

Five Paths Out of Conflict

The good news is that you can unlearn this power-over approach and start having more genuine cooperation in your relationships. Sound good? Then please keep reading. Just ahead you'll find five paths that lead to the power of *WE*.

Our life journey typically includes years of "Us vs. Them" training. Growing up we heard: "It's a dog-eat-dog world," "Look out for number one," "Watch your back," etc. This ingrained the strong mental habits that govern our actions now. Even in our most loving and trusting relationships, we often end up playing the good-bad, right-wrong game.

Got lawyers? Since blame, guilt, shame and punishment are such a big part of how we are taught to conform in society, one of the essential skills we all learned growing up is how to prove we are right and to defend against being proven wrong. This becomes very deeply embedded and it won't change overnight or just because you want it to. The only way to begin shifting this old way of thinking is to learn new understandings and skills that lead to new possibilities. If you desire more genuine cooperation in your relationships then you're ready to venture down the first path.

Path 1 - INTENTION Are you clear about your intentions? Do you know the difference between a strategy and an intention? Knowing this difference is essential. Without this you tend to get stuck wanting other people to agree with your strategies. This can leave people feeling closed and defensive. Even worse, being attached to one particular strategy dramatically limits your opportunities to be satisfied.

The math is simple: One strategy = One opportunity.
On the other hand, a strategy-free intention describes only what you value and the qualities you want to experience in a situation. Knowing this allows you to see many possible strategies for getting it. Starting with a pure intention like this is necessary to create outcomes that will satisfy everyone. Identifying a clear, strategy-free intention leads you to the beginning of the next path.

Path 2 - ALIGNMENT Is everyone on the same page? Do you have a shared intention and want similar results? Establishing alignment is the second path to the power of *WE*. The fact is that our interdependence puts limits on how far we can get in achieving any result we want without cooperation.

The process of creating alignment starts by getting clear about what is important to everyone. It's co-creating a shared vision of success. Beginning with alignment paves the way for easy negotiation, solid agreements and abundant results. Creating alignment in the beginning produces far greater satisfaction for everyone in the end.
And you need to be in alignment to have an easier time on the next path.

Path 3 - NEGOTIATION Will your plans take everyone's needs into consideration? Will you keep at it until everyone is satisfied? Understanding the difference between compromise and collaboration will play a big part in everyone's willingness and ability to stick with the process.

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Compromise is the way of an "Us Against Them" world. It begins by identifying what everyone wants. Then seeing who's willing to give up parts of what they want until everyone can live with what's left. This is based in the belief that there isn't enough to go around, so you have to settle for whatever you can get.

Collaboration is the way in an abundant world. It begins by identifying what everyone values and what is missing for them. Then, as you negotiate -- keeping your attention focused on everyone's values -- strategies will emerge that make it possible for everyone to be satisfied, without any compromise needed.

Once everyone is satisfied with the strategies that emerge you're ready to head down path number four.

Path 4 - AGREEMENT What's the plan? What needs to happen and who's willing to do what to make it so? After everyone's had their say and acknowledge they've been heard, people often think they've made agreements. In reality they've only expressed vague understandings of what they want and how they would like that to happen.

Genuine cooperation relies on your ability to make clear, doable requests that lead to definite agreements. Powerful agreements are specific about who, what, when, where, and how. They include a positive confirmation of each person's willingness to do their part.

Often, as you begin to solidify your agreements you'll find that you're actually not though negotiating yet. But stick with it until you can make explicit agreements that are comfortable for everyone. Doing so will increase your effectiveness and everyone's ultimate satisfaction.

When you've made your powerful agreements you're at the beginning of path number five.

Path 5 - ACCOUNTABILITY Will your agreements continue to work for everyone and create the results you want? Without accountability you can't know. If you wait too long to find out they aren't working, you may already have built up dangerous levels of frustration, resentment, and resignation.

You create accountability by setting specific times to review how well your agreements are working and to discuss what changes might be needed.

These accountability meetings are opportunities to continue practicing the 5 paths of genuine cooperation.

1 - Do you still have a clear **INTENTION**? 2 - Are you still in **ALIGNMENT**? 3 - Do you need further **NEGOTIATION**? 4 - Is it time to make new **AGREEMENTS**? 5 - How will you ensure ongoing **ACCOUNTABILITY**?

Accountability is the final path that leads you to the co-creative power of **WE**.

What Path Will You Choose? There you have it, five paths that lead to co-creating genuine partnerships. We hope you choose to learn more about these five paths and

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commit to the practice following them in all of your important relationships. Practice makes perfect, so learning about these paths is only the beginning of your journey toward developing healthy relationships. If you're looking for [effective relationship advice](#) that supports a healthy lifestyle, sign up for our thought-provoking and motivational [Weekly Action Tips eMail series](#). Each tip offers real-world advice for creating and maintaining the relationships you've always wanted.