

A decorative graphic featuring three concentric blue circles of varying sizes. Two circles are in the upper right quadrant, and one is in the lower right quadrant. Thin blue lines intersect the circles and extend across the page.

Wrinkle Free Relationships Using Win Win Thinking

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Transforming Communication online course.

This special report will give you key insights into why your relationships are a pain in the butt. Why you're constantly tearing your hair out, trying to get your message across and how everything that you've learned about "fighting for your corner and being assertive" is probably wrong.

Do You Have Competition or Co-operation in Your Relationships?

We live in a world with more and more conflict. On a global scale, we have wars, we have trade embargoes, we have threats of war...

On a national and community level, we have political unrest and dissatisfaction, we have increasing crime...

On an individual level, we have conflicts in families, in the neighbourhood, at school, at work with your co-workers and perhaps management.

And it is on this level that this is about. Because if we want to change how we deal with problems globally, we first need to change how we deal with our everyday issues and problems.

Conflicts arise everywhere, it's hard-wired into our brains.

And they can make you feel miserable, hurt, angry, resentful...

Take your personal relationship with your spouse or girl/boy friend for example. Do you have arguments and disagreements sometimes? Do they leave you frustrated and misunderstood? Angry and resentful ? And perhaps guilty if you won the argument ?

It happens to most couples. Because they don't know how to resolve their conflicts in such a way that both feel good about the results.

The same with your children, in your work place, even with friends.

We need to win, and we have been brought up with the belief that only one of us can win, and the other will lose. And of course the person that needs to win is you.

Here, I want to show you some of the consequences of a win-lose situation. Before that, though, you want to get clear on what these terms mean in this

context. Getting clear on what we mean is an important first step to understanding what you can do in specific situations.

Conflict in this report means that you're in a situation where you believe that what the other person does will make it difficult for you to get what you want and need. The other person may or may not be aware of how you feel. It could also be the other way round and you're not aware that the other person is not happy about something you do or say.

How will you solve this conflict?

You could solve it with a **win-lose** method where one of you, preferably you, will feel satisfied and get what you want and need, while the other person is not very happy with the outcome because they did not get what they wanted or needed. I'm sure you've been in such a situation. How did you feel? A little resentful? Very angry? Frustrated and misunderstood? I bet...!

Say for example, you and your friend both want the last orange in the fruit bowl. This would be a conflict. Now, with a win-lose approach, one of you will get the orange, and the other won't.

You could also arrange a **compromise or lose-lose** with the other person where both of you lose a little and won't get everything you need. In my example of the orange, both of you could arrange to cut the orange in half so that each will get half. And both of you will lose a little in this process.

Or, you could discuss how you can get a **win-win** solution so that both of you feel satisfied that you fully get what you need. There are gazillions of solutions you can create, once you know what each of you really need. Say in our orange example, you need the orange rind to grate into the cake mix while your friend wants to drink the juice. So, one solution would be that you get the rind and your friend the juice – from the whole of the orange! No compromise, nobody won while the other lost.

The important thing to notice here is that you needed to find from both or you what the actual need was for the orange. Only then can you both brainstorm for a solution that satisfies both.

There are a couple of other terms we need to get clear on.

Power is one of them. Power in this context means the ability to permit the other person to get some of what they need or want (in other words, you reward them), or it means the ability to prevent them from getting some or all of what they need or want (and so you would punish them).

Now, power exists in all of our relationships. There are always situations where I could help you get something you want or need, and you can also help me get what I need. That's not the problem. A problem with power arises when people choose to use it when there's a conflict and they use it as part of a win-lose or lose-lose method to resolve that conflict. In other words, when somebody uses power to prevent you from getting some or all of what you want or need.

The thing about using power in such a way is that you reward or punish the other person to make sure they do what you want them to do. You make sure that they "obey", although they might not want to.

This use of power is a necessary ingredient when you want to enforce a win-lose conflict resolution. When you both agree to a balanced use of power, you will have a compromise where both of you lose a little.

The thing here is, that both solutions leave the loser not 100% satisfied with the outcome. You may feel resentful, or even angry. Or you may feel frustrated because you couldn't get the other person to understand your needs, and see your view point. Or, you just feel powerless to change anything.

And the winner?

The chances are high that the winner doesn't feel quite so good either. Granted, they won, they got what they wanted but they had to use power to get it. And unless that person is completely unscrupulous, they will probably feel a little guilty. Or a lot guilty.

Solving a conflict with win-win in mind can sometimes happen so easily that neither of you are really aware that there was a conflict in the first place. I don't think you would have called the "orange example" above a conflict, because the solution is just common sense, isn't it?

The principle of win-win is basically the same though, whether you have an "orange situation" or a full-blown conflict or disagreement. And the 4 steps you go through to resolve your differences are:

1. You identify what each of you want
2. Then you identify the higher level of what you want. That means that you find out what you would need it for. And what you would get when you have what you want
3. You then agree with each other that you want to solve this so that both of you feel happy
4. And finally, you brainstorm for solutions together

In our forthcoming online communication skills course, we go into much more detail on exactly how you can put this into practice.

For now, though, we want to clarify the consequences of not using a win-win method to solve conflicts.

Because a world filled with loneliness, anxiety and frustration needs more co-operation, more love and more happiness. Any area in your life, from bringing up children to dealing with co-workers and management to living together with your partner to socialising with your friends and relatives... every area will benefit from win-win thinking, as we shall see.

Because for a win-lose situation to be successful, one person has to be obedient.

Now, you may say that being obedient is a virtue, especially in children.

Research carried out over the last 40 or so years clearly shows, however, that obedience explains many of the problems we have in society. Thomas Gordon reported in 1989 for example that the cult of obedience resulted in the inability of children to challenge sexual abuse (Gordon, 1989).

The Tavistock Institute in the UK studied the health data of 10,000 British civil servants over 20 years and found that the early mortality rate of clerical workers was 3.5 times higher than that of senior administrators. That means that the higher a person's status in the organization, the less likely they were to die early. And it wasn't because of income because all the people studied earned good money. They found that people who are exposed to unpredictable demands they couldn't control, who couldn't freely respond to these demands, and who had to work below of what they were capable of, showed higher rates of illness and early death (Aldridge, 1997).

An even more "deadly" problem was found after an experiment was conducted by Yale University in the 1960s (Gordon, 1989). Ostensibly, the experiment was about how people learn. So, a "learner" was strapped into a chair, and whenever he gave a wrong answer in his learning task, a subject volunteer was told to administer increasingly severe electric shocks.

What the subject didn't know was that the "learner" was an actor. He didn't receive any shock at all but convincingly acted as if he did. He pleaded to stop the experiment, then screamed, and finally collapsed as if dead.

The real aim of the experiment was to find out how many people would obey the experimenter in his white coat as he calmly told the subject to torture and kill another human being. And the subject was never threatened but was even offered more money if he was reluctant to carry out the task.

The result was that, no matter whether the subjects were male or female or came from different cultural background, over 60% of subjects would kill the person. Admittedly, they did tell the experimenter to stop the experiment. They showed many signs of distress, they groaned, they trembled, they stuttered or laughed nervously... and went right ahead and obeyed until the person was "dead".

What does this mean?

It means that 60% of us would obey an authority, especially a scientist or doctor in a white coat, even if it meant to kill somebody. We are afraid of punishment if we don't obey. And this obedience will eventually cause us illness and early

death, as the previous study with clerical workers indicated. The irony is that obedience not just kills the experimental “learner”, it also kills the subject in the long run.

What’s more, when somebody uses power in a win-lose situation, they will resort to reward and punishment. If you don’t obey me, I punish you.

Now, punishment is again not such a good thing. Evidence from research of punishing children, for example, shows clearly that when children received high levels of punishment, they are 4 times more likely to beat their spouse as adults. Boys showed stronger tendencies for suicide, self-punishment and accident-proneness in later life. And children who’s parents used more punishment and less reasoning have lower self-esteem. As adults, they have more difficulties in relating with others, they are more anxious, and feel more guilt and unhappiness (Gordon, 1989).

And there is more...

Other research found that children who had more authoritarian parents had poor self-control, were more withdrawn, and showed less evidence of “conscience”.

Already back in the 1950s, B.F. Skinner demonstrated in his research that these results were consistent in humans and animals. He found that “...punishment is ineffective unless applied immediately every time... and the punished behaviour always comes back, along with such additional behaviour as attempts to escape, or to evade punishment, or to retaliate...” (Platt, 1973).

He says that this is why windows are broken in schools and not in drugstores.

Skinner also found that the punished animal or child loses its creativity and confidence, it cowers, or else the child becomes defiant. What’s more, he found that the punished child acquires long lasting anxiety and guilt feelings.

Of course, you may now object and say that the opposite isn’t quite what the doctor ordered either. The way that children are let loose with no guidelines or rules is not satisfactory either. And yes, I agree, and I would add that if you take the win-win method and teach your child that there are solutions other than win-

lose with punishment or rewards, your conflicts will be resolved without the subsequent problematic behaviours.

There's a lovely story my trainer and mentor, Richard Bolstad, is fond of telling:

When Richard and his late partner Margot were first friends, and lived in separate houses, each of them was a single parent. One night, Richard was visiting Margot, and it was later than the bedtime his 6 year old son Francis had arranged (they'd arranged this using the win-win method. Francis liked to be read a short story to help him relax at bedtime; Richard didn't want to be reading or entertaining him after 8 o'clock. Having a regular 8 o'clock bedtime suited them both).

On this occasion, Richard had chosen to visit Margot, and planned to talk with her. He figured he'd be willing for Francis to stay up later this one night, so he suggested Francis watch TV while Margot and Richard talked.

Unfortunately, Francis seemed to want to climb over Richard as the two talked (being climbed on is an occupational hazard of early parenthood). Richard explained, "You can go and sleep in Margot's spare bed, or you can watch TV, but I'm trying to listen here and I can't do it when you climb over me."

"Well," Francis said, "I'd really like to sort this out so we both get what we want."

Now, Richard had been all set to order him out of the room (after all, there are some times when maybe you have to use power, he figured). But this statement of Francis' really hooked him. This was a bit embarrassing, in front of Margot, but Richard knew there weren't any other solutions so he told Francis, "Yeah, I like to sort things out that way too, usually, but there isn't any other way this time."

"Well, I'd like us each to say what the problem is", Francis suggested.

"Okay", Richard agreed, thinking he'd quickly prove to Francis that the win-win method couldn't work, and get back to talking with Margot.

“My problem is I want to be able to talk with Margot, and yours is you want to play with me. Right?”

“No,” Francis replied, “I’m really tired. I’d like to go to sleep but I don’t want to sleep in the spare bed because it’s a strange room and it scares me. And I don’t want to watch TV, either.”

This was a surprise to Richard. “Fair enough,” he countered, “but even so, we still can’t solve it. Either you watch TV or sleep in there.”

“Do you have any other ideas for solutions?” Francis asked.

“No”, Richard replied, annoyed at such a silly question.

“Well, I have a few”, Francis offered, and then listed five possible solutions, each of which would solve both their concerns. Richard was more than a little surprised.

“Okay, do any of those”, Richard agreed.

“Well, I think we should check which one will work best”, Francis suggested.

So they did. The solution they chose was for Francis to wrap up in a blanket and lie down on the floor by Richard’s feet. In five minutes he was asleep, safe and rested; therefore, perfectly meeting his need and Richard’s.

Naturally, the next day Richard checked how the arrangement went.

“Well I guess I solved that problem last night pretty well, eh Francis?” There was an amused smile.

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This story demonstrates that even when we think there’s no way we can use a win-win method to solve a problem, such situations are actually rarer than we think. Even children can teach us something some times.

Now, as we have seen earlier on, punishment may not be such a great idea. It causes all sorts of emotional distress in the person being punished. When you

consider the person that punishes and controls, they suffer emotional damage too.

Because when you're solving a problem or conflict with a win-lose method, when you use punishment to control the situation, you can never relax. You have to keep an eye out at all times. Controlling others backfires. And it takes a lot of time and energy to resolve conflicts because you have to overcome all the resistance of the other person.

Perhaps, then, we should resort to rewarding people for good behaviour? That would make sense, wouldn't it?

Can you remember as a child being threatened with missing a fun day out if you didn't behave? You probably didn't think that there was a great difference between reward and punishment.

In fact, there is no difference. Research again shows that parents, and teachers too, who use a lot of punishment also use a lot of rewards (Kohn, 1993). So, you see that reward and punishment are just two sides of the same coin of using power.

Furthermore, there's an increasing amount of research evidence that people resent rewards. Relationships are damaged, people don't take any risks and results are reduced. For example, when children get rewarded for correct answers, they will be less able to find the answers. And as their focus shifts from the task to the reward, they will enjoy doing it less and less (Kohn, 1993).

Numerous studies show that when adults get rewarded for problem solving, they will take twice as long to solve problems than those who are simply asked to do it, with no reward offered.

And surprisingly, they indicate that workplace incentive schemes, where people get rewarded for good work, do not actually improve overall productivity, staff retention and absenteeism (Kohn, 1993).

So, why then do we still try to solve conflicts, disagreements and arguments this way? Why do we still reward for good behaviour and punish bad behaviour when we know that they damage our relationships and emotional well-being?

The answer lies in our belief, in the whole of western culture, that if one person succeeds, the other one must fail. We call this notion **competition**. We believe that we will work better when we're trying to beat the other than when we're working with them.

But is it really true that we need to be competitive in order to be successful?

Apparently not, as a large group of business people, scientists, students and airline pilots show in another research study. In every case, the study indicated that competitiveness is negatively related to achievement (Kohn, 1986).

This of course means that cooperation and win-win thinking are very successful. In fact, the president of the Volvo corporation, Pehr Gyllenhammar, reported that when their managers started to use win-win conflict resolution, absenteeism dropped by half, staff turnover was cut to 25% and the quality of production improved (Gordon, 1978).

And if you're a parent, consider this: In the 1980s, Boston University found that when parents get trained in win-win conflict resolution, they start to understand their children better. As a consequence, they respect them much more and feel good about them. The children, in turn, have more self-esteem and feel their parents accept them much more for who they are (Cedar, 1985). They also have much higher IQ results. Compare this to children whose parents give in to them: their IQ results remain static. And they actually drop when parents are authoritarian (Baldwin, Kalhoun and Breese, 1945).

Every where you look, in every area of your life you have relationships with others, you can see that the major reasons for stress and distress involve some form of excessive power. One person in a relationship has more power than the other and uses it to reward or punish.

How would it be if we as a species, as individuals, as a community and society, started thinking more in terms of win-win and cooperation, and not competition?

Wouldn't we feel more in control if we didn't have to control the other?

Wouldn't you feel more relaxed, less stressed? Wouldn't you respect the other much more because you now understand where they are coming from? And, in turn, wouldn't you feel more respected by the other? You can build trust and understanding. And ultimately, you will have more love and happiness in your life.

And imagine, you could take it out into your community. And people will get what they want and also want what they get.

And people will like you more because not only do you create an atmosphere of trust and respect, you can also state your needs and listen to the other's needs, and then find a solution together that works for both of you. You don't have to give up a little, you don't need to be worried about punishment.

Utopia?

Maybe. But I'll let you decide, now, whether or not it's a cause to be pursued. It doesn't take a lot of effort, it just takes a little shift in our thinking. Wouldn't this be worthwhile? To feel trusted and respected, valued for who and what you are... without fear or favour.

To enjoy a life with more cooperation and less conflict. To have greater life expectancy and a better quality of life. To finally have the means to reach our full potential as a species.

To know that you and your children and your children's children, all can finally claim our rightful inheritance is, in our opinion, one of the most noble destinies we can pursue.

The next move is yours....

Click on the link to get the conflict out of your life now

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Only you can decide the future of your family, your friendships and other relationships.

Only you can decide whether or not the quality of your life is important enough to do something positive, NOW... for you and the rest of humanity.

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