement parks. Check the Web site of your state department of tourism or call for a schedule of fairs and festivals.

Small-town festivals range from strawberry and corn-on-the-cob celebrations to ice fishing. Entry is usually free, food is delicious, and it gives the family plenty to talk about.

Neighborhood baby-sitting co-ops save on child care. Parents take turns watching each other's children. It also helps to foster a sense of community.

Kids' meals at restaurants can often be shared. Most portions are big enough to split, and young children don't eat much at restaurants anyway.

FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Use the Sunday comics section of the newspaper for gift wrap.

Decorative gift bags can be reused.

Make gift tags out of old Christmas cards. Or have kids make cards and tags with things you already have at home.

BUY SECONDHAND

Volunteer at a thrift store to get already-cheap items at half price. Many items are new and have their original tags.

Know the current retail price of items you want when buying at garage, moving, or estate sales. Even paying one-third less than the retail price is a steal if the item is in good condition and you need it.

(Source: Reprinted from *Bottom Line/Personal*, November 15, 2000. <http://www.bottomlinesecrets.com>)

Questions/Comments to:

Evelin Saxinger
Work/Life Program Manager
esaxinge@hq.nasa.gov
358-1311

An online version of this newsletter may be found at <http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/codec/cc/navig-2.pdf>

