

P A R T 7

Strengthening the Bonds  
of Fellowship



*Now is the Law of the Jungle—  
as old and as true as the sky;  
And the Wolf that shall keep it may prosper  
but the Wolf that shall break it must die.  
As the creeper that girdles the tree trunk,  
the Law runneth forward and back—  
For the strength of the Pack is the Wolf,  
and the strength of the Wolf is the Pack.*

-Rudyard Kipling

## *a* Prescription for Emotional and Spiritual Well-Being



*There comes that mysterious meeting in life when  
someone acknowledges who we are and what we can  
be, igniting the circuits of our highest potential.*

- Rusty Berkus

*“Thanks for seeing me after group tonight, I just need a couple of minutes of your time.”*

Laurie asked to see me for a few minutes after our group session in order to discuss a recommendation her doctor had made for her.

“I got a physical today and my doctor started asking me a bunch of questions. The next thing I knew, she was telling me she thought it would be a good idea for me to start taking antidepressant medication.

“I told her I thought that I should talk it over with you first.”

I spent a few minutes talking with Laurie about the research on antidepressant medication, the pros and cons, what her choices were.

The one thing I emphasized with Laurie, as I do with all of my clients is, as a clinical psychologist I cannot prescribe medication. However I was more than happy to share with her a prescription that I can and do *write* for all of my clients.

She seemed to perk up a little when I told her that, so I continued.

“There are three things that I prescribe for anybody who is struggling, trying to enhance their emotional well-being. The first thing I prescribe is *people*. We have to step out of our isolation and find a way to get connected to the human race. There’s nothing more healing to the soul than to experience the love and the support we can get only from being involved with other human beings.

“It’s really very simple. We all need to feel like we have

a place in this world, that we matter to another living soul, that we hold some importance to somebody else. The relationship we have with ourselves is important for our emotional well-being, but that relationship has its own limits.”

Laurie was listening intently to what I had to say. She was nodding her head as I was speaking, so I continued.

“The second thing I prescribe is *people*. We need to be able to step out of our own problems, out of our own pain, and contribute, contribute to somebody else’s life. Involvement with other people, providing emotional nutrition for somebody else is a magical elixir for our own frozen souls.

“When we isolate and disconnect from our world, we feel empty as our lives are void of meaningful contact with others. Feeling alienated from the rest of the world drains our spirit of hope and purpose, the thought that our life matters. The act of giving to others, the act of transcending our own constricted world, plants the seeds of hope and purpose in our own lives.”

Laurie was still with me, so I looked at her and asked, “Now those are the first two things that I prescribe, what do you imagine the third thing is?”

Laurie stuck her right index finger under her chin, tilted her head back a little, rolled her eyes toward the ceiling, smiled and asked, “Uh, it wouldn’t be *people*, would it?”

“As a matter of fact, it would be. People is the third thing I prescribe. We need to be involved with *people* who are emotionally safe for us. People who can be supportive, who can be there for us. Emotionally safe relationships are an important catalyst for our own personal

growth. They provide the necessary contact we need with others to get out of ourselves. People who are emotionally safe to be with provide an outlet for us to step out of our woundedness and experiment with how we live our lives.

“That’s the essence of our emotional and spiritual well-being. Experimentation. Experimenting with our life choices. Expanding the world in which we live. Plugging into the love and support from others who are invested in our development, not threatened by it.”

*Strengthening the Bonds of Fellowship.* That’s what I call this stage of our journey. Building bridges to the human race. Getting involved with the people in our lives. Ending the wars we wage not only within ourselves, but with all the people we come into contact with.

Ending the isolation. Transforming the alienation. Creating harmony where there was once acrimony and pain. Does that sound like fertile ground to march upon?

Do you see the value of fellowship in the context of the big picture we’re painting? Here’s how I think about it. Relationships are like a mirror. A mirror that reflects back to us who we are, and who we can become. A mirror from which we can learn how the world experiences us, which invariably is different than what we believe to be true about ourselves.

Without a consistent source of contact with safe people that we can learn to be ourselves with, we lose an important balancing point to the many judgments we hold about who we are. Creating meaningful contact with safe people provides us with important feedback so that we may escape our self-imposed prisons of alienation and condemnation.

Let me more specifically list for you the value I find in all of us being willing and able to strengthen the bonds of fellowship. Don’t just read the list, but think about how any one item may hold some truth for you.

- ☯ Emotionally safe relationships enhance our self-esteem.
- ☯ Emotionally safe relationships activate the seeds of our potential for our personal growth.
- ☯ Emotionally safe relationships extract ourselves from the darkness of our isolation.
- ☯ Emotionally safe relationships elevate our mood.
- ☯ Emotionally safe relationships enable us to contribute to the well-being of other people.
- ☯ Emotionally safe relationships enable us to see more clearly how the world experiences us.
- ☯ Emotionally safe relationships create a purpose in our lives.
- ☯ Emotionally safe relationships teach us about who we are.

Let’s stop for a moment and explore in a more personal way what *Strengthening the Bonds of Fellowship* means to you. Try to focus on the value you can add to your life by building better bridges with the people who matter most to you.

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***T*is Best to Receive As Well  
As to Give**



*We are each of angels with only one wing.  
And we can only fly embracing each other.*

-Luciano de Crescenzo

## Pathfinder's Tip



*Our fellowshiping is strengthened by transcending the obstacles we create for others in becoming our friend.*

“Kojak, you stay away from me now, ya hear? I told you I don’t want you coming around here, *shrinking my head.*”

Lanis was starting the dance that we went through everytime he’d see me drive up to the house. At the time, I was working at a halfway house for men who were homeless after being released from prison. Lanis was on my caseload. From the time we first met, he called me Kojak. When I asked him why, he would just nod his head, give me one of his conspiratorial smiles and say, “Ah come on now, Kojak, you know why I call you that.”

Anyway, today was no different than any other day. He would be standing around the court yard. He would see me drive up, wait till I got within twenty-five feet of him, start shouting at me, then walk away. But he never walked away fast enough so that he would lose me. We always wound up in the same place where we would then sit and talk for at least an hour.

Today, I especially wanted to talk to him because I had a gift for him. I had noticed that Lanis had been limping the last few weeks. When I asked him about it, he would just shrug it off. After a while, I could tell that his left shoe had developed a huge hole in the sole, so I found

him a new pair of shoes to get him through the impending Chicago winter.

When I gave Lanis the shoes, he spent ten minutes trying to convince me that he didn’t need anything from me.

“Kojak, I keep telling you to stay away from me. Now you go and do this. What’s the matter with you? Why do you keep bothering me like this?”

“You think I’m bothering you?”

“Well, yea man. Why do you keep trying to get in my face? I don’t need you or anything you have to offer me!”

“Lanis, why do you keeping acting like you’re so bad with me all the time? What are you so afraid of?”

“Hey man, I just don’t want you getting too close to me, is that alright with you, Kojak, or do you have to make a big deal out of that too?”

“I’m not making a big deal out of anything, but I just don’t get why it’s so hard for you to accept someone’s kindness.”

“Listen Kojak, I can’t figure you out, but I know you’ve got an angle here, I just can’t figure out what angle you’re shooting.”

“Is it impossible to believe that the only angle I have is a concern for you or maybe even having a friendship with you. Have you ever considered that angle?”

“Kojak, don’t even go there, don’t you try that stuff with me. I know different. I know that everybody wants something from somebody. Nobody does something for nothing.”

“What’s the matter, Lanis? You think you’ll be obligated to me if you accept my kindness? You think I’ll hit up on you for something just because you accept my concern?”



