

Making
Molehills
O U T O F
Mountains

Reclaiming Your Personal Power
in Your Relationships

Dr. Steve Frisch, Psy.D.

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For years I have been the collector of a wide variety of quotations. In preparing this book I have spent countless hours attempting to locate the origins of some of the quotations cited.

If you know the names of sources that have been mistakenly overlooked, please contact the publisher at (773) 477-8959. My apologies to the authors, and to the readers for any inadvertent oversight of proper credit.

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This book is one more opportunity for me to share with you the lessons I have learned from a collection of very special people. I have been blessed by the touch of so many who have provided me with yet another piece to the puzzle of life.

Again I take pause to acknowledge the gratitude I feel for the teachers in my life. You have come in all shapes and sizes, but it is your essence that lives within me. Thank you all so very, very much!

*D*edication

In loving memory of my dearest friend, Jenny.
You taught me that being loved was more important than being right. I am a better person today for having known you. I feel blessed to have experienced your love, though for much too short of a time. The essence of who you were will live forever in my heart.

About the Author

Dr. Frisch is a clinical psychologist in private practice in Chicago, Illinois. He is a graduate of the Adler School of Professional Psychology where he received his doctorate in clinical psychology. He received his masters degree from National-Louis University where he specialized in addictions counseling. His undergraduate degree was awarded to him by the University of Cincinnati, where he graduated with honors.

Dr. Frisch received post-doctoral training in two specialties at the Adler School of Professional Psychology. He completed a certificate training program in clinical hypnosis at the Center For The Advanced Study Of Clinical Hypnosis. He also completed a certificate training program in marriage and family counseling. He is licensed by the state of Illinois as a clinical psychologist. He was certified in Illinois by IAODAPCA as a certified drug and alcohol counselor in 1988.

Dr. Frisch's first book, *The Comparative Effectiveness of Group Therapy Versus Individual Therapy As Measured By Self-Concept, Interpersonal Orientation, and Degree of Emotional Adjustment* was an empirical investigation of the treatment modalities he utilizes in his private practice. This book was based on a study he conducted to demonstrate the effectiveness of his treatment protocols.

He has since written the *Bridge-Builders* series, which focuses on the development and enrichment of relationships. As well, he has written the *Pathfinders* series, which focuses on personal growth and self-actualization.

His treatment philosophy has grown out of his diverse clinical background in which he has worked with a variety of different clinical populations. From these diverse experiences, Dr. Frisch has assimilated a variety of assessment and treatment interventions into his integrated treatment philosophy.

Dr. Frisch has worked on the staff of both inpatient and outpatient chemical dependency programs. This experience provided the foundation for his work with issues that arise from the impact of chemical dependency on the individual, the family, and the workplace.

As a result of his work in the field of chemical dependency, Dr. Frisch founded the Adult Children Institute. This treatment clinic specialized in working with adults who were raised in families that were emotionally organized around the influences of drugs and alcohol, sexual and physical abuse, and emotional neglect.

The Adult Children Institute developed treatment interventions that enabled the program's participants to develop effective ways to heal from the aftereffects of trauma they experienced from their earlier development. These aftereffects included substance abuse, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, shame, and relationship issues such as fear of emotional intimacy and commitment.

Dr. Frisch co-developed and was the coordinator of a mental health program for homeless adults who required treatment for substance abuse and emotional disorders. He developed an individualized assessment

and treatment protocol that provided the impetus and support for each individual to rebuild their lives within their local communities.

The Relationship Bridge Building and Pathfinders personal growth programs represent the integration of Dr. Frisch's ongoing research and work in the area of human growth and potential development. Program participants develop the necessary awareness and skills to create an empowered life that maximizes their full potential for both their interpersonal and professional lives.

Whether by individual consultation, group experiences, workshops, or seminars, Dr. Frisch engages his audiences with a mixture of common sense and sound psychological principles of change to awaken and inspire their dormant potential. He consults with individuals, couples, groups, and organizations that are seeking to implement the principles of development, change, and growth in their lives.

About the *Bridge-Building Program*

The essential ingredient for a life full of wellness and purpose is our emotional and spiritual well-being. Our emotional and spiritual well-being is predicated upon the quality of the relationships we have with ourselves and with the people in our life.

Because of the connection between the quality of our significant relationships and our emotional and spiritual well-being, I created the Relationship Bridge-Building tenets. The Relationship Bridge-Building program was created from three fundamental premises. The first premise is that our life's journey is most fulfilling when we are able to create fulfilling relationships with the people who matter most. Very simply, the heart and soul of our emotional and spiritual well-being is closely linked to our ability to successfully navigate the oftentimes choppy waters of our interpersonal life.

The second premise of Relationship Bridge-Building is that our emotional and spiritual well-being is directly connected to the relationship we have with ourselves. Not one of us is immune from the toxic aspects of the relationship we create with ourselves. Yet, by healing the most fundamental of all relationships we maintain, the relationship with ourselves, we can be more

open to creating a place in our world that honors us.

The third premise is that there is a set of skills easily learned that can enable anybody to repair the wounds we carry within us. Also, there is a set of skills we can easily learn that will enable us to create emotionally safe and satisfying relationships with people we choose to build relationship-bridges with.

Quite simply, we all are pursuing the same end—to create a life for ourselves based upon who we are as well as who we are fully capable of becoming. No matter where we are in our life’s journey, we are always in the process of becoming. Yet oftentimes, we get stuck along the way. When we become stuck, we can often see that the root of our obstacles lies within our relationship with ourselves and the people in our lives.

When we become stuck, we can feel overwhelmed by an inherent sense of powerlessness. And there’s a very good reason for that. What we all must eventually discover for ourselves is that we become stuck for one very simple reason—that reason being ourselves. And it’s impossible to transcend ourselves without doing things differently than we have up to that point.

That really is the first step we all must take before we can ever transform the drama in our lives into a space of emotional and spiritual fulfillment. We need to discover one essential, inescapable truth—we are the sole creators of what our life is today. We need to better understand how we are not mere victims of other people’s cruelty and hostility—rather that we are the author of all that exists in our life.

That is exactly what rises to the surface for participants in the Relationship Bridge-Building program. Responsibility

and personal freedom are the core of what each participant discovers. It is through one’s ability to create relationships with other people based upon mutual responsibility and personal freedom that unlocks each individual’s emotional and spiritual prison. The prison created by blaming others for not meeting their responsibility to make and keep us happy.

Afterall, we all are searching for a way to create a space in our lives that brings honor to who we are. A space where the relationships we create nurture our growth and development. A space where the relationship we have with ourselves encourages us to experiment and play. A space where we find a way of reclaiming all of those disowned parts of ourselves and bring them back into our life.

As a personal growth program, Relationship Bridge-Building serves as a catalyst for transforming our life’s journey. Quite simply, the only way to prepare for our life’s journey is to begin the journey. And for many of us, the present moment is a tremendous amount of inertia to overcome.

This is exactly the point of Relationship Bridge-Building. To discover deep within ourselves the majesty of living life in the here-and-now. To discover how the present moment is a powerful goddess. To discover the skills that live within each and every one of ourselves that enables us to most fully live our lives in the present, in the cleanest way possible with the people who matter most.

Relationship Bridge-Building is a powerful elixir for what we all encounter in our lives from time to time: discouragement; cynicism; hopelessness; loneliness.

Just how might that be so? You see, the most important tenet of Relationship Bridge-Building is that we can

stop defining ourselves by where we are in our lives today, for it is not so much where we are today, but in what direction our journey is moving us. And as we begin to feel more comfortable with our ability to create fulfilling relationships, we will discover a completely different direction to our journey.

That is the exact connection between the quality of our relationships and our emotional and spiritual well-being. For our relationships add a whole new dimension to our life's journey. Our relationships add a hue of meaning and purpose without which we become disconnected from our path, aimlessly cut adrift from our true purpose in life.

Developing the inherent skills to activate the dormant potential of cooperative living with the people who matter most is the ultimate aim of Relationship Bridge-Building. Anyone can soon discover the power that effective communication can have on their journey. Developing safe supportive relationships that build trust amongst people can truly liberate us from the pain that we experience when we feel overwhelmed by the *stuck* points in our relationships.

Discovering, perhaps for the first time, the power of acceptance as well as the immediate shift that acceptance brings to any of our relationships, is a truly empowering discovery. Discovering the capacity for acceptance within and how to bring it to our relationships will free us from the toxic effects that our own judgmentalness exerts upon our relationships.

As you acquaint yourself with Relationship Bridge-Building, you will see yourself reflected within the pages of this book. The words on each page will take on a very personal meaning to you—a meaning meant to awaken your

soul to the possibilities of what your relationships can be.

As the tiny seeds of hope and potential within you are activated, be ready for what your life will become. For your life will become a wondrous mixture of hope and fear, growth and paralysis, excitement and discouragement.

And that's as it should be. But over time, the roller coaster ride will even out for you—of that you can be sure. And as it does, you will have trouble recognizing who is staring back at you as you look in the mirror everyday.

Let me share this one last thought with you as you begin your journey. We have a saying that describes people's experience in the Relationship Bridge-Building groups.

“You couldn't pay me a million dollars to do it again, but you couldn't pay me ten million dollars to have never done it at all.”

It is with this spirit that I encourage you to launch your own search for the path that will [re]connect you to your life's journey.

T

*I want to love you without clutching,
Appreciate you without judging.*

*Join you without invading,
Invite you without demanding.*

Leave you without guilt.

*Criticize you without blaming
and help you without insulting.*

*If I can have the same from you
then we can truly meet and
enrich each other.*

-Virginia Satir

What's it all about ...

John Ruskin once said, “When love and skill work together, expect a masterpiece.” Indeed, the most fundamental premise of the *Bridge-Builder's* series is that specific relationship skills combined with the willingness to apply them in a consistent, respectful fashion can transform any of your relationships into richly rewarding experiences.

The most important relationship skill is learning how to resolve the inevitable conflict that develops between two people. Its importance is easy enough to understand. We're all experts at *creating* conflict yet very few of us are as skilled at effectively *resolving* conflict.

There are many reasons that this fact is so. Some of us are so deathly afraid of another person's anger that we back down from escalating conflict, believing that if we just ignore the unresolved issues in our relationships things will get better. For others, we believe that if we confront a person with our anger and hurt feelings, we will be abandoned by that person. Yet others feel like their expressed feelings fall upon deaf ears, feeling defeated before they try to resolve an issue with their partner.

There are those of us who are merely misguided in our attempts to resolve conflict. We mistakenly believe that if we *fix* a person or a problem, things will magically revert to peaceful bliss. Still others believe the secret to resolving conflict is being well intended. For those individuals, good intentions, justifiable actions, and unfailing logic are ingredients of a formula that perpetuates hurt

and resentment rather than mends the wounds caused by unresolved issues in their relationships.

No matter what the reasons are that we shy away from resolving conflict, the consequences are always the same. We surrender our personal power to our fears. We give away the control we possess to impact the well-being of our relationships. By shying away from resolving the relationship issues that exist between two people, we sabotage our best efforts to enrich our lives by building better bridges with the people who matter most. Worst of all, we undermine our emotional and spiritual well-being.

However, it doesn't have to remain that way. There's a way for you to reclaim your personal power. By mastering some very simple relationship skills, you'll rediscover the voice of empowerment that lives within you.

As you read *Making Molehills Out of Mountains*, you'll unearth nuggets of wisdom about yourself and your partner that will free you from the bonds of unresolved conflict. More than a self-help book, *Making Molehills Out of Mountains* is a blueprint for reclaiming your personal power by resolving conflict and healing open wounds.

You'll discover a new way to think about what conflict means between two people. More importantly, you'll learn how to resolve conflict. Beyond learning many new relationship skills, you'll begin to understand more clearly who you are. You'll learn that there's much more going on beneath the surface of your day to day disagreements with others than meets the eye.

By better understanding what those issues might be, you'll better be able to extinguish these disagreements before they take on a life of their own. The skills you'll

learn in *Making Molehills Out of Mountains* will enhance your ability to communicate with your partner. Enhanced communication can only mean less disagreements, fewer hurt feelings, and a reduced number of conflicts that remain unresolved.

Although there are many important relationship skills discussed throughout this book, *Making Molehills Out of Mountains* focuses primarily on an important relationship skill I call *pinpointing the issue*. You'll learn what this skill is, how to identify the two elements of a conflict, and the specific steps used to apply this skill. Examples of other relationship skills to be discussed are empathy, validation, checking-in, self-disclosure, and much more.

The book is divided into seven parts. Each part contains a few chapters that will discuss an important facet of the process of making molehills out of mountains. Parts two through seven contain a familiar feature from my previous relationship book, *Bridge-Builder's Tips*. These are concrete suggestions that will help you focus your efforts on a specific aspect of the process of making molehills out of mountains. Here's a quick overview of each section.

Reclaiming Your Personal Power is an overview of the problems inherent in any relationship and the solution that can transform those problems. You will be asked to reflect upon and record the benefits derived from creating such a transformation.

Pinpointing the Issue is the section in which I discuss the importance of identifying the two levels of most conflicts—the *circumstance* and the *underlying relationship issue*. You'll learn how to identify those two elements so that you can make the best choice about how to problem-solve

with your partner. This section sets the stage for the next four sections that discuss the themes that may exist in the underlying issues of your unresolved conflicts.

Acceptance, the following section, is the first theme of an underlying relationship issue I will discuss with you. You'll learn how the issue may appear in your relationship, the ways in which you may make your partner feel unaccepted, and how to remediate the situation. You'll learn two relationship skills—empathy and validation. When utilized, these two skills will leave your partner feeling accepted and your relationship more harmonious.

Unmet Emotional Needs is the second theme for an underlying relationship issue that I discuss. I identify two important emotional needs—secure connection and emotional safety—that we all need fulfilled in order to create close connections. This section focuses on the skills I call checking-in and self-disclosure. I also present to you two *Bridge-Builder's Tools* that will enable you to more easily meet your partner's emotional needs.

Appreciation is the third underlying relationship issue I discuss. This section challenges you to think about this dynamic as an important stabilizing influence in any relationship. You'll quickly see for yourself how the presence of appreciation for your partner alleviates conflict, while the absence of appreciation can quickly destabilize a relationship. I discuss two *Bridge-Builder's Tools* that will enable you to immediately transform judgment into appreciation, thus eliminating much conflict in your relationships.

Power and Control is the last theme for underlying relationship issues that I discuss. This section focuses on

two specific aspects of this multi-dimensional dynamic—fear of intimacy and fear of loss of autonomy. In this section, you'll have an opportunity to examine how those two dynamics live and breathe in your relationships. More importantly, you'll examine what impact they have upon your relationships.

Making Molehills Out of Mountains is the last section of the book. In this section, I tie together all of the previous sections and I provide a blueprint for you to create your own personal style as to how to pinpoint the issue. The first chapter in this section has three separate *Bridge-Builder's Tips* that outline the specific steps for pinpointing the issue. The second chapter of this section contains five *Bridge-Builder's Tools* to assist you in executing the various relationship skills I have discussed with you throughout the book.

Making molehills out of mountains is a process you'll grow into over time. Although there are important concepts that you can learn in this book, the process itself can only be mastered through practice and patience. I promise you that there's light at the end of the tunnel, but you must walk through the darkness, as well.

As you learn to walk the walk, you'll learn many things about yourself that will serve to empower you in your life's journey. You'll also have the opportunity to identify specific behaviors that create problems for you rather than honor you. You'll always have the option to discard those behaviors as you create new ways of thinking, acting, and feeling.

Whatever your experiences are, please know that what you learn throughout your journey in this book can profoundly change the way you build relationship bridges

with the people who matter most. I know full well that these changes will be for the better.

So if you're ready to get started, you bring the love, I'll bring the skills and together let's see if we can indeed create a masterpiece.