



FARRAR'S FAUCET

ACTIONABLE THOUGHTS ON PRINCIPLED BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS

The Basic Interpersonal Skills

I knew when I was at university that I wasn't going to become a clinical psychologist. My undergraduate degree was in economics, and I was focusing on organizational and leadership work in my graduate program. I took the minimum clinical subjects I needed, and I was lucky enough to spend six months in an internship in a family therapy practice.

In that very difficult environment I learned the power of basic interpersonal skills and how profoundly they can change someone's life.

The three basic skills

I worked largely with the people who were described as having "coping" issues. Often it involved maintaining positive relationships with other people, having a supportive network or feeling socially connected. The first thing we would do, (after we made sure they were safe), would be to work on the three basic interpersonal skills:

1. Treat everyone as you want to be treated
 - a. With dignity
 - b. And respect
2. Maintain and enhance other people's self-esteem
 - a. Be specific,
 - b. Be sincere
3. Always make an effort to make things better
 - a. Focus on the issues, not the people
 - b. Ask for help and engage other people

These skills are remarkably easy to learn and practice, and remarkably powerful in the positive effect they have on other people.

The keys to social success

The basic skills have never changed. Skill number one looks pretty much like the “golden rule”...do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Almost every religious belief from Christianity to Buddhism to Hinduism and Islam contains something that looks very much like this as a basic moral precept.

If you have read Dale Carnegies “How to win friends and influence people” you will remember that making other people feel good was central to his work. We are wired socially to respond positively to people who make us feel good. We go out of our way to be around them, and we make an effort to help them where we can.



And speaking of people we want to be around, studies consistently show that individuals who have an optimistic attitude and are focused on making things better are more popular and more successful socially and in business. They are also more successful and happier with their lives than people with pessimistic attitudes. They may see how things are not perfect, yet they put their effort into making them better. They offer and accept help and know the importance of engaging people to want to make things better.

If you think of my family therapy experiences you can quickly see how the three basic interpersonal skills provide a firm springboard from which to deal with the family’s other issues. Similarly, I have found that all workplaces and social organizations work best when using the basic interpersonal skills is just a natural part of how things are done every day.

Start with the basics if you want to look at your personal success, or you want to coach or mentor someone in your organization. Look closely at the basic interpersonal skills. I can guarantee for you that people whose behavior doesn’t reflect the skills will struggle to get things done successfully with other people.

ABOUT ME: DAVID FARRAR



A psychologist with an international practice as a consultant and professional speaker, David studied at the Royal Military College of Australia, (MUR), University of Melbourne, and Northwestern University, (Kellogg Business School). David has degrees in economics and psychology, graduated his master's program with honors, and qualified as a psychologist in Australia. David is the President of FGRAssociates, LLC, and Assistant Professor of Organizational Leadership at Saint Mary’s University, Minnesota.

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