

Agreements, Integrity and Trust at Work

Healthy and conscious relationships are open, honest, safe and trustworthy, where people are acting and being in integrity. One of the major foundation blocks of open, safe and trusting relationships is that of keeping agreements.

The foundation of healthy relationships begins to atrophy and crumble when one feels betrayed. One feels betrayed when another fails to commit to or keep agreements.

What is an agreement?

The Cambridge Dictionary defines agreement as: when people approve of or accept something; a decision or arrangement between two or more groups or people.

The purpose of an agreement is to engender harmony so that two or more folks can engage in an interaction without any subterfuge, hidden agenda, duplicity or lack of transparency. An agreement is effective only insofar as it comes from a deeper, internal place of motivation. Seems simple enough.

Dis-agreements

Yet, our life at work often seems rife with dis-agreements, betrayals, dishonesty, being out of integrity, and disharmony in our relationships. Why?

The underlying cause of one's not living up to one's agreements is that often one enters into an agreement knowing that one's true desire for, and commitment to, an agreement is half-hearted.

Often people enter agreements because (1) they are afraid of what will happen to them if they don't enter the agreement; (2) they want to feel safe in some way – mentally, emotionally, physically, psychologically, socially, financially, etc.; (3) they are "giving to get", that is, agreeing, in order to achieve some personal, self-centered goal; or (4) they want to avoid the discomfort of disagreement or conflict so they agree to "go along to get along." Such agreements never come from the "right place" - the place of integrity, trust and authenticity.

Whatever the excuse for entering an agreement comes from a place of duplicity, follow-through with consistency, taking the high road, and being in integrity never happens.

Agreements, in and of themselves, never lead to safety, trust and harmony. Acting on agreements, consistently, is what leads to safety, trust and dependability. Effective agreements are always built on a clear purpose that leads to action.

When agreements work

For agreements to work, that is, for agreements to generate safety, trust, harmony and dependability, one needs to reflect, deeply, consciously and from one's heart, and inquire: "Why am I agreeing to this?" "Really, really, really, why?" "What is the true and real purpose underlying this agreement?" Without a deep sense of clarity, most agreements self-destruct sooner rather than later. The fallout and collateral damage from failed agreements can be quite extensive -again, mentally, physically, emotionally, socially, financially, and psychologically.

Once an agreement is broken, the first thing to erode is trust, followed by feelings or emotions around betrayal, fear, resentment, blame, guilt, and shame apologies and “making up for the broken agreement”, notwithstanding. The level of trust can almost never be regained to the degree that it existed when the agreement was made. Without trust, there is no honest, safe, authentic and healthy relationship. Just toxicity, and a low-level-fever-grade type of agitation, fear, vigilance, unspoken, but felt, sense of guilt or shame, and a continual watching of one’s back.

When you create agreements that reflect integrity, authenticity, heart-felt purpose and accountability for one’s actions, you are creating a workplace culture that exudes safety, trust, harmony and well-being. Productivity, performance and conscious, healthy relationships grow and thrive in such workplace environments.

So, some questions for self-reflection:

How would you characterize your relationships at work (and at home and ay play)? Healthy, authentic, in integrity, trusting, duplicitous, fake, phony...?

Do you honor and keep your agreements, consistently? What would your boss, colleagues, direct reports, clients, friends, spouse/partner say?

Do you find yourself apologizing regularly for not keeping your agreements?

Do you apologize when you break agreements?

Do you create agreements with a win-win, or win(me)-lose(other) motive?

Do you generally blame others when agreements break down?

What is the level of trust in your relationships? If low, how can you increase the level of trust?

Have you ever been betrayed as a child? Do you enter agreements with a feeling that you’ll be betrayed at some point? Is trusting others a challenge for you? Why?

Is intimacy a common issue in your relationships?

Are your relationships characterized by communication and openness?

All of your failed relationships have one common denominator....you. Have you ever reflected on that notion?

How much do you trust people at work?

Do you believe that work is largely “political”? If so, why?

Are you continually vigilant of who are your allies, opponents, adversaries, and “friends” at work? Why?

(c) 2012, Peter G. Vajda, Ph.D. and True North Partnering. All rights in all media reserved. You may reprint this article as long as the article is printed in its entirety, including the author’s information

Peter G. Vajda, Ph.D, C.P.C. is the founder of True North Partnering an Atlanta-based company that supports conscious living through coaching and facilitating. With a practice based on the dynamic intersection of mind, body, emotion and spirit, Peter’s approach focuses on personal, business, relational and spiritual coaching. He is a professional speaker and published author. For more information, www.truenorthpartnering.com, or pvajda(at)truenorthpartnering.com, or phone 770.804.9125. You can also follow Peter on Twitter: @petergvajda