

# FROM 'ME' TO 'WE'

## 7 TIPS FOR CREATING A RELATIONAL FUTURE

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The narrative of the individual has been the dominant voice in our culture since the birth of the Enlightenment (“I think, therefore I am.”) Each person was reared to individuate, become autonomous, self-reliant, and high achieving. It has been a glorious age of the individual – celebrating our break from the tyrannical shackles of monarchy to individual freedom and creative expression which resulted in dizzying achievements in science, technology, and education.

Yet, the byproducts of the individual focus are culminating at warp speed. While necessary and good at the time, the individual narrative has also created a world of power and privilege, gross inequality, growing polarization, and environmental trauma. We are now at a moment of crisis where either the system collapses, or a new paradigm emerges. We believe the latter is happening, that we are moving towards a more just world. It is an innate pull that is reflective of our most fundamental level where relationship – rather than the individual – is front and center.

Yet the concept of self-help—and all of its expressions—still dominates the mainstream. What has become clear for us is that we need a new relational narrative that emphasizes primacy of the individual and competition, a “Me Generation,” to a relational culture that collaborates and cooperates, a “We Generation.”

As a member of the helping community (a coach, a counselor, a therapist, a teacher), you are in a unique position to embrace the “we” and facilitate the emergence of this relational worldview. Here are seven tips for some of the relational lessons for yourselves and your clients:



### **1. Listen, listen, listen**

Being heard, seen, and valued is our deepest human need and our greatest desire. Listen and repeat back what you hear (“If I heard you, you said...”), validate what they say (“You make sense.”), empathize with their experience (“I imagine you might be feeling...”). Listening anchors connection and belonging in the space between people.

### **2. Accept difference as reality**

We are meant to be different. It’s how we survived and evolved. Embrace different thoughts, feelings, and perceptions as an opportunity to learn something new.

### **3. Say bye-bye to negativity**

Understand and teach how all forms of being negative (shame, blame, and criticism) are emotional abuse. Period. It’s never okay. Instead, teach how to contain negativity and use “I” language when feeling frustrated. (“I want...” “I need...” “I feel...”).

### 4. Fish for the wish under the frustration

Zero Negativity also suggests a different way to handle problems and conflict. One is to convert a frustration into a request. After all, a frustration is just a desire in disguise. Rather than “You are constantly late!” Try “I really wish for this next meeting you arrive ten minutes early. That will make me feel less anxious. Could you do that for me?” Communicate your wishes rather than your frustrations.

### 5. Affirm the other

Affirmation is the polar opposite of Negativity. When you affirm someone, you are recognizing their intrinsic value because they exist. It is the unconditional acceptance of the other as they are. Affirm your clients and teach them to affirm others. “You are wonderful.” “You have a big heart.” “Your viewpoint is always interesting.” “You have such a unique perspective.” It goes right to the core of being seen, heard, and valued and finding a golden nugget in every person.

### 6. Hello curiosity

Welcome the unfamiliar with curiosity rather than judgment. Living this reality gives birth to a new, expanded culture that promotes collaboration, cocreation, and cooperation. When we’re curious, we learn new things about others — their desires, fears, and struggles. We’ll hear secrets, wishes, and regrets. We might even discover common ground.

### 7. Thank conflict

Conflict in relationships is supposed to happen. This is as nature intended it: everything in nature is in conflict. Conflict means something is trying to emerge, an opportunity to birth something new. It's only without this knowledge that conflict is destructive. Rather, if we’re willing to work with the conflict, there is something wonderful and amazing waiting for us right around the corner.



A relational narrative is a way of life, a way of being with others. It is how we live together in all our interactions with others. Embracing this new relational civilization in which the value system is universal freedom, inclusive equality, celebration of diversity, and radical inclusiveness—the next stage in human evolution.