



**Emily Alison
& Laurence
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**'Laurence Alison is one
of my academic heroes'
Malcolm Gladwell**

Rapport

**The Four
Ways to
Read
People**

Emily Alison and Laurence Alison

RAPPORT

The Four Ways to Read People



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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Emily Alison has worked for over 20 years designing and delivering treatment with families where relationships have broken down to the point of violence and abuse. Her programmes are delivered in over 80 UK schools, a dozen youth offending teams, and numerous other social care services and specialist police teams. Her 'Engage' approach to tackling domestic abuse and family violence has been piloted nationally in the UK as an alternative to traditional 'separate and isolate' methods. She is a research associate with the University of Liverpool.

Together, the Alisons have provided psychological advice on hundreds of serious cases including murder, rape, child sexual exploitation and terrorism. They have trained top UK and US law enforcement, defence and security service personnel, and countless other government and corporate agencies, in their model of rapport-based interviewing, known as 'ORBIT' (Observing Rapport-Based Interpersonal Techniques).

In 2004, at the age of 35, **Laurence Alison** became one of the UK's youngest professors. He continues his research and teaching as Director of Critical and Major Incident Research at the University of Liverpool. As the key psychological debriefer for over 400 critical incidents, including the London 7/7 bombings, the Buncefield fire (Europe's biggest peacetime fire), the response to the Boxing Day tsunami and countless rape and murder investigations, he has contributed directly to some of the most significant real-life applied law enforcement, military and security-related cases in recent history. Having produced over 200 internationally significant publications, including ten books on critical incidents and offender profiling, he has conducted internationally significant work with a global impact on improving high-risk decisions, child protection and assisting directly in ethically sound, effective interrogations.

For Heath – you are the best of us.
With love, Mum & Dad

INTRODUCTION

RAPPORT: THE KEY TO COMMUNICATION

Emily: 1996. I am 22 years old and in a lift with four men. All of them have convictions for violence and all of them have mental health issues. I'm their care worker at a secure hospital. We are going to the recreation room in the basement of the facility to play pool. A visit to the rec room means travelling from the secure wing through three sets of airlock-style security doors, and then descending to the basement using an uncomfortably small, brightly lit lift that usually smells of bleach. It reminds me of climbing into a giant old steel kitchen trolley like the type you see in films.

I am standing at the back of the lift next to the control panel. The four men are squeezed into the space in front of me. They have all done truly awful things before coming to the facility. Despite this, I enjoy working with them and find them interesting, complex and polite.

There is Will – he has committed five brutal rapes. I can see him rubbing the five small star tattoos on his hand, which makes me grimace. He insisted that he had them done to 'remind him of his wrongs' but the senior psychologist felt they were more likely trophies to help him relive his crimes. He is standing next to Isaac, who is awkwardly shuffling about. Isaac is as wide as a pair of barn doors and a bit short on conversational skills. He strangled his elderly father during a psychotic episode. He rarely looks up from his shoes and only speaks when spoken to. On the wing, he plays cards for hours, content but mostly silent.

'Do you mind pressing B?' I ask man number three, Charles – a gangly 18-year-old who suffers from paranoid schizophrenia and is a chronic firesetter. Charles had set a number of grass fires near his home until things escalated to him burning down the south wing of his primary school.

Luckily, it was a Sunday morning so no one was on the premises, but he caused hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of damage. Police found him placidly watching the school burn from the swings in the playground. Charles is a very polite friendly lad. Back on the wing, I often find him telling jokes to the thermostat on the wall in the lunch room.

'Sure,' he replies, pushing B. The doors 'shush' shut.

The men are being unnervingly quiet, and I wonder if there is something wrong. Has there been some beef between them on the ward that I don't know about? There is none of the normal banter and joking I have come to expect. As we descend, I can feel the tension in the air – it's like static crackling almost inaudibly in the background. The lift stops and the doors open – three of the men walk out, one does not.

Man number four is Jerome, who is over six foot and weighs about 15½ stone. He is standing like an obelisk in the doorway of the lift. He also suffers from paranoid schizophrenia but is much more intimidating than the gentle Charles. He has a history of violent, explosive outbursts. At the age of 19, he was convicted of murdering his elderly neighbour when he thought she was spying on him and tape recording his conversations for the CIA. He knocked on her door at three in the afternoon and, when she answered, hit her 12 times in the head with a claw hammer. She was 82.

'Go on Jerome, out we go,' I say, thinking, 'What's the radio code again for help?'

'No,' he says, 'ladies first.' His face breaks into a slow, slightly sinister smile and he motions for me to pass.

'Jerome,' I say, the hairs going up on the back of my neck, 'you know the rules – I'm the last one out, remember?'

'Yeah, well I don't like rules,' he says, his face suddenly darkening like a thundercloud. He turns to square up to me. I have one finger on the door hold button and one on my radio. I can feel my throat tightening.

'I know Jerome, but we've all got to follow them. I can't get out until you get out – that's the way it works,' I say, trying to stay calm, the flinty taste of fear filling my mouth. 'Let's go play some pool, come on – it'll be more fun than staying in here, won't it?' I say, giving him a tense smile, trying to stay calm.

There is a long pause ... he is staring at me, his eyes wide and his mouth set in a thin angry line. The idea of being hit by him is truly terrifying, but I

am trying very hard to look relaxed. The blood is thundering in my ears so loud I'm amazed he can't hear it.

'I'm not moving until you do Jerome,' I say quietly but firmly, holding his gaze.

His face contorts into a scowl, eyes dark and flashing – he moves closer and glares down at me, breathing hard, his hands visibly trembling at his sides.

I think, 'Can you reach for your radio? No! If you reach for your radio, that's it. He's going to batter you to death in this lift! Stupid girl ... It will take them two minutes to reach you and you'll be dead in 30 seconds – look at his hands! They're like mallets!'

Jerome bends down and hisses in my face, 'I don't like women telling me what to do – I have a hard time with that. You need to remember that,' he growls, jabbing his finger in my face.

'OK, I will Jerome, I promise,' I say quietly, continuing to hold eye contact with him, my heart in my mouth.

Then abruptly, he turns around and out he steps, striding into the rec room.

Once I have swallowed down the taste of bile in my mouth and stopped my hands shaking, I radio for a second staff member to come down and help me escort the men back to the wing. From then on, the hospital changed its policy to a two-person escort for three or more patients.

But for me, that definitely wasn't the only lesson learned that day.

Looking back on it, I knew that maintaining some sort of connection with Jerome was the critical factor in those ticking seconds as he decided whether to move or stay put, whether to keep talking to me or just batter me to a pulp. I am certain that if I had raised my voice to him, insisted he do as I said or tried to radio for help, it would have ended very differently for both of us.

He didn't want me to tell him what to do, so I didn't. I also couldn't do what he wanted me to do which was to put my back to him, so I calmly and quietly held my ground. Most of all, during our interaction I needed to connect with him somehow so that he could see me as a person rather than just an obstacle or, worse, an enemy. By appearing confident and calm (even when my stomach was doing flip-flops) and by keeping my tone quiet but firm (even when my inner voice was screaming for help), I didn't escalate Jerome's behaviour. Most importantly, I did not try to force him to

comply with what I wanted (*get out of this lift*) but instead I patiently listened to what he wanted (*not to be told what to do*).

At the time, I was in no way conscious of any skills I was using – I was simply trying to get out of the lift alive using my gut instinct. What I have come to recognise is that what I was actually using to get out of that lift was rapport.

Like a spider's thread, the way I spoke to Jerome wove an invisible but strong connection between us that stopped him deciding to hurt me in that moment, and let us walk away, with both pride and body intact. Neither of us wanted to end the evening on that lift floor. If he had been committed to putting me there, then I'd have had very little chance of stopping him. If I'd have called in the distress code on the radio, we probably both would have spent some time on the floor.

Even in such extreme interactions there is often a window of opportunity to connect. We have found that once you form that connection with someone, it becomes harder for them to attack you and, indeed, harder for them to argue with you or even to lie to you. Our research shows that there is more to building that connection than just following your gut. There are specific 'ingredients' that provide the formula for building rapport and we have spent over 20 years researching them.

WHAT IS RAPPORT?

Rapport is a term often used but difficult to define. What does it mean to have rapport with someone? It is most commonly understood to mean when two people connect or 'click'. The dictionary would tell us it is a harmonious relationship, characterised by agreement, mutual understanding or empathy. In other words, rapport occurs when two people 'get' each other.

This sounds so simple and straightforward. Even if you can't define it, you can probably recognise when you have it and, certainly, when you don't. But on occasions when you do have rapport with someone, do you realise *how* you got it? And when you lose it, do you understand *why*? If you can't seem to build rapport with someone, can you diagnose what is getting in the way? I'm sure you can think of examples, both personal and professional, where you feel that instant and easy connection to someone and others, where you would run a mile to avoid certain people.

Rapport hums along in the background to most of our successful interactions and, often without knowing it, we engage in building and maintaining it with people every single day. It's how we establish and sustain relationships – from chatting about the weather with strangers to managing complex, many-layered interactions with those people closest to us. Yet most people struggle to label the specific ingredients that make up rapport. This makes it difficult to learn and even more difficult to create when it doesn't just happen naturally.

So, can you learn how to build rapport? Based on our research as psychologists, we argue that you absolutely can. Discovering the formula for building rapport can help you to manage all interactions more positively. Rapport requires a solid and versatile set of interpersonal skills as well as the ability to empathise and adapt. Most challenging of all, it requires investing your effort into listening to and understanding others rather than being focused on your own agenda or point of view.

For many of us, this can be incredibly difficult, especially if we are accustomed to getting our way by being the loudest and most persistent person in the room. Listening to and understanding the needs of others can feel like a back-seat strategy for getting what you want. However, listening to others allows you to understand their goals and consider whether they are in line with or in conflict with your own. Understanding others' needs allows you to decide if you can successfully find compromise or if you will have to stick to your bottom line and weather through some conflict.

Being able to put listening and seeking understanding of others before your own desire to be heard is the most simple but significant step you can take towards building rapport.

WHY RAPPORT MATTERS

Being able to build rapport with others is an essential life skill for forming solid, intimate relationships, but it can also be critical in most professional contexts. Rapport comes from the French word *rapporter*, meaning *to bring something back, to report*. We have spent our careers advising the police, military and others in how to secure reliable evidence or intelligence from interviewees. Rapport is not only the bedrock of successful relationships; it provides the best path to securing information from difficult people.

The approach in this book is based on the scientific examination of what strategies get people to open up and talk. Despite what Hollywood (and some politicians) tells us, the answer is not a threat to their family, a punch in the mouth or waterboarding – it is rapport.

In 2012, we were commissioned as part of the High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group (HIG) to investigate strategies that would be effective at securing intelligence or evidence from terrorist suspects. The group was created by President Barack Obama in 2009 to improve questioning of terrorist suspects immediately after their arrest and to prevent further terrorist attacks against the United States and its allies. The HIG serves as a repository for interrogation best practices, lessons learned and research for the federal government. The HIG is comprised of individuals from the following US government agencies: the FBI, the CIA, the Department of Defense, the Department of Homeland Security and the National Security Council, and it is the hub of global scientific research into interrogation.

Our research was commissioned under the ethos of finding an alternative to torture. The HIG wanted to know whether the work we had been doing for many years in counselling and with other crime suspect interviews would work with high-value detainees.

Previous investigations into the use of harsh techniques, such as the so-called ‘enhanced interrogation techniques’, has demonstrated that such strategies^{[fn1](#)} were never effective.¹ Instead, they generated, at best, contaminated information or, more commonly, no information at all. In addition, the use of torture brought the reputation of the security services and psychologists into disrepute on an unprecedented scale and made the world a more dangerous place – not a safer one.² Our experience has been that both the US and UK military have demonstrated a desire to learn and a commitment to approach things intelligently and openly. Some readers may be shocked by this statement given our research into the use of torture during the Afghan and Iraq wars.

However, what we and many other researchers have found is that true expert interrogators know that establishing rapport or some kind of connection is the most reliable way to obtain information. They respect and understand the damage force and coercion can cause, and they do not advocate or embrace the use of torture.

Torture didn’t enter the interrogation room because the experts suddenly rolled up their sleeves and broke out the big guns. It was brought in by

charlatans and novices who were using the theatre of war as a giant human Petri dish. What was happening was not a necessary evil, just a wholly ineffective one. It didn't take long for it to escalate out of control, bringing us to the dark and murky place of the abuses of Abu Ghraib and Camp X-Ray, and the use of rendition and state-sanctioned torture against our enemies.

However, we are not naïve. Torture does not work to secure reliable information from terrorists, and neither does a cup of tea and a biscuit. There are contexts where it is absolutely necessary to establish control and gain compliance, and where life and death hang in the balance of securing information from people. In these circumstances, the urge to use 'any means necessary' to obtain information is understandably overwhelming.

For these reasons, when we were applying our model to this area, it had to not only uphold the rule of law and be guided by the ethical obligations we swore to as psychologists, but also be backed up by scientific proof that it worked. You cannot solve a problem by telling people how *not* to fix it – you have to provide a viable solution.

Academic research is not always so solution-focused. Both of us have always been more interested in providing research that can be applied directly by practitioners on the front line rather than discussing concepts understood only by an elite group of academics. Our work had to matter in the real world and help real people. It had to have more fidelity than a lab study with students paid a fiver to pretend they're terrorists and resist sharing information with other students being paid a fiver pretending to be police. We knew this issue wasn't going to be solved by students playing pretend.

We needed to look at real terrorists and real police interviewers. To achieve this, we secured access to the largest dataset of police interviews with convicted terrorists in the world.

Prior to this research, we had first-hand experience of applying the strategies discussed in this book to a wide array of issues from supporting parents struggling with their children to the interviewing of criminal suspects (such as murderers, rapists and robbers).

But would the same approaches really work with terrorists? Would people filled with hatred for everything the person across the table represented still respond to rapport-based strategies? Would the same

approach that can get teenagers to tell you about their day work with terrorists?

We tested the model on over 2,000 hours of law enforcement interviews to find the answer, and what we found amazed us. The model of rapport we had developed excelled even in these adversarial interactions. The approach taken by interviewers had huge potential to impact the suspect's decision to speak. The use of rapport-based strategies produced a significant increase in 'yield' (information of intelligence or evidential significance) across the sample. Rapport was not a guarantee that someone would talk, but it appeared to be the interviewer's best chance at success even in very challenging circumstances.³

RAPPORT-BUILDING FOR ALL RELATIONSHIPS

We have been astonished and humbled by the results of our training, not only due to the impact on the participants' results when interviewing but the impact it often had on them as people. Several of our police, military and emergency service personnel have said the training not only made them reflect on their professional relationship with interviewees but on their personal relationships as well. It was not uncommon to find them applying the skills we were teaching to difficult conversations they'd had with their partners, teenage children, and even their boss. This diverse application is what motivated us to try to bring the model to a wider audience via this book.

There are two key aspects of rapport-building that will be covered in this book. The first section addresses the four cornerstones of rapport: honesty, empathy, autonomy and reflection (HEAR). The HEAR principles provide a blueprint for enhancing your interactions with others and improving your chances of getting the outcome you want.

The second aspect is mastering the four fundamental styles of communication. We often summarise these by representing each with a totemic animal:

- **T-Rex.** How to manage confrontation: when you argue or challenge, be frank and forthright. Do not be attacking, sarcastic and punitive.
- **Mouse.** How to capitulate: when you need to concede or show deference, demonstrate humility and patience. But avoid weakness and

uncertainty.

- **Lion.** How to establish control: good leaders are clear, in charge, set the agenda and support others. They are not demanding, dogmatic and pedantic.
- **Monkey.** How to build cooperation: when you want to create connection, show warmth, concern and togetherness. But be careful of drifting into overfamiliarity and inappropriate intimacy.

We will expand on each of these styles later in the book and discuss when to use which animal across a variety of possible situations. You will also have an opportunity to determine what sort of ‘animal style’ you are most like, so you can begin to expand your interpersonal skills and your mastery of rapport-building.

Rapport cannot guarantee a confession or tell you if someone is lying – there is nothing that can reliably do that. But rapport does significantly increase your chances of getting useful information. In our research on police interviewing, there were a number of very experienced offenders who were very familiar with being interviewed and had no intention of revealing any information during their interview. The most overt of these was a chap who literally zipped his hoodie up over his mouth as soon as the tapes were turned on and remained like that for the duration. So why would it matter to still use rapport principles with someone so clearly committed to disengaging and not cooperating? If they are never going to talk, what’s the point in making the effort?

What was fascinating was that when a number of these hardened savvy individuals were treated in line with rapport-based principles, they would still not utter a single word on tape, but they were more likely to give up intelligence information once the tapes were switched off. This included a man who asked for a map post interview and simply circled three locations and handed it back to interviewers. At each location, police found a body. Police theorised that he revealed the locations out of respect for the principle of ‘giving back the dead’ when at ‘war’. The point is he didn’t have to tell them anything at all but he decided to out of respect and in line with his ‘values’, however twisted that may seem. In our context of uncovering criminal or terrorist networks, rapport always matters.

These interpersonal approaches connect with something hard-wired in all of us, whether that connection is conscious or unconscious. We are both psychologists and experts in rapport-building, and we have also been

married for over 20 years. These strategies still work when we use them on each other. We have a teenage child and they still work on him, even when he knows what we are up to. And they work on us when he uses them back! The beauty of these approaches is that they do not require deception or complicated strategies to deploy and even if someone else is in on the secret, they will still work.

Be aware, this is not a book about how to persuade people to buy things they neither need nor want. Nor is it about how to work some mind trick on people to get them to tell you things they don't really want to say. When done correctly and well the other person should not leave the room thinking, 'What just happened? Did I just get played?' as if they've just left a used car showroom.

This is because genuine rapport is about building an authentic connection with someone, not deploying a short-term parlour trick that wears off once you leave the room. Rapport is all about maintaining respect, dignity and compassion for others, regardless of how they are behaving towards you. These are clearly positive things to give to others that require mindfulness and effort. So what's in it for you?

WHAT RAPPORT CAN DO FOR YOU

Recent studies have established that the depth and meaning of our personal and professional relationships is directly related to our mental health as well as our longevity – both very good reasons to care about learning how to build rapport.⁴

Discovering the keys to rapport in this book can help you to :

- Make new friendships and connections and avoid social isolation.
- Strengthen and deepen your existing relationships with your partner, your children, your friends and your parents as you move through different stages of your life.
- Unlock the door to more effective business relationships through improved communication and the ability to be direct with colleagues, managers or important clients.
- Increase your understanding of others, even when you don't agree, and help you to manage difficult or challenging situations in a productive rather than destructive way.

Rapport is the bedrock of healthy relationships and the secret weapon of effective communicators. By the end of this book, you will have all the tools you need to achieve it.

In the first chapter, we will discuss why these authentic connections to others are so significant and how they are the key to being healthier, happier and more successful, and can even help you live longer.

CHAPTER 1

MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

When we understand the connection between how we live and how long we live, we can see that our relationships are among the most powerful determinants of our survival.

– Dean Ornish, founder and president of the Preventive Medicine Research Institute and clinical professor of medicine at the University of California

Laurence: This may come as distressing news for committed introverts, but recent research has identified that contact with other people is a critical element of maintaining our mental and physical health. I, myself, am a profound introvert by nature and when I have had extended time to sequester myself away to work or write, I always imagine it should be a recipe for happiness. It is true that what can seem like loneliness to an extrovert is blissful solitude to an introvert. But despite sometimes enjoying solitude, I still need to connect with others on a regular basis. As Josh Billings, the nineteenth-century humorist, said: ‘solitude is a good place to visit but a poor place to stay’.

What I have noticed is that, after a period of isolation, all social interaction suddenly becomes much harder. Even making polite conversation at the supermarket feels awkward and clunky. It’s as if social skills are a muscle that you need to flex regularly or they start to atrophy. I quickly learned through my experiences that if I wanted to create opportunities and have the life and career that I wanted, I would have to build up many of the skills that did not come naturally to me.

So, while at school I was painfully shy, I soon realised that I had to get over it and be able to break out of my comfortable introversion. Our core personalities do not have to be the boundary line of our social skills – with effort and practice we can adapt and grow outside of our comfort zone. When it comes to our ability to form connections with others, we cannot leave it down to luck or see it as a luxury; it is actually an essential life skill.

NO MAN IS AN ISLAND

Rather than being a relief, being isolated from others is actually extremely damaging to us as human beings. In 1951, Donald Hebb, a psychologist at McGill University, was investigating the impact of isolation on mental health.¹ He was attempting to create a defence to the Soviet's use of sensory deprivation against prisoners of war in Korea. His research team paid a number of male graduates to stay in small rooms with no sensory stimulation – no sights, smells or sounds – nothing at all. They were blindfolded throughout and wore ear protectors to block out any sound. The experiment was designed to assess the impact of being in solitary confinement for six weeks. The longest anyone lasted was seven days.

After seven days, all of the participants stated that they had started to lose the ability to think clearly and could no longer make decisions. Prior to the experiment, they had discussed with optimism and enthusiasm what they would do during their blissful isolation – many intended to plan term papers, revise or think about their studies.

Instead, researchers found that the participants rapidly lost connection with reality. Many started to hallucinate, and one student said that he had repeatedly seen and heard dogs barking at him. Others developed paranoia so severe that they thought the government or other forces were targeting them. They couldn't complete basic tasks, such as simple arithmetic, and they became emotionally unstable and restless. They also became highly suggestible and easy to influence. The conclusion was clear: isolation made people unstable, suggestible and vulnerable to manipulation. It was clearly damaging to their mental health.

Several psychological studies have also looked specifically at prisoners in solitary confinement. In his interviews with hundreds of inmates, psychiatrist Stuart Grassian found results similar to those conducted at

McGill decades earlier – namely that solitary confinement caused hallucinations, panic attacks and paranoia.² Inmates experienced difficulties thinking and concentrating, and their ability to remember things was severely impaired. These results are especially disturbing given the high level of solitary confinement currently used in our prison systems, with estimates of between 80,000 and 100,000 prisoners being held in solitary confinement at any one time in the US prison system.^{fn1}

Findings suggest that the physiological and psychological consequences of solitary confinement linger even long after prisoners are released. Psychologist Craig Haney found that even when returned to ‘normal society’, individuals who had been in solitary confinement found it extremely difficult to adjust – they were no longer able to form healthy bonding relationships with other people and often reported feeling hopeless and helpless.³ Their social skills and ability to connect had often been damaged beyond repair, leaving them cut adrift from the rest of society. This has clear limitations for prisoners’ successful reintegration into communities after long experiences of solitary confinement, including their employability, parenting and ability to manage conflict with others. It may be an effective way to isolate someone from the rest of the prison population, but the impact of that isolation appears to follow them long after they leave their cell and even crosses over into life after prison.

When we lose our connections to others, either by our own choice or due to others’, loneliness and depression can creep in and take over. Once this happens, it becomes even harder to make the effort to reconnect. People can sometimes become trapped in a vicious cycle of isolation and depression, struggling to connect, feeling lonely, becoming depressed, causing them to further isolate themselves, leading to further difficulty connecting, deepening depression and magnifying their sense of loneliness – and down and down it spirals.

LONELINESS: THE SILENT KILLER

Loneliness is not the same as being alone. When you experience loneliness, you feel disconnected from any sort of meaningful relationships. It is manifested by a lack of understanding from people around you and a lack of any intimate feelings. You could be part of a family, you could be holding down a busy job, you could be seeing dozens of people every day, but you

could still feel profoundly alone because none of these people seem to know or understand the inner you.

Intimacy can be a difficult thing to establish or maintain in our modern busy lives, mainly because it requires devoting time, effort and energy to understanding others. With our global lifestyles, overflowing inboxes, social media accounts and hectic schedules, we can end up feeling disconnected and deserted by meaningful conversation. We can feel our lives are devoid of the time and energy required to understand other people's struggles as we spend all our energy grappling with our own.

Loneliness is often discussed in relation to the elderly, but it is important to note that it can affect people of any age. In 2018, BBC Radio 4 conducted a survey, in conjunction with the Wellcome Trust, of over 55,000 people and found that while a concerning 25 per cent of those over 75 felt lonely often or very often, this was true of a staggering 40 per cent of 16 to 24-year-olds.⁴ Traditional connections to family and loved ones seem to be decreasing and more and more people live alone. Single-person households have doubled in the last 50 years in the UK and have almost tripled in the US.⁵ In global urban capitals, there is a staggering amount of people living on their own, such as Paris (50 per cent), Stockholm (58 per cent) and in some areas of Manhattan (well over 80 per cent).⁶

The significance of loneliness and social isolation not only to mental health but physical health is woefully underestimated. A review of 148 studies representing over 300,000 people by Julianne Holt-Lunstad and her colleagues at Brigham Young University identified loneliness as a more significant factor in premature death than diet, exercise or even smoking.⁷ Results were consistent whatever the age, gender or initial health status of the individuals assessed.

It seems that loneliness is not just an emotional heartache; it is a silent killer. Psychologist John Cacioppo discovered that social isolation can increase the risk of premature death by as much as 20 per cent. In studies of both humans and monkeys, he found that loneliness led to significant alterations in white blood cell counts. White blood cells that cause inflammation were increased rather than those that fight off disease. The resulting physiological changes created many associated health risks, such as elevated blood pressure, metabolic problems, fragmented sleep and diminished immunity.⁸

Loneliness has also been linked to increased risk of developing dementia. Robert Wilson and researchers at the Rush Alzheimer's Disease Center in Chicago assessed 823 older adults who were all free of dementia at enrolment in the study. They found that the lonelier participants were, the poorer their performance on a series of memory and perception tasks. Over the next five years, those participants who reported feeling socially isolated continued to decline in cognitive performance and 76 of them actually developed dementia. This was not true of those participants who reported solid social connections to other people.⁹ In summary, research has proven that loneliness can have serious effects on our physical and mental health.

Yet, despite such compelling research, Professor Catherine Haslam at the University of Queensland found that the general public rate social support ('How many meaningful relationships do you have?') and social integration ('How connected do you feel to your community and social groups?') as two of the *least* important factors in predicting life expectancy. Haslam points out in her recent book:¹⁰

Doctors' rarely include the importance of looking after your social relationships in health advice.

Social 'health' is often considered a private, personal and tangential issue to our physical health. Time with family and friends is seen as a low priority among the other pressures of modern life. Yet, research clearly tells us that looking after our social connections is the single most significant factor in inoculating us against disease and premature death. Our social health appears to have much more 'medical' significance than it is given by either the public or indeed the medical community. Intimacy is not a luxury; instead it is a critical part of our well-being and longevity.

Social relationships that lack depth are unlikely to address the need for intimacy. Similarly, relationships that are fraught, stressful and difficult to manage are unlikely to produce positive effects. Mullan Harris and Yangs' detailed and extensive lifespan surveys in the US identified that individuals with healthy social relationships (defined as those that were supportive, empathic and low on criticism) had reduced blood pressure, reduced waist circumference, reduced body mass index and reduced systemic inflammation, all characteristics that are associated with living longer.¹¹

Often, when trying to improve our health, we worry first about our waistline and then we might worry about our cardiovascular fitness. Yet feeling loved, cherished and connected to others is a critical part of what sustains us and maintains our emotional and physical well-being. If we focused as much energy on our social connections as we did on diet and exercise, we might find that they are the key to making us happier, healthier and even less prone to illness, dementia and premature death.

Consider what priority you are currently giving to maintaining key relationships in your own life. Are nights out with friends, phone calls to family and days out with your children constantly shuffled down the list of priorities due to the relentless demands of work? Do you find yourself unable to form any kind of friendship or connection with colleagues as you bounce from task to task with no time for a chat or cup of coffee as you chase the next deadline? When you do have a break, are you so exhausted you just want to hibernate under a blanket, watch TV and not speak to anyone?

Looking after your relationships is an important life priority, not just for your day-to-day quality of life, but your long-term health and well-being. These same principles apply not only to our personal relationships but also our relationship with work.

OFFICE POLITICS

Organisations often do not consider the significance of their employees' social well-being to their productivity. Researcher Christina Maslach coined the term 'burnout' to describe when workers are no longer able to invest themselves emotionally and productively in their job. Her initial research was with first responders in emergency service professions. Often people in these areas of work felt overwhelmed by long shifts, traumatic incidents and the burden of protecting and saving others.

Maslach was interested in whether these same effects would be present in the presumably less extreme environments of the corporate world. However, when her research team examined a number of large corporations, they discovered that it was not workload that was causing burnout, but social relationship issues between members of the workforce – competitiveness, politicking, put-downs, backstabbing, gossip, unfairness and a lack of recognition or appreciation for employee effort all contributed

to burnout.¹² They also found that some organisations explicitly adopted divisive tactics to try to increase performance by deliberately encouraging cut-throat competition between staff members. Many had even introduced threatening consequences, such as changes in status or performance measures, for failing to meet ever-increasing targets.

Organisations that operate in this way are not considering the long-term consequences of these working practices, such as health problems, exhaustion, sleep deprivation, work–life conflict, loss of self-worth and, of course, ultimately, staff burnout. Instead, people who burn out are seen as expendable and then ultimately disposable. So, what happens when they burn out? They leave. Then organisations must recruit and retrain, which is costly and time-consuming. Then, of course, they can't retain these staff either as the system is unchanged. And so the cycle continues.

This is the human equivalent of 'intensive factory farming' where practices to maximise output and minimise cost are implemented regardless of the impact on longevity or quality of life for the 'workforce'. There is an interesting parallel here.

Intensive farming practices have been associated with increased transmission of disease, reductions in overall product quality and reduced lifespan for the animal.¹³ By comparison, studies have found that propagating such an organisational culture contributes to staff being more likely to go off sick, reduces creativity and innovation, and ultimately leads to burnout and high staff turnover. No workforce wants to be treated like battery hens. Maslach refers to burnout as the canary down the mine – it is a warning that the work environment has become toxic.

To counter these effects, Professor Maslach advises sustainable workloads, the provision of choice and control to employees wherever possible, systems of recognition and reward that are fair and equitable, and establishing an organisational culture of fairness, respect and social justice among the workforce. Her recommended management philosophy is: 'We are a team, we are in this together.'

As cynical adults, one may scoff at such a structure. Many of us are perhaps bruised by experiences with organisations or employers that demand more and more with seemingly no regard for us as individuals. If you feel you are in a toxic work environment and are being treated like a battery hen, it may be time to grab some well-needed perspective on the role work is playing in your life. Prioritising your physical and mental

health is a reasonable line to draw in the sand with your employer, given the impact on not only your individual well-being but on your productivity and effectiveness. It is not just your interests that are served by having an employer who is considerate of your psychological well-being – it is in their interest as well.

It should come as no surprise that our work culture often does not prioritise social and emotional well-being. Think back to your childhood. Was the focus on developing your social skills and building up your friendships, or was the focus on getting good marks, winning awards and building up your CV to prepare you for competition in the workforce?

PLAY DATES MATTER

If you are a parent, what priority are you putting on your child's socialisation? Do you support them to make friends and make efforts to sustain those friendships by organising get-togethers or play dates? Do you concentrate the same energy on encouraging your child to show kindness and compassion to others as you do to them learning their times tables? Do you value the social health of your child as much as their academic performance?

You may retort that kindness never got anyone a place at university. If we look back, we may feel that many of our childhood friendships are now just hazy and relatively insignificant memories. However, we need to remember that, at the time, these relationships were critically important. These relationships helped shape our personality, our self-esteem and our core sense of self, and these are the things children need to manage their future with confidence, wherever they end up.

There has been a great deal of attention on the increasing stress and anxiety reported by young people. Much of it has been linked to academic pressure and competition. Recent studies have suggested that non-stop exam prep and a dearth of unstructured playtime is having a negative impact on children's emotional and cognitive development.^{[14](#)}, ^{[15](#)}

Academic institutions that focus on standardised test performance and school rankings are literally 'testing' the enjoyment out of the act of learning. Laurence has worked at a university for over a quarter of a century and sees this in some of his students. When they want to progress their studies and work as forensic psychologists, it isn't sufficient to just look at

their academic achievements. They need to be creative, critical thinkers, not chase irrelevant plaudits or immerse themselves in bureaucratic hoop-jumping to hit key performance indicators that change with each successive government. Exclusive focus on testing under exam conditions gives no indication of a person's creativity, integrity or their desire to make a difference to the world. Do they have the interpersonal skills to manage a roomful of police officers or to speak to offenders? Relentless exam testing is simply not the pathway to producing well-rounded, resilient and capable children or adults. So why do our systems encourage such a framework of competition and survival of the academic fittest? Now we're on this path, is it possible to change?

Contrasts have been made between our current framework to the Finnish education system. Rather than relentless assessment through standardised testing, the Finnish system places equal emphasis on all aspects of the young person's development, including personality, creativity, morality and socialisation.^{[16](#)}

Lucy Clark, author of *Beautiful Failures*, has laid out the challenge to reimagine what education and development of the child should be about.^{[17](#)} She challenges the adults in children's lives – parents, teachers and leaders of society – to work out ways to reduce the pressure and expand the current narrow definition of success. She advises that kids should have time in their schedules to do the things they love – creative things, hobbies, having fun, just being kids – as these experiences build their confidence, resilience and bravery to take on challenges as adults. Clark argues that parents and educators need to support and value the whole child, not just focus on building up their academic abilities or extracurricular activity portfolio. They need to also think about whether their children are enjoying learning and are able to think creatively and independently. Social skills and solid friendships are just as important in building the framework for healthy competent adults as extracurricular activities and good grades.

Maintaining and sustaining friendships can become even more important as we grow older – especially when ageing means some of those key relationships start to disappear. An A* in Chemistry is unlikely to sustain us in our golden years – instead it will be the relationships we have nurtured with others.

JAPAN'S BLUE ZONES

In his book, *The Blue Zones*, Dan Buettner states that Okinawans have the highest life expectancy in the world.¹⁸ Men are, on average, expected to reach 84 and women expected to live to almost 90. Depending on where you live, this can be five to ten years older than in most other countries.

But in Okinawa they don't just live longer, they are also healthier for longer. They develop a fraction of the diseases that kill their Western counterparts, such as cardiovascular disease and cancer, and suffer about half the rate of dementia, although there are some variations and differences across the Blue Zones and, of course, diet and physical activity also play a part.

However, the *only* common theme between all of the zones is the presence of strong positive social connections. In the Blue Zones people of all ages are socially active and integrated into their communities. There have been efforts to establish similar schemes in the UK to support connections later in life, such as the Older Women's Co-housing (OWCH) group in London, which promotes independent but socially connected living for older women who would otherwise be living on their own.¹⁹ Women who are part of the scheme have reported increased levels of emotional well-being, daily activity and life satisfaction.

Men haven't been left out either. The Men's Sheds movement has received a great deal of attention in recent years for combating loneliness and rates of suicide among men. Originating in Australia, the sheds provide workshops where men can work together on projects and socialise. Researchers have found that the focus on a practical project allows connection and friendship to evolve naturally, a model that often better suits the male approach to making friends. In an evaluation by King's College London, shed-visiting participants scored higher than their non-shed counterparts on mental and physical health indicators, including confidence, clear thinking and cheerfulness.²⁰

It is clear that human beings are by nature social creatures, and that much of our health, happiness and sense of fulfilment is derived from our interactions with others. However, many people struggle to communicate and thereby connect with other people in a positive, constructive way. As a result, they can find their relationships a source of stress, anger, unhappiness and uncertainty rather than a positive supportive cornerstone of their lives.

TO BELONG IS TO MATTER

The feeling of belonging to a larger, meaningful community of other human beings is a key component of our psychological well-being and happiness.^{[21](#)}, ^{[22](#)} Examples of meaningful communities can be via individual connections, such as maintaining a group of school friends or being a member of a sports team or a club, or they can be broader, such as nurturing a sense of identity via your national identity, your cultural background or your faith. Much attention has been given to the importance of social groups in maintaining emotional health and well-being for a range of issues from depression to substance abuse.^{[23](#)}, ^{[24](#)} Social groups seem to be particularly significant in helping us cope with major life events or transitions such as moving from school into university, becoming a parent for the first time, recovering from a serious illness, retirement or bereavement.

Social groups provide meaning through activity and routine (such as regularly attending yoga classes or a running club), creating a shared social identity (such as clubs for motor-cyclists or corgi owners) or allowing people to pursue collective goals (such as campaigning to stop knife crime or to save the environment).^{[25](#)} The groups we choose to pursue membership of are linked to our own core values and goals. In turn, we want to share those goals and values with other like-minded people who affirm and support us.

However, there is a note of caution around joining up with those we feel are similar to us. Belonging to a group creates a sense of inclusion but it can also create a division between those who share the group's collective values and those who don't. Sadly, we are living in a world in which simply expressing an opinion can lead to immediate aggression from individuals and groups with opposing views.

Much of the effort in social media is devoted to separating people into camps based on race, religion or politics, and much of it hinges on provoking reactions by deliberately promoting conflict with our deeper held values and beliefs. Division and tribalism have always been part of our society, but both the remoteness and pervasiveness of social media serves to amplify our differences rather than bring people together. It is what has led to people being prepared to make death threats against someone based on

their choice of diet (see the *Daily Mail* headline ‘Smug vegan who said dairy worker could just “get another job” ... is hit with death threats’).²⁶

To be clear, we are not trying to hinder free speech – we are simply saying that hateful speech achieves nothing other than creating more divisiveness in an already divided world. For example, some of the tweets that have been posted on topics as diverse as Brexit, Trump, anti-vaccers, fox hunt protests, immigration, government surveillance and even vegan sausage rolls are abusive in the extreme. Gina Miller, the lawyer who challenged the UK government over Brexit in 2018, received a set of particularly vile tweets in response. The statements made were outrageously offensive, sexually threatening, violent and hateful. They were also criminal as they threatened physical and sexual violence. The comments had no other function than to intimidate, demean and bully.

Equally, slinging insults is unlikely to encourage anyone to reconsider their position or engage in a productive debate. Instead, it simplifies other people’s thoughts and feelings, creating more and more distance between one another and greater social isolation. Insults are not about providing a counterargument or discussion. They seek to divide rather than to connect.

That is why, though it may require a Herculean effort, we must try a little harder to understand one another, especially those we disagree with, and seek points of connection rather than separation. We have evolved too far to be satisfied with slinging mud at each other and calling it communication. So, *if* the goal is to have your argument heard and considered, venting your spleen on Twitter is not a viable strategy. People who communicate in this way intend to bully, intimidate and create division to try to influence others rather than seek understanding or connection.

We’ve identified how strong intimate relationships are important to improving your quality of life, your emotional well-being and even your physical health and life expectancy. Social cohesion and connection appear to be the bedrock of happiness, contentment and long life.

Throughout this book we will work on developing your rapport skills to help you establish long-lasting supportive relationships that can weather any episode of conflict, disagreement or challenge. With that in mind, we should make a commitment to being better at understanding not only those closest to us, but even those we dislike or fear.

LESSONS

1. ***Rapport can be learned.*** Whether an extrovert or introvert, you need other people. But rapport skills are about helping to make connections deeper and not necessarily just adding friends. It is the depth of relationship that matters, not the breadth. So don't rush out and try to get more friends on Twitter. Instead focus on the people who you really want a deeper and more meaningful relationship with. And for people you regret falling out with, try to reconnect. You cannot and should not be alone.
2. ***Work the rapport muscles.*** Several studies have shown that feelings of loneliness and lack of connection to others is not just bad for our mental health but for our physical health too. So, as well as watching your diet and going for more walks/trips to the gym, consider what efforts you will make to enhance your relationships. Seek out people who share your values and interests; get involved, join in and be a part of your community through clubs, social events or volunteering.
3. ***We are one world, one tribe.*** Try to avoid being drawn into divisive/tribal language against others. Do not big yourself up by attacking others or making them feel small. Even when someone is your enemy or opposed to your values in every way, seek to understand them. You do not have to like them and you do not have to agree with them, but do try to understand. It is the key to resolving the issues that divide us. No matter how tempting, do not stoop to abusive, hate-filled insults. Such behaviour does not debase them – it debases you.
4. ***Connect and care about others.*** Work on increasing your connection and compassion for both the young and the old in your social circles. Connection between generations is the absolute hallmark of healthy communities. Make an effort to connect: meet your neighbours, learn their children's names, do the postal run for an elderly neighbour or offer to include their front patch of lawn when you mow. If these things are too much effort for hectic modern schedules, then at least try to connect indirectly. Sponsor or support a youth club, green space or other community initiative that you feel connects with your wider values.
5. ***Connect and build intimacy with those closest to you.*** Make time to genuinely listen and find out what is important to your children, your parents and your grandparents – not just whether they have homework,

have been to the dentist or have taken their pills. We will learn specific techniques to help with these more meaningful conversations later on in the book but decide now where you think your relationships need improving and commit to making those changes.

CHAPTER 2

WHY WORDS MATTER

Words – so innocent and powerless as they are, as standing in a dictionary, how potent for good and evil they become in the hands of one who knows how to combine them.

– **Nathaniel Hawthorne**

Laurence: 1993. In my small office in Guildford, having just graduated from university, I was presented with six black box files, each bursting with papers. This mountain of information was paperwork for the first case I worked on as a forensic psychologist. On the side of each box file was written, in black marker pen, ‘R-v-Stagg’. Stagg was the Metropolitan Police Service’s prime suspect in the murder of young mum Rachel Nickell. Rachel was stabbed 47 times in front of her then two-year-old son, Alex, on Wimbledon Common. Alex was found clinging to her bloody body, pleading ‘wake up Mummy’. Stagg was arrested based on an eyewitness identification and a spurious ‘criminal profile’ provided by Paul Britton (a psychologist and offender profiler who had worked with the police on many other cases).¹

Colin Stagg lived alone on the Roehampton estate, a stone’s throw from the Common where he was a regular dog walker. He kept himself to himself, didn’t drink, didn’t take drugs and by his own admission was a loner. At 30 years old he was still a virgin, but desperate for a relationship. When police visited his house, they were disturbed to find that one of the rooms in his small flat was painted completely black with white chalk drawings of what they thought were demonic or satanic images. They were actually Wiccan symbols.

Britton, in his original offender profile (provided before Stagg was identified) claimed that the man they were looking for was likely to be a loner with strange sexual interests, would likely live near to the Common and be in his late twenties or early thirties. Police had found Stagg odd in interview (to say the least). He seemed to fit the profile and, having watched the police interviews, Britton confirmed that Stagg was, in his view, a good match.

An undercover operation (that became known as ‘Operation Edzell’) was set up. An undercover officer, code-named ‘Lizzie James’, befriended Stagg in order to see whether he would reveal any evidence that only the murderer would know and thereby incriminate himself. This resulted in letters at first, then phone calls and, finally, a series of meetings.

I was asked to examine many features of this case and it was at the very start of my career as a forensic psychologist (I was in my early twenties at the time). One senior police officer tried to warn me off: ‘This is a big case for Scotland Yard, Laurence,’ he said sternly, ‘and, if you work for the defence, trust me, you won’t ever work with the UK police again.’ Despite this warning, I felt compelled to pursue it.

The key element I was asked to examine were the interactions between Stagg and Lizzie James. This included a careful analysis of every letter, phone call and meeting between the two of them. As I sifted through the material, I wondered whether this man was a savage rapist and murderer who the police had drawn into revealing his true nature or an innocent man lured into saying things he didn’t mean.

Nearly 25 years later, I still have many vivid memories of this distressing case. Two stand out in particular. I had a full set of crime scene photographs that visually ‘walked me’ through the offence. After this set of horrific images, the photoset then panned back out of the area where Rachel Nickell was murdered until the final photograph of the sequence.

Oddly, this final photograph is the one that is etched on my memory. It is an eerie aerial shot of the Windmill car park on the edge of the Common. And in the shadow of the impressive looking windmill that overlooks the car park, was a single vehicle, which, of course, was Rachel’s. I remember a feeling of acute sadness at this everyday image. It took on a sudden look of isolation – a single car in the shadow of the impotent sentinel that was the windmill. I remember thinking that Rachel and Alex left that car imagining they would come back to it after a nice walk in the park. I remember

thinking how tragic it was that this completely normal event would end in such unimaginable horror and devastation.

The second memory that stands out is my undiluted shock at the blatant efforts of the police to manipulate Stagg into confessing to Rachel's murder. Lizzie James had effectively offered him sexual intimacy and romance in exchange for a confession. Stagg desperately craved such attention from a woman. He was a socially naïve man who didn't smoke, drink or take drugs, and had no record of violence. Lizzie was a beautiful blonde woman, seemingly interested in a relationship with him. It is not difficult to imagine his motives for responding to her attention.

My analysis showed that many of the supposedly incriminating things that Stagg had said (about making women feel physically and psychologically humiliated) were in fact shaped and influenced by the undercover officer. He was persuaded to say such things on the promise of sex (which, of course, was never forthcoming). Lizzie persisted in saying that humiliation and feeling defenceless were what turned her on, and Stagg would do his best to concoct some sort of story to satisfy her desires, which was often more wet lettuce than torrid fantasy. The undercover operation became increasingly absurd in its desperation to seduce Stagg into a confession. During one meeting, as Stagg continually refused to say he'd killed Rachel, Lizzie actually said to him, 'It would be brilliant if you had killed her ... if only you were that man.' His response was, 'I'm sorry Lizzie, but I'm just not, sorry.' Throughout all of their interactions, Stagg never confessed to the murder.

My psychological assessment of these interactions contributed to the case being eventually thrown out of court by Lord Chief Justice Ognall. Ognall accused the police and Paul Britton of 'excessive zeal' and 'deceptive conduct of the grossest kind'. The media, the public, and even Rachel Nickell's family, felt betrayed. They firmly believed that a sex killer, an animal, a deviant predator had been set free to kill again. They believed, as the police had told them, that Stagg was the only man who could have killed their beautiful daughter. Except he wasn't.

They had the wrong man – and 17 years later, due to advances in forensic science, Robert Napper was finally identified as the killer. The evidence suggests that Napper may well have committed over 100 rapes, known as the 'Green Chain' rapes, as well as murdering Rachel. In many of these offences, he would specifically target young mothers with children. He

appeared to enjoy the additional distress and the control he had over the mother due to her fear for her child.

After he murdered Rachel Nickell in front of her son, he went on to kill another young mother and her child – Samantha Bisset and her four-year-old daughter, Jazmine, who were savagely murdered just over a year later. It was a murder scene so horrific it would rival the worst of Jack the Ripper's.

The investigation team's decision to build a honeytrap based on coercion, manipulation and deceit had put an innocent man in jail on remand for 14 months, cost the public over £3 million and, most tragic of all, allowed a monster to continue to rape and kill, resulting in the death of another mother and child. Lizzie James had sought to connect with Stagg through deceit and trickery. It was a sham. It was based on tactics to cajole, pressure and induce Stagg into a confession. A weaker, more vulnerable individual may have fallen for it and falsely confessed, and then spent the next 17 years in prison waiting for forensic science to advance enough to finally free him.

When we seek to influence others or manipulate them by false promises, pressure and deceit, we might be able to trick them into doing or saying what we want. But because it is a trick, when it is exposed to scrutiny, it crumbles. The interaction is corrupt, and it cannot be sustained in the long term.

When you build rapport with someone, it is not a trick. Rapport is a meaningful connection based on honesty and empathy. People may tell you the honest truth about who they are and what they've done, even if it is horrific, but they will not feel compelled to lie or make things up. If they decide to tell you something, it will be because they have chosen to, not because you've tricked them into saying it.

Working on the Stagg case had a significant influence on me and the way I viewed communication throughout the rest of my career. It also demonstrated the clear harsh reality that the way we use words can have powerful consequences.

Emily: When I was studying Behavioural Science and Criminal Justice at the University of Madison-Wisconsin, I was fortunate enough to go on a ride-along with community police officer Mary Anne Thurber. Thurber was a ground-breaking officer, among the first of a large class of women to be hired in 1979. Just prior to her retirement, she said in an interview with the

local paper that her philosophy to policing was that 'kindness is the universal language'.

In fact, it was this lesson that I absorbed from her in graphic and shocking detail during our short interaction in 1993. Officer Thurber picked me up on a crisp sunny autumn day in her squad car. I was 19 and nervous. She was a tiny dynamo of energy – all smiles and sparkly eyes under a mass of messy dark hair. She handed me a bulletproof vest from the back of the car saying, 'Pop that on, just in case' and winked at me.

'What have I got myself into?' I thought, taking a deep breath.

During our ride, a call came through from the local homeless shelter. A woman who worked at the shelter was being threatened by her ex-boyfriend, who was drunk and shouting abuse at the door. Staff and the homeless people at the shelter had barricaded themselves in the building, locking all the doors and pulling down the metal shutters. The man was threatening to kill the woman or to 'burn the goddamn place to the ground' if she didn't come out. She was understandably terrified, as were the rest of the people inside. The last thing the operator said as she gave us the call over the radio was, 'They said he's a big guy Mary Anne, like really big ...'

'Hmmm,' Mary Anne said. 'You'll just stay in the car if it looks dangerous. Don't worry.' I looked at her wide-eyed as she tried to reassure me. We pulled into the car park and, sure enough, there was a great big grizzly bear of a man, banging and kicking the metal shutter. He looked wild, drunk and absolutely terrifying.

Mary Anne looked at me and said, 'When we park, get out but don't come around the car – stay the other side and don't move unless I say, OK?' She was firm, confident and utterly calm. I assumed she wanted me out of the car in case she had to put him in it and I was 100 per cent fine with that decision.

'OK,' I said, trying to sound brave. As I got out, I could hear the man shouting,

'Come out here you cheating fucking whore! I'm going to stomp the life out of you! Open this motherfucking door or I'll burn the whole fucking place down!'

He was so drunk or intent on getting in the door – I'm not sure which – that he hadn't even noticed us pull up.

'Hey!' Mary Anne shouted to him. 'Stop that and come over here and talk to me.'

He turned to look at her with bloodshot eyes, glowering at her from under his sweat-covered brow.

‘What do you want bitch?’ he snarled back.

‘Hey,’ Mary Anne said, ‘don’t be nasty! Just come talk to me. What’s going on? What’s this all about?’

The man started swearing and shouting about how his girlfriend had left him and that she had promised they’d be together forever. He suddenly stopped as if he’d just realised Mary Anne was a police officer.

‘You don’t give a shit, you’re just going to arrest me anyway!’ he said, eyeballing her, like a wild bull about to charge.

Mary Anne was a totem of calm and reassurance. ‘If we have to do that, we’ll do that, but right now I just want you to explain what’s happening. What’s your name?’

‘Thomas,’ the man said, sharp and suspicious.

‘OK Thomas, you got anything on you I need to know about?’ Mary Anne asked calmly.

‘No,’ Thomas muttered.

‘OK, turn out your pockets for me OK?’

‘Yeah, yeah – I know the goddamn drill!’ he barked back at her, turning his jean pockets out like little white flags.

‘Just tell me what’s going on. What’s happening?’ Mary Anne said, reassuringly.

‘I just want to speak to her. She won’t come out, she won’t see me, she won’t answer her phone, man! Have you got any idea what that’s like?! Somebody who’s your whole fucking world and then they just freeze you out! Aw, you don’t understand ...’ Thomas slurred.

He was still very emotional, but now he was looking at Mary Anne like he might cry rather than try to kill her.

‘I get it – you feel upset and that made you pretty desperate, so you came down here to try to talk it out. Love makes people act a little crazy sometimes. But Thomas, when I pulled up you were threatening to kill her and burn the place down!’

‘Yeah, but that’s only ‘cause she wouldn’t come out!’ said Thomas, defensively like a child, as if this was an entirely reasonable response.

‘Were you drinking before you came down here?’ asked Mary Anne.

‘Yeah, you know, a little bit,’ he muttered.

They spoke for another 10 minutes or so, much of it too quiet for me to hear, but I watched as Thomas's demeanour started to change. He started to relax, leaning against the wall and seeking eye contact with Mary Anne. They moved away from the steps of the building and came over towards the car.

Mary Anne said to him, 'Now, Thomas, you know I've got to take you in. You can't kick off screaming and shouting the place down and not expect to come down to the station, OK?'

He paused, looking like he was thinking of bolting, but then said, 'Yeah, yeah, I know.'

At that point, another squad car pulled up and two male officers got out. I hadn't even noticed Mary Anne radio for them.

'Oh, here's the fucking muscle come to put the cuffs on me I suppose?' Thomas said, his anger rising again.

'Thomas,' Mary Anne said, 'look at you. You're six foot whatever and built like a brick shithouse so, yeah, I phoned for backup. But let's just stick to the plan OK? We're going to put cuffs on you, no big deal. You sure you haven't got anything on you? I don't want to find any surprises.'

Thomas shook his head no.

'OK, good, we're going to go down to the station and sort this all out, OK?' said Mary Anne reassuringly.

Thomas nodded back, begrudgingly.

This was amazing, I thought. This tiny pocket-sized female cop had tamed this huge drunken beast of a man. He was actually agreeing to be arrested! How had she done it? How could she have managed to convince him to cooperate?

One of the male officers went around the car to place the handcuffs on him. The officer bent Thomas over the boot of the car and was patting down his trousers. Thomas started goading him. It was trash talk, but *just talk*. This carried on, and on, and on.

Until, suddenly, with one quick motion the officer took Thomas's head and gave it a sharp bounce off the back of the car. Just one quick motion. Bam! And then all hell broke loose ...

Thomas started kicking and thrashing, trying to hit anyone near him. All three officers – including Mary Anne – jumped on him at once. All of them were soon a massive pile of arms and legs on the ground as they tried to get the huge drunken man back under control.

Finally, I could see from behind the car that the officers had secured Thomas with zip ties so that he was face down on the ground. The officers lifted him up and put him in the back of one of the cars. He was still swearing and spitting at them as they slammed the door shut.

Mary Anne walked back over to me, her hair a dishevelled mess and dirt on her face. ‘Well, that could have gone better,’ she sighed. ‘What an idiot ...’ I wasn’t sure if she was talking about the suspect or her fellow officer who had decided to bounce Thomas’s head off the boot like a squash ball. The statement seemed to fit both.

It was a disappointing end to the interaction, and I remember thinking, *despite the fact he was threatening his ex girlfriend I felt sorry for him.*

What stayed with me was the way Mary Anne had used calmness, patience and words – *just words* – to tame a violent, drunk and aggressive man who was much larger and more powerful than her. I remember thinking that she could have got him in our car, no problem, without any help from the male officers. She hadn’t really needed the backup. She was the most powerful one in that car park, and she was only five-foot-nothing. And she never raised her voice or her gun.

Even in this most challenging of situations, she had managed to build a connection and by patiently developing that rapport she had created a powerful tool for getting Thomas to comply, something far more effective than just meeting his aggression with force: the power of words.

Rapport-based relationships are based on building a genuine interest in the other person, being aware of their thoughts, feelings and core values. The listener is interested in the agenda of the other person, even if they are still holding the reins of the interaction.

Mary Anne had patiently drawn out of Thomas the story behind his behaviour and that built trust and respect between them. There was no threat, no coercion, no deceit in her communication with Thomas. She never indicated in any way that he wouldn’t be arrested. He knew she intended to arrest him because she told him she was going to.

She ignored Thomas’s negative behaviour and gradually drew him over to her position of cooperation. And it had almost worked.

You might be thinking, ‘Why bother with all that though?’ Thomas was threatening people and being aggressive. Why didn’t Mary Anne just pull her gun and tell him to get face down on the ground? I think in the current climate, in particular in America, this would have been a much more

common response. And then what? What if he refused? What next? Shoot him? Would that have been a better outcome for everyone?

Don't misunderstand – I have no doubt that if he had made any clear threatening move, Mary Anne would have drawn her weapon and if she had to shoot him, she would have. But, for her, it would have been a last resort, not her 'go-to' strategy.^{fn1} Instead, she was prepared to use her interpersonal skills to try to de-escalate the situation with Thomas first, even if he was six-foot-four, steaming drunk and crashing about like a bear with a sore head.

These stories illustrate how words can be used in extremely powerful ways to pressure and coerce or to calm and communicate. In learning how to wield rapport successfully, it is critical to know the difference between the two.

POWERS OF INFLUENCE: RAPPORT VS. FORCE

There is a natural drive within us that tempts us to use force to get others to do what we want. Instinctively, it seems like it should work. On a primitive level, it does, in particular when the other party is clearly unable to stop us or to use force back towards us. For instance, consider this extremely common situation for parents: how many of you have found yourselves having to do up the straps of a car seat or pram as your child arches their back and wriggles like a ferret to escape? As frustrating as it is, we know that eventually they will tire and we will win.

Force, like coercion, deception and manipulation, has a high cost over time. It breeds fear, resentment and contempt, and, while it doesn't seem to matter when you're struggling to get your two-year-old in the car, these things often will surface in the long run if we don't eventually learn to expand our repertoire of skills.

It requires great self-control, emotional resilience and patience to seek compliance by agreement. Imagine the levels of patience required to empathise with your toddler, acknowledge how hard life is when you don't want to leave and still convince them that getting in the car seat is the right choice?

It is not an easy skill and it is one based on mindful effort rather than just operating on instinct. Many parents may be thinking, 'You're having a laugh! Who has time for that?' But if you want to have a battle every time

you get in the car, use force. It will work ... until they get bigger. If you want to have it once or twice, and then never again, use rapport. Such approaches require a shift in mindset from 'survival of the fittest' to 'survival of the most patient'.

SIT DOWN AND SHUT UP

Emily: I remember a lad, Alex, who we were working with on an anti-violence treatment programme for young people. He was a lanky lad, at that awkward teenage stage where boys tend to look like baby giraffes – all knobby knees and gangly limbs. He had a mop of unruly sandy brown hair and often at least part of his uniform was untucked or missing. What I remember most though are his eyes. There was a deadness behind them, a cold flinty look that was far beyond his tender years.

His mother had taken him to live abroad when he was nine and he had been forced to beg in the street to fund her drug use. As you can imagine, this produced a variety of horrific and traumatising experiences for Alex. After their mother was arrested, he was returned to the UK and placed into foster care. He was 13 when we started working with him. Alex really liked coming to the programme. It was early days and he didn't say much during the sessions, but his eyes would follow you intently as you moved around the room.

One of the rules the teachers had was that the children couldn't leave class for group until everyone was sitting quietly in their chairs. Many of them had ADHD so this was quite a challenge and the messing about drove Alex crazy. So, on the fourth week, he went around to each of the other boys and said, 'You're going to sit still in your fucking chair when it's time to go to group or I'm going to break your fucking arm, understand?'

When we discussed with him that this might not be the best way to motivate his peers to sit still so he could get to his *anti-violence* group on time, his response was, 'Yeah, but they all sat still!'

Due to his early traumatic experiences, life had taught Alex to look out for number one because no one else would. Violence

and intimidation was a completely reasonable and effective strategy to get people to do things. He struggled to recognise the importance of friendship or why it might be a problem that everyone was afraid of him. For him, it was working just fine. But on the horizon, we could see that if Alex carried this philosophy of ‘do what I say, or else’ into his adult relationships it would likely lead to frustration, violence, and most probably prison.

Fear cannot be the foundation of a healthy relationship with anyone – not your classmates, not your employees, not your partner and certainly not your children. What’s worse is that once fear is introduced into a relationship, you cannot ever fully remove it. Like a spot of rust, it can spread and corrode the structure of your relationships from within.

Many people are seduced into thinking that the quickest, most effective way to get what they want from someone is to shout and bully them into submission, to demand things, bang on the desk or threaten punishment. We certainly see this narrative played out over and over again in TV dramas – hang somebody over a building and they’ll tell you anything.

In the real world, many of us have been on the receiving end of such supposedly motivational pressures, whether at school, home or in the workplace; being threatened, intimidated or made to fear the consequences if we do not comply, obey or appease someone more powerful. Have you ever had a boss who felt the best way to motivate you to do your job was to make you scared that you might lose it?

Perhaps we’ve even used such tactics ourselves, to try to get our sullen teenager out of bed in the morning (‘Get ready RIGHT NOW or I’m pouring a bucket of cold water over you!’) or to motivate a member of staff to be more productive or get to work on time (‘One more late arrival and I’m going to have to put you on performance measures’) or to get our partner to help around the house (huffing and sighing while passive-aggressively banging pots around the kitchen).

Think back – if such strategies have ever been used on you, how did they make you feel? Encouraged and motivated? Or annoyed and fearful?

How did you respond? Did you comply? Did you resent it?

If you’ve ever used them on other people, did they work? Did they improve your relationship with the other person or make it worse?

And, most importantly, did they fix the behaviour you were trying to control in the long term or just in that moment?

Numerous studies have shown that such tactics are ultimately ineffective. Even if they do gain initial compliance, they produce the very worst outcomes in the long run.² People often respond to such tactics with ‘malicious compliance’ or ‘workplace deviance’ – they will appear cooperative on the surface but go on to engage in behaviour that undermines or corrodes the authority of the person trying to control them. In the workplace, this might take the form of unnecessary sick days, lowered productivity, malicious gossip, bad-mouthing the company, or even workplace theft. In the case of your teenager, it may take the form of souring your relationship, them pushing the boundaries whenever possible, or working harder at not getting caught rather than obeying the rules. In the case of your partner, they may help you tidy up the kitchen but then give you the silent treatment for the rest of the night.

The point is, such tactics erode long-term loyalty and cooperation between you and the other person. The ‘target’ of the manipulation soon turns their efforts towards finding ways to undermine your control rather than cooperate and work together. In the long run, these types of tactics are not only harmful to relationships, they are ineffective. Their illusion of giving us control over others is actually a false promise.

Alternatively, taking a rapport-based approach means never seeking to escalate conflict. This does not mean you cannot be assertive or that you can’t disagree with someone. What it means is that you do not use aggression, threats or intimidation to gain compliance. Such strategies are about manipulation, domination and force. They send the message: ‘You will do what I say, and I don’t care how you feel about it. If you don’t comply, you’ll wish you had.’

But to achieve agreement rather than resentful compliance, you must be prepared to put in the patient, calm understanding that is required and the extra time it may take to reach your goal. If you can tough it out and stay calm, whether it’s negotiating with an employee, your child or your partner, eventually there will be agreement. By the end, you will not just be left with resentful or fearful compliance, but you will have built a solid foundation of cooperation.

We are reminded of one of our trainee participants who told us that her pet peeve was her teenage children never bringing the wheelie bin back up

their very long drive. Time and time again, when they got home they would just walk past it up to the house. So after dinner one night, she smugly said to her 15-year-old, ‘Could you please take the rubbish out Charlie?’, knowing he would discover that he had left the bin all the way at the end of the drive. So Charlie helpfully took the rubbish out – he walked it all the way to the end of the drive and put it in the bin, and then he walked back. Leaving the bin at the end of the drive.

The moral of the story is: if you want something, ask for it – be polite, respectful and patient, but also be direct. Don’t expect people to mind-read, don’t be sarcastic, don’t be intimidating – just ask.

LESSONS

1. ***Be wary of trickery and deceit.*** Do not be seduced into using trickery or deception to get your way. It may seem like a legitimate strategy. However, as we will see in the next chapter, honesty is one of the core values that underpins rapport and healthy communication. If you sacrifice this principle, you corrupt the integrity of the relationship and people’s ability to trust you. Often whatever you gain in the short term, will not be worth the price it costs you in the long run.
2. ***Do not ever be a bully.*** Do not be tempted to gain compliance by the use of threat or force. Taking a rapport-based approach means seeking cooperation by agreement. It can feel like the long way round to solving a problem – it can seem quicker and easier to simply shout or intimidate to get the job done – but no one respects a bully; they only fear them. Don’t sacrifice your moral compass in an effort to get your own way.

CHAPTER 3

THE CORNERSTONES OF RAPPORT

Its not the hearing that improves life but the listening
– **Mihaly Csikzentmihaly**

Often, communication skills are thought of as mastering the art of saying the right thing, at the right time and in the right way. However, the real key to communication lies in what you do before you even open your mouth. Careful listening, not smooth talking, is actually the key to building solid rapport with others.

Rapport should be built on four core foundations:

1. **Honesty**: be objective and direct when communicating your intentions or feelings.
2. **Empathy**: understand someone based on recognition of their core beliefs and values.
3. **Autonomy**: emphasise other people's free will and right to choose whether to cooperate.
4. **Reflection**: identify and repeat back those elements that are significant, meaningful and tactical to help guide a conversation towards the goal.

We have found the core principles of honesty, empathy, autonomy and reflection (HEAR) to be the core tenets of how to maintain engagement with other people in a positive and productive way, regardless of how adversarial or awkward the situation.

We would recommend you choose two 'touchstone' relationships in your life as you consider the examples we present: one that is strong and

positive, and one that has broken down or gone wrong. Try to recognise where you already use the HEAR principles in the positive relationship and where they are possibly missing in the relationship that is struggling.

RAPPORT: WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?

We spoke in the Introduction about the significance of rapport in getting information from people. But what if the person you're dealing with is not someone you need information from? In fact, what if they aren't even someone important to you? It could be the pedantic bureaucratic clerk at the passport office who spots a torn page in your passport and decides to give you a hard time. It could even be the person who takes your parking space out from under you at the supermarket. Does rapport really matter in these situations? We would argue that it does. Shouldn't we be allowed to take the interpersonal gloves off and just let someone like this have a taste of how we really feel? We would counter this with the question, 'Will it help you get the result you want?' In other words, is it in line with your goal?

Firstly, when dealing with an interaction, we should ask ourselves: 'What is the goal?' Even when others are being unreasonable or awkward, how you choose to respond may help you leave the situation with the outcome that you want, or at least not make the situation any worse.

The second reason the HEAR principles matter are because, even in brief interactions with people you neither care for nor respect, you should remain firmly on the communication high ground. If I want my passport stamped, I may have to restrain my desire to argue with the clerk who can decide whether that happens. If I had my parking space taken out from under me, I need to decide if I want to spoil the rest of my day by having a shouting match in a car park with a random, obnoxious stranger or just let it go. Adhering to these principles lets you leave interactions with your confidence, integrity and moral compass intact, even if the person you are dealing with happens to be an arse!

We grapple with this with our interviewers sometimes, often when they are interviewing some particularly reprehensible people such as rapists, racists, paedophiles and murderers. Why bother treating such a person with honesty, empathy, autonomy and reflection? Surely they don't deserve the effort!

The answer is because treating someone with deception, judgement, coercion and dismissiveness reduces us, not them. Like in the story with Officer Thurber in the previous chapter, someone watching your interaction should not come away feeling sorry for the bad guy because you've behaved like a bully or a brute. We need to be better than succumbing to tit-for-tat reflex responses, especially when dealing with someone awkward or difficult. And if we come away from the interaction with the outcome we wanted, then who has *really* come out on top?

It is never worth sacrificing the interpersonal high ground, especially to someone not worth the sacrifice. Therefore, no matter how the other person is behaving, always try to stick to the HEAR principles. They are the steady platform on which all other rapport strategies are built.

MANAGING AWKWARD CONVERSATIONS

So, what does a HEAR approach to communication look like? To warm us up, consider the following example. Imagine that your dad is in his mid-seventies. He has always been extremely independent, physically fit and prides himself on being a capable, practical man. Recently, however, doctors suspect the onset of macular degeneration and his eyesight is starting to be affected. You are worried about his driving and that he might have an accident and be hurt or hurt someone else. Yet, you also know how much of a blow it would be to his independence if he could no longer drive. You can barely bring yourself to think about what the conversation will look like where you have to suggest to him that he stops driving. However, you also know in your heart that you cannot avoid it forever.

Imagine for a moment how you think the conversation will go. How will he react? Does the idea of initiating the conversation fill you with dread? If it does, you might find it very hard to just come out and say what you want to say. You might end up being hesitant or a bit opaque. You might try to drop hints about seeing a news article on testing eyesight in elderly drivers. Or you might ask him, 'How's driving going for you at the moment, Dad?'

Hmmm, what is his likely reaction to these comments? Confusion, suspicion, annoyance? Will he spot what you are trying to say and get angry? But don't you need him to understand what you are trying to say anyway? How else will you get around to discussing it? But if you try to come at it in a way that is sly or indirect, when he does finally figure out the

point of your question, odds are he will be doubly annoyed. Firstly he will be annoyed at the suggestion, and secondly that you were so vague and unclear about it. And isn't his annoyance exactly what you are trying to avoid?

To improve those odds, let's try to construct the conversation using the HEAR principles. Firstly, we must be **honest** and direct – no hedging or trying to hint that there is an issue. We need to be clear and upfront about what our concern is. Take a deep breath and get to the point.

We also need to show some **empathy**. Acknowledge that this is going to be a difficult conversation. You know him well enough to reasonably predict his reaction, so show some understanding of that. Acknowledge that he might feel defensive and angry at you for even bringing it up. When and if he is, be prepared for it – not offended by it.

This might look something like this:

You: Dad, I need to speak to you about something and I don't think it's going to be an easy conversation (*empathy*). I need to talk to you about your eyesight and how it might be affecting your driving (*honesty*).

Dad: (*Without even looking up.*) My eyesight's fine and so is my driving. There's no issue.

You: OK, but my concern is the macular degeneration. The doctor has said that it is progressing and starting to affect your central line of sight (*honesty*). I know how important driving is to you (*empathy*) and I think both of us would do anything to just make this go away (*empathy*), but I worry as it gets worse you could be at risk of an accident and you might get hurt or hurt somebody else (*honesty*).

Dad: (*Looking up angrily, clearly irritated.*) So you're going to try to take my licence away from me? After driving for more years than you've been breathing without ever having an accident my own child is going to try to get me banned?!

Hmmm ... he *is* angry and defensive, but you probably predicted that. Now this is the important bit: what is your instinctive response to his anger and defensiveness? Is it to say, 'Dad, that's not fair I'm only trying to help' or

‘Dad, I’m not trying to get you banned – don’t be dramatic! Why can’t you just listen to what I’m saying?’

Now who’s being angry and defensive? Don’t let his reaction pull you into his style of communication. You knew it was coming, didn’t you? So, hold your interpersonal ground and stick to the HEAR principles: respect his **autonomy** to the maximum extent possible. This means trying to support *him* to make the choice to stop driving – don’t make it for him (unless there is simply no alternative due to the risk). Lastly, listen very carefully to what he says to you about the situation and **reflect** it back to show you are listening and that you understand. Be more tactical with how you respond, rather than just reacting back to him.

You: Dad, I can see you’re angry at me for bringing it up and it sounds like you feel as if I’m attacking you (*reflection*).

Dad: I know you’re not attacking me, but you *are* worrying over nothing.

You: I really hope so Dad. You’re right, you’ve never had an accident in all these years – you’re a superb driver (*reflection*), but there’s also no way round the fact that your eyesight is going to keep getting worse (*honesty*). At the end of the day, you’re the only one who can know if it is affecting you yet. I really want it to be your decision when you stop, not anyone else’s (*autonomy*).

Dad: I know. (*Sigh.*)

You: I just want us to be able to talk about it when it starts to become a problem (*honesty*). None of this is your fault (*empathy*), but the idea of you having an accident scares the life out of me (*honesty*).

Dad: I know, I don’t want that to happen either. Honestly, it really is not a problem right now. I promise I’ll keep an eye on it – ha! See what I did there? (*Dad joke.*) Seriously, I will tell you if I think it is getting worse or causing problems. I wouldn’t carry on driving if I thought it was going to get somebody hurt.

Throughout, you have tried to stick to the issue and not react to your dad’s defensiveness or anger. You do not want an argument and you are not

bringing it up to be cruel. By reinforcing your honest motivation, the honest situation and showing understanding, you will hopefully have opened an important door to communication on this issue and will have built a pathway for future discussions. You have also built a commitment with him that he will monitor the situation himself and speak to you when it becomes an issue. He has also made a clear commitment to stop driving if it becomes dangerous or risky – a sort of behavioural contract between the two of you.

Now you need to be patient and respect his commitment. He might come back to you in a month, a week, or later on that afternoon after digesting what you have discussed and say that he thinks it might be time to stop driving. The important thing is, you have built the rapport bridge on solid ground and it can develop from there.

Constructing a conversation in this way may feel quite awkward at first. You have to remain focused on the goal and think carefully about how you use your words. This is not always easy. It can make it feel like you are endlessly hitting the pause button on your instinctive responses. But the more you practise and embed these principles into how you communicate, the more natural and effortless they will become.

The first step to achieving this is understanding each of the HEAR principles a bit better.

HONESTY

I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than to private affairs, that honesty is always the best policy.

– **George Washington, farewell address**

‘Be honest with people’ sounds like simple, straightforward advice. However, it can be very easy to overstep that honesty into delivering a message that is actually too blunt or laden with emotion to be received productively by the other person.

Emily: I can recall returning to the US for a visit with family several years ago to discover that my mum’s mobility had drastically reduced due to a particularly progressive form of arthritis in her knees and hip. I had known she was struggling but I had no idea just how much. She was still trying to get by as

normally as she could, refusing to use a cane and not even contemplating the idea of a wheelchair. I remember, one night, finding her at the top of the stairs on her way to bed, sobbing in complete agony.

She said, 'It's fine, sweetheart, it will pass in a minute. It's like this every night.'

The next morning over breakfast, I said to her, 'Mum, you are disabled.'

She looked at me as if I'd slapped her.

I said, 'You need a wheelchair, the blue badge – all of it. You cannot carry on the way you have been – it's ridiculous. Whatever changes in the future, you need to accept that you are currently disabled.'

She was clearly shocked by what I'd said and also very angry with me.

'I'm not disabled! Don't exaggerate!' she said defensively.

'Mum, you can't walk 50 yards or go up a flight of stairs without being in complete agony. You are disabled – you need to just accept it,' I retorted.

We carried on arguing back and forth for several minutes, when she finally said tearfully, 'Why are you being so horrible to me over something I'm struggling with so much?'

'Because I love you, and I can't bear to watch you suffer every day, that's why,' I replied, through my own tears.

I had been too blunt and now both of us were an emotional mess. Was what I said true? Yes. Was it motivated by love? Yes. But it was too blunt and, therefore, too brutal to digest.

There is a Chinese proverb: Do not use a hatchet to remove a fly from your friend's forehead. It basically means: only use the amount of force necessary to the task or you may make the situation worse. You mustn't waffle around the truth, but it is also unwise to smack people in the face with honesty like a wet trout – especially the people you love.

The skill in rapport-building is to deliver the right degree of honesty with the right amount of sensitivity required to achieve the goal.

There are three ways to bring honesty to your interactions in a way that maintains rapport:

1. Avoid using deceit or trickery.
2. Be clear, objective and direct.
3. Keep calm – leave your emotions at the door.

FOOL ME ONCE

The account of Colin Stagg discussed in the previous chapter illustrates that using deceit or coercion to trick people into doing what we want, a) often doesn't work, and b) if it does, it probably shouldn't. Being dishonest to try to influence people is a short-term risk-filled strategy that often doesn't hold up over time or under scrutiny. It often works only up until the person finds out that they have been duped.

Chris Mackey and Greg Miller in their book, *The Interrogators*, discuss how a theatrical deception was used in Afghanistan to try to trick prisoners into providing information.¹ They had an American soldier pretend to be an Arab colonel in order to give detainees the impression they were going to be shipped to the Gulf States 'whose reputation for cruelty and torture was a source of fear across the Arab world'. The desired implication is clear: the interrogators wanted to generate fear of death or torture in their prisoners in the hope that it would get them to talk. And talk they did, but how useful or reliable the information this generated was a matter of much debate. Ultimately, the information obtained by this elaborate ruse was determined to have no immediate tactical value. Even Mackey and Miller acknowledge that as the prisoners stepped off the transport planes at Guantanamo and realised they were not in the Gulf States after all, the deception would be revealed and it would make the next interrogator's job that much harder, for very little real gain.

Police interviews should not be based on manipulation, deception and coercion and neither, of course, should relationships with those close to us. Short-term deceit and craftiness can erode longer term trust and loyalty that many relationships rely on.

Imagine if you had tried to use deception or trickery to get your dad to stop driving? Imagine if you had drawn up a letter from the doctor instructing him to stop and hand over his licence? He might have given it up based on such a ruse. However, once he discovered the lie, it would very likely shatter your whole relationship and he would never trust you (or the doctor!) again.

QUID PRO QUO

Another powerful tactic of persuasion is reciprocity. Reciprocity is a type of bargaining that relies on offering someone something in the hope that they will feel compelled to return the favour. It has the proven psychological effect of encouraging people to feel more favourably towards you.² For example, studies have found that when diners are offered mints by their server after a meal, they tend to tip more generously, especially if they feel the mints have been given as a gesture of warmth by the server rather than just as a matter of course.³

However, in the area in which we work, such clunky efforts at social persuasion are little more than a superficial parlour trick. If as an interrogator I offer you a cup of tea, you may feel a bit more warmly towards me. Perhaps if you were able to, you might offer me a mint or a piece of gum in return. You might even hold the door open for me when we leave the room. But would you tell me about your uncle's secret meetings with the Taliban? Doubtful.

So, in such situations there is the dilemma of proportionality. I must offer you something compelling enough that you would consider a trade. What might that be? Your freedom? Extracting your child from a conflict area? Promising to send a letter to your wife before you are extradited? Promising not to send you to a country known for torturing its prisoners?

These things might be worth enough to convince you to tell me something of value. You might even be prepared to turn on your uncle in return for these favours. But what if I cannot actually achieve them? I promise them to you, but I have no intention of delivering on that promise. Many people may think, 'So what, who cares? If it gets them to talk, who cares if it's a lie? A promise to a terrorist is not something that has to be honoured.'

However, the problem with this is that when you fail to deliver on your promises – even to someone who you consider unworthy of a promise – you are a liar. You are a liar in their eyes and in the eyes of everyone else they manage to tell. You have proved your dishonesty, so next time you attempt this trick, you will need to hope that the next person does not know you have previous form as a liar and deceiver.

Consider the reputational damage caused to Wells Fargo bank by the fake accounts scandal in which the organisation was regularly engaged in the creation of fraudulent chequing and savings accounts. A banking institution

that had existed since 1852 and had weathered the Great Depression relatively unscathed was brought to its knees by these deceptive actions. Wells Fargo is unlikely to ever be known for anything else, so widespread was the reputational damage. Do you, and indeed your entire organisation, want to gain the reputation of being liars and tricksters? How damaging is such a reputation to your longer-term goals?

In his book, James Mitchell (a psychologist and former member of the US Air Force and described as the ‘architect of the enhanced interrogation techniques’ used post-9/11) describes the use of waterboarding on prisoners to ‘soften them up’ for interrogation.⁴ Interrogators would often say to detainees, ‘You can stop this. Just tell us what we want to know and you don’t have to go through it again.’ The suspect would then sometimes reveal an item of information, often something already known to the interrogators. But because they’d given something, the interrogators would assume they had more to give and so they would break their ‘promise’ and waterboard the detainee again. The lesson the detainee quickly learned was: ‘It doesn’t matter whether you talk or not, we’re just going to keep doing this to you over and over, whether you lie/whether you tell the truth – it will continue. There is no escape – you must just endure.’ Resolve hardened and hatred grew.

For a trick to be so costly, it should at least work. Certainly in the case of Wells Fargo it actually made the bank very little profit and was principally driven by staffs’ desperate attempts to meet ever-increasing and impossible targets set by management. Instead the actions resulted in huge fines, financial penalties, thousands of staff losing their jobs, and unprecedented reputational damage. If we return to the interrogation arena, where the goal of enhanced interrogation techniques was allegedly to secure information, there has been no profit^{fn1} in terms of actionable intelligence gained by the use of EITs, but instead a senate enquiry and reputational damage to both the intelligence and psychological communities.

A suspected Al-Qaeda terrorist was waterboarded 83 times by the CIA, as well as being subjected to numerous other torture techniques including forced nudity, sleep deprivation, confinement in small boxes, stress positions and physical assault.⁵ One has to wonder: at what point would you start to think such a technique was not working? The fiftieth time?

The one-hundredth? And if it wasn’t about whether it was working or not, then one must ask: what was it about?

So, are we saying you can never strike a deal or barter to gain compliance? Are we removing bribery or, heaven forbid, Father Christmas, from the parenting repertoire? Absolutely not. But in order to use any form of bargaining that will not damage rapport, you must promise only what is within your ability to deliver and if you do promise something, you must follow it through. Do not try to use tricks or bluffs to influence people who you ultimately want to develop loyalty and connection with – whether that is your customers, your partner, your parents or your children. No one trusts a trickster.

NOT TOO SOFT, NOT TOO HARSH

Our advice is to be as direct and honest as possible whenever possible. But there is a balance – we do not want to be avoidant or hesitant but we also do not want to be too blunt. When we say be honest, we are not talking about brutal honesty that stings, but a genuineness and directness that gives a clear message.

Conflict avoidance is a frequent hurdle to communication. In the age of texting and email, how often have you been tempted to use an indirect method to try to deliver a tough message? Often, we either try to avoid the conversation entirely, waffle our way around the real issue or try to drop the message indirectly, such is our compulsion to avoid direct challenge or conflict. This kind of avoidant communication often makes the situation worse rather than resolving it.

For instance, imagine a work colleague, Keith, regularly discusses project ideas with you and then in meetings presents them as if they have come entirely from him. What might you feel like doing or saying to him?

At the very least, you might feel like confronting him about it. However, the drama and gossip this would cause might feel too high a price to pay. So instead you might take a passive approach and spread the message that Keith is a magpie around the office and give him the cold shoulder in the tea room. This may carry on for months, creating negative swells of emotion every time you see Keith and making work a very unpleasant experience.

The actual issue of his behaviour and receiving credit for your work has also not been addressed.

Finally, it might end in a big showdown, involving pointing, name-calling and flinging Keith's knick-knacks off his desk. Too direct.

Or you may never deal with it and just silently seethe, letting it affect your confidence and mood every day until you decide to change jobs to escape having to be around Keith. Too soft.

So why not just be honest and direct? It is entirely acceptable for you to say to Keith that when he discusses your work, he needs to properly acknowledge you.

Why is this so hard to do? Surely it is better to deal with the actual issue upfront rather than avoid the conflict but have all the negative consequences anyway. Often we worry that if we challenge someone directly, we will become emotional and overwhelmed and it will turn into a very awkward, uncomfortable scene of conflict. So, instead, we just keep quiet and often it eats us up inside until we explode or abandon the situation.

How could we then deliver this message with just the right balance of directness to achieve our goal? Luckily, in this situation we have the luxury of time. We do not have to respond immediately so we can put a bit more thought into our response.

Firstly, we need to decide what we want the outcome of the conversation to be: do we want an apology, a public acknowledgement of our input or an agreement by Keith that it won't happen again?

Once we decide the goal, then we need to prepare what we want to say. Once we think we've got the message right, we need to practise it in the mirror, the toilet or, even better, to another trusted person to make sure the message is what we want it to be and to help us practise keeping the lid on our emotions while delivering it. This sounds like a lot of drama for one short conversation, but if you use this method whenever you have the luxury of time, you will find it easier to compose yourself when you don't.

Your final delivery might look something like this:

You: Keith, I need to speak to you about a situation that has been bothering me for a few days now. When we met about the Anderson contract on Monday, I offered some really solid ideas and suggestions to move it forward.

Keith: Yes, I know, thanks for that.

You: But when you presented the strategy to the team, you presented it as entirely your idea and I'm really not happy with that.
(*Three deep breaths.*)

- Keith: (A bit shocked.) Well, I don't know if that's really true! I know we spoke about it on Monday, but I'm the one who wrote everything up. Anyway, you know I'm trying for promotion. Does it really matter?' You: (*Ignore Keith's defensiveness and dismissiveness.*) I realise you wrote up the document and I'm definitely not trying to take away from your input, but I'd like you to acknowledge my input to the rest of the team. It does really matter to me.
- Keith: Well I'm sorry if you feel I've misrepresented things. I think it's a bit dramatic, but I can certainly make sure people know the ideas were a joint effort between us. I don't like people thinking I've been unfair.
- You: Thanks Keith, I appreciate that a lot.

Often honesty requires restraint. To stay focused you need to know what it is that you really want to achieve – what is the goal? In this case, it is to get Keith to acknowledge your input to the rest of the team. It is not to turn everyone in the office against him or to just launch a load of insults at him. You are after a solution after all, not petty revenge.

If you were the colleague who had taken credit for the work, what would you want your co-worker to do? Spread rumours around the office about you? Write you a passive-aggressive email? Or speak to you directly?

If I were Keith, I might not like what you have to say to me, but I would rather you said it to me directly. I would respect you more for it and it would be resolved.

For the person making the complaint, it seems so much easier to just ignore the issue or put it in an email. That way they don't have to manage their reaction and can avoid any sort of scene. But this kind of passive communication can breed undercurrents of distrust and resentment that direct communication often avoids.

We are gradually losing our ability to properly and artfully manage such conversations face to face, as technology gives us an easy way out and allows us to hide behind a screen. Texting is now the most common form of communication for the under-fifties in both the UK and the US.^{6, 7} However, texting can be perceived as passive or avoidant and may damage rapport much more than being upfront and direct, even if the message is bad news.

Conflict avoidance isn't just common in person-to-person relationships – it is a corporate issue on an even bigger scale. Much of our work currently is tackling what we call 'avoidant practice' within organisations. Avoidant practice is where, by design or circumstance, an organisation attempts to passively or indirectly deal with a situation rather than confront and resolve it directly. You only have to look at recent large-scale organisational scandals to see the problems that avoidant practice can cause. The *Guardian's* investigation into claims of sexual assault and harassment at UK universities uncovered serious problems with the universities' responses.⁸ In a six-month period, 160 claims were identified. Many of the victims reported that they had been discouraged from making a formal complaint or that no action had been taken. The Catholic Church's handling of child sex abuse allegations is another example of avoidant practice on a global scale.⁹

Allegations were often not fully investigated and offending individuals were moved to different locations and allowed to continue to serve as part of the church.

Another example of this is skilling up human resources officers to address bullying and harassment in the workplace firmly and directly rather than engaging in avoidant strategies. Often responses to workplace bullying result in offers of support or adjustments to placate the alleged victim or simply move the alleged bully to another department, where they carry on the same behaviour until someone else is brave enough to complain. You may have had your own experiences where bullies and aggressors are allowed to get away with such behaviour because no one seems to want to confront them directly.

If it is just about avoiding awkward, difficult conversations, I'm afraid those are just part of life in long trousers. We all have to have them at some point, so it is better to build up the confidence and skill required to carry them off well rather than continuously try to avoid them. The greatest gift you can give yourself is the ability to be direct in a balanced, constructive way.

Many of the conversations we regret are because of things we thought but failed to say at the time. We don't want to cause upset, so we hesitate and keep quiet, only to regret it later. Part of this is down to avoiding confrontation or conflict and part of it is not feeling confident to deliver what we want to say without it coming out as aggressive or demanding.

But when personal circumstances have pushed you past this barrier – when the situation has demanded a response – you have the ability to be direct, firm and confident. Challenging the nursing staff saved our son's life when he was in hospital as a baby. Sometimes, even when all the social norms tell you to stay quiet, but your brain is saying speak up, you need to find your voice.

Consider where your threshold is for being direct. Should you try to adjust it? Have you failed to address problems because you were avoiding confrontation, only to find that they have grown bigger? Gift yourself the power to use your voice and be assertive – not cruel, argumentative or spiteful, but direct. Try not to hedge away from what the real issue is: whether it is talking to your partner about not spending enough time together; your teenager about concerns they are drinking or smoking; or your parents about their deteriorating health and mobility. These are hard conversations, but by being upfront about what you want to discuss, you will help to build trust and set a clear agenda.

Be brave, be direct and, like ripping off a plaster, get it over and done with.

KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON

Controlling our emotional reactions can be a difficult, almost impossible, task, especially if the situation we are trying to deal with is very intense or personal. If our emotions take over the driver's seat, we can find ourselves just off-roading into the emotional wilderness and the communication could end up going anywhere or nowhere. Therefore, we need to maintain enough control over our emotions to be able to guide the communication in a productive, meaningful direction. This is easier said than done!

When someone has done something that makes you feel personally insulted or criticised, the natural reaction is to feel attacked and defensive. Even small slights can provoke a strong response. For instance, if your partner criticises how you fold the laundry, you might immediately feel put down and angry. You might criticise them back and the argument might escalate into being about your relationship as a whole. Another classic example is if someone criticises your driving. They might say, 'Careful! You're really close to that wall!' Our instinctive reaction is to be defensive and shout back, 'No I'm not, you don't know what you're talking about!', even as we scrape the side of the car down it. I'm reminded of my

grandparents who had a steadfast rule that all backseat driving comments were to be met with a polite, ‘Thank you very much for your advice, darling.’

It is hard to fight the natural instinct to defend ourselves against criticism, but it is unhelpful and unnecessary to allow your emotional brain to take the reins. If you do, you are immediately at the mercy of the other person’s response and you are going to react on autopilot rather than with a clear objective and strategy. It is natural but it is not clever to simply act with your emotional brain. It’s often not that good at providing calming alternative thoughts to us in moments of emotional overload.

Controlling our inner voice requires restraint and mindful practice to adjust its tempo and volume to help us stay calm. Consider the next time you are shocked, upset, offended, hurt or embarrassed by something someone says, and pause. If it is impacting on you and your happiness, do not let it slide, because they will almost certainly keep doing it. While acknowledging your true feelings, try to consider a more objective response. Think to yourself: ‘I wonder what this person is trying to achieve by talking to me like that. What are they actually trying to say to me?’

Try to distil the underlying message behind what they are saying. Once you think you understand what that message is, ask them. Say: ‘It seems like you are trying to make me feel guilty/hurt/embarrassed about my choice of diet/partner/ lifestyle because you want me to change it. Is that right?’ or ‘It seems like when I talk to you about anything personal – your job, the kids, your health – I feel like I’m annoying you. Do you feel uncomfortable talking to me about personal things?’ By being direct and honest about how other people’s behaviour is making you feel, you can keep a situation from escalating into a pattern that is hard to break or from being walked over or bullied by people who are not used to being stood up to over their bad behaviour. But be prepared for the answer you may get – remember to try to understand the other person’s point of view even if you don’t agree with them. By being more direct, you can avoid emotions seething under the surface and never being worked through or resolved in your relationships.

HONESTY LESSONS

1. Avoid being deceitful or dishonest to gain influence over others.

- The truth may hurt, but being deceitful, even if you think you are trying to protect someone or do what is best for them, breaches trust in a way that is difficult to restore or rebuild once broken. Be as honest as you can, whenever you can.
2. Be direct and clear with the message.
 - Try not to opt for passive forms of communication when you have an important statement to make – forms of communication such as email or text are easy to misinterpret or misread. Being able to deliver a difficult message upfront is a very rare skill which requires courage and sensitivity to execute well. Practise, practise, practise it until you feel more confident and comfortable with being direct.
 3. Control your emotions so the message can be heard.
 - This is the most difficult skill, especially in situations where emotions run high and are deeply felt. But honesty means reflecting reality as objectively as possible. Try not to cloud the message with high drama and emotion. This can be very challenging but try these tips to help you:
 - Slow your reaction down by counting to ten or overtly say you need a bit of time to think before you respond.
 - Try to distract your emotional brain (try doing this by pressing your thumb and index fingers together hard or giving yourself a calming word such as ‘serenity’ which you say three times to yourself before responding).
 - Lastly, when you do respond, make sure you stay focused on the goal: what is it about this issue that you want to resolve? Concentrate on resolving the issue rather than just offloading your emotion on to someone.

EMPATHY

If you can learn a simple trick, Scout, you'll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view, until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it.

– Atticus Finch in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Empathy, like rapport, is an oft-used word but one that is frequently misunderstood. Many people think of it as showing compassion or warmth towards another person, thereby confusing it with sympathy. Empathy, however, is about trying to genuinely understand what a person is thinking and feeling. It does not require softness or warmth, but it does require that you show an analytical interest in uncovering the other person's core beliefs and values. This is the key to understanding another person's behaviour, to getting 'inside their skin'.

Modelling empathy is critical to children fully developing their own empathic skills in adulthood. Babies as young as eight to ten months old have been found to show signs of empathic concern when someone is upset or distressed.^{[10](#)}

However, while empathy has been linked to both genetic and environmental factors, it is not a fixed trait. Empathic children are much more likely to become empathic adults, who treat others with respect and understanding, so it is important that adults who surround the child encourage and develop their capacity for empathy.^{[11](#)}

As with most things, once we are adults, it can be much more challenging to improve our ability to empathise with others. In fact, in our work training elite interrogators, empathy is the most difficult skill to improve from their baseline level. However, it is not impossible and simply requires motivation and determined effort to improve. In a recent study, 48 married couples participated in a programme to improve their empathy towards each other.^{[12](#)} Empathy measures improved over the six-month test period and those partners who were rated more positively on empathy were also more likely to report higher relationship satisfaction after six months.

STAGE 1: KNOW YOURSELF

Stage 1 empathy is being able to connect with and describe what you were thinking or feeling when something happened to *you* ('I felt scared', 'I thought "this isn't fair"', 'I felt worried you wouldn't like me any more').

However, we're sure there are people you can think of who struggle to master even this stage as adults. When asked why they did something, they struggle to find the words to describe the thoughts and feelings that underpin their actions. When you ask them what they felt about something they say, 'I don't know.' When you ask them what they were thinking at the time they say, 'I can't remember.' Being able to connect with our own

thoughts and feelings is important. Self-awareness is the very bedrock of interpersonal skills. If we are struggling to work ourselves out, we are likely to find it almost impossible to work out other people's thoughts and feelings.

Interpersonal skills, whether as an adult or a child, develop through conversation and interaction with others. In order to learn how to talk about our thoughts and feelings openly, we need others around us to show an interest in understanding us. As a result, talking through our experiences with others can help us to understand ourselves better. If this is an area you are struggling with, find someone you trust enough to be open and a bit vulnerable with and share your thoughts and feelings more openly with them. There is an intimacy to revealing your inner thoughts and emotions to someone.

It does not have to be something dramatic – in fact, it can be decidedly normal or even boring. Take a behaviour you engage in regularly but that annoys or frustrates you, for example, wasting food. Think back to the last time you had to chuck something unopened or untouched directly into the bin. What were your thoughts?

'Ughh, that's so annoying! We've just been so busy this week, I didn't have time to cook or even think about what was in the fridge. Why is it always me that has to remember the expiry date on everything? Forget it, I'm just going to buy everything frozen instead.' What feelings did you have at the time: guilt, frustration, irritation, resentment?

As we talk about this, you might explain that you feel guilty as you are trying very hard to model cutting down waste in an effort to support your teenager who has become very 'green conscious'. You might explain that you feel frustrated because money has recently become very tight and you are trying to keep on top of the grocery spend and avoid takeaways. These more detailed conversations are telling me about your values: you care about the planet, you want to show solidarity to your teenager, you are trying to be more frugal and avoid waste to save money. Any one of these could be expanded into a much more meaningful conversation than about the fact that you had to chuck out a cucumber.

This skill becomes even more relevant the more extreme the situation becomes. Can you apply it after a row with your partner? Rather than concentrating on what the other person did, spend a bit of time thinking about what you were thinking and feeling that led you to deal with the

situation in the way you did. Try finding the words to explain: ‘When they said that, I thought ...’; ‘When they walked away from me, it made me feel ...’; ‘When I texted my ex, I was thinking . . . ’. Being able to describe your own behaviour in terms of the thoughts and feelings that are linked to it is the key to mastering Stage 1.

STAGE 2: IN YOUR SHOES

Stage 2 empathy involves being able to put yourself in someone else’s shoes and imagine how you might feel if something that happened to someone else, happened to you. We begin to develop this skill around the age of three to six years old. Children use their own experiences as a template to begin to understand that if they were sad and upset when they lost their teddy then their friend might be upset and sad if they lose their favourite toy. This means they can also begin to relate to hypothetical narratives such as characters in films. For instance, when Bambi’s mum dies, they imagine how they would feel if they lost their mum and it makes them feel very sad and upset. Stage 2 empathy is really putting yourself in someone else’s shoes and imagining how you would feel if you were going through what they are experiencing, be it friend, partner, boss or Bambi.

As a couple, we are lucky enough to have regular opportunities to build up some Stage 2 empathy. Due to our jobs, we both regularly have to work long hours or work away from home. Due to this, we inevitably find ourselves swapping household roles on a regular basis.

If one of us has just done a 15-hour day and arrives home exhausted, the other can relate because we may have done the same thing the week before. We both know that the weary traveller who has been up since 4am and battling with public transport just wants to fling their belongings into the house and flop on the sofa.

On the other hand, the person who is at home may have only worked an eight-hour day but then may have made the tea, tidied the kitchen, hoovered the lounge, hung out the washing, and done two hours of homework with the kids. They may also want to just flop on the sofa!

So, what do we do? Should it become a competition over who’s had the hardest day? Do we have a ‘flop-off ’?

Often when we want empathy from someone else, they demand it back from us instead of trying to understand how we are feeling. When someone

says, ‘Do you realise how shattered I am? I’ve been up since 4am’, we often respond by retaliating rather than empathising.

We might say back, ‘Do you know how much I’ve had to do today? I haven’t even sat down since 6am – you’ve been sat drinking coffee on a train for hours!’

‘Do you know how bad coffee is on the train?!’ they retort, and so on until no one is feeling the love. This sort of dialogue leaves both parties feeling misunderstood, unappreciated and resentful.

However, if you have been on both sides of the coin – relentless day of tasks vs. brutal commute – you are more able to put yourself in the other person’s shoes because you have walked that path yourself. Therefore, when your partner has turned into a human blobfish after a horrific day, you can understand exactly how they are feeling because you too have been that blobfish!

For couples whose lives do not overlap as much or who have very different day-to-day routines, putting yourself in your partner’s frame of mind can be much more challenging. You may look at their schedule with envy and think it can’t possibly be as hard to cope with as yours. The most important thing to remember is that empathy is not about competition; it is about understanding. You do not need to compare your day to your partner’s – you just need to try to understand their perspective. Try to show appreciation and respect for their feelings and experiences, rather than just weighing them up against your own. If you care about someone, they are worth the effort and imagination it requires to see their point of view more clearly.

In fact, there was a very interesting study conducted by researchers at Harvard Medical School.¹³ They found that couples reported higher relationship satisfaction if they felt that their partner made a genuine effort to understand them, even if they weren’t actually very accurate at deducing what they were thinking or feeling. It seems everyone really does love a tryer!

STAGE 3: IN YOUR HEAD

Putting yourself in other people’s shoes sounds like an effective way of relating to others’ emotional experience and it can certainly be powerful, but to move on to Stage 3 of empathy you need to be able to put yourself in their head. If you are interpreting the experience of another person or

character through your *own* values, beliefs and experiences, it can be difficult to understand exactly the sort of impact it has had on them as an individual. In essence, you can relate, but you are not actually understanding what is going on in their head.

Stage 3 empathy requires not that you ask, ‘What would I have done in that situation?’ but ‘Why did they do what they did?’ To answer that, you need to be able to accurately place yourself inside another person’s head – doing your best to filter a situation or experience through their feelings, their core values and beliefs, their gender, their age and their life’s lessons.

How could you truly know what someone else’s thoughts and feelings are? The answer, of course, is that sometimes you can’t – it’s the act of trying that is necessary. Making this effort is a core therapeutic skill – you must attempt, through careful listening and gentle questioning, to decipher what is going on in the head of someone else. And, of course, the more you try something that is difficult, the better you will get at doing it. Developing this skill is the very foundation of counselling psychology.

Carl Rogers, the psychologist and founder of person-centred counselling, believed that by using empathy a counsellor could build a strong therapeutic alliance with the client. In simple terms, empathy was about non-judgemental and non-directive listening to encourage the client to simply talk through their issues.¹⁴

Roger’s view was that a person ultimately knew themselves better than anyone else. The role of the counsellor was to allow the client to access their own solutions to their problems. Enabling the client to generate their own solution was thought to increase the likelihood that they would accept and embrace it since it came from within themselves rather than being imposed upon them externally by the therapist.

For parents, empathising with your children and understanding their feelings can be a daily challenge. In order to try to empathise at Stage 3, you must try to remember what it was like to be a toddler and that dropping your ice cream or having to get out of the swimming pool literally felt like the entire world was ending.

For a 13-year-old, it might be remembering the churning distress and despair at being dumped for the first time. It means that you can’t just tell them to ‘cheer up’ or that there are ‘plenty of other fish in the sea’ or that ‘you could do so much better anyway’. These are all statements from your

adult perspective – not your child’s – so they are not empathic, even if they are true.

THE TODDLER AND THE T-SHIRT

This principle of adopting the other person’s perspective means you can acknowledge how someone feels before explaining your position. This is a critical tactic in being able to give people direct messages or demands. Emily often refers to this as ‘the toddler and the T-shirt’ approach.

Imagine a three-year-old who says, ‘I want to wear my dinosaur T-shirt to nursery today Mummy.’ But the dino T-shirt has just been washed, and it’s wet. If you simply say, ‘You can’t honey, it’s wet’, they are likely to say, ‘But I want it.’ You then say, ‘Well it’s wet sweetheart, you can’t wear a wet T-shirt to nursery.’ To which they say, ‘But I want it.’ And so on and so on it continues until both of you want to lie down on the floor and cry and one of you maybe already has.

If you say instead, ‘I know sweetheart, you *love* that T-shirt, it’s your favourite. I bet you were really looking forward to wearing it and I can see you are really upset about it. (*Big nodding eyes.*) But it’s wet honey, so we will dry it today and you can wear it tomorrow, I promise. Today you need to pick one of these other 20 T-shirts with dinosaurs on them.’

And suddenly we might make it to nursery on time after all.

JUST LEAVE ME ALONE

A slightly more challenging example might be trying to relate to your teenager’s perspective, as it can be difficult to return to that churning sea of hormones and emotions. Today’s teenagers also have things to contend with that we may have never experienced, such as social media, Internet bullying and online pornography. But let’s consider this example: say your teenager suddenly appears to be more sullen and quiet than normal. They don’t want to talk about their day at school or their friends or about anything really. At least not with you. In fact, they seem to be avoiding you as much as possible and hiding in their room, physically glued to their phone.

Some people might say, ‘Yeah, that’s the picture of teenage normal.’ And for some parents and their teenager this might be true, but ‘normal’ doesn’t necessarily mean there isn’t a problem and if it’s a change in demeanour it’s definitely worth investigating.

Think of as many reasons as you can for why they might be acting like this. What jumps into your head? Drugs? Girlfriend/boyfriend problems? Internet bullying? Hormones? Just a phase? Think: what evidence is there for each of these hypotheses? Then try to open up a conversation with them to explore what it might be, without assuming you already know.

Try not to suggest reasons at first. As soon as we do this with our teenager, it turns into verbal ping-pong and quickly goes nowhere :

'Is it something with your mates?' No.

'Is it something at school?' No.

'Is it something on social media?' No.

'Is it a girl?' NO! Oh my God, you're so ridiculous! I'm fine – just stop!

'So it's a girl?' (Cue teenager walking away.)

It is very difficult to resist playing 20 questions to try to elicit a response. However, it's much better to just offer reassurance and plant an open invitation to share. If it is rejected, just move on. Like with the driving licence example on [page 58](#), let the suggestion grow on its own rather than trying to force it. You could do this by sharing with them that you have noticed a change and the evidence of this. You might say something like :

So it seems like you want a lot of space on your own at the moment and like you aren't very keen on talking about much with me either. I'm a bit worried about you – is everything OK? Is there anything I can do to help?

Another example of this would be:

You don't quite seem yourself at the moment. If you need to talk about anything, I'm here. I'm not going to judge or shout or get angry whatever it is. I just want to help.

Even if they don't bring things forward immediately, you have psychologically opened the door. Let them walk through when they are ready. Often, a prompt to chat on the car ride home from school ends with no success, only to wind up with a heart-to-heart just before bed. We will

talk more about providing choice wherever possible in the section on autonomy (see [page 90](#)).

Empathy is not just useful for improving the depth of your relationships with people you care about. It will definitely do that, but it can also be useful with people who you are in conflict with. In police interviews, empathy is a tightrope the interviewer must walk between avoiding being judgemental and avoiding being collusive. If they can successfully master empathy, our statistical analysis shows that they are likely to generate significantly more verifiable information from suspects. As such, empathy is not about being warm and friendly. This is not empathy. As we have discussed, to show genuine empathy one has to make a concerted effort to try to understand the other person and what they care about, be they ISIS terrorist, armed robber or sex offender.

Importantly, understanding someone's motives, values or actions does not mean that you share them. You do not have to share their views, but you do have to show genuine interest in what makes them tick without leaking judgement or opinion.

Consider this concept in relation to talking to a teenager about smoking marijuana, their friendship with the wild child at school or always leaving their homework until the last minute. You may have a very clear view on each of these things, but until you listen to and understand your child's view you cannot hope to genuinely influence their behaviour.

The challenge is to listen with patience and curiosity, and display interest and understanding in what the other person is saying to you, even if you don't like it, don't agree with it and find their actions or values in opposition to your own. Understanding their point of view is the most important step to being able to guide or influence it in any way.

EMPATHY LESSONS

1. Be more self-aware. Practise building up your own self-awareness by linking up your behaviour to the thoughts and feelings that underpin them.
2. Empathy is not a competition. Try to relate to others by seeing things from their perspective as much as possible. Do not be tempted to make it a competition of who's most deserving of empathy. Give it openly and often and people around you will feel respected and understood and eventually give it back.

3. Understand others from their perspective rather than your own. Try to stay open-minded, explore options and recognise that just as you have a bundle of life experiences that will have shaped the way you think and feel about things, so will your teenager, partner, work colleague, and so on. Don't be too hasty in judging others based on only your experiences. Try to see things through their eyes, even if their actions are counter to your own values and beliefs.

AUTONOMY

The strongest principle of growth lies in the human choice.
– **George Eliot**

Autonomy is an incredibly powerful feature of how we interact with other people. Whether or not we feel someone is trying to control us has a huge influence on our behaviour. Freedom to choose appeals to an instinctive drive within all of us to be in control of our own destiny.

In fact, in our work on the interrogation of terrorists, maintaining the suspect's sense of autonomy (the power of choice) exerted one of the most powerful influences on whether someone would speak to the police or not. This seems counterintuitive: why would someone who is committed to a cause and who views you as the enemy tell you anything if you give them the choice not to? Surely you have to pressure or manipulate them in some way to get them to cooperate?

Hollywood frequently tells us that the way to get criminals to cooperate is via a mixture of threat (rough them up until they talk), inducement (offer them a plea bargain), appeal (plead with them to talk for the sake of their victims), demand (bang on the desk and point) and relentless pressure (keep going until they are exhausted and just give up and tell you everything). But Hollywood is not reality.

In our research, none of these methods were effective at securing reliable information. These behaviours *do* influence people – they make them more vulnerable and potentially increase the risk of false information or even false confession. These tactics are an unsophisticated, lazy way to communicate with others.

Good police interviews should not be based on manipulation, deception and coercion, and neither should relationships with others close to us. We

want our partner to stay faithful in a relationship out of love, not fear. We want our children to do as they are asked out of respect, not resentment. And we want people close to us to tell us things out of a sense of trust and intimacy, not trickery.

So how does one encourage cooperation through offering choice? Right at the heart of the humanistic person-centred approaches to therapeutic intervention is the notion that whether they speak or not is up to the client. The same principle is enshrined in UK and US law when it comes to suspects. It is their right to say nothing. When this right is presented to them with genuineness and respect, they are more likely to stay put in the room and engage with the interviewer.

A powerful example of autonomy can be seen in the interrogation of Russell Williams, a colonel in the Canadian Royal Air Force.¹⁵ Williams was convicted of the murder of two women in 2010, a number of sexual assaults and numerous breaking and entering offences in which he would steal women's underwear from their bedrooms.¹⁶ Williams was interviewed by Ottawa province police detective Staff Sergeant Jim Smythe, who displays a mastery of building rapport and giving his suspect a sense of choice.

As is standard practice, Smythe begins the interview by highlighting Williams's rights and freedoms. He reinforces that he can ask for a break at any time, that he can consult with a solicitor at any time (which he mentions four times in two minutes) and that he does not have to answer any of the questions that are going to be put to him. However, it does not feel scripted or like Smythe has done the same spiel hundreds of times, even though he undoubtedly has. It feels genuine and meaningful and, most importantly, non-judgemental. Williams, in turn, does not ask for a break, nor for a solicitor, and nor does he refuse to answer any questions put to him.

What is so significant about the Russell Williams case was the fact that Smythe was under tremendous pressure to get Williams to talk. He was investigating the disappearance of 27-year-old Jessica Lloyd. The police view was that her disappearance may have been connected to two other home invasions and sexual assaults by an, as yet, unknown offender. Williams was called in for questioning based on the fact that his truck's tyre tracks matched those found near Lloyd's house. So, at the time of questioning, Smythe knew very well that the military man in front of him was in all likelihood a sexual predator and could, potentially, have Lloyd

tied up somewhere or have already murdered her. How tempting then, given the stakes, for Smythe to be demanding, judgemental and dogmatic, and to pressure Williams to confess.

After around four hours of questioning and the presentation of some damning evidence including footprints and tyre tracks at the victim's property, Smythe asks: 'So, Russell do we talk?'

Williams responds by saying, 'I want to minimise the impact on my wife.'

Almost before Williams has finished saying the word 'wife', Smythe says, 'So do I.'

Williams looks up and then asks, 'So how do we do that?'

Suddenly, interviewer and suspect have become 'we' – unified by a shared goal. Smythe retorts with, 'Well, we start by telling the truth.'

There is a very long pause. Smythe isn't too hungry to reel Williams in – he gives him the space to decide to put his own head in the noose he has created.

Williams finally and with quiet resolution says, 'OK.'

Smythe responds calmly with, 'OK, so where is she?'

There is another heart-stopping pause of 17 seconds, until Williams quietly says the chilling words, 'Have you got a map?'

There is no external pressure being placed on Williams. Rather, everything in those heart-stopping final seconds is internal pressure – it is in Russell Williams's own head. He must consider his position and decide whether to speak or not as each piece of evidence is objectively and fairly placed in front of him. Smythe is simultaneously direct but unhurried, supportive but firm. And he is patient – endlessly patient – waiting for Williams to realise for himself the box that is closing in around him.

There is no table-thumping, no minimising, no 'maybe it was an accident', no demands that he starts telling the truth and no indication or hint of judgement from Smythe. With this combination of a direct and fair presentation of the evidence, calm and engaged delivery and utter freedom of choice as to Williams's next move – what happens?

Eventually, Williams grimaces, his shoulders droop and he confesses.

But why? Why does offering choice work so well?

The answer is at once very simple and complexly frustrating – we don't like to be told what to do. This holds true even at an instinctive, animalistic level. We want to decide our own fates, be in charge of our own destinies,

stand or fall by our own merits, and this desire for autonomy is hard-wired into us. It is part of the fabric of being an independent living organism.

To demonstrate how instinctive the principle of autonomy is, we can look to a number of studies on animal behaviour. A study at Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago found that chimpanzees and gorillas that could choose whether to go indoors or outdoors, showed more positive prosocial behaviours towards other members of the group, spent more time relaxing and were calmer than when the keepers were in control of their movements.¹⁷ Chimps and gorillas that were restricted were more antisocial, aggressive and stressed. In other words, animals afforded some freedom of choice, even in captivity, were happier and healthier when they felt they had some control over their environment.

Similarly, when pandas and polar bears were given the choice to go into an off-display area out of the eye of the public, they became less agitated and stressed and showed a reduction in abnormal behaviours (such as pacing).¹⁸

Most interestingly, these improvements occurred even when the animals rarely exercised this choice. For example, the bears only chose to use their 'off-exhibit' area less than 2 per cent of the time. In other words, it was not about what option was provided (to be on display or not), but the very fact that there *were* options that improved the animals' well-being. Thus, providing choice is a fundamental way of promoting positive, prosocial behaviour. A looser grip is more likely to gain compliance and cooperation than restriction, which instead often prompts rebellion.

LEADING A HORSE TO WATER

But is that really true? What about, for instance, when you go to the doctor: do you not want to be told what to do, be given advice, solutions, answers? Aren't we seeking exact instructions: 'Take two of these and call me in the morning'? The answer is no, we are not – even though we think we are!

Say you go to the doctor as you've been feeling run down and fatigued. You've also been burning the candle at both ends, with long hours at work, little sleep and high levels of stress. You've noticed that you are getting up more frequently in the night for a trip to the toilet, but you've chalked that up to too much coffee during the day.

The doctor starts to ask about your eating habits: 'How would you describe your diet? Do you consume quite a lot of processed food? How

much sugar would you say you consume on an average day?’

You’re thinking, ‘Why? What’s wrong with me doc?’

He says, ‘Well, I’m concerned you might have some of the warning signs of developing diabetes. We’ll have to do a blood test to be sure but, given the amount of sugar and processed food you eat, there are some clear changes you can make to your diet to reduce your risk.’

Great – the doctor will tell me how to reduce my risk and then I can avoid becoming diabetic! Tell me what to do doc and I’ll do it!

Except you won’t.

He will tell you you’re eating too much sugar and processed food, that you need to eat healthier, exercise more, get more sleep and find ways to manage your stress levels. If you don’t, you could develop Type 2 diabetes which could seriously affect your health.

But you knew you needed to do all that already, didn’t you? So why haven’t you done it?

The reason we struggle to change our behaviour simply based on well-meaning advice or clear instruction is that it doesn’t connect with our internal drives – our core values and beliefs – which would help motivate us to change our behaviour. In order for us to change, we need to feel that that change is in line with our core values and beliefs.

Imagine that instead of asking about your sugar intake, the conversation went something like this:

Doc: What have your concerns been since you’ve been feeling this way?

You: Well, I don’t feel right: I feel pretty run down and unwell and I’m worried there might be something more serious wrong with me.

Doc: Tell me more about what you think might actually be wrong.

You: Well, I’m getting up about three times in the night to go to the toilet. I just don’t want this to get worse and worse. I worry it’s something like cancer or heart disease – I’m not getting any younger doc but I’m also not exactly old!

Doc: OK, so you feel like these symptoms might be related to something more serious and that worries you as you don’t want things to get any worse.

You: Yes, exactly. I mean, I can hardly play a game of football with the kids as it is without feeling like I need a lie down! What about when I've got grandkids?! I don't want to just be watching them sat on a chair like my dad always was.

Doc: OK, well, I can tell you that I'm very glad you've come in. I understand you're concerned it might be something serious such as cancer or heart disease and that is probably making you feel quite anxious and worried. From your symptoms, I think it is unlikely to be either of those issues, but I do have some concerns that you might have early indicators of Type 2 diabetes.

I know you want to turn things around and get back to a point where you can play a game of football with the kids and look forward to doing the same with your grandkids. There are lots of things we can do to tackle this – positive changes to your diet and exercise routines and ways of reducing stress that can be very helpful. How do you feel about that?

So what is different in the second conversation?

The second doctor has listened to the patient's worries and concerns about their health and has reflected them back to demonstrate they have heard what is important to the patient.

They have also uncovered a motivating core value – wanting to be able to be active for the children and grandchildren. This value in turn has been linked to the strategies the doctor is going to suggest. Instead of a plan based on the negative maxim 'How about you stop eating so much rubbish?', we have a very positive, individualised mantra to help motivate the patient: 'How about we improve your diet so you can be active for your kids and grandkids?'

What is the usual outcome when you offer people advice or solutions to their problems? In many cases, even if they find your advice sensible, helpful and reasonable they still won't take it.

DON'T LOOK IN THE BOX

When we attempt to pressure, intimidate or threaten someone in order to get them to bend to our will, we end up inducing what psychologists call 'reactance'. Reactance, first labelled as such by social psychologist Jack

Brehm in the sixties, is our response to a perceived threat to our behavioural freedom.¹⁹ It occurs when a person feels they are being controlled or constrained, often by authority or regulations. Such perception can lead to deliberate resistance and behaviour counter to what is desired.

Worryingly, you can create reactance in someone where there previously was none. For example, if I asked you to throw a box away for me, but I said, 'Please don't look in it before you get rid of it', you will suddenly feel compelled to look. I have 'implanted' the idea that you want to now look in the box when, before I mentioned it, you probably had no intention of doing so. In fact, I can increase this previously non-existent thought by saying, 'You must not look in the box.' The more I try to limit and control you, the more I produce the desire to rebel and overrule my instruction.

Wherever possible, we need to allow people freedom of choice, even when it seems to go against all we believe in or hold dear. For example, as much as we may want our teenager not to get a tattoo, or to get our elderly parent to go and see the doctor, or our toddler to eat their peas, we should not try to force them to comply with our wishes. We need to recognise that these are personal choices that people must make. We can encourage and support them but, ultimately, they need to be given the space and opportunity to work things out and make the choice for themselves.

Clinical psychologists Miller and Rollnick are key individuals in the development of counselling approaches to helping people change their behaviour.²⁰ Their work has evolved and developed from a background of counselling for substance misuse and they are acutely aware of the perils of a therapist unwittingly creating reactance when trying to support people to change.

According to Miller:

*Research demonstrates that a counsellor can drive resistance (denial) levels up and down dramatically according to his or her personal counselling style. Use of a "respectful, reflective approach", rather than by arguing, the accusation of "being in denial", and direct confrontations, is more likely to lead to motivation to change and avoid resistance and denial, or reactance, elicited by direct confrontation.*²¹

The key to motivating someone to change their behaviour is not via well-meaning suggestions and recommendations, but to be respectful and reflective about their own desires and wishes. By asking your loved one about their feelings towards going to the doctor, getting a tattoo or eating peas, you display respect for and interest in their personal view. By listening to what they say, you may encourage them to think more deeply about their behaviour and they may be more open to changing their mind.

Let's consider an example such as trying to get your auntie to cut down on smoking. Your motivations for doing so are likely to originate from concern and care for her. You might be concerned about her health or the impact smoking is having on her day-to-day life. When you bring up your concerns, she dismisses them saying, 'I'm fine, you're worrying over nothing. Loads of people smoke way more than me!'

So how will you get her to quit?

You could mention it every time you see her ... and she will start avoiding you.

You could suggest strategies to help her quit by sending her links to websites for hypnosis, acupuncture, reiki, detox diets and healthcare schemes ... She will probably eventually block your number or unfriend you on social media.

You could push nicotine gum or leaflets through her letterbox each day ... She may tape the letterbox shut.

When you do finally get back in the same room with her, you may find she smokes four cigarettes at a time just to spite you!

Why? Your efforts have created reactance, and rather than encouraging Auntie to quit, you have pushed her the other way by increasing her commitment to rebel against your attempts to control her.

So as a concerned loved one, what *can* you do to influence someone's behaviour?

TALK IT OUT

If your auntie begins to talk about all the reasons that she loves a cigarette and can't possibly quit, you can uncover the deeper layers of this reasoning. For instance, 'So you're saying you just really like having a smoke, it relaxes you and you also just think it will be too hard to quit now – it's been too long, too many years of a habit.'

She now feels understood, listened to and treated with respect, even if you don't agree with her views.

She may respond: 'That's exactly right – I've tried to quit before you know, it just never sticks. I just end up back smoking so it's a lot of effort for nothing I think.'

You might respond: 'So you just don't want to fail again, but there was a time when you wanted to quit.'

Auntie: 'Well, yes. After I had my second child, I quit for over a year. I felt really good; I could run around with the kids and the extra money was nice too! Ugh, why did I ever start again?'

Suddenly, our diehard smoker is contemplating change again ... And we can encourage this by now discussing why she thinks things worked then and what led to her going back to smoking again.

Respecting someone's autonomy is about listening and talking about the issue with them. However, as soon as we try to impose rules and advice or cajole them into doing what we think they should do, we will trigger reactance and resistance.

Instead, *they* must choose, and *they* must be the ones that convince themselves that it is the right choice for them. It's tempting to tell someone else what is best for them, but individuals are really their own best experts – they know themselves better than we do.^{[22](#)}

AUTONOMY AND THE ELDERLY

Nowhere is the consequence of losing autonomy more pronounced than for elderly people as they require more in-depth dependent care from others. As we age, more and more of the tasks that have become intimately ours may have to be passed on to others – changing bed linen, cooking, getting dressed, showering, even going to the toilet. This loss of independence can have a deep psychological impact on older people and can naturally lead to a sense of isolation and depression.

Continuing to provide as much choice and independence as possible is a critical aspect to maintaining emotional well-being even as someone becomes more and more physically restricted. A number of studies of the elderly in care homes have found that autonomy is a critical factor in well-being and coping. Elderly residents expressed a clear desire to be allowed to make decisions about daily life, such as when to have a nap, when to get some fresh air and when to bathe or have meals.^{[23](#)}

However, often the staffing schedule and management of the facility would override these desires. Staff would end up making these choices for the residents based on *their* needs rather than the needs of the residents. This extended further to choices that could easily have been integrated into the schedule, such as allowing residents to choose what to wear or some choice over what to eat on a daily basis.²⁴ As autonomy and decision-making were removed, independent functioning, mobility and emotional and mental well-being suffered. Elderly residents reported feeling ‘unseen and unnoticed’ as if their desires and decisions were an irrelevant distraction to the daily routine. They felt treated like children or, even worse, ignored like they were ghosts in the room.

What can we do to try to rectify this loss of autonomy? Sometimes it is simply not possible to allow independent choices due to time, resources or physical ability. However, we can ensure that we promote and provide our loved ones with as much choice as possible. We can actively talk to them about their daily routines and what they would like respected and acknowledged in terms of bathing, meals, dressing and activities. If they hate bridge, we don’t need to force them to join the bridge club, even if we think it would be good for them. If they don’t want to eat meatloaf, they are old enough to choose not to.

We can also eliminate surprises and consult them more about what would be helpful. Don’t surprise them with a new picture or plant for their space – ask them what they would like to make the space more homely and try to take their wishes into account. Don’t just pop in when you can – ask them when would be the best time to visit and try to take this into account and stick to the schedule you’ve set.

Lastly, treat them as individuals with their own desires, values and wishes. Ask them about their views and values and show respect and understanding for what they say. Often, when someone has to sacrifice their independence by moving into a care setting, they may feel resentful and angry. This can lead to taking digs at the staff, the facility, the food and even their family, feeling like they have been abandoned (‘Why don’t you come and see me more? You’ve just stuck me here with strangers’).

Our temptation is to say, ‘This is a lovely place – you picked it yourself from the three we looked at! The food is better than your own cooking and there is more to do here than you’ve had opportunity for in years! I see you as much as I can – stop being so negative!’

However, that is exactly the sort of response that can create further reactance and resentment. Now they also feel guilty for complaining, or like they have to convince you that they are right.

Instead, don't be afraid to acknowledge that they are feeling negative and unhappy. Show some empathy for the loss of their independent routine and space – it is a painful thing to lose for anyone. Try not to take it personally when they attack or criticise you for their situation – it is natural to look for someone to blame, especially when the real culprit is an intangible spectre like ageing.

So let's put that all together and try something like this:

It sounds like you are struggling with being here at the moment. I know you are thinking about the house and how much you miss having your own space. It seems like you feel angry and sad sometimes at being here. What can I do to help make it better?

AUTONOMY LESSONS

1. We like to be in charge of our own destiny. If you are feeling trapped or controlled by a situation, look for ways to exercise choice, even if they are small things. If someone is taking decisions from you that you can easily make, ask for them back. Often people restrict autonomy unknowingly, in an effort to be helpful or efficient, without recognising the impact.
2. Recognise other people's need for independence and choice and endeavour to respect this wherever possible. Ask about and listen to what people say they value and care about and try to build these qualities into their situation, even if it is difficult or challenging. Consider when choices really matter and when they don't. If your toddler wants to wear something ridiculous, does it really matter? They can't wear flip-flops in -4 degrees, but they can still help you with the shopping dressed as Batman.
3. Even when there are high stakes, try to start from a position of choice – remember the scenario at the start of this chapter about Dad's driving licence. There may come a time when you have to firmly insist that he stops driving, but try to implement a way for him to choose if you can. The outcome will be more palatable for you both and he is likely to suffer less as it was his own choice.

4. Even in situations where the only choice is between the devil and the deep blue sea, we want to be allowed to choose which way we jump.

REFLECTION

You're short on ears and long on mouth.

– **John Wayne**

Throughout the previous criteria, we have been building towards the final foundation skill: reflection. Reflection is repeating back in part or in paraphrase what someone has said to you. When you use reflection, all you are really doing is inviting the other person to expand and add more by 'sending' out the key words, feelings or values that you've just heard them say.

Consider some of the previous examples we have discussed about how to explore feelings with an elderly parent who has had to go into a care home or the auntie we've tried to help stop smoking. Many of the suggested responses are simply built from what the other person has said. When we reflect in this way, people are likely to add to and either correct or expand their response, allowing you to get a deeper understanding of them and their views.

If you truly understand what someone is saying and the core values that shape their view, you are not only better equipped to reflect on your own view in comparison, but you can see who they truly are – the holes in their argument, the gaps in their logic and the levers that might allow them to change their view.

Reflection is the aikido of conversation management. You take whatever the person has given and use it to build the momentum of the conversation and move it forward. You may find it surprising just how often this method works. The skill is, of course, in selecting the correct word or words to reflect back. That is why the most critical element of reflection is to listen very carefully to what is being said. Then select that segment that is most in line with or linked to the topic you want to know more about.

Reflection sounds such a simple and basic thing, but do not be fooled. Of all the elements, it is the single most important skill you can take away from this book – it is the key to unlocking all the other skills. Because of this, it is worthy of its own chapter, which follows next.

REFLECTION LESSONS

1. Reflection is about listening carefully to what has been said and repeating back or paraphrasing what has been said to the person. It is important to select what you want to know more about, not just parrot the last thing that was said.
2. Reflection is the key to keeping a conversation moving forward. It is simple but powerful and is worth the effort it takes to master.

HEAR LESSONS

1. *Honesty*. Be as honest as possible, whenever possible. Try to be direct without being blunt and guard against the desire to avoid or ignore the issue.
2. *Empathy*. Empathy is an effort to develop an objective understanding of where someone is coming from – their core values and beliefs. In order to give them the freedom to express this we need to just listen and be neither judgemental nor collusive.
3. *Autonomy*. No one likes to be told what to do. Let others convince themselves that it is the right choice for them by talking it through with them rather than trying to persuade. Give choice wherever possible.
4. *Reflection*. The most critical element of reflection is to listen carefully to what is being said and reflect back the most relevant point to build on and move the conversation forward. That way you will develop a more detailed understanding of how people really feel.

CHAPTER 4

REFLECTION: WHAT LIES BENEATH

*Look beneath the surface; let not the several qualities of a thing
nor its worth escape thee.*

– **Marcus Aurelius**

In the previous chapter we talked about honesty, empathy and autonomy. These are all to do with how we treat people and what effect we wish to have on them. We are honest because we want to create trust; we are empathic because we want to create understanding; and we respect autonomy to create freedom of choice. Reflection, the last of the four principles, is critical because it is the pathway to helping us achieve all of these things. Reflection is both an attitude and set of skills that we can use as a listener to help us understand and explore other people's thoughts, feelings, beliefs and values. Once understood, reflection is a simple and effective technique to connect to people on a much deeper level.

A failure to see what lies beneath a statement (not just what was said but what it actually means) can result in us making erroneous assumptions, putting our foot in it or imagining what's best for someone without having any idea of how they feel about it.

Reflective listening is often misinterpreted as a mechanical parroting back of what someone has said. The caricature is of the psychologist who always responds to a question – 'What do you think, doc?' – with the frustrating retort, 'Well, what do *you* think?'. This gives the impression that you might be better off having therapy from a robot than bothering to pay for a psychologist. This is not reflection.

Reflection is a way of signalling empathy and acceptance and resisting the instinctive temptation to ‘correct’ other people’s behaviour through advice or instruction. There is a natural tension that therapists feel between listening reflectively to clients and their own inner voice screaming out advice and criticism when hearing clients talk about their problems. You may have your own examples of people who frequently ask for your advice and your instinctive thought is to say, ‘Well just stop it and it will all be fine.’

TOUGH LOVE

Emily: I recall working with a single mum who reported that her teenage son, Simon, had become violent and difficult to manage at home. Mum was a short, anxious-looking woman – like a frightened rabbit constantly vigilant for predators. She always came in flustered and twitchy, like every journey to the office was filled with unexpected stress and challenge. Simon, who had just turned 14, was more like a wiry little bird that had been cornered by a cat. His floppy blonde fringe and bowed head made eye contact almost impossible. You would catch a glimpse and then his head would fall again. Mum described a long history of temper tantrums since Simon was about two years old. She said that she had been advised by her GP to use ‘hold therapy’ and should ‘hug Simon tightly’ during these outbursts until he calmed down.

She’d been using this method for years and was still using it even though he was now a teenager. Mum was still able – just about – to restrain her tiny, willowy son with this method, though now it would often result in both of them being bruised, battered and exhausted.

During one particularly fraught session, Mum described an incident where she had been trying to get Simon to go upstairs to bed. Throughout her account, the voice in my head was shouting out all the things Mum was doing to make the situation worse and the urge to offer some clear instruction and advice was overwhelming.

But that, as we have argued, is very ineffective at understanding the root cause of the problem, as well as not at all

helpful in finding a real solution. As you read Mum's description of the incident, think about where you would want to correct her or tell her what she should be doing instead :

Simon was sitting in the lounge texting someone on his phone. I'd asked him twice before – very gently mind you – if he'd please get ready for bed. Then I asked him again – I just politely asked him. He completely ignored me. I just flipped. I walked over to him and grabbed that bloody phone out of his hands and put it in my back pocket. He just went crazy – shouting at me, 'Give it back, give it back!'

I said, 'No, you can consider it gone for the rest of the week.'

That made him even madder – I thought he was going to punch me. He stared right at me and screamed in my face, 'Give it back, right now!'

I could see he was losing it, so I just said, 'No, Simon – go upstairs to bed like you've been told!'

Then he just stood bolt upright and pushed me out of the way, actually pushed me with both hands. I was so shocked!

I said, 'Don't push me Simon! You're not allowed to push me!' and then I grabbed him – round the middle – from behind, like in a bear hug, like I'd been told to by the GP.

'You calm down right now!' I said.

And then he exploded, screaming and shouting, 'Get off me! Get off me.' So I had to grab him even tighter.

I was watching this poor woman doing things that clearly were making things worse. She continued:

'Fucking get off me, Mum!' Simon was screaming over and over, totally hysterical.

So, I tried to kind of pin him to the floor. I said, 'No Simon! Not until you calm down!'

Suddenly, he just pushed me backwards – and we both fell over the sofa and on to the floor. He was kind of on top of me now – we looked ridiculous I suppose. We were both in tears – I know he didn't mean to hurt me, but I hit my leg when we fell over, so I let him go. When I was lying there crying, he grabbed his phone back. I was going to grab him again, but I was out of energy.

After Mum finished her story, she said tearfully, 'He's just out of control – I don't know what else to do with him.'

As I listened to this description, what struck me was how rapidly a common situation – trying to convince your teenager to go up to bed – had escalated to a violent and distressing incident. I'm sure as you read the description of this incident, you had thoughts about how Simon behaved as well as some advice for Mum about how she could have handled things a bit better.

You might be very tempted to say, 'Next time, don't take away his phone – just switch off the Wi-Fi ... that soon works' or 'If he pushes you again, tell him you'll phone the police and report him – that's assault' or, possibly, 'Just let him keep walking – nobody can resolve an argument when they're that riled up. Discuss it with him when you've both calmed down.' Or you may simply feel the need to express your sympathy and say, 'That's awful, that is no way for a son to behave towards his mother.' Or you may be appalled at Mum's physical manhandling of her teenage son and think, 'I'd have done the same if you tried to bear hug me!'

But the problem with these approaches – offering alternative solutions, advising, directing or even expressing sympathy or judgement – is that they do not help the person actually fix the problem. Why? There are two reasons.

First, people are the best experts on themselves – they have the best chance of really understanding what the root cause of the problem is. You, as the 'therapist', do not.

Second, the best chance of them being prepared to find a way through the problem is for them to come up with and internalise

the solution in line with their own beliefs about parenting. You, as the therapist, cannot just externally impose a set of solutions and expect them to change.

Consider attempts you may have made to change your behaviour, such as going on a diet. If someone gives you a recipe book of healthy eating, you might start cooking from it. And you might start feeling healthier and maybe even lose a bit of weight. Then life will creep back in, and your old eating patterns and habits will gradually override your new healthy regime and the book will find its way on to a shelf somewhere instead of the kitchen counter.

If we don't figure out what our relationship with food is before we start, we won't internalise the change. It might last a week, maybe a month, but our old habits will soon take over because our beliefs and values have stayed the same ('I deserve a treat, I work so hard – I don't want to cook when I get in, I will start on Monday or even next Monday').

Even if you have a great bit of advice (and the other person might even agree it's great advice!), they will struggle to change their behaviour because advice in and of itself does not help them understand what is causing the problem in the first place. It's the rapport-based equivalent of trying to fix a cake mix by simply adding more and more ingredients rather than figuring out that the eggs were off and starting again.

I would have liked to say to Mum:

Your use of 'hugging' is probably making Simon feel demeaned and controlled. He's 14, not four. He's never learned to manage his emotions because you just hug him into submission. You need to find strategies that respect him as a young man, rather than treat him like a toddler. And you need to treat him how you would like him to treat you – with respect and care.

It upset me to see this young lad restrained and demeaned and to see Mum so distressed and unhappy.

But if I had come straight out with my advice, she would have struggled to listen to me. She might have agreed with me, but she wouldn't know how to have this sort of mutually respectful relationship with her child. They have 14 years of bad habits to pull apart first before we can move on to possible solutions. If I simply 'Dr Phil' her with some home truths – 'How's that working out for you?' – it might make *me* feel clever but that is certainly not the point. I can't just tell her to stop it and be more reasonable, cross my fingers and hope she changes her behaviour after she leaves my office.

In order to get to the bottom of what is happening and improve her relationship with her son, I need to understand the core values and beliefs that are underpinning her parenting. That will assist both of us in working out how to deal with her son's fairly normal rebellious teenage behaviour, without it escalating into wrestling, swearing and tears, leaving both of them miserable and bruised.

You might be tempted to leap straight into giving some helpful advice or trying to fix the problem. However, we don't even really understand what the problem is yet so rather than advise or suggest, we need to listen and explore. That is the only way to discover what is actually underlying the issue and causing it to happen over and over. The way to do this is through reflection.

Here are some of the things I said after she had finished speaking :

It sounds like you're feeling overwhelmed and upset at the way arguments with Simon escalate out of control. On the one hand you still feel like you need to use the hug technique you've used on him since he was a child, but on the other you want Simon to be more grown-up and responsible. Tell me some more about that.

When Mum and I looked into her parenting values more deeply, it emerged that she was tremendously afraid of letting Simon grow up. She did not feel comfortable with his demands for

independence, such as going on the bus to meet his friends or staying up later in the evenings. She would find herself saying no without considering his request or trying to enforce early 8pm bedtimes on Simon to feel more in control.

She felt the sign of a good mother was to produce a completely obedient and silent child – Simon had no voice and no independence in their relationship. He was to do as he was told or be bear-hugged into submission.

Mum felt terrified of stopping the ‘hugging’ technique because it had helped her feel in control of Simon when he was small and had always made him stop his tantrum eventually. We had to work through that it was not providing any benefit now and, in fact, using it had led to failing to teach Simon to regulate his own emotions. It was leaving them both angry and upset, and posed a serious risk of injury as he got older and stronger.

After several sessions, Mum stopped using the ‘hugging’ technique and started to use ‘time out’ instead (where the person becoming upset asks for space to calm down and the interaction must stop for at least 20 minutes). It took several months, but their relationship gradually improved and Simon was allowed more freedom and independence. As a result, he almost completely stopped having temper outbursts at Mum and there was never a repeat of the ‘hugging’ incident where he had kicked Mum so violently.

DISCOVERING CORE VALUES AND BELIEFS

In order to help someone successfully diagnose the root cause of the problem, you need to explore the thinking behind it. Think about this in relation to people who regularly ask for your advice or seem unhappy with their life choices. You might have a friend who is constantly in conflict with their ex over contact with the children. You might have a family member who is miserable in their job and can’t seem to find something that suits them. Your child may constantly be drawn to friends who seem to either let them down or get them in trouble.

Changing behaviour for the long term requires both effort and patience on the part of the person changing but also the person supporting them to

change. Tapping into people's conscious and, in particular, subconscious beliefs is challenging. We spend much of our time on autopilot, making a huge number of decisions and choices each day without really considering the values they are based on. Sometimes, we are not even aware ourselves of what these values are or where they came from.

But when you pause and reflect, you can identify significant experiences or individuals that have influenced your core values and beliefs: your parents, a significant teacher, becoming a parent, losing a loved one to illness, being in an accident, etc. These kinds of formative relationships and experiences are the rich soil in which our beliefs and values originate and grow.

Due to the powerful influence of core values and beliefs, the route to changing behaviour cannot be simply changing your thoughts and feelings like flipping a switch. This is such an overly simplistic approach, such as 'think yourself happy' or 'reframe your problems as challenges'. Motivational catch-phrases are not enough to transform behaviour if our core beliefs and values remain the same. If you do not identify and tackle those, there is no possibility of changing your behaviour for the long term.

The exploration of core values is essential to understanding others. In doing so it helps us build intimacy and understanding with others, in particular in romantic relationships. We may be delighted to discover on a first date that our prospective partner prefers their steak cooked exactly the same way as us and has our favourite cheesy pop song as their ring tone. But the mood will change if we suddenly discover that they have voted opposite to us in the last election, and that they don't agree with us about broader more complex issues, such as finances or how to raise children.

So how can we uncover these deeper, more intimate views without offending or having it feel like an interrogation? The key is to build our responses from the information the other person reveals and to continue this until we reach a deeper, more meaningful layer. This sounds tricky, but it largely relies on listening more carefully. For an example of how a classic 'chit-chat' level question can give us a pathway to much more personal interesting information, let's sit in on this conversation from a first date:

JACK AND JANE'S FIRST DATE

Jane: So where did you go on your last holiday?

Jack: Ah (*smiles sheepishly*), I don't really want to say ...

Jane: Why? Why? What's so secret about that?

Jack: Because it was Benidorm ...

Jane: (*Looks up wide-eyed.*) Oh ... I see. Nice ... You probably shouldn't give me any details.

Jack: No, listen, you've got me all wrong! It wasn't like that – it wasn't a stag do or anything. I don't have any embarrassing tattoos to reveal!

Jane: Then why *Benidorm*?

Jack: It was a super-cheap package deal. I went with two lads I've known since school and we spent the entire time surfing and hanging out in Old Town. There was absolutely no karaoke or beer bongs involved, I swear!

Jane: So surfing? That's cool. Is that the sort of holiday you like then? Something sporty?

Jack: Yeah, I'm not really into this all-inclusive holiday 'prison camp' scene ...

Jane: Prison camp?!

Jack: Yeah, you know – get your towel on a sun lounger at 8am, sit by the pool, eat when they ring the dinner bell three times a day, watch some crazy lame entertainment show, go to bed and do it all again the next day. I'd rather you just shoot me ...

Jane: So you're not a fan of having somebody else in charge of your schedule?

Jack: No, not really. I'd much rather be out in nature and really experience a place. Eat with the locals, explore what a place has to offer – you know, embrace the whole experience.

Jane: So not much relaxing then.

Jack: No, I wouldn't say that. I just like to be on my own schedule. Life's too short to let other people tell you what to do.

Jane: Ah! So would you say you're a bit of a rebel?

Jack: Ummm, I don't do very well with authority.

Jane: What do you mean, 'don't do well'?

Jack: I've gotten myself into a bit of trouble occasionally.

Jane: 'A bit of trouble'?

Jack: OK, I got expelled from school, well, a couple of schools, as a kid. I was a bit mouthy and just wouldn't take shit off anyone, especially the teachers.

Jane seems pretty good at this. She is reflecting key aspects of what Jack says and it gets him to open up more and discuss things in more depth. What you will notice is that she is saying very little about herself or her views – only uncovering and delving into Jack's. But she has learned an awful lot about him through this technique. He is adventurous and sporty. He prefers to be active than lie in the sun. He rebels against structure and rules and it even led to him being expelled from not just one but a couple of schools.

There is more of a story there but there is certainly a layered picture of Jack that is being built up. That is why reflection is such a useful part of the therapist's arsenal. It can gain you a great deal of information without you having to give much of yourself away.

Now let's see how Jack does:

Jack: But that's something better left for another conversation or maybe my priest! Anyway, what about you? Where was your last holiday?

Jane: Barcelona.

Jack: Nice. What was that like?

Jane: Fun, it's a very cool place. Lots of trendy restaurants and clubs, great art scene and just a really friendly vibrant atmosphere.

Jack: How long were you there?

Jane: Just three days – it was a short city break.

Jack: Were you on your own?

Jane: No, I actually went with a guy I'd been dating at the time.

Jack: Oh! I see ...

Jane: But nothing serious.

Jack: So did you see the Sagrada Familia?

Jane: Oh yes, that's like a law when you go to Barcelona. One of those must-see places. (*Long awkward pause.*) Have you ever been?

Jane has handed the ball back to Jack to save herself from death by boredom. But why? Why is Jack's conversational style so much less interesting to listen to? The difference is, he is not engaging with Jane's responses at more than a surface level. He just puts out a question, waits for the response and lobbs another question at her without really caring about the answer to the last one. It is not really connecting through conversation and there is no window into Jane's deeper values and beliefs – therefore there is no intimacy. What has Jack uncovered? Jane went to Barcelona for three days with her ex-boyfriend and saw the Sagrada Familia. Fascinating. They might as well be talking about the price of milk at a bus stop.

REFLECTIVE LISTENING: SONAR

Reflection is useful in both long and short interactions to improve communication. It also helps you sidestep some common conversational traps that people often fall into. Let's return briefly to parenting and consider these examples of typical conversations that may take place between teenagers and their parents:

Strategy	Child	Parent	Child's response
Demand	<i>I really don't want to go to school today.</i>	Tough, you're going.	<i>You can't make me!</i>
Sarcasm	<i>I know I should do my homework, I'm just so tired all the time!</i>	Oh please! Wait until you have a real job and then talk to me about tired ...	<i>Whatever ... You don't understand!</i>

Strategy	Child	Parent	Child's response
Accuse	<i>You're always on my case about everything!</i>	Well maybe if you didn't have to be told everything eight times, I wouldn't be! Cloth ears!	<i>I hate you!</i> (And I feel bad about myself now.)
Dismiss	<i>I like maths, but this stuff is impossible – no one could do it!</i>	The teacher wouldn't have assigned it if it was impossible – keep trying.	<i>I am trying! I can't do it – I give up!</i>
Confront	<i>Cleaning my room is pointless – it just gets messy again.</i>	So, you're just going to live in filth until you die buried under your own dirty laundry?!	<i>Yep, that's my plan!</i>

Hmmm ... those don't seem to be working!

With these approaches, the conversation is pretty much over – apart from the slamming doors or shouting that is likely to come next! If you ignore the other person's feelings and try to push them to comply, they naturally dig in and resist. So how can we avoid this reactance? The key to stopping reactance is reflection.

We use SONAR as a mnemonic for the specific techniques of reflective listening. In the same way as sonar detects objects by emitting sound, someone skilled in reflection listens to what is being said, sends a signal back and then listens out for further information that 'bounces back'.

Simple	Simple reflections are just that – a direct and often
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reflections	verbatim restatement of what has just been said. The important thing is to select the correct word/portion to reflect – what do you want to know more about? What is significant about what has been said?
On the one hand reflections	This involves summarising back to the person two conflicting views, conflicting emotions or conflicting evidence. Whatever you place at the end of the sentence is likely to be what they speak about more, so be tactical.
No arguing	Rather than engaging in argument or rationalisations, explore the argumentative statement with reflection and do not argue back. So, statements such as, ‘So what you’re saying to me is ...’ or ‘Can you tell me more about that?’ are helpful and prevent tit-for-tat arguments.
Affirmations	Actively and determinedly seek out positives to build on and ignore the negatives – you can go back to them later. Look hard for them even if they seem buried by negative statements or behaviour as they are the platform for change.
Reframing	Reflect back what has been said using paraphrasing, summarising or by reflecting deeper feelings or values that you think might present. ‘Based on what you said, I think _____ is very important to you.’ This is often most effective when followed by a key question that then moves the conversation forward to the next topic.

Let’s try the earlier examples again using the SONAR strategies :

Strategy	Child	Parent	Child’s response

Strategy	Child	Parent	Child's response
Simple	<i>I really don't want to go to school today.</i>	You really don't feel like going to school today?	<p><i>No, there's all this drama going on with the other girls – it's doing my head in!</i></p> <p>(Drama?)</p>
On the one hand	<i>I know I should do my homework, I'm just so tired all the time!</i>	So, on the one hand you feel really tired, but on the other you know you should do your homework.	<p><i>Well yeah, duh! This is an important year for me. They use your scores to decide which set you're in.</i></p> <p>(And even though you're finding it hard, you want to do well.)</p>

Strategy	Child	Parent	Child's response
No arguing	<i>You're always on my case about everything!</i>	Tell me what's making you feel that way. (Be prepared for more personal digs.)	<p><i>You never just talk to me – you just immediately get on me about stuff: do this, do that! It's annoying ...</i></p> <p>(You feel like all I do is hassle you and we never just talk.)</p>
Affirmation	<i>I like maths, but this stuff is impossible – no one could do it!</i>	Tell me what you like about maths.	<p><i>It's normally one of my best subjects – I like how there's a proper answer to each problem but these are just dumb!</i></p> <p>(It usually seems easy for you but these are really difficult.)</p>

Strategy	Child	Parent	Child's response
Reframing	<i>Cleaning my room is pointless – it just gets messy again.</i>	So, it just seems like a never-ending cycle of mess and that is making you feel frustrated and annoyed, like 'Why bother?'	<i>Yes! Totally ... I don't like it messy but it just always is! It's so depressing ...</i> (So you would prefer it tidy. How can we make it easier do you think?)

We're still likely to encounter some resistance but the conversation is still going.

That allows us to explore the situation more and possibly figure out the root of the problem and therefore a more successful solution. Learning to use reflection in your interactions is the single most significant thing you can do to immediately improve them. As you develop this skill, it will add depth and richness to your conversations and help you build understanding and intimacy. To do this, you need to reflect more than once – try to aim for three reflections on any topic before you move on. If you can be more mindful and persistent, you will start to reap the rewards.

To help you build up these skills let's look at each of these approaches in a bit more detail.

SIMPLE REFLECTIONS

Of all the reflection techniques, simple reflection is probably the easiest. Of course, we still have to be mindful of what we choose to reflect. By carefully listening to what someone has said and reflecting back key elements, we can not only expand our understanding of the other person, but in a strategic sense, we can also guide what areas of interest they tell us more about and possibly uncover important information.

We had a rather comical example from a training event of misfiring a simple reflection. The suspect being interviewed by police stated, ‘We were arguing in the kitchen and it got a bit heated, so I went to leave. I just pushed past her to get by and knocked a potted plant over on my way out – she said I threw it at her, but that’s a lie.’

The interviewer replied, ‘Potted plant?’

Even the suspect looked bemused.

The point is, no one cares about the potted plant – not as much as the words ‘arguing’, ‘got a bit heated’ or ‘pushed past her’. If we’re investigating an assault, we’re not bothered about the plant – we’re interested in words linked to the assault. So, the rule of reflection is: ‘Don’t be distracted by the potted plant’ – use reflection tactically and wisely to learn more about what you are actually interested in finding out more about from a person.

The point of simple reflection is twofold. First it forces you to listen; in order to be able to reflect back the most significant or meaningful part of the statement you have to focus on listening. Second, it signals to the person that you *are* listening. This then leads to encouraging more from them.

Try this one: ‘I know we talked about moving in together, but I just don’t think it’s the right time. Things are so easy the way they are now.’

What should you reflect? Consider what you would want more explanation about.

‘I know we talked about moving in together, but I just don’t think it’s the **right time**. Things are so **easy** the way they are now.’

We could go for ‘right time’ or ‘easy’. Let’s try easy:

‘Easy?’

‘Yeah, my place is so near my work, so I don’t have that awful commute across town. I’m working 10–12-hour days anyway at the moment so it’s not like we’re getting time together during the week. I just think we should hold off a bit longer – earn a bit more money for the down payment for our new place. I don’t like living apart, but I just think it’s sensible right now.’

Now you might not be happy with that answer, but you certainly know more about your partner’s reasoning. They want to continue living apart for mainly practical and financial reasons, not reasons of the heart. Now you know a bit more, you can keep talking about it rather than sliding down the slippery slope into arguing. You might still feel a bit hurt or undervalued but you have more information about what is really motivating their

decision. You don't have to agree, but you do have to keep talking rather than arguing. Arguing stops communication in its tracks and often builds a wall between you and the other person. The goal of reflection is to keep the conversation moving forward, to keep learning more detail until you genuinely understand where the other person is coming from.

ON THE ONE HAND

'On the one hand' reflections are an example of what individuals trained in motivational interviewing call 'developing discrepancies'.

For example, in the statement: 'I know I need to watch my diet and get back to exercising, but it just seems impossible at the moment! There's no time in my day to do anything.'

In response, we could say: 'You can't be that busy! You watched that entire boxset on Netflix this week! You just need to try harder if you really want to make changes.'

And they will want to push us into a hedge, order a pizza and sit back down in front of the TV. Challenge like this is not motivating, it is shaming, and shame is not a pathway to change. When you press the 'bullshit' button on someone, they are likely to feel attacked, rather than supported. Instead, we can tactically reflect the conflict they are feeling and hopefully inch forward towards actual commitment to change: 'So you just feel overloaded and exhausted at the moment, but you really wish you could get back to healthy eating and working out.'

Now they should tell us more about why they want to get back to a healthy lifestyle, which should in turn reinforce their positive motivation. We're hoping for a response like:

'Yeah, when I was going to the gym three times a week and eating healthily, I had so much energy. I was sleeping better as well! I want to get back to that but it's so demoralising to have to start over again.'

Now they have taken themselves to an important point in time where they were motivated in the past, and we can encourage them to go back to that mindset and try again:

'So it feels daunting, but it sounds like it had lots of advantages – more energy, better sleep. What's a small thing you think you could do to get back on that path?'

The skill with discrepancy development is to do it with a spirit of inquiry, curiosity and openness, not judgement, incredulity and disbelief.

Sometimes, holding back an incredulous, ‘Hang on – earlier you said X and now you’re saying Y’ can be difficult.

However, if the person feels judged or like you’re trying to trap them, they will disengage and stop listening. We see this in the context of police interrogation time and time again. It can seem almost irresistible to slam a piece of conflicting evidence on the table and say, ‘Oh yeah? Explain this then!’ This only works in TV dramas. In the real world, such a tactic is exactly what leads to someone clamming up and asking for their solicitor. Cornering someone rarely leads to them suddenly cooperating. Instead, in most cases it leads to them adopting the conversational equivalent of the brace position – they shut down and disengage.

However, artful presentation of discrepancies within statements or evidence can be extremely powerful and avoids this rational ‘cornering’. It allows the person a way to save face and either concoct a story full of holes that we can later prove is a lie or they may even feel able to admit to a lie and tell the truth. Either outcome – deception or admission – gives us information to investigate and evidence to explore to help bring us closer to the truth. One of our interrogator colleagues is fond of saying, ‘I don’t care whether they’re lying, I only care whether they’re talking.’

NO ARGUING: THE REFLECTION TRAPDOOR

Not infrequently, we can end up in tit-for-tat arguments – especially in asymmetric power relationships (boss–employee; parent–child). When we feel attacked or criticised, our instinctive reaction is to argue back. Rapport-based approaches instead recommend ‘rolling into’ the criticism and exploring or reflecting it. Not only does this force the other person to clarify exactly what they are saying, it often neutralises the argument as there is no further fuel being added to the fire. This is the aikido approach to argument, by which you can defend yourself without inflicting harm on your attacker.

STICKS AND STONES

Emily: I was once leading an assessment centre session with 20 or so men who had convictions for domestic abuse offences. As I was handing out paperwork and issuing instructions, Harvey, one of the younger participants, said, ‘You seem a bit tense love, maybe you need to get laid.’ He was sneering at me like a hyena

as he said it, leaning back on the legs of his chair, with his arms behind his head, trying to look cool in front of the other men.

I could feel my emotional brain cringing in embarrassment and discomfort, as well as my face betraying me by going scarlet. Despite all this emotion churning around in my guts, my rational brain knew his comment was nothing to do with me or even to do with sex. It was to do with power. He felt powerless, awkward and judged, so he wanted to tip that power imbalance and pass some of that awkwardness back to me.

I must have paused for a solid five seconds, thinking about what to say next, gradually turning redder and redder. The room was full of tittering and laughter from the other men.

Finally, I said, 'Harvey, why would you say something like that to me?'

'Because I can help you out with that if you want ...' he drawled.

I paused again, amidst more schoolgirl tittering from the other men. I didn't want to start an argument with him so instead I just reflected back to him what he had said: 'OK, so let me get this right, Harvey. You're saying I seem a bit tense and so you are offering, in the middle of your domestic abuse assessment session, to have sex with me to help sort me out. Have I got that right?'

One of the other men guffawed, loudly.

Harvey scowled back at me, 'I don't really want to have sex with you, love. Don't flatter yourself.'

I replied, 'Well, that's good, because I don't want to have sex with you either.'

Cue more tittering from the audience. 'Now that we've established that you and I don't want to have sex with each other, can we get on with what we're here for?' I said, holding out a handout for him. He took the paper from my hand begrudgingly and we got on filling it in.

It was an awkward situation and I still look back on it and cringe. But by reflecting back to Harvey objectively what he was doing ('So what you're saying is ...') it had neutralised the power struggle he was trying to create.

Reflection, while seemingly simple, is not often our instinctive reaction. It certainly wasn't in this case. My emotional brain wanted to: a) ignore it and pretend it wasn't happening, b) challenge it head-on by saying, 'You're being inappropriate – get out' or c) hope the fire alarm would go off and rescue me. But none of those options would have solved my problem.

If I had done a) nothing, I would have looked weak. If I had chosen b) and tackled him head-on, it would have possibly escalated things, especially if he refused to leave.

It also might have made me look a bit dramatic and shrill to the other men who were avidly watching this awkward scene play out. It would then become a tactic to use against me – a challenge to see who could get me to turn the deepest shade of red each week. Instead, by simply reflecting back what he was doing, I was able to neutralise it and move on.

So how can you use this skill? The next time someone says something personal or attacking to you, steady your natural reaction and instead pause and think about what they have actually said and its meaning. Then, as calmly as possible, reflect back the message of what they have said. This could be literal, such as my example with Harvey, or it could be the subtext of what they are saying: what is underneath what they have said?

We experience this frequently in the context of police interviewing terrorist suspects, whose ideology and beliefs are often in direct opposition to their own. The suspect may personally attack the interviewer and what they stand for, saying something like:

'You don't care what's really going on in the world. You just sit there watching telly and eating your fish and chips, waiting for your next pay cheque. People are starving, being made homeless, children are being blown up in their beds. What have you done about it? Nothing!'

What might be your immediate instinctive response? To defend yourself? What if you try to explain that you have dedicated your life to helping others by joining the police? Do you think they will accept this response? Say instead you list all the things you have done to support charities: donating old blankets to the homeless or £3 a month to Water Aid. Will they

accept this as enough? Say you try to explain that you don't even like fish and chips.

The point is, they will not accept these responses because they want the argument. So do not argue. Instead, reflect the message that is resting underneath what they are saying:

'It sounds like you feel most people just go about their lives and can't be bothered to do anything to stop people suffering around the world. But you obviously care about it a great deal. What have you done to stop people suffering?'

With this response, they will hopefully go on to explain more about their views and feelings and how it has led them down the particular path they have chosen. They may still sling the occasional insult at you and what you represent, but the important thing is that they are doing the talking, and you have not had to answer the question. You are not spending precious minutes arguing and trying to defend yourself or talking in circles about whether £3 a month is enough to qualify you as a good person.

This is the power of the reflection trapdoor. You can escape an argument by reflecting back what is *underneath* what has been said, which often results in the other person further explaining their position. To further understand this technique, let's look at a non-police example.

Imagine your partner starts the following conversation with you :

'I've been feeling so out of shape lately. I know I've put on weight and none of my clothes fit properly anymore! It's so depressing. Gillian has been doing that slimming plan and looks amazing. Don't you think she looks amazing? I bet you fancy her, don't you?'

DO NOT ANSWER THAT QUESTION. It is a trap! If you say no, your partner is likely to think you are lying. If you say yes, you're probably going to wind up sleeping on the sofa. So it is time to break out the reflection trapdoor. What is your partner really saying in this conversation? Does she really want a yes or no response to whether you fancy her best friend? Even if she thinks she does, she probably doesn't.

So what can you say back that will not result in an argument? **HELP!** Let's try to reflect what is underneath what is being said :

'It sounds like you are feeling really down on yourself at the moment and a bit out of shape. I think everybody feels like that sometimes, I know I do! Our diet hasn't been that great lately. Maybe we should both try this slimming thing that Gillian is doing? Is it expensive?'

Whew! Now hopefully we are talking about signing up for a slimming plan or counting carbs or getting a spin bike together – anything other than whether or not you fancy your partner's best friend!

What if we haven't quite escaped though? Say she says back, 'Yeah, maybe. But do you fancy her? I bet you do. I know she's your type.'

Hmmm. Now what? Reflect again? Reflection can be overused. We often recommend to interrogators to follow the rule of three when using reflection – you can try to escape three times and if you find yourself still caught then you may have to answer.

So you could reply, 'Type? What's my type then?'

She might say back, getting a bit annoyed now: 'You know – sporty, athletic, nothing wobbly in the wrong place. Just admit it, I know you fancy her.'

If that happens, then it's time to use 'the toddler and the T-shirt' technique, discussed on [page 86](#):

'Listen, I know you're feeling low and a bit down on yourself at the moment. That's why you keep asking me if I fancy Gillian, but I think what you are really asking me is "Do I still fancy you?" The answer is I do – always, every day – whether your jeans are a bit tighter or not! I will always fancy you because I love you, not bloody Gillian.'

In this case, you have addressed the issue that you suspect is underneath your partner's question rather than answering the direct one they have asked. Strangely, by cutting to the heart of the matter rather than giving an answer, this response should allow you to move forward.

If someone simply won't let go of the provocative question without a response, then we have to consider that what they really want *is* the argument, not the answer. Then the choice you have is either to indulge in the argument or to simply walk away from a conversation that is not going to go anywhere positive anyway.

AFFIRMATIONS

Unsurprisingly, most people want to receive positive rather than negative feedback and, where possible, we want to reinforce good behaviour rather than focus on the negative. Affirmation is a key component of reflection as it demands that you specifically try to decipher the positives from what someone is saying and reflect them back to enhance and reinforce them over the negatives.

There is a very extensive body of research in behavioural psychology that shows positive reinforcement or rewarding good behaviour is a much more successful means to change both human and animal behaviour. In contrast, the effect of punishment of bad behaviour is far less successful.

Making sarcastic digs about someone's diet will not help them eat healthier. Criticising someone for never being happy in their job will not suddenly help them find their joy. Telling someone off for being late is not likely to encourage them to be on time the next time.

With that in mind, when we want to have some influence over others' behaviour, we want to try to focus on the positives rather than the negatives whenever possible. This doesn't mean you completely ignore all bad behaviour, but look hard for those actions or attitudes you can support and reinforce. Miller and Rollnick sometimes refer to this as 'finding the flowers among the weeds'. So don't hand someone a bouquet of weeds in an effort to encourage them to change.

Even if the behaviour is quite extreme, we need to resist the urge to express judgement and continue to look for the positive. The more abhorrent the behaviour or negative the statements surrounding it, the harder it can be to find something positive. You may find yourself thinking, 'There are no flowers here, only weeds!'

We experience this regularly with clients, some of whom have done awful things to the people they are supposed to love the most. But by looking very hard for the positives to build upon, we have often been able to help them find a pathway to change. Even when it is difficult or indeed seems impossible, we need to strive to seek the positive. Sometimes that one positive can be the small foundation on which change is built.

CUTTING YOUR NOSE OFF TO SPITE YOUR FACE

Emily: Several years ago, I was working with a client who had committed a severe assault on his girlfriend. He had come home from work to find their two-year-old sat in the middle of the floor, red-faced and crying, saying, 'Mummy, Mummy' over and over. She was covered in tears and her nose was streaming – she had obviously been crying for some time. Mum was on the sofa on her phone chatting to a friend.

'Why haven't you picked up the baby?' he said, angrily.

'I'm on the phone,' she said, rolling her eyes at him.

His response to this was extreme. He smacked the phone away from her face, bruising her jaw. He then dragged her off the sofa by her legs giving her carpet burns up her back and proceeded to kick her in the stomach several times.

The challenge in that sea of violence and awfulness is to uncover what the positive value is that you can start to build on.

Children shouldn't be left to be upset. This is our starting point for change. The man's behaviour indicates that this is a view he holds, regardless of the terrible way he decided to enforce it.

After he had described to me what had happened, I said, 'It is clear that you were upset that your daughter had been ignored and that you don't think children should just be left to be upset.'

'That's right,' he said adamantly. 'I got taken into care when I was six 'cause my mum got done for neglect, so it really set me off, seeing her just ignore the baby like that and let her cry.'

By concentrating on the positive, rather than the multitude of negatives, he has helped me understand this value and also told me a bit more about its origins. However, he has also revealed a glaring discrepancy between his own values and his behaviour during this incident.

On the one hand, he does not feel children should be left to be upset; he feels it is neglectful and harmful to them. However, on the other hand, by assaulting Mum in front of her child, he has harmed his daughter more than she ever would have been from Mum ignoring her requests to be picked up.

In order to reflect back this discrepancy without it appearing judgemental or accusatory, we need to reinforce the positive value first and then juxtapose it with his behaviour. This is another example of the developing discrepancies technique mentioned earlier (see [page 127](#)) and it is a very powerful way to challenge people over inconsistencies between what they say and what they do.

'It's clear you want your daughter to feel loved and looked after and you didn't want her to go through some of the things you did as a child. Tell me about what your daughter was doing during the assault,' I said quietly.

He paused for a long moment before he said, ‘She was screaming her head off. I can still hear it.’

After another long pause, he looked up at me and said, ‘What I did just made it even worse. I don’t know why I did that. Why did I do that?’

It is so much more powerful to hold up a mirror and let people recognise their own flaws than for us to simply lob criticism at them in the hope they will change. People who are under attack naturally seek to defend themselves. So do not attack – instead, reflect and eventually they will be able to see what you can see for themselves.

We cannot build a ladder to change without affirmation. Think of your own attempts to change your behaviour (such as dieting, speeding, smoking, leaving things to the last minute, being disorganised, etc.). What do other people, and even the voice in your own head (perhaps especially that voice), focus on? The negative. It whispers away in our ear: ‘You have no willpower’, ‘It won’t last’, ‘You’ve always been this way’, ‘You always fail.’

It can be very challenging to try to reframe this in a positive way. But if the voice was instead saying: ‘You graciously accept your failures’, ‘You keep trying’, ‘You can change’, ‘Never give up’, then our brain is working with us rather than against us. Keep focusing on the positive when encouraging others and especially yourself when you are trying to change.

REFRAMING

This is perhaps the hardest of the various reflection techniques since it requires the listener to listen carefully and process what has been said, and then reinterpret and draw inferences in order to move the conversation forward at a deeper level.

If simple reflections are a direct echo back and ‘on the one hand’ reflections develop two or more discrepancies, reframing is taking what has been said and inferring what might have been meant by the statement or even the values and beliefs underneath the surface. It requires looking deeper at the meaning or message behind what someone is saying. This builds on our previous discussion about the reflection trapdoor and identifying positives.

When you reflect values and beliefs accurately, even if they have been unspoken, they have a powerful effect on the speaker. They feel you've understood them at a deeper level and the process of talking things through often results in them knowing their own mind more clearly to help them make decisions.

In Emily's work with troubled kids, she and her colleagues use these strategies all the time. The kids are often rebelling against authority – cutting class, smoking dope, drinking, committing petty crime. They feel like their life is not going anywhere, no one cares what they think, so what is the point of sticking to the rules? The trick is to find the thing they care enough about to be worth the effort of changing. We cannot convince them by listing our reasons for them to change; we have to find out what their reason for change would be and build on that if we are going to be successful. Remember – it is about achieving the goal.

One of the girls we were working with was incredibly bright but also incredibly violent. She would regularly get into fights in and out of school. She had thrown a chair down two flights of stairs at a teacher and had broken another student's finger during a fight.

We might want her to stop this behaviour for all sorts of reasons: because it was ruining her grades and chance of graduating; because it may lead to a criminal record; because it was hurting other people; because it might lead to her being expelled or ending up in prison. The problem was she didn't care about any of these things. They were not her values. Our task was to figure out what she did care about enough to change her behaviour.

She loved music and was desperate to get a place on a DJ-ing mentorship programme run by the school. She wanted to be a DJ in clubs in Ibiza – that was the dream. She imagined herself touring the world, DJ-ing at festivals. This was the lever. We discussed that to be part of the mentorship programme you had to have six months' solid attendance at all your classes. She couldn't achieve that in time, so we negotiated a deal with the head that if she could have perfect class attendance for the next four weeks she could be considered for a place. We also discussed the fact that her drug use made it harder for her to concentrate in lessons and that it was risky for her future plans. She would have problems with international travel, especially to the USA, with drug convictions if she was ever caught. For the first time, there was a glimmer of concern across her face. Suddenly, her behaviour was

threatening her own goals and desires – not other people’s – and that meant she suddenly cared.

Take the following examples and see if you can identify a core value and belief that is held by the person speaking. Then consider how you would reframe what they have said back to them to see if you are correct.

Mandy (aged 20) is in her second year at university and is struggling: ‘I’m just finding things really hard at the moment. I didn’t do very well on my mid-terms and so it just seems demoralising to keep plugging away at it. I really thought I would like biochemistry – I was top of the science class in secondary school. But here, I’m probably lucky if I’m in the top half of the class. What’s the point?’

Suggested answer: ‘It sounds like you feel demoralised that you aren’t doing as well at University as you did at secondary school. I think you believe that if you aren’t the best at what you are doing then there is no point in doing it.’

Trevor (aged 36) is frustrated with his life: ‘I’m just so fed up of the boring wheel of tasks. By the time we get in, make tea, wash the kids’ sports kit, wash the kids, feed the pets, tidy the kitchen, put the kids to bed – urghh! It’s never-ending! We’re too tired to speak to each other, wouldn’t dream of having a night out, and you can forget about sex. We certainly have ... Sometimes, I just stay in the car for a bit longer so I don’t have to face the boring grind that my life has become.’

Suggested answer: ‘It sounds like you feel your life has become all about mundane tasks and that there isn’t much time for any fun or joy. I think you believe that family life doesn’t leave much space for you and your partner as a couple and you miss that.’

Bradley (aged 27) is looking for a relationship: ‘The dating scene now is crazy. Nobody is looking for a committed relationship. You just have to act like you couldn’t care less if somebody is interested or not, if they call you back or not, or even if they go off with someone else in the same night. I hate it.

How the hell are you supposed to find somebody to settle down with when it's all just about acting like you couldn't give a shit about anyone?!

Suggested answer: 'It sounds like you feel people aren't interested in long-term relationships anymore, but that is exactly what you are looking for. I think you believe that other people might want that too, but they just act like they don't.'

As we've said, reframing is the trickiest of all the techniques and requires a fair amount of practice. Hold on to some of the key phrases that signal to the other person that you understand the deeper message behind what they have said, such as, 'It sounds like you feel ...' or 'It seems like you care about ...' Try using these statements in your next conversation with someone with whom you are trying to improve your relationship. The key to using reframing well is the exact same thing that is relevant to the other types of reflection – genuine, non-judgemental curiosity.

LESSONS

1. ***Appreciate the value of values.*** Reflection can help you to uncover the deeper core values and beliefs that are actually underlying people's motives and behaviour. This understanding is useful in building connection as well as gaining more information from people.
2. ***Avoid the 'righting reflex'.*** When we hear someone explaining why they can't control their eating, smoking or drinking habits, or indeed asking for advice on whatever topic, the immediate temptation is to offer advice or criticism. Consider that in order to help someone, it is often better to help them work out how to help themselves rather than just offer possible solutions or try to shame them into changing.
3. ***Practise sending SONAR signals.*** The rapport-based version of SONAR includes a set of techniques that enable you to grasp some of the fundamental reflection tactics. These range from simple reflections of keywords to reframing the deeper values you uncover. You may already use some of these in conversation. Try to widen your repertoire and practise those you are less familiar with using.
4. ***All things in moderation.*** In any rapport-based efforts, you need to be able to use techniques in a fluid and organic way. Clunky and endless

simple reflections or constantly saying ‘on the one hand A, but on the other B’ will of course backfire. In the early days of practising such things, it can be painfully robotic but, as with any complex skill, practice makes perfect. Recognise that conversations with others are opportunities for practice and are also likely to improve your understanding and connection to people, especially those closest to you.

CHAPTER 5

POWER, INTIMACY AND THE ANIMAL CIRCLE

Do not be so sweet as to be gobbled up, nor so bitter as to be spat out.

– **Pashto folk saying**

In the previous two chapters, we discussed the foundations of rapport-building: honesty, empathy, autonomy and reflection (HEAR). They will serve you well in improving communication and connection across all relationships and situations. However, not all situations are the same and not all people have the same strengths. Some people are natural leaders, others thrive on conflict, while others are natural carers or prefer to stay in the background. Everyone has an interpersonal comfort zone. It can be very difficult to move out of this and manage interactions you find more difficult. It is very tempting to simply try to avoid social situations you find awkward. In this chapter, we will encourage you to push past your comfort zone and learn to be more versatile so that no situation is too daunting to manage.

This brings us to mastering the ‘animal circle’, which uses a totemic animal to represent each of the four primary styles of communication. In later chapters we will go through each animal in detail, but it is worth becoming acquainted with the basics now :

- **T-Rex: conflict.** To master dealing with conflict you must learn to remove aggressive, demeaning and punitive ways of interacting from your repertoire. Good arguers are assertive, frank and forthright, but

not attacking, punitive or sarcastic. It is often the area people find the hardest to master and also requires the most self-control over your emotions.

- **Mouse: capitulate.** To master letting others take control you must avoid appearing weak and instead learn how to sit back, listen and take advice with patience and good grace. Good followers are humble but not weak.
- **Lion: control.** To master Lion, you need to be able to take charge and lead effectively. The risk is that your efforts may become too controlling, dogmatic or pedantic. Good leaders are supportive, set the agenda clearly and firmly, and lead by inspiring devotion and confidence in others.
- **Monkey: cooperate.** To master friendly cooperation and teamwork, you must be wary of overfamiliarity and inappropriate intimacy. Good friends use warmth, conversation and consideration for others to build affection.

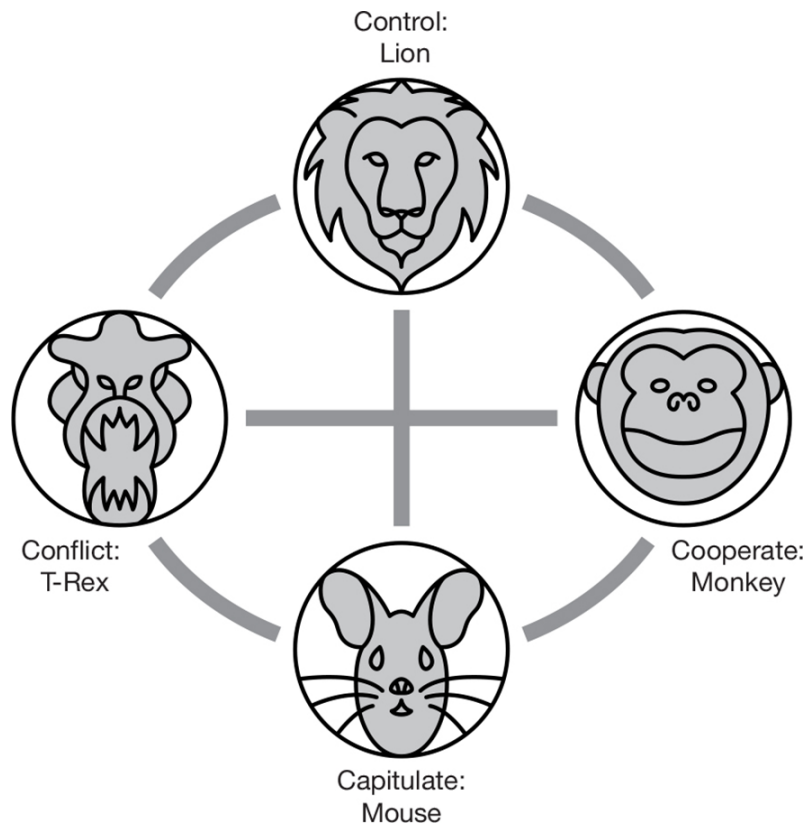
In this chapter we will explain how the animal circle works and help you learn how to read situations to decide which animal style will be most productive. We will also help you determine which animal style you are most comfortable communicating in and which needs the most improvement.

The goals are for you to be able to:

1. Diagnose a situation correctly: 'What animal am I dealing with?'
2. Avoid instinctive reactions that might hinder communication: 'What animal am I tempted to be in response and will it get me what I want?'
3. Be able to operate in any of the animal styles comfortably and confidently: 'Can I communicate in all four styles with confidence and ease?'

Subsequent chapters will take you through each style to help you recognise what you already do well and where you need to work harder at developing your interpersonal skills.

Now let's have a look at the model and how it works:



The Animal Circle Model of Human Interaction

You can immediately see that Lion and the Mouse are opposite each other on the circle. Imagine that the vertical line that runs between them is measuring 'power': who wants to be in charge of who? When you are in Lion mode, you want the person you are interacting with to capitulate. You don't want them trying to also be a Lion, vying for control. You want them to submit to a greater or lesser extent.

In the opposite position, when you adopt a Mouse-like, follower stance (capitulate), you are hoping that the other person you are interacting with will take charge and take on the Lion role.

In a nutshell, on the vertical power dimension, Lion behaviour seeks to encourage Mouse, and Mouse behaviour encourages Lion.

T-Rex and Monkey are also opposing forces – one is about conflict and one is about cooperation. However, unlike Lion and Mouse where opposites attract, the styles on this axis push apart. This horizontal axis is about intimacy. So, at a simplistic level, if we imagine that the T-Rex represents hate and the Monkey is love, hate cannot encourage love, only more hate. Love encourages love.

When we adopt a style of interaction that is about conflict and distance, we are inviting the same type of behaviour back. Equally when we adopt an intimate, warmer, more cooperative style like Monkey, we are hoping for warm, cooperative behaviours in return. On the horizontal intimacy axis, opposites do not attract. Instead, birds of a feather flock together – conflict begets conflict and cooperation begets cooperation.

Needless to say, this is an extreme simplification of human interactions but using this as a kind of shorthand will enable you to make quick associations with particular styles of communicating.

Broadly, all interactions will follow a set of interpersonal ‘rules’ based on the vertical ‘power’ dimension and the horizontal ‘intimacy’ dimension. Dominant Lion behaviour encourages others to behave like submissive mice.

For example, you might be the Lion when you are trying to cook Christmas dinner and you’ve delegated tasks to other members of the family: ‘Chop the sprouts, baste the turkey, slice the carrots, set the table please.’ You want everyone to know their assigned tasks and complete them as part of the team, but you are in charge: ‘I am the Lion, I am the leader – you follow my instructions.’

Conversely, submissive Mouse behaviour encourages dominant Lion behaviour. Have you ever tried to get your teenager to tell you about their day? You may start very warm and conversational (friendly Monkey) and end up asking a series of more and more demanding questions (bossy Lion) trying to get the conversation going. Avoidant (quiet Mouse) behaviour brings out the demanding Lion in us as we insist on a more detailed response than ‘Yeah, it was OK.’

However, on the horizontal axis, T-Rex communication often prompts aggression back. When someone shouts or swears in an argument, it opens the gate for the other person to respond in the same way. How often have you found a discussion turning into an argument as both people try to top the other and things start to become personal and attacking?

It may have started so well with something like, ‘When you put the baby’s plastic dishes in the top of the dishwasher they upturn and fill with water. Please don’t do that.’ A factual, direct statement followed by a reasonable request (Lion).

This might be met with an ‘OK, sorry’ (Mouse).

But this dynamic is often then spoiled by the next line which might be something like, 'I've asked you a million times. Why can't you remember?!' (T-Rex).

This is likely to get a very different and probably defensive response of: 'Are you serious? You're having a go at me over having to empty water out of the baby's bowls? At least I'm helping! Why don't you get some real problems to worry about?' (T-Rex).

Whoops ... And now you're both arguing! And the person is very unlikely to comply the next time, because it is our problem, not theirs. So we had a Lion/Mouse interaction, which has ended up as T-Rex/T-Rex.

Similarly, and no less powerfully, Monkey behaviour begets Monkey behaviour. Being cooperative, warm and friendly instinctively generates the same behaviour back in others. A warm smile is hard not to return. Have you ever found it impossible to say no to someone who was being warm and friendly towards you? You may have started firmly committed to resisting but as the other person is friendly and warm you cannot help becoming friendlier in return and being pulled towards cooperating with them. Street touts rely on this when they approach with a big smile and ask where you are from and if you're having a nice holiday. Suddenly you find yourself buying a ticket for an open-top bus tour.

In nearly all interactions, we adopt one of these four key communication styles. We are either leading the interaction (the Lion) or following (the Mouse). We are either cooperating (the Monkey) or in conflict (the T-Rex).

The quick shorthand for using the model to diagnose an interaction is to ask two simple questions:

1. Does this person want me to be psychologically higher (Lion) or lower (Mouse) than them in this situation?
2. Does this person want a psychological scrap with me (T-Rex) or a hug (Monkey)?

That should give you an idea of the 'power' dynamic the other person is trying to create.

Once you have this basic premise, you can use the model to predict where someone wants you on the circle. It doesn't mean you have to go there but you will understand what response they are trying to generate and can adjust as you see fit.

Consider three people you know well: your partner, your child, your boss, your best friend, maybe your nemesis in high school :

- Can you decide which animal they are most of the time?
- Which animal are you when you are around them?

Are you starting to see some patterns emerge? In order to navigate these positions successfully you must know yourself. You will need to ask yourself which animal you are most like. Are you good at leading and taking responsibility but less good at following and taking direction from others? Do you struggle making a perfectly reasonable complaint? Do you, in fact, avoid conflict whenever possible but have no problem giving praise and showing intimacy?

If we aren't mindful of these principles, we can end up being pushed around the circle by other people, never feeling in control of our reactions and falling into bad behaviours that are unhelpful. If you try to compete for power every time you have to work together with a colleague who always likes to be the Lion, every project will be a battle. If you are led into argument by your teenage son's sarcasm (bad T-Rex behaviour) and respond back with a dose of sarcasm (more bad T-Rex behaviour) you are letting them set the dynamic.

THE GOOD AND THE BAD

We are not saying that all T-Rex-type behaviour is bad, and that we should all strive to be cuddly, happy Monkeys with everyone we meet. In fact, we are certain some people's seventh circle of hell would involve all of us going around smiling at each other, high-fiving and telling each other we're awesome all the time. We need each style of communication to navigate the full breadth of life's interactions – even T-Rex has its place for effective communication. This is why rapport and interpersonal skills are so much more complex than just 'be nice'.

In fact, interpersonal theorists have suggested that each style of communication has a good version and a bad version. Esteemed psychologist and marriage guidance counsellor, John Birtchnell, specifically composed two versions of the circle: one that he referred to as 'adaptive relating', or those behaviours that would lead to positive communication,

and the other as ‘maladaptive relating’, which had a negative damaging effect on communication.¹

As such, in our model each animal has a good and a bad version. Positive relating involves ways of interacting that promote connection and communication, and negative relating disrupts or discourages communication. Importantly, on the positive circle, no position is better or worse than any other. There is no ‘winning’ animal. The skill is knowing when to use the right style at the right time.

Here are some key characteristics to help you recognise the good and bad animal styles:

Confrontation (‘T-Rex’): challenging or attacking the other person	
GOOD T-REX	BAD T-REX
Frank, forthright and critical, this sort of person is very direct. What they say may sometimes appear blunt but it is often honest and never personal or purposefully hurtful. Their attitude is: ‘Let me be clear. This is the bottom line.’	Often aggressive and intimidating, this sort of person seeks to control others through fear, either of unpleasant consequences or potential violence. They may be verbally insulting, attacking or sarcastic. Their attitude is: ‘Do what I say, or else.’
Capitulate (‘Mouse’): submitting or giving in to the other party	
GOOD MOUSE	BAD MOUSE
Humble, patient, pensive, this sort of person treats others with respect. They may seek out support or reassurance, or may want to cautiously assess the situation fully before acting. Their attitude is: ‘I’m listening and observing. I’ll chip in when I’m ready.’	This sort of person is avoidant, weak and hesitant. They will try to dodge confrontation whenever possible and may appear uncertain and lacking in confidence. They may be formulaic or hide behind a script. Their attitude is: ‘I don’t really know what I’m doing – you do it for me.’

Confrontation ('T-Rex'): challenging or attacking the other person	
GOOD T-REX	BAD T-REX
Cooperate ('Monkey'): working collaboratively or in concert with the other person	
GOOD MONKEY	BAD MONKEY
Cooperative individuals seek to get others to cooperate through support and encouragement. They are appropriately warm and affectionate to the context they are in. Their attitude is: 'We're a team – together we can do this. I'm here for you.'	This sort of person blurs the boundaries of relationships, be they friendships or professional. They are overly intimate and may make others uncomfortable with their affection. They want to be liked at all costs and may appear fawning or desperate. Their attitude is: 'We are all friends here.'
Control ('Lion'): seeking dominance or power over the other person	
GOOD LION	BAD LION
In charge, considers themselves a leader, makes clear decisions, and likes to be in control. Their attitude is: 'Listen to me – I know what to do.'	Bossy, dogmatic, controlling, this sort of person takes over completely, ignores others' opinions, interrupts and overrules others. Their attitude is: 'My way or the highway.'

Can you think of people who fall into these four different categories? Can you think of times you've been each of these different animals? Which do you relate to the most? If you go bad, which animal do you tend to adopt? Which version of the good animal do you struggle with most?²

PARENTING AND FRIENDSHIPS


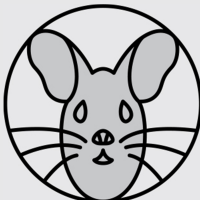
We originally devised this simplified version to help teach communication skills to parents and children as young as five years old, but it can equally apply to adult–adult relationships, whether at work, with family or in platonic or romantic relationships. It provides a shared model of understanding, allowing conversations with even very young children like:

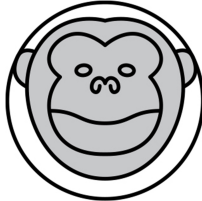

- Which animal are you most of the time when you are at home?
- What about at school?
- Which animal is Mummy most of the time? What about Daddy?
- Which animal do you feel like being when Mummy tells you to clean your room?

Suddenly, a five-year-old can describe their social interactions and relationships in a clear way that can be easily understood by them and their parents. They even start to refer to the model to understand and interpret each other's behaviour, saying things like: 'You don't have to T-Rex at me Mum, I'm coming now!' (child) or 'I'm the Lion in this house so that means you need to get ready when I ask you to' (parent).

DIFFERENT STYLES OF PARENTING :		
Good		Bad

DIFFERENT STYLES OF PARENTING :

Good		Bad
<p>A good T-Rex parent is able to hold their ground and not give in if rules have been broken or boundaries are crossed. They can give clear firm message when required (e.g. 'You cannot go out this weekend', 'No more toys – it's time for bed.'). The child knows they cannot get around the good T-Rex parent.</p>		<p>Bad T-Rex gains compliance by using scary or aggressive behaviours, such as threats (e.g. 'Do it or else', 'Wait until your dad gets home') or possibly escalating to shouting or swearing. The child obeys because they are afraid of the T-Rex parent.</p>
<p>The good Mouse parent can apologise to their child without losing respect. They show that they will listen to their child and respect the child's need to feel some control over their decisions.</p>		<p>Bad Mouse parent has given over the dominant role in the household to their child; the child sets their own rules around curfew, school, eating and sleeping. The bad Mouse parent may be disengaged from their child.</p>

DIFFERENT STYLES OF PARENTING :		
Good		Bad
<p>The good Monkey parent-child relationship is based on friendship and teamwork. The good Monkey parent will teach lessons by example, have fun and know their child as a person.</p>		<p>The risk for the bad Monkey parent is becoming too much like a friend rather than a parent, where discipline is lax or non-existent and adult-child boundaries may be blurred.</p>
<p>The good Lion parent is in charge; the child sees them as the boss. There are clear rules and expectations, and clear consequences if they aren't followed.</p>		<p>The risk for the bad Lion parent is being too rigid and inflexible or expecting obedience and compliance at all times and in all things. They parent from the position of 'Why? Because I said so.'</p>

Equally, you could also apply these principles to a romantic relationship. Ask yourself:

- Which animal are you most of the time when you are at home with your romantic partner? What about in public?
- Which animal is your romantic partner like most of the time?
- What animals are you when you argue? Do you clash because you are both lions vying for control? Or do you or your partner become personal, attacking or sarcastic with each other when you argue?

As you can see, the categories are not based on the actual animal behaviour but rather a set of defined characteristics. In other words, when considering your own communication style or mode of parenting or partnership, don't be too literal! For instance, we have labelled cooperative behaviour as 'Monkey-like' but you may think of ways in which real monkeys behave that is not very cooperative at all (such as fighting, stealing and flinging poo). Try not to get too hung up on this and remember they are archetypes – a sort of shorthand.

And, of course, if you don't like the animals we use, consider other ways to help you remember the four archetypes. Some people prefer to just stick to the terms control, cooperate, capitulate and confront – that is fine too.

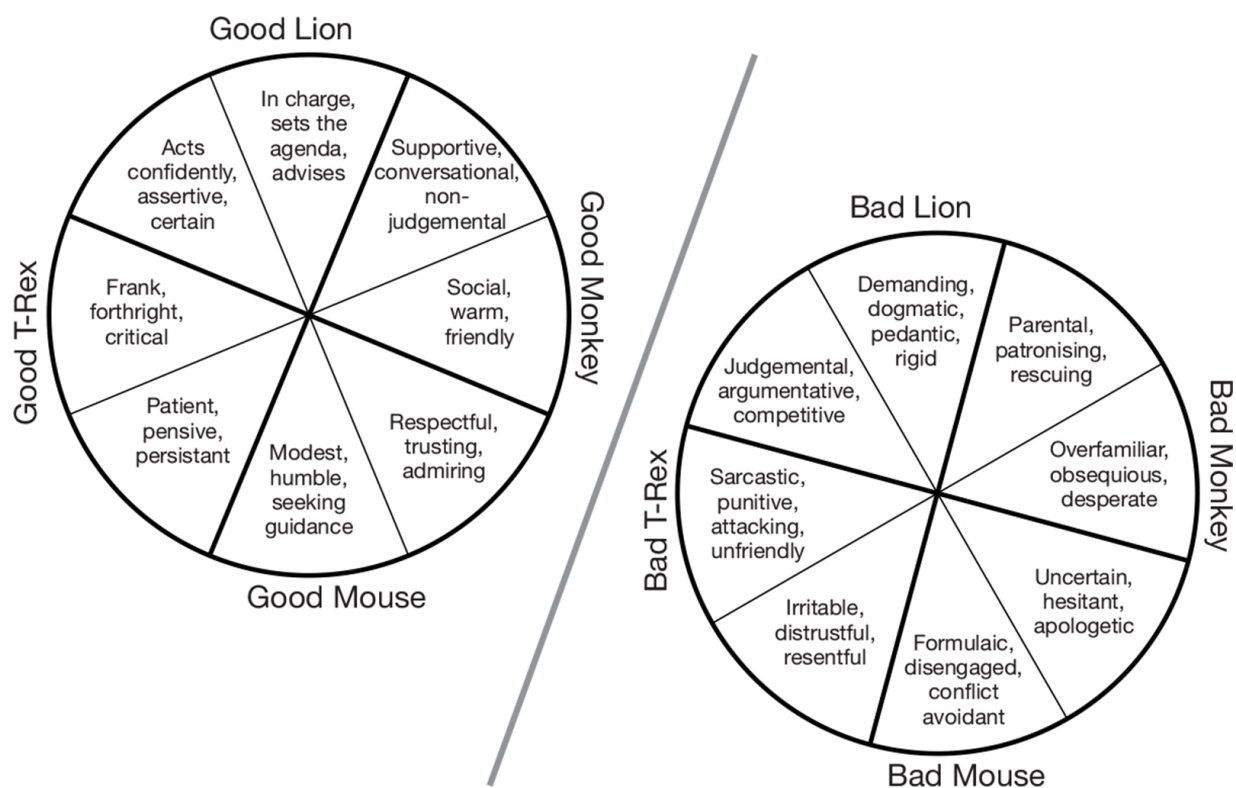
While we might be born with dispositions to one of the key four styles, we need to develop skills in each of them. So, even if you are naturally a shy Mouse, sometimes you must assert yourself and be the Lion. Even if you are naturally a friendly Monkey, sometimes you must be critical or firm with others as a T-Rex. To be mature and have a degree of versatility is the measure of our ability to communicate as adults and manage the complexity of adult life.³

There are three key skills we will help you to develop:

1. ***Recognising your own behaviours.*** Knowing what animal style you naturally adopt most of the time and those styles you need to avoid or develop further.
2. ***Recognising other people's behaviours.*** Diagnosing the animal style other people are using in order to respond effectively and get the most out of an interaction.
3. ***Being versatile.*** Knowing how to use the full range of styles of communication to become interpersonally versatile – how to communicate in all the animal styles. This is the sign of expert interpersonal skill and can substantially improve rapport in your relationships.

Ultimately, we want to replace bad animal behaviours with good ones. Ideally, we want to master all four styles. You should not put too much pressure on yourself. You will inevitably slip back into habits, some of which may have been learned over a lifetime. Forgive yourself for these slips. They are normal and we are all prone to them. Failing and trying is fine ... it's the not trying that means you are stuck or complacent.

The animal types map on to the circular model shown on [page 158](#). This allows you to apply the principles we discussed and visualise the good and bad versions in a more interactive way. You can see in the figure overleaf that we have now added some more segments to illustrate more subtle blends of behaviours. So where we said, for example, that Lion was at the most northerly position and Monkey at the easterly position, consider behaviours such as supportive conversational and non-judgemental as a blend of Lion and Monkey (north east) or acting confident, being assertive and displaying certainty as a blend of T-Rex/Lion (north west). This gives us a more nuanced model that better represents the idea that many behaviours are a blend of power and intimacy.



In our interrogation research those officers who used behaviours on the good circle maintained more engaged and cooperative interviewee behaviour. Communicating using behaviours from the bad circle led to resistance or disengagement. And, of course, disengagement led to a decrease in information.

Consider the last difficult interaction you had with someone. Where were they on the circles? Where were you? How did you both move around the

wheel as the interaction developed? What approach could you have tried instead?

We found that interviewers who showed mastery of the skills on the good circle (but also had a few bad behaviours) fared less well than interviewers who had fewer good skills but – crucially – had *no* behaviour on the bad circle. In other words, when they were good it was good, but when they were bad, it was catastrophic. In terms of building rapport, what is more important than using good behaviours is a complete absence of the bad ones.

This research shows that the single most important first rule of rapport-building is to try as best you can not to use any bad animal behaviour. In particular bad T-Rex is especially damaging. That is why in [Chapter 6](#) we will start by showing the awful consequences of harsh attacking T-Rex-type behaviour and how that can lead to the complete and utter dissolution of a relationship.

WHICH ANIMAL ARE YOU?

It may be that you immediately have a feeling about which animal category you are most like. However, this section will help you to work out which animal style you are strongest at and which is not in your nature.

To illustrate this, consider the following example between a parent and child.

Mum, Sarah, has had a phone call from school that her daughter, Lucy, was late for maths after returning from lunch. She is waiting to confront her about this when Lucy gets home but it's now after 4pm and she still hasn't returned from school which finished at 3:20. Sarah is sat on the sofa, fuming, thinking about how disrespectful Lucy is and that she would never have behaved like that at her age.

Consider what animal Sarah is priming herself to be when Lucy finally gets home. What animal style is this likely to bring out of Lucy in response.

At 4:30, Lucy finally comes through the door and chucks her bag and coat on the floor and starts to head upstairs to her room.

'Lucy!', shouts Sarah, 'Come back down here!' (*demanding*)

'What?', says Lucy, dragging her heels and rolling her eyes, 'What do you want? Is it 'cause I didn't hang up my coat? Sooorreeee!'

‘It’s not your coat – although that’s another thing. *(pedantic)* Where have you been?’, says Sarah, hands on hips at the bottom of the stairs now. *(demanding)*

‘Just hanging out with my mates ...’, mutters Lucy. *(avoidant)*

‘What about at lunch? Where did you go? *(accusatory)* Were you with your mates then as well?’, says Sarah, voice a bit shrill and accusatory. *(sarcastic)*

‘We just got some food in town – it was Maddie’s birthday’, says Lucy. *(defensive)*

‘So you went into town and then straight back to school?’, says Sarah, laying the trap. *(competitive)*

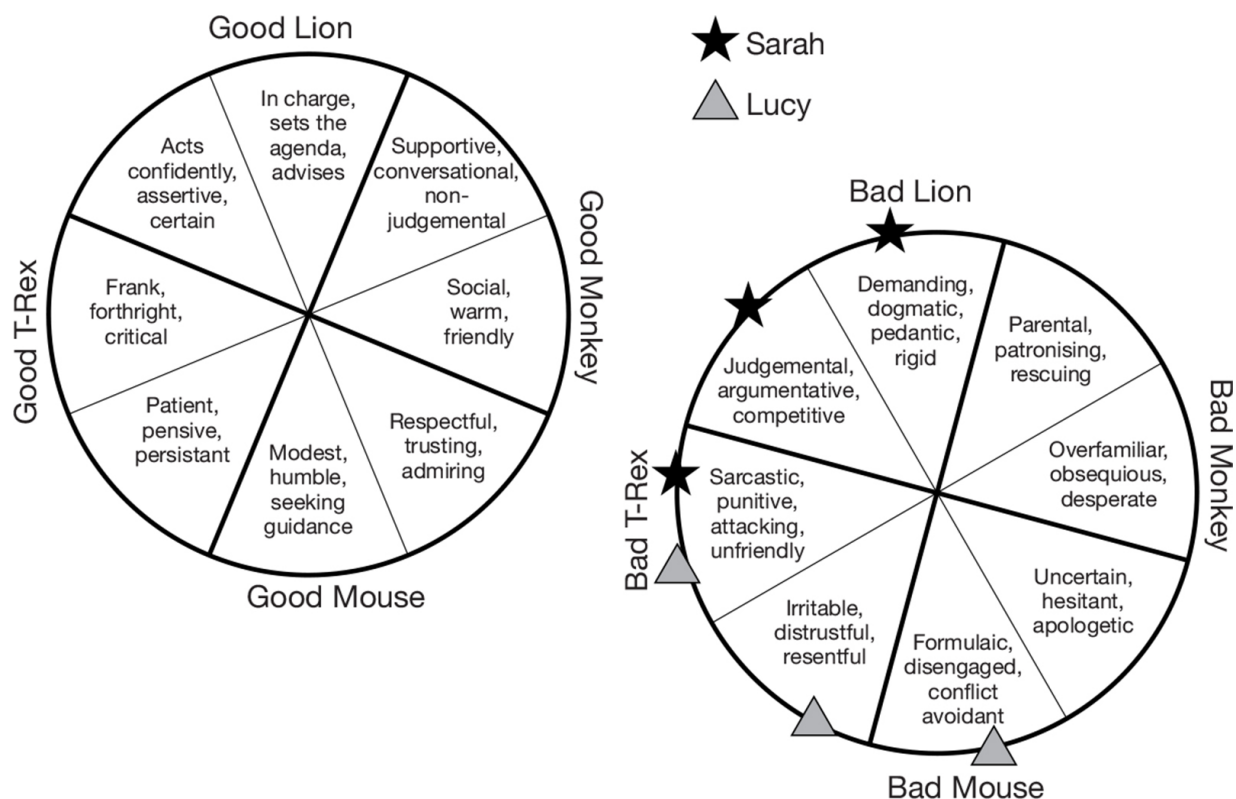
‘Yep’, says Lucy, landing right in it.

‘You’re a liar!’, shouts Sarah, *(attacking)* ‘School phoned and said you were over 15 minutes late for maths, that you swanned in and when the teacher challenged you, you just laughed.’ *(accusatory)*

‘That isn’t even true! Oh my god Mum, it’s not a big deal – it was like five minutes. Maddie bought us all cupcakes. Mr Perry is such a pain. I can’t believe you’d just believe him and not even listen to my side!’, says Lucy, exasperated. *(resentful)*

‘You have no respect Lucy – you don’t respect me or your teachers or anybody’s rules. I didn’t raise you to behave like such a brat – and these friends of yours, I bet you get this off them. That girl Sasha is trouble and Maddie’s not much better,’ says Sarah, clearly angry and on the attack. *(judgemental)*

‘Oh my god! You don’t even know them! Just ‘cause you don’t have any friends, Mum, don’t start attacking mine! I told you it was five minutes- believe what you want. I could care less what you think!’, and off Lucy stomps upstairs to her room. *(conflict avoidant)*



So what happened and whose fault was it? Except, we don't really care whose fault it was. When we are trying to solve a problem by communicating with someone we have to stay focused on one thing – the goal. What was Sarah's goal with Lucy? Presumably, it was to get her to be back to school on time and be more respectful of the rules.

This interaction has left them both fuming and resentful. Sarah probably feels worse than when she started the conversation and Lucy is probably upstairs bad-mouthing her Mum to her mates and defiantly planning where to go for lunch off-campus tomorrow.

So why didn't it work? Mum was trying to be the Lion – why didn't she get Mouse behaviour back? The problem is they are on the wrong wheel. Mum's Lion is a demanding, pedantic one who rapidly morphs into a bad T-Rex – accusing, insulting, and being sarcastic.

So predictably, what she gets back is an angry Mouse/T-Rex from Lucy. Lucy isn't listening, doesn't accept she's done anything wrong, and attacks her Mum back.

Often when we know we are going to have to challenge or confront someone about an issue, we can make the mistake of ramping up our emotions which can push us off the good wheel and onto the bad one.

Mum's feelings are understandable and most of her points are reasonable – but the style in which she is communicating them is not effective so none of her points get across to Lucy.

Let's consider an alternative approach that would keep Mum on the good wheel.

Sarah gets the phone call from school about Lucy's late lunch. She feels angry, embarrassed and upset at first. It's not the sort of behaviour she expects from Lucy. Instead of ruminating on these thoughts while she is waiting for Lucy to come home from school, she makes herself a cup of tea and thinks about what she wants to say to her daughter to get her to take the rules more seriously. She thinks about her own behaviour as a teenager and that she would have been far too obedient to have ever cut class or back-chatted to a teacher. But Lucy is an extrovert and has always been a bit of a wild child. Sarah sends Lucy a text message at 3:20 which says 'Hi – we need a chat when you get home. Let me know if you've got this message'. She gets one back that simply says, 'K'.

She is looking at the clock and after about twenty minutes decides she's just getting annoyed so she starts working her way through a basket of ironing that has been sitting there for a week. At 4.20pm, she hears Lucy come through the door and head upstairs.

Sarah walks to the bottom of the stairs where Lucy's bag and coat are lying on the floor like she's been atomised out of them on entering the house. Sarah sighs, but that's not the issue so she ignores it for now. 'Lucy, could you come down please?', Sarah says, trying to maintain her calm state of mind.

'Yeah! I'm just changing out of my uniform!', Lucy shouts back.

Sarah goes back to her ironing. After ten minutes, she hears Lucy come barrelling down the stairs and then into the lounge. She flops on the sofa and gets out her phone. 'What's up? Is it cause I didn't hang my coat up? Soz ... I'll do it on my way back upstairs.'

'No it's not your coat, but thanks – I'd appreciate it,' says Sarah, 'I got a phone call from school this afternoon to let me know you were late coming back to campus after lunch.'

'Oh my god! It was like five minutes! Mr. Perry is such a pain Honestly Mum, he just has it in for me', says Lucy, scrolling through

something on her phone.

‘Lucy, can you put your phone down while we discuss this please?’, Sarah says, firmly.

Lucy sighs, and puts her phone down on the coffee table dramatically. ‘Thank you’, says Sarah.

‘So this is what I need to say to you about this so just hear me out before you react – school said it was 15 minutes late and that you swanned into maths, they literally used that word ‘swanned in’, and that when you were challenged about it you just laughed. Is any of that true?’

‘Oh my god! What?!? NO! Mum, it was like five minutes and we were only late because it was Maddie’s birthday and she wanted to go to this place that does cupcakes and there was a queue so we were just a bit late. I didn’t ‘swan’ – what does that even mean anyway?!?’, says Lucy defensively.

‘Ok, I believe you but there is a problem here. I know, Lucy, that you aren’t big on rules – you like to do your own thing and it doesn’t seem like a big deal to you. But if they let everybody slide on the rules and do their own thing then why would anyone turn up for afternoon lessons? I’ve raised you to be confident but also to be respectful. So whether it was five minutes or fifteen, I need you to show that you can be respectful of the rules.’

Lucy is picking lint off her jumper and frowning, but she is obviously listening. ‘So am I grounded then, or whatever?’

‘No, you’re not grounded – but if it happens again you might be. Right now I just want you to help with this ironing and we can practise your apology to Mr Perry next time you have maths.’

‘Ughhh, no way!’, Lucy groans.

‘Own your mistakes, that’s the rule. You don’t have to like him, Lucy, but you do have to show him respect. I’ll be him ... ‘So nice to see you could join us today young lady!’, says Sarah, pushing pretend glasses up the bridge of her nose.

‘Soz sir’, says Lucy, grabbing the iron.

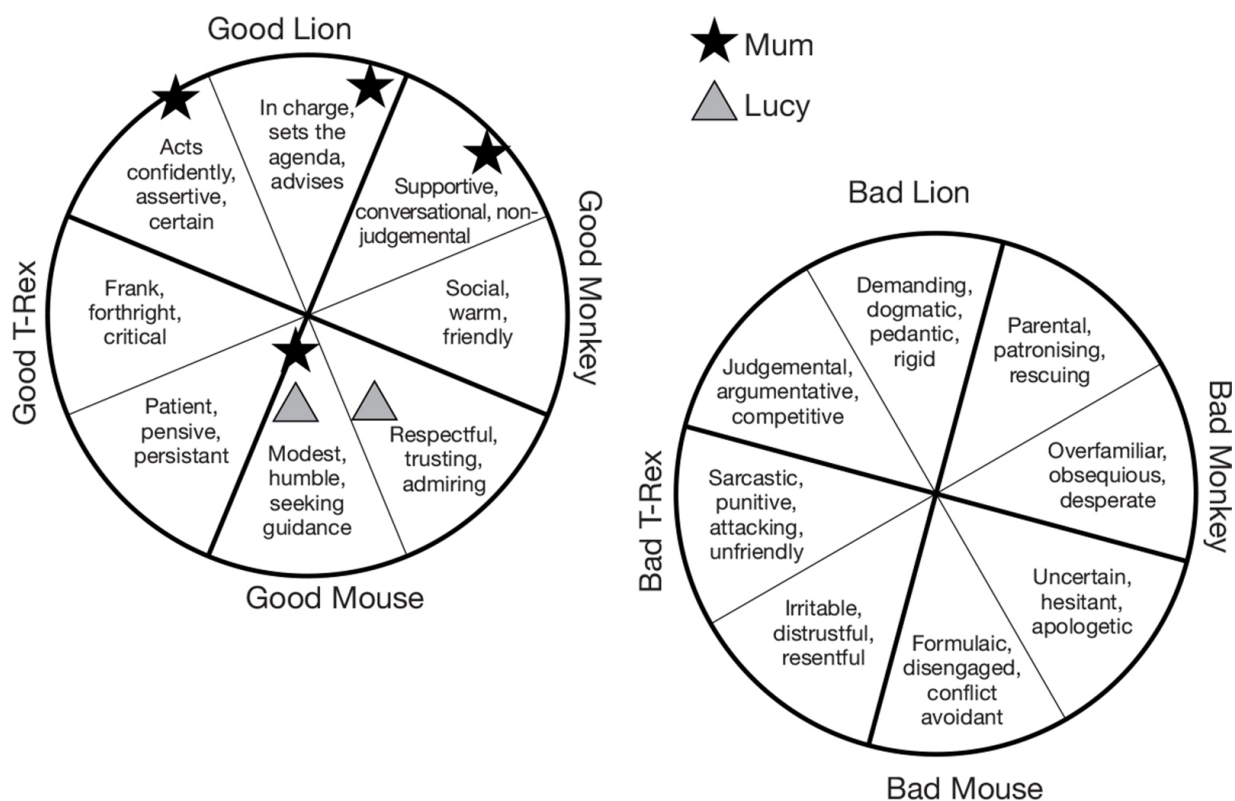
‘Soz is not a word, young lady!’, Sarah says in her Mr Perry voice. Lucy rolls her eyes and laughs.

What style of motivating and influencing are we seeing here? Mum is conversational, non-judgemental, even warm and friendly. But she is also

clearly in charge and sets out her expectations and the possible consequences. She is good Lion/ Monkey with the occasional dash of T-Rex, being frank, forthright and critical when she has to be.

What reaction does she get back from Lucy? Lucy is still defensive and avoidant at the start but she is engaged and listening to what Sarah has to say.

Has Sarah put her foot down hard enough? Will Lucy turn up late again? She might, but Sarah has indicated what will happen if she does and she has done this without being threatening, bossy or trying to intimidate her. Lucy needs to learn to comply with the rules as part of her own moral compass-compass, not imposed or intimidated onto her by her Mum. Otherwise, when Mum isn't around, there's no reason to follow the rules.



Does her approach meet the HEAR criteria discussed in [Chapter 4](#)? Instead of arguing her case or telling Lucy off, Mum tries to show some empathy and understanding for Lucy's behaviour. She is honest and objective, rather than just lambasting her with the need for rules. Her approach seeks understanding and allows Lucy some autonomy – she has an opportunity to disagree or challenge the decision.

This is a core principle of rapport-based approaches. As we discussed in [Chapter 4](#), you will be more successful motivating and influencing people by listening, reflecting and letting them convince themselves of the need for change rather than using external argument, pressure or threat.

ENCOURAGING SELF-MOTIVATION IN OTHERS

Consider how companies introduce policy or procedural changes for their employees. When this is done as a directive from on high without any consultation or explanation, staff often resist or ignore the change and it then needs to be enforced externally through auditing and monitoring. When staff feel some ownership and awareness about the reasons for the change, they are more likely to embrace the change and integrate it into their working practice rather than having to be spot-checked and watched to make sure they have changed their behaviour.

All bosses would rather have a self-motivated, self-regulating team than a staff group that has to be monitored, observed and reprimanded to make sure they do as they are told. I think parents would also agree this is a desirable, if ambitious, goal to have with their children as well!

Consistently building interactions that follow the HEAR model sets a foundation of open communication and encourages internal motivation rather than relying on external pressure. Using the animal circles helps you to match and set the correct tone for the interaction.

When you are using the animal circles to support your interactions, it can be useful to talk through these three steps:

1. What sort of animal am I dealing with?
 - The quickest way to determine this is to ask ‘Higher (Lion) or lower (Mouse)?’, ‘Scrap (T-Rex) or hug (Monkey)?’ Then decide if they are on the good circle or the bad one.
2. What is my risk area?
 - Now you know where they are, think, ‘Where are they trying to push me?’ Remember: Lion/Mouse push apart; T-Rex/Monkey attract the same behaviour. So if someone is being bad Lion (demanding, pedantic, bossy), your risk area is bad Mouse (withdrawal, hesitation, uncertainty). If someone is being bad T-Rex (attacking, argumentative, sarcastic), your risk area is to bad T-Rex back.
3. Go good circle.

- Counter bad interpersonal behaviour with good. So, you counter bad Lion with good Mouse; you meet bad T-Rex with good T-Rex; bad Mouse is countered by good Lion and bad Monkey by good Monkey.

In later chapters, we will examine how to gain more control and direction over interactions by using the model, but the first principle is to be in charge of your own reactions and not just operate on instinct. So before we start diagnosing other people, we can start with diagnosing you and finding out which animal style you find easiest and which is the most challenging.

FIND YOUR ANIMAL TYPE [fn1](#)

The next section will help you to work out which animal style you are strongest at and which is not typically in your nature. This will allow you to see those areas where you are naturally strong and highlight where you may need to develop and expand your skills.

INSTRUCTIONS :

- Think of how you behave in a single particular environment: at work, with your children, with your in-laws, with your partner. Pick one of these environments. It may be helpful to choose the area you seem to struggle most with currently.
- Using the chart opposite, give yourself a score from 0 to 3 for each description, where 0 is 'not at all like me' and 3 is 'always like me'.
- Try to go with your gut reaction, don't overthink it.
- Once you have scored all the categories, tally up the scores across each row.
- Transfer these scores to the good and bad animal charts ([page 158](#)).
- Then if you would like a visual representation you can plot your scores on the circles provided and connect the dots (see the example of plots on [page 171](#)).
- You can also grab a different coloured pen and complete this for someone close to you or for the person with whom you are having the most trouble managing your relationship at the moment.
- Of course, you can do more than one of these if you pick a different environment (i.e. fill in one version to represent how you interact with, for example, your partner and another for how you interact with, for

example, your boss). The more you fill in the more you will see to what extent you are the same (or different) in different contexts.

Communication style profile

Using the chart, give yourself a score from 0–3 for each description :

Never like me at all	Occasionally like me	Often like me	Always like me	
0	1	2	3	Total:

1	Advise others about the best way to do things	Like to be in charge	Set out a clear plan and expectations for others
2	Don't let things go easily	Expect people to do what I say	Pull people up on small mistakes to make a point
3	Not judgemental of others	Supportive and encouraging	Find it easy to start conversations
4	Use a motherly/ fatherly approach	Talk down to other people	Fill a silence if it feels awkward or someone is uncomfortable
5	Often smile and chat to others	Enjoy the company of other people	Warm and kind-natured
6	Compliment people to get on their good side	Self-disclose early in relationships	Want to be liked by everyone
7	Treat others with respect	Naturally trusting of others	Often compliment or commend others

			for doing well
8	Feel uncertain or unsure in new situations	Hesitate if not sure of something	Apologise even if you haven't done anything wrong
9	Apologise if you are in the wrong	Seek help and support from others	Not boastful even when you've done something well
10	Switch off if you feel awkward/uncomfortable	Avoid conflict whenever possible	Stay quiet in social situations/try to fade into the background
11	Patient and tolerant of others	Thoughtful and reflective	Keep emotions contained
12	Feel irritated by other people	Naturally distrustful of others	Resent it when others do well
13	Clear and concise	Direct and to the point	Can give critical feedback without offending
14	Like to verbally spar with others	Use sarcasm in arguments	Think others should pay for their mistakes
15	Confident	Certain about your own views and opinions	Assertive when challenging someone
16	Like to have the last word in arguments	Enjoy a good argument with someone	Judge other people's behaviour if it fails your own standards

Now add up your scores for the three questions in each row – you can have a minimum of 0 or a maximum score of 9 for each row.

Now transfer your scores for each row to the following chart :

Good Circle: when you are communicating well you are likely to be a: ...

... ..

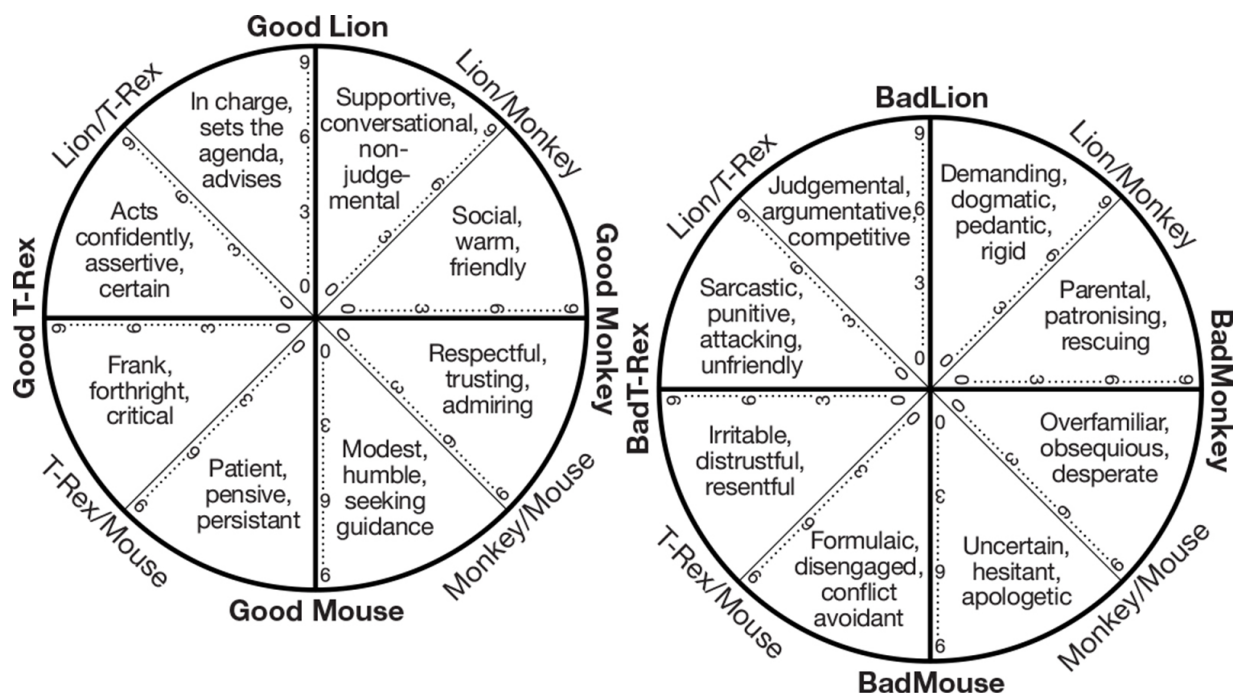
Row 1	Lion	Row 9	Mouse
Row 3	Lion/Monkey	Row 11	Mouse/T-Rex
Row 5	Monkey	Row 13	T-Rex
Row 7	Monkey/Mouse	Row 15	T-Rex/Lion

Bad Circle: when you are communicating badly you are likely to be a: ...

... ..

Row 2	Lion	Row 10	Mouse
Row 4	Lion/Monkey	Row 12	Mouse/T-Rex
Row 6	Monkey	Row 14	T-Rex
Row 8	Monkey/Mouse	Row 16	T-Rex/Lion

Now plot your scores around the circles starting with Lion and ending at T-Rex/Lion. Connect the dots. Pay attention to spikes or troughs on each circle.



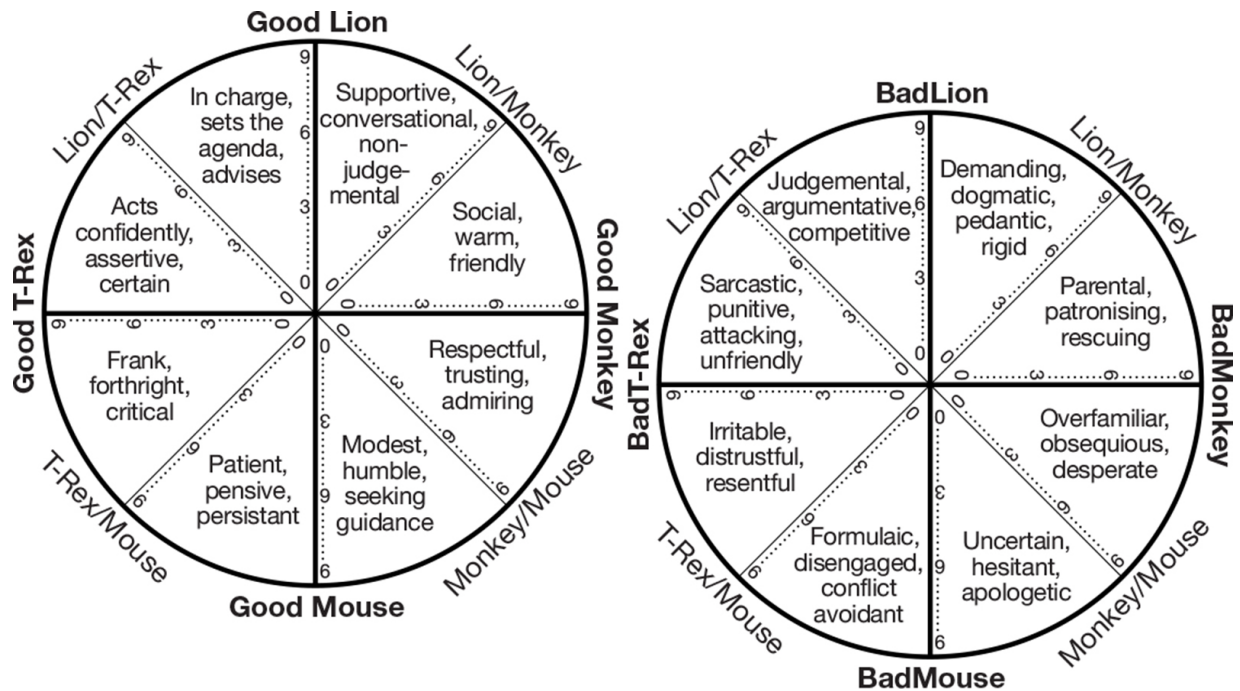
INTERPRETING YOUR CIRCLES

Plotting your scores on the circles allows you to see where your strengths and weaknesses are. Is there one animal that dominates or are you high in a number of areas? It is OK if you haven't come out as one animal in particular. Remember, versatility is a plus on the good circle. Often your high scores on the good circle are matched in the same area by high scores in those same areas on the bad circle. Our strengths are sometimes also our Achilles heel.

Consider those areas on the bad circle where you have high scores. Are these the sorts of behaviours that often cause problems in your relationships? These are the sorts of behaviours you need to eliminate from your style of interacting as much as possible.

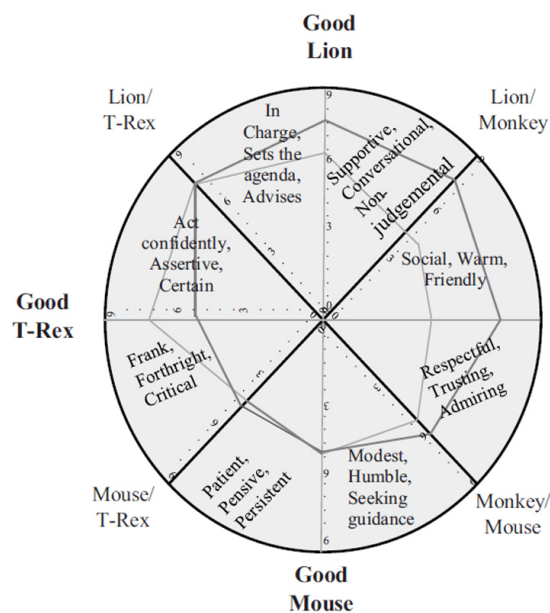
Now look at your low scoring areas on the good circle. These are the areas that you need to develop and strengthen in interactions with others. They may be the sorts of skills you struggle with when the situation calls for a response that is out of your comfort zone.

You will never completely eliminate all behaviours from the bad circle. It is part of our interpersonal struggle that sometimes we stray into these forms of communication. However, the stronger and more adaptable you are on the good circle, the better you will be at repairing it when it goes wrong and the better you will be overall at building rapport.



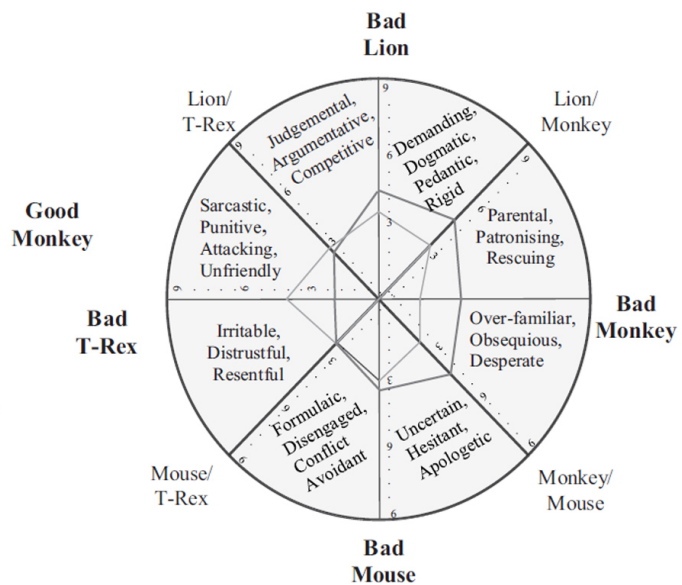
OUR CIRCLES

Below are our circles if you would like to know how we scored. Even though we have been applying and using this model for over 20 years, we still have areas we need to work on and develop. The important thing is that the model enables us to identify what those areas are and helps us understand ourselves and each other.



Laurence _____

Emily _____



LESSONS

1. **Learning starts with awareness of self.** Before you begin to contemplate changing any part of the way you interact with others, you need to do a little bit of inward examination. Think about your strengths and weaknesses and rely less on going with your instinctive reactions. Try to be more tactical and focus on the goal.
2. **Only you control you.** You can't control other people's behaviour – only your own. So, don't get into the habit of thinking, 'He or she made me behave that way.' You might feel that someone always pushes your buttons, but that is because you are letting them set the tone of the interaction. It is worth being more mindful of how to respond in a way that fits with your goals rather than just bouncing off the other person.
3. **Higher or lower?** In any interaction consider the 'power' dimension. If something is not working it may be that both of you are jockeying for power. Sometimes it is worth considering, in the spirit of longer term rapport-building, where it is best for you to position yourself, even if it is not where you feel most comfortable.
4. **Scrap or hug?** Also, consider the 'intimacy' dimension. If someone is in confrontation mode it is sometimes worth taking that head-on.

Similarly, if someone is after warmth and social interaction, ignoring this and being more functional about solving a problem may not be the way ahead. Of course, both modes (confront, cooperate) can be done well or badly but, as with the power dimension, you need to consider being more versatile than simply adopting the role you are most comfortable with.

CHAPTER 6

AVOIDING CONFRONTATION: THE T-REX

The direct use of physical force is so poor a solution to the problem of limited resources that it is commonly employed only by small children and great nations.

– **David Friedman**, *The Machinery of Freedom*

Basra, April 2007, during the Iraq war: a small, white, featureless interrogation room. Two soldiers in British military camo fatigues tower over a suspected insurgent. The detainee's translator is standing immediately behind him. The soldiers are part of an interrogation team directed at securing information about attack sites, capabilities for manufacturing IEDs, associates and financial networks. The stakes could not be higher. The consequences of securing reliable information could not be more significant ...

Interrogator Now you're fucked aren't you? (*The soldier standing right in front of the detainee spits on the floor.*) You fucking murdering bastard. We've got your phone ... We've got your phone. When we see your call to his phone you're fucked. I don't know what you expect. But it's not what you're gonna expect. You're going to fucking hang for this ...

Detainee: I haven't eaten or drank for two days.

Interrogator
:

Use your *fucking* toothbrush (*inaudible*) ... You're fucking disgusting and if I ever, *ever* see you standing like that again in front of one of my colleagues I'll fucking come for you ... (*Interrogator mocks the way the detainee is standing – he folds his arms and tilts his head to the side.*) I'll fucking come for you alright? Whatever time of day or night it is I'll fucking come for you alright!

Now, say sorry for your fucking attitude (*detainee makes no response*). You shit ... You're a fucking murderer ... (*Detainee stands still and silent.*)

Is it you?! One of you is going to fucking hang for this. You were there ... You were there! You were there!! One of you is gonna hang for it. Who's it gonna be. You? You?

This interaction was filmed and then broadcast by the *Guardian* newspaper.¹ Whatever your thoughts about the acceptability or unacceptability of such behaviour by the interrogator under these circumstances, what is clear is that the verbal rough-housing isn't working.

If your goal is securing reliable information, this style of interrogation does not achieve that. It is at the extreme end of bad T-Rex behaviour and seeks to degrade and dehumanise the individual, to instil fear and, in theory, compliance. It is a form of bullying and such practices have been associated with beginning down the slippery slope to dehumanising or torturing prisoners, such as the cases uncovered at Abu Ghraib.²

Research on torture shows that interrogators either get no information at all (detainees simply shut down) or – at the other end of the spectrum – they get lots of information, much of which is completely bogus or made up because the detainee will say anything to stop the pain.

Notwithstanding its ineffectiveness as a means to secure information, torture has the added effect that when its use is discovered, it serves as an excellent propaganda and recruiting tool for terrorists. Witness, for example, the upswing in recruitment to the IRA after such methods were used in the seventies, or the number of members of high-ranking individuals within the ranks of ISIS and Al-Qaeda who were previously held in internment camps such as Abu Ghraib and Camp X-Ray, or tortured in foreign prisons. Subjecting human beings to psychological and physical degradation is an excellent way to confirm their own worst view of you and

increase their desire for revenge against you and everything you stand for ... but it does not make them talk.

This concept is summarised in plain language by a US army sergeant quoted in a Human Rights Watch report regarding practices with detainees in Iraq:

[The intelligence officer] said he wanted the [detainees] so fatigued, so smoked, so demoralised that they would want to cooperate. But half of these guys got released because they didn't do nothing. We sent them back to Fallujah. But if he's a good guy, you know, now he's a bad guy because of the way we treated him. [3](#)

Whatever your political leanings or views on the war against terrorism, we can all agree that we shouldn't be in the business of creating more bad guys.

No one doubts that in conflict zones there are such extreme opposing views that things cannot be sorted out with a cup of tea and a handshake. Confrontation is a necessary and inevitable part of life, and it is the very backbone of war. When you are training soldiers to kill, you must switch off their empathy, compassion and humanity to allow them to do what is required. But once you switch those things off, the real question is whether you can switch them back on. For example, can you reasonably expect an individual indoctrinated to kill the enemy with violence to then interrogate them with compassion and empathy, even if they know it is the best way to secure information?

Outside of such extremes, though, and in more everyday situations, the rest of us also experience conflict and disagreement. There are occasions where we have arguments with our colleagues and our family and there are times where people have disappointed or upset us. There will be times when we meet and must deal with people who hold views that are diametrically opposed to our own – whether political, ideological, religious, spiritual or personal. Although conflict is a necessary part of much human interaction, the example of the Basra interrogation shows how aggression can get in the way of useful communication. When bad T-Rex emerges, rapport crumbles and is irrevocably damaged. Instead, aggression generates disengagement and resistance, and the interaction can no longer be labelled communication.

Consider people's responses over social media to controversial issues – Brexit, Trump, breastfeeding, male papooses. In these kinds of interactions, we have seen people resort to aggression, sarcasm, insults and efforts to humiliate their opponent. The goal is no longer meaningful communication about whatever the issue is, but 'winning' the argument by being louder, scarier, nastier and more aggressive than the other person.

These are all bad T-Rex behaviours and if you are prone to any of them, this is the first thing you must eliminate. As counterintuitive as perhaps it may seem, there is such a thing as good T-Rex communication. But first we'll outline how and why 'bad T-Rex' doesn't work, and then we'll demonstrate how 'good T-Rex' behaviour can – and does – work.

BAD T-REX BEHAVIOUR

Bad T-Rex behaviour is attacking, punishing, degrading, humiliating and threatening. In contrast, good T-Rex behaviour is frank, forthright, critical and clear. To understand the difference, it's worth returning to the extreme exchange in the prison in Basra that was captured and leaked to the world by the *Guardian* (see [page 175](#)). The interrogator makes it clear that there is no safe way out of this situation and that the detainee's life is essentially over. This isn't part of an intelligence gathering exercise, but is instead designed to erode any sense of self-worth ('Now you're fucked, aren't you?').

By heaping abuse on the detainee, the interrogator is saying that he is under his complete control. Then begins the certainty of statements made about the detainee's guilt. Here, the message is that it doesn't matter what he does or says, the interrogator knows the facts and they are so incontrovertible that it shows omnipotence over the detainee ('We've got your phone. You're going to fucking hang for this'). Threat, punishment, control.

The only thing the detainee gets a chance to say is that he hasn't eaten or had anything to drink for two days, which is ignored – again emphasising that the control is completely in the hands of the interrogator. The interrogator continues to humiliate and degrade the prisoner ('You're fucking disgusting'), with more physical threats ('I'll fucking come for you') to heighten feelings of fear and dread.

Similar ‘techniques’ were used in communist regimes, for instance by the North Koreans on American prisoners of war (POWs) during the Korean War. It is claimed that brainwashing was achieved through what psychologists Farber, Harlow and West coined ‘debility, dependence and dread’.⁴ It has been subsequently uncovered that rather than some form of ‘brainwashing’, the more likely explanation for the POWs’ odd, flat behaviour was severe malnutrition and disease. Debility was brought on by inducing chronic fatigue and semi-starvation. Dependency was created by controlling basic needs, and dread was marked by deliberately increasing the subjects’ fear and anxiety that they would be beaten or killed.

Similar conditions have subsequently been observed in various cults and help explain why some followers don’t leave even when seemingly given the chance (due to their autonomy or sense of choice being so fully eroded). In our own relationships, why would we want compliance from people around us that is based on fear, degradation or aggression? The cost of behaving in such a way is not worth the reward. When confrontation in relationships is resolved by these methods, no one wins.

HANDLING CONFRONTATION WELL

The first rule of rapport is to avoid aggressive confrontation whenever possible. In particular you must try to avoid any of the attributes of the bad T-Rex. Most relationships involve some level of disagreement and argument – whether it is between couples, parents and children, work colleagues, neighbours or even occasionally strangers in traffic.

Good T-Rex behaviour is about dealing with arguments in a way that is direct, forthright and upfront. This delivery overlaps with the discussion about honesty and empathy in [Chapter 3](#) and the need to maintain objectivity and balance in your delivery. That can be extremely difficult, especially for those of us who dislike conflict in the first place. Instinctively, when someone is aggressive to us, we feel like being aggressive back, whatever we actually decide to do. Even if you keep quiet or walk away, you may fantasise about what you would have liked to have said or done and often that might even involve violence or at least the delivery of a perfectly timed insult.

We have learned to control our instinctive impulses, but that doesn’t mean we don’t still feel them. When we feel under attack, our natural fight

or flight response kicks in. If we cannot avoid, we attack – it is not only natural, it is chemical. The rush of endorphins and cortisol that the body experiences when we feel threatened is designed to give increased strength and speed in anticipation of either fighting or running.

However, in our research on interviewer behaviour, we found that the effect of even small amounts of negative T-Rex behaviour (such as being judgemental, argumentative, sarcastic and attacking) was catastrophic to rapport and subsequently to generating information. In counselling literature, the effect of working hard to gain trust that is then destroyed by one tiny off-hand remark is called ‘spoiling’.

DO AS I SAY, OR ELSE

Imagine this dynamic in less extreme environments, such as the home or workplace. Let’s take the example of a parent in conflict with a child. Many times, I have witnessed moments of confrontation where a parent, in wishing to get their child to comply, says, ‘If you don’t do what I say, I’ll make you.’

For younger children, this may be being left in their cot to ‘cry it out’ or being sent to the ‘naughty step’ as a punishment. For older children, it might be taking away their phone/ Wi-Fi/games console, etc. Tech companies now facilitate this, and there are a number of apps that allow parents to control their children’s devices remotely by locking them or switching them off. Force might seem, in the heat of the moment, a good way to gain compliance because it emphasises that the parent is in charge and there is no way for the child to override it. There is a firm line and, despite their efforts, they cannot cross it.

However, as children get older their thirst for autonomy grows and forcing them to comply can feel tremendously controlling. Instead of choosing to behave through their own free will, they have no choice but to comply. A child forced to comply through threats, intimidation or punishment, often feels angry, resentful and hard done by.

Rather than choosing to behave, they often invest a great deal of energy in trying to outwit, hide or find loopholes in the system to once again exert their autonomy.

We once had a case where the son’s response to having his phone controlled remotely was to hack his mum’s account and install a similar app on her phone that he would then lock in retaliation if she locked his.

Creative, but not exactly a solution to their problem! Fortunately, they both agreed it wasn't working and negotiated another solution.

Such strategies often work but only until your 'opponent' can find a way to outfox you or gets big enough to T-Rex back. You may get a short-term effect of control, but if such techniques are used persistently throughout your relationship with your child, they foster resentment rather than trust and respect. Your child obeys because they have no choice, not because they understand your reasons and can be trusted to respect your rules.

In some circumstances exerting short-term control may be necessary. Children do need clear boundaries, but if the atmosphere created is one of compliance through force, ultimately it creates fear and then rebellion. It erodes trust, respect, consideration and, ultimately, love.

Consider a parent trying to negotiate with their teenager about being more helpful around the house. Say the teenager has said they want to take on a summer job to earn money for a trip with their friends, but they have slept in until noon every day for the last two months. If Dad comes straight in and says, 'I don't see how you're going to get the money to go on this trip – you haven't lifted a finger around here (attacking/ unfriendly), let alone got a job (sarcastic). Don't think I'm going to just give this money to you – you have to earn things in this house (competitive/argumentative)! You just expect things to be handed to you with no effort – it drives me crazy (judgemental)!'

The result is very likely to be an argument and it is unlikely that the teenager will suddenly transform into a helpful, tidy, motivated, obedient angel. It is much more likely that she will just give up on earning the money. If she does get a job, it will be out of spite and her goal in life is now to prove Dad wrong. That might be seen as Dad effectively motivating the child into action, but it isn't really a foundation for a warm, loving relationship between them. Motivating your child out of spite makes them, well, spiteful!

Instead, Dad could say, 'Gemma, I just want to speak to you about this trip. You said how much you want to go and that you want to earn money for it this summer (reflection). We are about halfway through the summer now and if you still want to do this, time is running out (honest, critical, forthright). It's up to you whether you want to or not (autonomy), but I need to be clear that if you don't have it by the time the payment is due, I cannot

and will not just give you the money for it (assertive/certain). If you really want it, you will need to earn it (frank/direct).'

Dad might still get, 'Oh my god, Dad! I know!' or just a rolling of the eyes, but he has not resorted to being insulting, unkind or cruel. There is no name-calling and no ultimatums. Good T-Rexes state: 'This is my view, here is my evidence – and this is the bottom line.'

You can see here, though, that the line between good and bad can be fine – imagine the above example delivered in sarcastic tones or if when Gemma says, 'I've got it under control Dad, no problem', Dad can't resist shaking his head in despair or retorting, 'I'll believe it when I see it.'

As well as being mindful of your words, be mindful of the tone and avoid spoilers – tag-on comments that puncture all the good work you just put in. It can be helpful when delivering a solid good T-Rex approach to think of removing any emotion from the interaction. It is about getting the message across clearly, without clouding it with anger, upset or irritation. This is not easy, but it is effective.

Good T-Rex behaviours cut to the chase, enable the quick identification of a problem and increase the speed of resolution. Perhaps paradoxically, good T-Rex behaviours can prevent conflict escalating because they are overt, clear and prevent accusations of manipulation, underhandedness and deception. They are not about trying to manipulate a solution – they are about straight-up asking for what you want. Good T-Rex shares the principles discussed in [Chapter 3](#) about the importance of honesty: 'I should not avoid confrontation but I also don't need to hammer you into the ground with the truth.'

There are three steps we advise for good interrogator behaviour :

1. ***Directly quote evidence.*** When you need to present someone with a problem, try to use their own words back to them as evidence. Be as specific and factual as you can. If it is spoken, be as close to what they said as you can. If it is in writing, read it out directly. Do not exaggerate or confuse the message.
2. ***Present any conflicting evidence.*** Do this without leaking emotion or judgement. Be balanced and objective.
3. ***Suggest a solution.*** Finally, how can it be made right? What do you want to happen next? It is important to consider your goal in such an interaction. Do not just argue for the goal of getting to say, 'See, I am

right and you are wrong.’ Instead, think ‘Now we agree this is a problem, what I want you to do to fix it is ...’

This model applies to so many contexts – parenting, work negotiations, arguments between couples, business partners, and even dealing with complaints.

But what about when the person you’re dealing with is filled with emotion? How can you deliver the bottom-line message when they are too upset to listen? While it is important for you to remove your own emotional reaction, the key to calming someone else enough to allow them to listen is to acknowledge how *they* are feeling. Remember the ‘toddler and the T-shirt’ approach discussed on [page 86](#). Acknowledging the other person’s emotional state with empathy and honesty immediately lowers reactance and allows the other person to hear what you are trying to say. You can’t cut straight to the message without first managing the emotion.

T-REX IN THE WORKPLACE

The workplace is another arena where exercise of power has to be carefully managed. A boss who tries to increase productivity and motivate his team through bad T-Rex tactics, such as intimidation and the fear of job loss or performance management if they fail to meet their targets, is likely to find a team that becomes demoralised, dejected, angry and engaged in passive-aggressive revenge (workplace theft, unnecessary sick days, low productivity). Ultimately, they will be wishing they were working somewhere else.

Good T-Rex behaviour, on the other hand, can have a very positive effect on staff teams. Those who adopt a good T-Rex approach, being critical and forthright, can provide a devil’s advocate role – thereby providing a good counterbalance to the entire team running away with a crazy idea or ignoring an issue that secretly everyone knew was flawed but was too scared to raise.

Good T-Rexes are frank, forthright, critical and constructive with their input. Because a T-Rex is prepared to challenge anyone and everyone’s views, they can help organisations anticipate and guard against failure. Their clear, direct honesty means sometimes they are the only one who will say what needs to be said – the voice of reason in a sea of enthusiasm. In her work on effective leadership, Judith Komaki established that a key

principle in the elite, compared to the lacklustre, leaders was their ability to give clear, frank and forthright instructions about expectations.⁵ And Lindred Greer's work at Stanford Graduate School of Business established that when someone in a team presents a clear alternative perspective and is prepared to disagree, it encourages other members of a team to think more deeply about a problem and explore solutions they otherwise would not have thought about.⁶

When organisations start to make decisions based solely on policy, culture or habit without any regard for the connection to real-life circumstances, it can be a recipe for disaster or at least a public enquiry.

Consider the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010, where after all safety measures failed, the oil rig exploded, killing 11 workers and causing the largest recorded oil spill in US waters. The subsequent investigation uncovered that BP bosses had made decisions during the installation of the safety measures that had compromised their structural integrity and early indications of a problem had been ignored on the rig. Behaviours were indicative of an organisational culture that had placed profit production over safety. In the resulting court case, the judge ruled BP was guilty of gross negligence and wilful misconduct.⁷ He described its actions as 'reckless'. BP pleaded guilty to 11 counts of felony manslaughter and had to pay more than \$4.5 billion in penalties and fines.

As we've seen in other corporate scandals, corruption of power inevitably leads to people being afraid to speak out or challenge the perceived wisdom, no matter how glaring the flaws might appear.

When such slippage starts in a workplace, whether it is ignoring safety procedures, cutting corners, implicit racism or sexual harassment, we are all waiting for the voice of dissent that is brave enough to speak up and say, 'This is not OK.' This can be a very difficult step to take and can feel a very lonely, exposed position. It is the brave thing, the correct thing, but it is also a very hard thing. However, as Dr Martin Luther King Jr simply and eloquently put it: 'The time is always right to do the right thing.'

GOOD T-REX VERSUS BAD T-REX

Emily: I remember a family I was working with that was under review by social services. Dad was arrested and convicted for assaulting his partner, and sentenced to community service and supervision for 18 months.

Dad had been instructed to move out of the family home and was meant to be living with a family member over two hours away. He was allowed to see the children twice a week at a contact centre. He was not allowed any contact with their mother at all or to be near the family home at any time. However, due to his local commitments – child contact, employment, probation appointments and community service – he was in town every day for most of the day and evenings as well.

When we began working with him, this situation had been going on for five months. Driving or getting the train every day was almost impossible to maintain both logistically and financially. Many people might think he would be tempted to violate his conditions and return to the family home, just hoping he didn't get caught. The cynical among you might think the situation had been set up to almost push him in that direction.

He did not – instead he started sleeping in his car.

One of the manager's view about this situation was effectively, 'Oh, he's struggling? Tough. Then maybe he shouldn't have done what he did.'

At the next meeting, I set out my view that we were increasing the risk to the entire family by failing to address Dad's need for adequate local housing and recommended that Dad be placed on a priority housing list as soon as possible.

'Well no one else agrees with you as you are clearly putting the father's needs above the children so let's just move on, shall we?' she responded with a patronising nod and flick of her hand in my direction, almost as if she could waft me out of the room like a bad smell. I felt humiliated and demeaned.

I mustered my confidence and said in a slightly quivery voice, 'Before you move on, I want it noted in the meeting notes that I dissent. I do not agree with the decision. I want it to be made very clear that I have advised that the current situation, if left unchanged, will elevate the risk to the children in this case.'

Her face turned purple as she looked up in disbelief. 'Fine, it's noted, but no one else feels that way so it's actually irrelevant,' she said.

I will confess that as I was delivering my frank, forthright challenge I did not feel very confident or assertive – I felt like a Mouse in a T-Rex costume. I knew I was not the Lion – I was not in charge of the decision. But I also knew that I needed to say that I didn't agree with it. I had a bottom line and, in my mind, it was clear what the right thing to do was.

After the meeting, I had three other representatives come up to me and say that they also felt the situation was increasing the risk. They had simply not felt brave enough to speak up in the meeting. I asked them to put their views in writing, which they agreed to do.

Initially, I had felt angry. I thought, 'Why hadn't they spoken up in the meeting and supported me? If they agreed, why did they leave me to twist in the wind?' The reality is that they hadn't wanted to join the tense exchange in the meeting because they hadn't wanted to be part of the conflict.

But by me vocalising my concerns, it had at least prompted them to take some positive action outside of the meeting and challenge the decision that was being made. Honestly, looking back, I don't blame them. Good T-Rex is the hardest style for me but the right thing is always the right thing.

Bad T-Rexes rely on the fact that people will feel intimidated or frightened. Their use of intimidation allows them to ride over other people who may have important points or concerns. Managers who behave in this way become dictators, making decisions independent of consultation and devoid of challenge. They do not discuss or compromise with their staff; they simply issue orders and expect them to be carried out.

Working for such a person is hugely demoralising and erodes confidence and critical thinking among the wider staff group. Interestingly, it also leaves the power-swollen manager at the top at risk of being toppled. When all decisions are yours, so is the accountability if it goes wrong. Karma has a way of catching up with bad T-Rexes.

Bad T-Rex behaviour also often contains high levels of anger. Long term, anger increases our chances of heart attack and stroke.⁸ It leads to isolation and the dissolution of professional and personal relationships. Psychologists have long identified what they call the 'destructive leadership style' (in

which an individual rises to the top quickly but leaves a trail of destruction in their wake).⁹ It is defined by aggression, and a reckless disregard for others. So, although their initial dynamism can prove helpful to get to the top, bad T-Rexes have no staying power since they create more and more discontent, resentment, avoidance and hatred as they repeatedly fail to be steady and consistent, and instead lash out and attack others. Worse still, they feel no remorse for their actions, fail to learn from mistakes and, ultimately, cannot remain in the top seat for long as there is a string of angry disgruntled people trying to dislodge and undermine them. They ultimately put themselves in the position of being left alone to fend for themselves against an increasing number of enemies busy plotting revenge.

Good T-Rex doesn't involve avoiding confrontation – quite the reverse. Significantly, it is devoid of anger. Instead it is about being cool, calm and firm, even when under attack. This can be an overwhelmingly difficult thing to do at times, especially when sat opposite the bad version of T-Rex, as in the example above. Part of this process of managing your own anger is to examine and be curious about how the other person is feeling and sometimes even overtly acknowledge the other person's feelings. To be a good T-Rex you have to be the rock, not the palm tree. Let the other person's anger/outrage/ demands wash over you, but do not bend. State your view frankly and directly. Then hunker down, hold your ground and persevere.

Be aware, though – good T-Rex can be very hard to master, especially if it doesn't come easy to you. It is tempting to slip into bad T-Rex yourself and bite back with insults or sarcasm. You might also feel like withdrawing, as it is easier to bite your tongue and let the other person have their way. Sometimes, this is actually the smartest decision to avoid a situation escalating, but when necessary, someone has to step up.

The best frame of mind to deliver good T-Rex responses is with calm conviction. It does not matter if the other person gets angry or upset; it does not matter if they are a patronising tosser – what matters is that they hear you and understand your bottom line. Ignore personal attacks, hold firm and repeat your view as clearly and calmly as possible.

HOW TO COMPLAIN AS A GOOD T-REX

Laurence: I remember a family holiday in South Carolina when ten of us were sharing a holiday apartment. Despite this,

everyone was having a great time until we discovered that directly across from us was a building site which was running a wrecking ball crew from 8am to 6pm every day. It was grating and intrusive and was driving everyone crazy.

In frustration, Emily phoned the front desk and unloaded her ire on the woman who answered. The woman simply said there was nothing she could do but promised to have a manager phone back. Another hour passed. No one phoned.

In response, I went out and recorded the din and chaos that was going on directly across from us. I then walked over to Reception and asked to see the manager. I was told she was unavailable.

‘Could I help?’ said the extremely polite woman on Reception, clearly someone other than the woman Emily spoke to.

‘OK,’ I said. ‘Listen to this please.’ I read out the welcome letter we had received when we checked in which said: ‘We are currently renovating some areas of the resort. However, this will cause minimal disruption and we assure you, you will have a relaxing, enjoyable time during your stay.’

The woman was smiling at me and nodding, ‘Yes, that’s right.’

‘Now I’d like you to listen to this recording I made 15 minutes ago,’ I said. I then pushed ‘play’ on my iPad and played her the two-and-a-half-minute clip I had made, which included incessant jackhammering, sirens and the sound of a 60-ton wrecking ball taking down a wall. As we listened to the racket together the colour was gradually draining from her face.

When the clip finished, I said calmly, ‘Does that sound like “minimal disruption” to you?’

‘No sir,’ she said limply.

‘I agree,’ I said. ‘It is not minimal. We are here from overseas for a family holiday to enjoy what is very precious time together. We cannot even hear each other speak with this going on and it is every day for ten hours a day.’

‘I’m very sorry sir,’ she said again, ‘but I’m not sure what I can do.’

I said, ‘You can get a manager. I would like to be moved to somewhere quieter or reimbursed for the fact that we have to go out all day every day because of the disruption.’

She nodded, and then offered me some vouchers for drinks at the bar while I waited.

I repeated the exact same exercise with the manager. There were no raised voices, no shouting, no aggression throughout this entire interaction. There was also not a great deal of smiling or warmth. I had been calm, direct, neutral, critical and forthright about what was wrong and what I wanted in response – and it worked.

If I had sworn or shouted or been aggressive, it would have been much easier to treat *me* as the problem. Instead, they offered to move us to a different resort and they reimbursed 50 per cent of the cost as well as enough resort points for a second holiday for my father-in-law and his wife later in the year.

There are many advantages to using the positive T-Rex approach of being frank, forthright and direct: it stops you being pushed around, it allows you to have a voice and it assists you in articulating the bottom line – what are you not prepared to compromise on. Importantly, it allows you to do this in a way that doesn’t come across as belligerent, unreasonable or aggressive. Although it may be described as challenging someone, it is not confrontational. It names the ‘elephant in the room’ and everyone has a very clear picture of where they stand and what needs to happen to resolve the situation.

Once you do master the calm, assertive delivery of good T-Rex, it can be very reinforcing. When you remove emotion from a situation and focus on the goal, it can bring an enticing sense of self-control and confidence. However, when you use it, you do need to consider whether the battle is worth it.

If it is overused, even when done well, it can feel blunt or brittle over time. Good T-Rex does not bend and that can make compromise difficult and even hamper warmth and intimacy developing in relationships. Remember that it is on the exact opposite side of the circle from the sociable friendliness of the Monkey. Being a good T-Rex means you aren’t

there to win friends. So, while it is immensely useful, ideally good T-Rex behaviour should be used sparingly and only when the situation requires. Bad T-Rex behaviour, on the other hand, should be made extinct.

LESSONS

1. ***Make bad T-Rex extinct.*** If you have identified that you have any of the bad T-Rex attributes, it is worth making a concerted effort to remove them. Where possible, prepare what you are going to say ahead of time. Plan it and practise saying it a few times. Concentrate on losing any insults or language that is demeaning or aggressive. Be factual, clear and ensure accuracy. Repetition alone can take some of the feelings of your own anger away. When you are going to make a complaint, take a moment to practise it and ensure you aren't derogatory in your language – that doesn't mean you can't be factual and direct.
2. ***Choose your battles.*** Ask yourself, before you embark on any likely issue of confrontation, 'Does this really matter?' or 'Can I let it go?' (Be absolutely certain that this is not merely something that is a bit annoying but rather is important.) Conflict is best avoided but not always possible to avoid – make sure it is worth it.
3. ***Have a specific goal.*** Think through your goal(s) and bottom line: what do you want/not want to happen? Be fair, proportionate and objective. In examining what is fair, imagine you are on the other side of the argument ('If I had been in their position, what would I think was a reasonable solution?'). Don't fall into the trap of just wanting to be right or taking what you can get.
4. ***Avoid personalising it.*** Once you are clear on your bottom line, make sure you do not fall into using any of the following: sarcasm, personal slights, aggression, anger or any attempt to degrade or make the other person feel small. If necessary, do a 'dry run' or role play with someone you trust and ask them how it feels being on the receiving end of it.
5. ***Don't deny the other person's feelings.*** Understand that they also have an emotional reaction. Don't deny them this and do appreciate that it may be 'normal' (as we have said, the most frequent reaction to confrontation is to bite back). Even if their reaction seems abnormal

(disproportionate, odd, extreme) try to be curious about it rather than punitive (for example, when your teenager has 'lost it' over being asked to do their homework, rather than thinking, 'How dare you backchat me!', think, 'What is going on for them that this seems like such a big deal?').

CHAPTER 7

LEARNING TO CAPITULATE: THE MOUSE

Humility is the solid foundation of all virtues.

– **Confucius**

Lieutenant Brian Murphy drove up to the car park of the Gurdwara (Sikh) temple at Oak Creek, Wisconsin a little after 10.25am after reports of a shooting. Up until that moment it was a quiet, sunny Sunday morning. Murphy, born a New Yorker, was as tough as an anvil and hard to shock. His dad, a New York sanitation worker forged in the same east coast fires as his son, described Brian as, ‘the sort of guy who can walk through walls’. Murphy was about to need every bit of his mental and physical resilience as he responded to the call-out at the temple.

As he exited his squad car, Murphy saw two bodies in the car park – one slumped on top of the other. He could immediately tell that the person lying on top was dead. He was about to check the other for signs of life, but as he moved back towards his vehicle, he saw a man running directly at him. The man was wearing a white T-shirt, a gun holster and his gun was drawn and pointing directly at Murphy. Murphy drew his gun and fired, and at the same moment, so did the shooter. Murphy’s bullet missed. The shooter’s did not. It hit Murphy in the face, ripping through his chin, entering his larynx and spinning out the back of his head.

Despite the initial shot, Murphy was still breathing and able to take cover behind a car. He dipped down and then looked up to see where the shooter was. He hoped he would be in front of him, so he could exchange fire, but

the shooter had in fact circled around him – a classic military move. He was directly behind Murphy. The second shot took Murphy's left thumb off and he fell to the floor in agony. Then, the attacker fired two more shots – one in the back of each of Murphy's arms. Murphy rolled under a car for cover as the shooter began to calmly reload. He has said he remembers thinking at this point, 'Is this guy ever going to stop shooting me?'

Moving out from under the vehicle towards his own car, Murphy tried to reach the shotgun he kept in the boot. As the bloodied lieutenant made his move, he was shot again, this time at point-blank range and in the back of the head. The shooter still wasn't finished. He fired again and again – one in the arm, then the leg. And still he kept firing. In total, 15 shots ripped into Murphy's body and head. Shot after shot rang out. And then, finally, there was silence.

Then the shooting started again, this time coming from Officer Sam Lenda's gun – one of Murphy's colleagues. Lenda had pulled into the long tree-lined driveway of the car park and stopped his car to assess the threat and help his buddy. When he spotted the gunman through the scope of his rifle, he took a shot, even though he was a significant distance away. It is noteworthy that Lenda was the force's sharp-shooting trainer. He hit the gunman in the hip and the shooter immediately fell to the ground. Other officers pulled up in squad cars, unclear as to how many were dead, where Murphy was or whether there were any other shooters.

Having fallen to the ground after Lenda's hip shot, Wade Michael Page – a white 40-year-old, hate-filled extremist, who had served in the US Army – finally shot himself in the head.^{[fn1](#)} His own aim was lethal and the head shot killed him instantly.

Remarkably, after a shot to the front and back of the head, being shot in the arms and legs, and taking 15 bullets in total, Murphy survived. There was no way Murphy could have known that as he entered the car park, the gunman had been approaching a small kitchen pantry where exactly 15 people, mainly women and children, had been huddled behind a paper-thin door in terror. When Page spotted Murphy in the car park, he turned and went to deal with the officer. Afterwards, the survivors felt that Murphy had literally taken a bullet for each one of them.

Lieutenant Murphy strongly resists the word 'hero' to describe his actions that day. Instead he reserves the term for Satwant Singh Kaleka, the leader of the Sikh temple, who had also tried to stop Wade Page. In his

dying moments Mr Singh had held on so tightly to Page that his own fingernails had been ripped out as he tried to stop him attacking anyone else.

Despite these acts of resilience, this chapter isn't about the heroic Lion – it's about the humble Mouse. Murphy says that events on that day taught him more about humility than heroism, and that the really significant part of the story is everything that came next for him after his recuperation and eventual release from hospital. The consequences of what had happened to him had taught him humility in the most direct way possible.

In his talk as part of The Virtus Group (a series of talks for Law Enforcement officers and military personnel) he made this point very powerfully.¹ In his New York accent, made all the more gruff by the bullet that had penetrated his larynx, he says :

Your family is your lifeline. And for the longest time I didn't take any of that into account. I was too proud. I was too type A ...

But a funny thing happened ... After I get lit up like a Christmas tree ... I had both my hands in casts – all the way to the tips ... (Murphy shows the audience how his hands were rendered useless by holding them up like the rigid claws that they were straight after the accident.)

I still gotta go to the bathroom ... but ... (now showing the audience the futility of his 'claws' to help him with such basic daily functions as a visit to the toilet) I can't ... hold paper

(Murphy looks down and sighs.) You wanna talk about being humbled ... You wanna talk about being brought down to a level that I always should've been. That marriage was a partnership that needed to be reinforced every day.

And I forgot it ... until I needed it.

And when you're a 50-year-old man banging your cast on the wall saying, 'I'm done going to the bathroom' so your loved one can come in and take care of you ... That – ladies and gentlemen – is a humbling experience. It's something we don't account for. It's something we don't appreciate on a day-to-day basis.

So, for all the ironclad heroism and fortitude Murphy showed in 'catching bullets' (his term), what he wanted to highlight as a cop to his fellow cops

was the need to show humility and a deep appreciation of others. The wife of Mr Singh describes Murphy as, ‘God at that time to us ... Because he saved us. He took all the bullets on him. He’s got so much strength. I hug him – he saved so many lives.’ Despite his heroism and the adoration of those he saved, Murphy remains humble. The experience made him cherish the things in his life he had previously taken for granted – the love and care of those closest to him.

Of all the rapport-based behaviours we have discussed, it may surprise many that the most significant impact on others can be achieved by mastering the art of being a good Mouse – the art of allowing others to be in control, to seemingly take a back seat as events happen around you, and the ability to be humble. If bad T-Rex is the most important behaviour to eliminate, good Mouse is the most important to add.

Humility is extremely hard to attain. In Buddhism it is considered an enlightened state. In fact, sometimes it is even described as a kind of emptiness – ‘empty of the contents of an illusory ego’. Part of the challenge of humility is its elusiveness because of our natural instinct to bolster our fragile egos.

Equally, as difficult as it is to attain, as soon as we have achieved a degree of humility, we run the risk of considering this attained state as somehow making us a higher being, or better or more ‘enlightened’, and, in doing so, we immediately lose the humility we strove for. Equally, feigning a sense of self-deprecation would be to engage in hypocrisy and egocentricity.

Humility involves developing an honest, objective sense of our own strengths and weaknesses with an ongoing commitment to learning about others. It involves curiosity, persistence and an accurate sense of one’s place in the universe. An accurate sense of self-worth for most of us means not overinflating our merits.

Humility is about behaving without ego or self-conceit and with respect for others and without wishing to please or impress them. Sometimes extreme events (often sensing our own mortality and fragility) can create focus for us (as they did for Murphy), though they are not a necessary or sufficient requirement for gaining humility.

Moments in our lives when we realise our own lack of control or importance can serve as symbolic totems to help us resist the automatic urge to put ourselves at the centre of things.

The humble Mouse approach is about following others and adopting a position of capitulation. In Western cultures we immediately associate giving way to others as a weakness. Something about it feels wrong. We may prefer the control associated with the Lion, the joy and intimacy of the Monkey – perhaps even the cathartic release of the T-Rex. But, as we will argue, Mouse is *the* single most important feature of rapport-building.

What has humility got to do with building rapport with other people? In our observations of thousands of hours of interview footage we have seen that the very best interviewers are humble – even directly in front of someone who hates them so much they would happily take their head off if they could.

When we looked at the many hours of police interviews and careful examination of all the data with high-value targets and terrorists we found that, against our expectations, the behaviours that had the most positive impact on rapport-building were the positive, respectful, humble approaches of the good Mouse.

Don't be misled into thinking Mouse is about 'giving up' or 'going soft'. Allowing the other person to feel in control is powerful and can be done in a very tactical way. This 'gentle art of surrender' exemplifies the behaviour of the Mouse. An excellent example of this was one of the interviews that we were involved with and which was a classic 'David and Goliath' situation.

THE LION AND THE MOUSE

Diola was heavily set with a long, dark beard and black, shiny thick-rimmed glasses that looked all the inkier against his white ankle-length robe. He sat like a carved statue glowering over DS Dabir, who was short, slim and with an immaculately cropped beard. Dabir's hair, in contrast, was a little wild – as if he had concentrated so hard on grooming his facial hair that he had forgotten what he had on his head. Dabir was new to interviewing and, in particular, to the world of counter-terrorism. He had sat in with Diola on the previous interviews as the second interviewer, but now he was in the lead chair. DS Dabir had watched the previous lead interviewer deploy his well-rehearsed, thoroughly planned strategies, only to be backed into a corner, stonewalled or ordered out of the interview room by Diola.

Diola radiated a capacity for violence and had a criminal history that reflected that. But in this particular interview he was suspected of having posted messages on social media plotting an attack on a police cadet. In a search of his residence, the police had found a bag containing a hammer, a kitchen knife and a map with the location of a nearby police cadet training centre. They suspected he could be targeting cadets and that he could also be part of a larger group, plotting an attack or kidnap attempt.

In previous interviews Diola had interrupted officers and accused them of ignorance, naïvety and moral weakness. He refused to answer questions. Despite his stream of verbiage, he told his interviewers little of any significance, other than to lecture them on history and their own cultural ignorance.

DS Dabir began his interview with the police caution. Diola stared intensely at Dabir from under his glasses: ‘The purpose of the interview is not to go through your little checklist in your notebook so you can get a pat on the head. If I find you are in this to make a name for yourself, we are done talking, so be sincere.’ His tone was stern and dipped in sarcasm.

Dabir, remaining completely calm, moved a little closer to show Diola his police notebook. He flicked through it in front of Diola and showed him the empty pages. ‘I don’t have a list of questions and no checklist. I just want you to tell me in your own words about what you were planning.’

Diola appraised DS Dabir with a smirk, ‘Right, then I will give you *one* chance. The way you answer my question will determine whether I speak.’

Then, moving in closer to DS Dabir, and pointing his finger in Dabir’s face, he said, ‘So ... think *very* carefully before you answer (*pause*). Why should I speak to *you* today?’

DS Dabir paused for a full ten seconds before answering. It was as if all of the oxygen had been sucked out of the room. We tapped the monitor in the video room thinking it may have frozen. Then in a calm, measured voice, DS Dabir simply said, ‘On the day we arrested you, I believe you wanted to kill a police cadet (*he paused again, taking a deep breath*). I don’t know the details of what you intended, why you may have felt it needed to happen or what you wanted to achieve. Only you know these things Diola (*another pause*) ... I want to know not because I want to please my boss but because I want to protect people. I can’t force you to tell me – I don’t want to force you. If you are willing, you’ll tell me, and if you’re not, you won’t. It’s your choice.’

DS Dabir let this statement simply sit between them. He remained calm and collected, patient and humble; the Mouse awaiting the Lion's response.

'That is a beautiful reply,' Diola said, breaking into a smile. 'Because you have treated me with consideration and respect, yes I will tell you now. But only to help you understand what is really happening in this country.'

Those of us observing, including DS Dabir's senior officer, were stunned. DS Dabir's unorthodox humble approach had worked, but why?

Part of the reason for DS Dabir's effectiveness was that he did not attempt to take control of Diola. Diola wanted to be in charge, he wanted to be the Lion, so DS Dabir let him. As we have said, if you attempt to use force, you will be met with equally forceful resistance. DS Dabir here used no force. In fact, he explicitly stated the opposite – 'I won't force you, I don't want to force you.'

Consider DS Dabir's response in relation to the HEAR principles. Dabir did not give some formulaic answer or attempt any manipulation or tricks. His answer was genuine and honest. He didn't pull any punches and said overtly, 'You're here because I suspect that you wanted to kill a police cadet.' DS Dabir also highlighted Diola's sense of autonomy – 'Only you know these things' – and admitted his own ignorance: 'I don't know the details of what happened, why you may have felt it needed to happen, or what you wanted to achieve by doing this.' He also sought guidance from Diola, putting Diola in the role of educator and teacher: 'I'd like you to help me understand.' And, critically, he revealed he didn't have any preconceived idea about where he wanted the questions to go. Displaying the empty book without any notes or questions is such a symbolic way of saying: 'You set the agenda, you are in charge, I am here to listen.'

It may grate for some to read about this police officer capitulating himself to this arrogant, self-aggrandising terrorist, but it's a very honest presentation, a very human one and a very humble one. As such it is disarming, authentic and completely irresistible.

Remember what we said about the T-Rex instinctive response in the previous chapter. You might want to see the terrorist humbled, made to submit, brought down a peg or two, but does that fit with the goal of this interaction? DS Dabir's goal is not to teach this person his place – it is to secure credible, reliable information that may help stop a potential attack. Not everyone would be capable of mustering such humility across the table from a man like Diola. If DS Dabir had let his ego get in the way, they may

never have uncovered Diola's associates or their plot to terrorise and murder innocent people.

Adaptive Mouse's approach to competition is akin to the tortoise in the story of the hare and the tortoise. The hare is confident to the point of arrogance in his ability to defeat the tortoise. He mocks the tortoise's patient, persistent but plodding effort. He certainly does not perceive it as a threat and that is his downfall. His ego is so overinflated that he takes a nap in the middle of the race, thinking he will still easily defeat the plodding tortoise. The hare lets his guard down and the tortoise defeats him in the end.

Is capitulating always the most appropriate strategy? No. Should we always back down to demands? No, of course not. But sometimes we should consider being more reflective and more humble than we naturally are. Many very successful people have the ability to back down, to show humility, to apologise, to consider and carefully listen to all points of view. They are also able to let others take the reins if that is what is required to achieve the goal. The art is knowing when such a skill is useful and when it is not.

THE IMPACT OF THE BAD MOUSE

Often it is helpful to learn what to *stop* doing. In the previous chapter this involved removing the worst attributes of the T-Rex from your behaviour: being attacking, judgemental or sarcastic. Similarly, with the Mouse style we need to eliminate the bad behaviours before we start mastering the good. Bad Mouse includes behaviour that is hesitant and uncertain, avoidant, formulaic and disengaged.

Bad Mouse behaviours are displays of weakness (not humility) and can be hard to recover from, especially in a competitive or cut-throat business environment. The result can be that you are bullied, ignored, sidelined or overlooked. Uncertainty and hesitancy project a lack of confidence that can then undermine people's trust in your decision-making. Remember that Mouse is opposite the Lion and therefore is not appropriate in situations where you are required to show leadership, assertiveness or confidence.

Emily: Bad Mouse in a leader is particularly damning. I can recall a staff team I'd been asked to support with some supervision. What quickly emerged was a fractured hierarchy

where certain sub-teams had declared themselves more important than others and divisive practices had evolved that were generating a river of resentment and frustration among the team as a whole. Much of it was simply perception rather than any real deficits or dangerous practice. They were all doing their jobs and doing them relatively well, but they were all miserable, angry and demotivated and felt like they were pitted against each other. How had this happened?

I met with their supervisor, Anne, to discuss the state of things. Anne was a tiny woman with a kind face and glasses that reminded me of a kindly nana. She introduced herself by explaining that she was only meant to be with this team temporarily and that it wasn't really her area of expertise. I asked how long she had been managing the team.

'Umm, it's been almost a year now, I guess,' she said, as if only just realising this herself.

I asked her how she felt about the work the team was doing.

'Oh I think they are brilliant. They all know what's needed much more than me. I just let them get on with it and tell them to let me know if there is a problem,' she said cheerfully.

I could suddenly see the issue. For almost 12 months, this team had been left to self-manage with no guidance or expertise from the top. They were trying their best, but the lack of direction meant that stronger characters had risen to the top to push their own views or agendas over quieter members of staff. The leadership style they were receiving was one of uncertainty and avoidance – bad Mouse.

'Let me know when there is a problem' sends the underlying message of 'Leave me out of it.' It is a recipe for *Lord of the Flies* self-management to emerge, with teams setting their own rules and deciding whose needs should rise to the top of the pile. Luckily, things hadn't descended into mayhem and murder between the sub-teams just yet, but it took another three months of sessions to air out the toxic undercurrent that had developed and reset their practice in a more holistic, positive framework.

An essential component of this was integrating Anne much more fully into the teams' day-to-day practice and encouraging

her to listen to their needs, issues and successes. Our starting point was to flip her bad Mouse behaviour (disengaged, uncertain, formulaic) to good (patient, seeking guidance, respectful). But as much as teams need to be listened to, they also need to be led. So, the second step was to promote and develop Anne's Lion style of leadership – to be in charge, set the agenda and be supportive of her staff. Each sub-team also needed its own Lion to bring issues forward and promote the needs of their colleagues clearly and openly to Anne to inform her decisions. For the teams, there was to be no more hiding behind closed doors, gossiping and backbiting, and undermining each other's confidence and abilities. For Anne, no more switching off, hiding in her office waiting for that transfer to another team that she'd been waiting on for over a year.

HOW TO BE A GOOD FOLLOWER

Being a good Mouse is not about switching off; quite the opposite – it requires patient, focused and invested listening. Adopting a follower position is a woefully underestimated and enormously powerful component of rapport-building. This is because it sends the message to the people with whom we are seeking a relationship that they are in control, they have choice and that they are important to us.

Utilising the Mouse style in our relationships means that our parents, children, spouse and colleagues feel listened to and valued. Instilling these feelings in the other person is the best way to generate long-term rapport. And, if we recognise the simple truth that we relish and thrive on feelings of control and choice, and that we want to feel like we matter, if we gift those feelings to others, rapport-building is the automatic consequence. In our personal relationships, good Mouse generates trust and consideration.

The good Mouse also has tactical advantages. In our research on interviewing and interrogation, it has proven one of the most powerful positions on the circle for eliciting information. As we saw in the example with DS Dabir, when done well, the Mouse approach is a quiet but effective weapon in allowing others to feel that they are in charge and therefore disarming them, and perhaps leading to them revealing information. That trust and consideration that is so positive in our personal relationships becomes a strategic advantage when seeking information from someone.

So, what are the behaviours and approaches that underpin Mouse thinking? Adaptive Mouse means being infinitely patient, even in the face of a roaring Lion; remaining persistent in focusing on our goals but not rushing them or trying to force or pressure the other person into compliance. Adaptive Mouse is all about generating internal pressure through patient exploration rather than external pressure, begging or berating.

Good Mouse means controlling your ego and appreciating the power of submission. Fundamentally though, Mouse is about retaining a sense of perspective on all things, and indeed about ourselves, in the world. Sometimes we need to sacrifice our own ego or self-interest for the greater good. Humility is the true essence of good Mouse.

Adopting the good Mouse approach as a manager allows you to instil a sense of independence and personal responsibility in others – often resulting in greater personal investment in the company and in achieving the goals of the organisation. By generating positive feelings in others through allowing them to feel listened to, valued and in control of their own destiny, team members feel a sense of belonging and increase their desire to achieve.

For example, research by the Interdisciplinary Center for Healthy Workplaces in Berkeley, California found that providing choice and control to employees through flexible working hours and choice over team roles resulted in more healthy, happy and motivated employees.^{2 3} They were also more productive, efficient and dedicated to the company they work for

So if good Mouse can be useful at work, what about at home?

THE MOUSE PARENT

In repairing parent–child relationships, there are two distinct problems related to Mouse-style behaviours. The first is where a parent has been pushed into ‘bad Mouse’ behaviour by a child who has taken the Lion position. The parent can end up being avoidant or weak and hesitant when disciplining the children. They may try to dodge conflict whenever possible and appear uncertain and lacking in confidence about their own parenting skills.

The second issue is when a parent refuses to ever adopt a Mouse position. It is as if the parent thinks that by treating their child with respect, by apologising when they make a mistake or admitting when they are

wrong will somehow undermine their own authority and the child will run rampant over them.

Both of these situations miss the point that there is tremendous power in the Mouse position – it can unlock terrorists who are committed to kill and murder the person across from them, and it can certainly help manage an angry, moody teenager. One of the standard techniques we use to help parents who are struggling to manage conflict with their children is what we call the ‘Ten Commandments’ of positive parent–child relationships. They provide a clear expectation of behaviour, but encourage apologising or taking a step back to allow yourself or others to calm down:

1. If I swear at someone, I will apologise.
2. If I shout at someone, I will apologise.
3. If I get in somebody’s personal space, I will apologise.
4. If I say something I know I shouldn’t have or didn’t mean, I will apologise.
5. I will let the other person have a break to calm down if they ask for it.
6. I will ask for a break to calm down if I need it.
7. I will never try to frighten somebody to win an argument.
8. I will vent my anger in a way that doesn’t hurt anybody (including me) or smash anything or ruin anything in our house.
9. I will *never, ever* hit another person in this house.
10. This is my home, this is my family – I will give them respect and love.

Everyone in the household must agree to the commandments. They are not a set of ‘rules’ for the unruly teenager that Mum or Dad wants fixed. They are for everyone – Mum and Dad included. This is where it gets hard.

Parents often struggle with two elements of these commandments :

1. Allowing their child to have a break to calm down.
2. Apologising to their child if they have overstepped.

Both of these things feel like relinquishing power and, indeed, they are very Mouse-like behaviours. But, when done well, they can keep a situation from escalating and becoming exponentially worse.

TIME TO COOL DOWN

When you allow your child time to calm down when a discussion gets heated, you are teaching them so many important skills. The first is being

able to recognise when a discussion is turning into an argument and is no longer productive. They need to learn that when an argument gets to this stage it is better to walk away and calm down. The second is to manage their own emotional state by taking time away to calm down and return to the issue when they are less overwhelmed. This is called emotional self-regulation and it is a critical part of growing up.

Sounds easy we know, but it can be very difficult to take a Mouse approach and walk away mid-argument to allow your child the space to calm themselves down rather than going Lion and trying to make them be calm. This is the proper use of the 'time out' technique, rather than sending them to the 'naughty step' as a punishment. Time out can help teach children how to regulate their emotions and cope with negative feelings that are an inevitable part of life.

As psychologist parents, we have raised our child to stick to these principles since he was small. When we argue, and he says, 'You need to give me some space to calm down, I can't talk about this right now', even for us it feels like treading cement to turn and walk away. We have not infrequently had to grit our teeth and scream silently as we walk away and give him space and time. But the rules work so we respect them, even when it's hard.

THE HARDEST WORDS

The other aspect that parents struggle with is apology. When our behaviour does cross over on to the bad circle, in any respect, we need to be able to recognise it and apologise. Apology is an extremely powerful social tool when delivered sincerely and genuinely. We have seen all sorts of apologies in our observations of police interviews. When done well, it can have an amazing effect of resetting the dynamic of an interview and gaining respect from the suspect. When done badly, it can torpedo the whole interaction.

Parents, like our interrogators, often feel that if they say 'I'm sorry' to their child, they are giving up their position of power. What they are really doing when they refuse to apologise is modelling tyranny: 'Even when I am wrong you must accept it because I am in charge.' What you are showing when you apologise is that you own your mistakes and are accountable for them. And, importantly, you are modelling this to your child as a principle that they too should adopt.

The golden rule is that you should only apologise for what you are genuinely responsible for. If your teenager won't get off their PlayStation even though you have asked three times but then you shouted and switched off the Wi-Fi without warning knowing it would wipe their game, you should apologise. But you should only apologise for shouting and switching off the Wi-Fi with no warning – not for asking them to get off in the first place. Your teenager is still in trouble for not listening. That is their own behaviour and they are responsible for it. People worry that any apology will be taken as a blanket admission that you were in the wrong – about everything! Not apologising when you know you have overstepped or are in the wrong is the opposite of humility – it is hubris. To avoid this, practise with someone first if you can. Role-play the apology until the other person says they feel like you mean it, but that you aren't saying sorry for their bad behaviour, only your own. We carry out an exercise with our children's group called 'I'm sorry, no butts' where any time someone adds an excuse or blame to their apology, the other kids hold up a giant cardboard bum and shout 'no butts!'.

Here's an example apology for the situation described above :

I'm sorry for shouting at you and for calling you cloth ears and for turning the Wi-Fi off without warning you first. I shouldn't have done that – it was over the line and I know it's upset you. It's not how I want to ever speak to you.

I do need you to listen when I ask you to do something so I am not going to turn the Wi-Fi back on tonight. We can both try to do better tomorrow – you listening and me not shouting.

The apology is Mouse – it is you humbling yourself and owning your bad behaviour, even to your child. Confirming that there is still an issue and that there is a consequence is you reasserting the Lion position. Encouraging you both to try harder is moving towards the teamwork of Monkey.

As long as you can move out of Mouse when you need to, there is no harm in apologising. In fact, it is a great asset and models behaviour we would expect from our child. Is there anyone to whom it is more important to show that you take responsibility for your mistakes than your child? Failing to do so can lead to them trying to get out of responsibility by making excuses or blaming others for their own behaviour.

Good Mouse involves an acceptance that you should not always seek to control things. To help us keep focus on this it can be helpful to occasionally reflect on events that are very significant to us – loss of a loved one, an illness, or some other event that has put us in touch with our own place in the world. This can prevent us from worrying unnecessarily about trivialities. We should embrace the fact that good Mouse is the ability to acquiesce, apologise and recognise that we don't know everything. These are virtues and strengths – not a sign of weakness. Force and power, in the world of rapport-building, is overrated, and patience and humility often underrated.

LESSONS

1. ***Gain perspective from the big events of your life.*** These might be good or bad, but most of us will have had a significant one. Occasional reflection on this and appreciation of it should keep you humble. Some people benefit from appreciating other aspects that enable them to see themselves for what they really are – only a small cog in a massive universe – and they do this by appreciating nature, spirituality, religion, and so on. Being spiritual, religious, atheist or agnostic are all fine – they just aren't fine when any one of them is used to assume a position of superiority over others.
2. ***Listen.*** Say less, listen more. Find out what someone else is interested in and ask them about it. Be curious about others rather than seeking any possible opportunity to talk about yourself. We recommend waiting at least seven seconds to allow someone to think about their reply. Try not to verbally jump into the space and learn to let it sit comfortably as the person considers their response.
3. ***Own your shit and apologise.*** It is irrelevant who you have wronged – someone you hate or someone you love, criminal or cop, teenager or pensioner, boss or employee. Apologise without the expectation that they will accept it or that you want anything back. If you have erred, you have erred, and it is a weakness not to own it and admit it.
4. ***Be patient. Persevere. Persist.*** Your learning on Mouse will not end. Curiosity is a joyful experience and once embraced is not an effort or a chore. It will bring very great pleasure even in small things. As well as reflecting on the really big events, do slow down occasionally and take

time to enjoy the things you love, and really appreciate and reflect on how lucky you are to have them – a piece of music, chatting to your child on the way to school, a walk on the seafront watching the waves. Look for the small details that you may have taken for granted – whether these are sights, sounds, tastes, feelings or even memories.

5. ***Build your quiet confidence.*** When you feel hesitant or uncertain about a situation, try not to leak this. It is OK to be unsure, but allowing it to be a consistent style can lead to people losing trust in your decisions or walking over you. Take three deep breaths, swallow that uncertainty and keep moving forward.

CHAPTER 8

TAKING CONTROL: THE LION

I am not afraid of an army of lions led by a sheep; I am afraid of an army of sheep led by a lion.

– **Alexander the Great**

There are over 300 words for ‘lion’ in Arabic. The name ‘Hamza’ means a strong lion that is a powerful protector and can protect his pride from enemies. But Hamza is also a tolerant lion who seeks protection and balance for his pride. He leads by earning their respect and loyalty.

‘Ghadanfar’ represents the bad lion. In Arabic this name means a moody lion that is unpredictable, with a vicious temper, that seeks to fight at every opportunity. He leads his pride through fear and intimidation.

Why lead through strength and not fear? The answer is simple – a leader whose followers are filled with respect and devotion will always outlast a leader whose followers despise him or her and lie in wait for the opportunity to dislodge them.

Laurence: If you’re standing beside the docks in mid-November, you’ll need a warm coat and hat. As I huddled next to one of my colleagues, looking across the grey choppy waters at the incoming ferry, loaded with 56 of my undergraduate students I said, ‘Man, these students are gonna feel this today.’ We were conducting a large-scale ‘critical incident exercise’ in which we test the decision-making of emergency response agencies. It involved a ferry disaster in which a tugboat carrying cement would hit the ferry and cement particles would spew out

over the ferry, creating a respiratory hazard. Of course, there was no real cement but there was a real ferry, and a bunch of real people on the ferry (my students) who had to pretend they'd been hit and covered in cement particles. In a real such incident, there would be a pressing need to get that ferry docked and get everyone decontaminated. Mass decontamination involves setting up a large, inflatable tube-like tent that sprays cold water over the contaminated individuals.

The chief fire officer was observing the incident and was eager to see how the less experienced staff would respond. But there was a problem – the ferry was about 30 feet from dock and seemed to be in a holding pattern. Nothing was moving. This wasn't part of the exercise. What was going on? The plan was: ferry leaves port, tugboat with cement hits ferry, cement cloud envelops ferry, ferry docks, decontamination begins. But the ferry wasn't docking.

'What the hell is going on?' I said to my colleague. 'Why won't they dock?' Other rumblings occurred among the response teams. What was the problem? I thought, 'Shit, if this were real some of the people on that ferry would be in serious trouble by now.'

The most critical feature of decontamination procedures is the speed of decision-making. Whatever the contaminant is, you need to strip and get the skin wet – quickly – and you need to make that happen whatever the situation. For every second that ticks by, whoever is centrally in charge is continuing to put people at more and more risk the longer they take to sort it out. Ten minutes slipped by, then 20. We were approaching 30 minutes.

'Jesus, why isn't anyone gripping this?' I thought. The frustration was made worse by the fact that the ferry was so close to the dock, but simply not moving.

Finally, after about 45 minutes, the ferry docked and, sure enough, one by one, I saw the students enter the decontamination tent, scream as they experienced the shock of the cold water and then emerge at the other end to dry off and be given a bacon sandwich and a mug of tea. Apparently, they all

enjoyed it. But I was still puzzled by the delay. Later, I found out that the issue was a large tree or log floating right next to the dock, which had made it impossible to risk docking at that port. What was interesting, though, was the chief's reaction – he was going crazy at seeing the amount of flapping and inertia caused by the unforeseen log.

Chief Dan Stephens is an ex-para and wide as a door. He's a friendly tank of a bloke and a classic no-nonsense Lion leader. He is a doer, not a talker. He thrives on extremes and embraces difficulties. He was supposed to be observing, but I subsequently found out he was going crazy at the apparent lack of leadership in the control room. In such incidents the rigid protocol is supposed to be followed – dock the ship and then begin decontamination. So that's what most folk wanted to follow and the log was creating a great deal of discussion and faffing about. Not for Dan.

He knew that with increasing delay came increasing risk and so, as a natural leader, he was shouting, 'Look, fuck the procedure, get a fucking RIB [rigid inflatable boat] either between the dock and the ferry and move that fucking log. At the very least, start throwing the decon capes on to the boat from the RIB so the victims can start taking their bloody clothes off and be ready to start decon as soon as they dock. I don't give a shit if it's not policy – people could be dead by now! Accept some fucking responsibility and get on with it!'

If T-Rex behaviour is all about dealing with conflict and Mouse is all about learning to listen and follow, the Lion approach is about being a strong accountable leader. In the scenario above, Chief Fire Officer Stephens was demonstrating the decisive accountability of the good Lion, albeit with the addition of some colourful language! He knew that the responsibility for managing the situation and protecting the people on the ferry ultimately rested with him, and that spurred him to adapt and take charge of the situation, even in unforeseen circumstances. The measure of a Lion's leadership style is how it is expressed in adversity, not in 'fair weather' circumstances.

Good Lions are assertive and clearly set out the agenda for others. Unlike the T-Rex whose skill is firmly establishing their own bottom line ('This is what I'm prepared to do or not do'), the Lion sets out expectations for others ('This is what I expect of you'). Good Lions help establish clear boundaries and a moral code of conduct to guide the rest of the team.

Consider some of these lines from Colonel Tim Collins's eve of battle speech to the 1st Battalion of the Royal Irish regiment in Iraq in 2003:

We are going into Iraq to liberate, not to conquer. We are entering Iraq to free a people and the only flag which will be flown in that ancient land is their own. Show respect for them.

The enemy should be in no doubt that we are his nemesis and that we are bringing about his rightful destruction.

Show them no pity.

It is a big step to take another human life. It is not to be done lightly. I know of men who have taken life needlessly in other conflicts. I can assure you they live with the mark of Cain upon them. If someone surrenders to you then remember they have that right in international law and ensure that one day they go home to their family.

The ones who wish to fight, well, we aim to please.

If you harm the regiment or its history by over-enthusiasm in killing or in cowardice, know it is your family who will suffer. You will be shunned unless your conduct is of the highest – for your deeds will follow you down through history.¹

Colonel Collins's overriding theme here is one of ethical behaviour and balance of force – but force nonetheless. He is setting out the rules of engagement for his men, clearly and firmly describing what he expects of them. He expects them to be men of honour, showing respect for the country and culture they are occupying. He warns against savagery, cowardice and disregard for international law – setting clear boundaries for his men.

Critically, he makes it clear what he wants but he places the responsibility for that behaviour on each individual man and his own personal reputation and moral compass. He expects them to behave with honour, strength, commitment and compassion. To inspire the loyalty and

respect required of his men to obey his directives, he must represent these qualities himself. Hypocrisy is the death knell to effective leadership. He does not expect anything of them that he does not demand of himself.

The good Lion's use of control is a firm guiding hand, not a yank on the lead, pulling someone somewhere they don't want to go. It is when force is imposed at the cost of the other person that the interaction drifts from control ('The other person is behaving how I want them to') to controlling ('I will make this person behave how I want them to'). There is influence and guidance in the good Lion's leadership style, rather than dogmatic demands and an expectation of obedience.

THE LION AND THE MOUSE

Laurence: The most intense example I have seen of a good Lion interrogation takes us back to the military. The interrogator was after time-sensitive information, and the stakes were high – in this instance the pre-interrogation intelligence suggested that a roadside bomb had already been planted and the interrogator needed to find out where.

The interrogator opened by firmly asking the detainee to tell him why he was there. As he did so, he looked directly at him while the detainee tried to avert his gaze. He firmly commanded the detainee to look at him when he was speaking.

'It's been mistaken identity,' said the detainee.

The interrogator looked sternly at the man right in front of him and with a fixed gaze said, 'It's not fucking mistaken identity. Tell me what happened.'

The man did not reply.

The interrogator upped the intensity: 'When was the bomb going to be planted – morning or evening? Which? Quickly, come on.'

'In the morning,' came back the reply. 'They were making plans for an IED.'

Interrogator: 'When? Yesterday or today?'

Detainee: 'Yesterday.'

Interrogator: 'OK, right. When?'

Detainee: 'I don't know ...'

Interrogator: 'You do know. What was it going to be put in?'

Detainee: 'I don't have any other information.'

Interrogator: 'Who were the associates? I know you've got other associates (*pause*). This is what's going to determine how long you are in here. (*Assertively, but with no sense of threat.*) Don't give me no bullshit.'

At this point the detainee begins to give the interrogator lots of names. The interrogator is calm and reassuring, saying, 'Right, OK, OK.'

All three people in the room – the interrogator, interpreter and detainee – are now crouched around a computer screen working together to identify the precise locations of where the bomb is going to be set off. The good Lion behaviour has done the trick and all three are now collaborating together. The dominance of Lion is now moving towards the cooperation of Monkey.

The interrogator is far gentler and softer now, but still remains assertive, confident and clear. He explains that it's the detainee's opportunity to tell what has happened. He tells the detainee that he needs to be honest, so that he can be honest in return. He reaffirms that the detainee will be shown respect and be given food, water and an opportunity to pray.

It is clear that the interrogator is not attempting to degrade, bully or humiliate the detainee during the interaction. It is intense and there is a clear sense of urgency to the interrogator's questions, but there are no insults or threats. There is no sign of bad T-Rex. Compliance is expected but not demanded.

Remember the Basra interview at the start of [Chapter 6](#) This is the difference between a Hamza lion and Ghadanfar. This interrogation is very different – it is not debasing or degrading, but it is intense. It is unlikely that the interrogator's approach would have had the same effect on an individual in the upper levels of an Al-Qaeda or Taliban network with an unshakeable commitment to the cause, or towards someone who was overtly hostile and displaying T-Rex behaviours. This good Lion communication, though, has worked very effectively with someone displaying Mouse-like behaviour.

As testament to their connection and that his choice to talk was out of personal choice and respect rather than being coerced

and out of fear, I witnessed an interrogation conducted several weeks later between the same three men. It was clear, in this final interrogation before the man's release back to his family, that the detainee saw the interrogator as a Lion to respect and love rather than a Lion to hate and fear. At the end of the interview the interrogator suggests that the detainee will soon be leaving the detention centre. The detainee turns to his interrogator, grabs him by the hand and, warmly shaking it, says, 'You ... I will miss.'

LIONS IN THE WORKPLACE

Consider bosses you may have had in the past. Were they a Hamza or a Ghadanfar? How did they lead the team? Were they confident, in charge and supportive? Did they have a clear plan and objectives? Did they share the credit when things went well and shoulder the responsibility when things went wrong? What behaviour did they inspire in you? The good Lion should inspire a team to work hard and aspire and strive. Or perhaps you have had a Ghadanfar-style boss – demanding, pedantic, rigid and unyielding. This sort of leader micromanages the team. People feel under scrutiny and paranoid about their performance. A Ghadanfar boss may hold the threat of performance review over their staff as a means of discipline rather than support. While the good Lion inspires people to achieve, the bad Lion results in a work ethic that is about competition and paranoia within the team.

The problem with the bad Lion approach is that it sets up some substantial negative long-term consequences that ultimately make it an ineffective leadership style. It is typified by dogmatic, pedantic demands issued to reinforce who is in charge, rather than for the wider benefit of the team. This style of leadership makes followers feel under scrutiny and under pressure to perform, to question their every action or decision, and ultimately the sense that whatever they do will not be good enough anyway.

Encouraging divisive competition among team members and setting unrealistic, unobtainable targets are hallmarks of bad Lion leadership. Bad Lions are also inappropriately parental and patronising, never fully allowing members of the team to step forward independently or take some individual responsibility. They will sweep in and rescue junior staff before they have

even had a chance to try ('Here let me do that, you'll never get it right. It's easier if I do it myself'). This leads to staff feeling undermined and disengaged from their role. Why try if you never get to grow or develop? It is corrosive to the team and can lead to an office culture that is negative, sabotaging and ultimately demoralising to performance.

The two styles that are most often confused are Lion and T-Rex. We have seen that for T-Rexes the main thing is that you must establish what your bottom line is and state it clearly and firmly. T-Rexes do not lead; they simply stand their ground when there is conflict. They do not want to control others; they just do not want to be controlled.

People who adopt a Lion style, in contrast, specifically seek to control other people's behaviour and directly guide it. That does not mean they will not open themselves up to suggestions, listening and other ways of doing things. We should not assume when someone wants to be in charge, that they expect or want confrontation. Lion is about leading, not confronting.

Good Lion behaviour involves directing a team and being in charge of all the working parts of it. Lions direct, advise and delegate. Being in control means that Lions don't and can't do all the individual tasks. Good Lions recognise the diverse nature of a team and carve up roles by appraising and effectively deploying the various forms of expertise within the group. As such, they are the leader and conductor of the team, and the followers are the various musicians.

However, if the orchestra fails, good Lions recognise and take responsibility for that failure – they do not blame the individual musicians. They recognise that leading from the front means being accountable for the actions of everyone behind them.

That is why it is very rare to have effective leaders who have not at some point learned the Mouse's tough lesson of humility. There is a lovely quote from St Augustine, the Christian theologian and philosopher from Numidia, that eruditely captures the notion of humility first, leadership second :

Do you wish to rise? Begin by descending. You plan a tower that will pierce the clouds? Lay first the foundation of humility.

GOOD LION LEADERSHIP

Laurence: I find it useful to think about one of my undergraduate professors: Adrian Furnham. He was always engaging to listen to and made an effort to engage with us, even though we were (as I saw it then) lowly undergraduates. He worked exceptionally hard and expected us to do the same.

One on one, he was calm, supportive and empathic, and I always sensed he genuinely wanted me to do well.

He wanted to know what I cared about and was interested in, not just what I could do for him. He gave clear direction and instruction, and he encouraged me to be brave and aspire to achieve greater and greater things. This sense of guidance, support and encouragement never left me and inspired my confidence and aspiration to pursue an academic career.

This kind of supportive reassurance is summarised powerfully by casualties we have interviewed in critical incidents such as floods, fires or chemical attacks. Their description about what they want when emergency services deal with them is the perfect recipe for the good Lion: clear, uncomplicated instructions about what they should do, empathic reassurance and a sense of protection.

Think about people in your own life who have been inspirational leaders. What was it about them that earned your respect and trust? What characteristics did they have? How did you respond to them? What did they bring out in you?

WHO'S THE LION IN YOUR HOUSE?

Consider Lion behaviour at home between parents and children, or even between romantic partners. In Emily's work with families experiencing domestic violence, she teaches the circle of communication ([page 171](#)) in particular to repair and restore healthy relationships between parents and their children. We ask the clients, 'If your child was asked which animal you are most of the time, what would they say?'

For many parents, the Lion position looks like the ideal place to parent from. It means you are clearly in charge, you set the rules and the boundaries, and your child defers to your authority. For many, the idea of generating obedience from their child is the hallmark of good parenting.

However, there is a problem with parenting from the top of the communication wheel. If you fall into bad Lion, your child may feel that all you ever do is give them instructions and demands, and check up on them ('Have you brushed your teeth/done your maths/cleaned your rugby boots/eaten your peas?'). You become a constant taskmaster to your child and your relationship can feel almost supervisory. Think about how you would feel about a boss who behaved this way towards you – constantly issuing demands and then checking up on you to see if you'd completed them. You would quickly start to resent their pedantic interference and wish for more autonomy. Such micromanaging of your child sends the message that you don't trust them to do what you say and you certainly don't trust them to make their own choices.

The parenting approach of 'My way or the highway' is similar to trying to break a horse in by force – by asserting dominance and control over the child, eventually they will give up their attempts at asserting their independence and do as they are told. But such conformist obedience holds a sting in the tail.

If parents are successful, they have often stifled the child's critical thinking and independent moral development ('If I just do as I'm told, I don't have to think about whether it is right or wrong. I will look to others to make my choices rather than work it out for myself'). What will happen to such a child once they leave home or when they encounter someone who holds more influence than their parent? Their moral compass may attach to whoever holds the most influence rather than remaining steady and stable whatever the context.

When we are working with parents, we get them to reflect on how they have been interacting with their child and if they are happy with that relationship. We also talk about the ideal parent-child relationship on the circle. Broadly, the best position would be for the parent to behave as a good Lion/Monkey (firm but kind) and the child to be a good Mouse/Monkey back (happy and obedient). From this position, the parent is still holding the reins, but loosely, and the child has the space to explore their own views, to make mistakes, and to learn, develop and grow as an individual.

A good Lion parent is still in charge but is supportive rather than dogmatic (such as encouraging the child to find ways to get up on time for school, such as using multiple alarms, laying out clothes or packing bags

the night before, rather than simply shouting repeatedly up the stairs every morning). A good Lion parent invests time and energy in conversations with their child, showing interest in what they think and feel about things (even if they are not their own interests!). If interaction between parent and child has simply become a cycle of demands and avoidance then effort needs to be made to realign positions on the circle.

Interestingly, often when we ask participants, ‘Where would you place the ideal relationship with your partner?’, they often say ‘the same as with my child’. This is not the correct answer. One partner should not be ‘in charge’ of the other. Romantic partnerships or co-parenting relationships are a team effort – one sometimes conceding to the other, and vice versa, but working together towards a common goal, be it running the household, parenting the children or managing the finances.

If your partner feels that you are the boss or vice versa, then you may need to make some adjustments in how you are communicating with each other. A large percentage of domestic abuse derives from one person trying to control the other through threats, intimidation and violence. Even if a relationship has not escalated to abuse, pressuring, demanding or ‘parenting’ your partner would all be considered unhealthy behaviour. Conversations with your partner should uphold the HEAR principles whenever possible:

- **Honesty:** you should not feel frightened of being honest with your partner if you are unhappy or concerned about something. If you find yourself being avoidant of conversations or being attacking towards your partner when you disagree, you may need to work harder to establish balance in your relationship.
- **Empathy:** you should be able to see your partner’s perspective on things and vice versa. This does not mean you will always agree on everything, but you should try to understand where the other person is coming from and what their core values are. If your values are very different, this is likely to be a continuing source of conflict until it is resolved.
- **Autonomy:** are you and your partner able to do things independently of each other? Do you feel that you need to ask permission rather than discuss a decision with your partner? As independent adults you should feel you have choices and freedoms within your relationship that are not ‘granted’ to you by your partner. It is not uncommon for

partners to lose some of their independent self as part of a couple; and for some couples, they may both consciously choose to enmesh themselves in each other's lives. The problem comes if you feel disallowed from having connections or interests outside the relationship. Healthy relationships are built on trust and honesty, not control and restriction.

- **Reflection:** do you feel understood and listened to by your partner, and vice versa? If you have stopped having meaningful conversations or being interested in each other's views and opinions that is another clear sign that communication has broken down. Take the time to listen to what your partner is saying and to explore what they think and feel about things. These are the building blocks of intimacy and a healthy connected relationship.

Guiding rather than pushing is the hallmark of being a good Lion. Taking control and being a leader is an important part of building rapport with others and getting results, but like all power and control it needs to be wielded carefully. It should only be used with the right people and at the right time, where we are expected to lead and others are expected to follow. We need to think carefully if we are putting ourselves in charge when actually the situation demands teamwork rather than leadership.

When we do need to lead, this position should be adopted with an underlying spirit of wanting to protect, not punish the person we are interacting with. Ultimately we need to recognise, too, that as passionately as we might want to make someone follow our way or jump to our tune, in order to build a sense of long-lasting rapport, in the end, we must respect their autonomy and allow them to have the choice to follow us or not.

LESSONS

1. ***Leading requires other lessons first.*** There is no automatic right to lead. It is true that sometimes individuals are put into a role of responsibility, but we all know leaders who cannot or should not lead. The first step to being a good leader is to remove bad attributes that get in the way of effective leadership – being pedantic (micromanaging), being attacking and competitive, leaking disinterest or uncertainty, and being overfamiliar or blurring boundaries. Most importantly, do not be tempted to lead through fear. It may be true that you can be very

effective in the short term leading through fear, but don't expect that to last.

2. ***Know when to lead from the front and when to take a step back.***

Great leaders don't need to be in charge of everything all the time and under all circumstances. They are able to support those around them to develop and grow, rather than simply expect others to follow orders and do as they are told without thinking. A good leader wants a team filled with critical thinkers who are able to bring their experience and intelligence to the table rather than simply look to them for a list of instructions. There is responsibility in leadership, and one of those responsibilities is nurturing the leaders of tomorrow.

3. ***Reap the benefits but accept the responsibility.*** Being in control comes with many benefits: you can set individual and team goals; you can push through hard times; you can be ambitious for yourself and for the people you love. And all this can be achieved without you having to do all the work. You can delegate, you can get others to work hard for you and help carry the load. But recognise that when you are in charge, the responsibility for not only your actions but those of your team will rest on your shoulders. When it goes well, a leader shares the glory with their team. When it goes wrong, they know that the Lion's share of responsibility will rest on them and they accept the consequences.

4. ***Lead with your moral compass.*** Long-lasting leaders excel because they not only look after their team but they consider the wider implications of their actions. Although they may be highly competitive and may say they seek to achieve a goal at any cost, their underlying and most sacred value is to lead and protect, not lead and defeat. When you lead, lead with your moral compass intact, considering your core values, not just the desire to conquer, defeat or achieve at any price. History has shown us that when leaders lose their moral compass, their followers often soon slide into the muck alongside them.

5. ***It is a choice to follow as well as to lead.*** Great leaders do not impose their will on others. They lead because their followers accept, freely, a choice to have them lead. Asserting authority over someone against their will may sometimes seem necessary, but recognise that the longer-term consequences may be resentment, resistance and ultimately rebellion. The more you can provide choice for followers,

the more they will respect you and the greater will be their dedication and motivation to work with you and for you.

CHAPTER 9

BUILDING COOPERATION: THE MONKEY

*If you want to go fast go alone.
If you want to go far go together.*
– **African Proverb**

In previous chapters, we have gone to some length to illustrate that rapport is much more than just being nice. Rapport requires the T-Rex's frankness and honesty, the Mouse's humility and patience, and the Lion's leadership and guidance. Yet there is still a place for 'niceness' in the repertoire of skills required to build rapport, and it is being nice that is at the heart of the Monkey style of communication.

The Monkey approach is all about building authentic cooperation. It is collaborative; working together for the group or the team towards the same goal. The Monkey approach with our friends involves showing mutual concern, helping out, mucking in and knowing that, whatever happens, we are in this together.

Monkey is the ideal dynamic between romantic partners; it is love – a deep physical, emotional and spiritual connection to each other. It is a sense of unbreakable comforting togetherness that lets you know no matter what you are facing, you are not facing it alone. Successful Monkey behaviour forges a powerful bond that allows us to work together, achieve things that we couldn't alone and builds a pathway to long-term happiness and success.

Cooperation leads to success in business, the arts and in many athletic endeavours. Goals are almost always more effectively achieved by groups

than individuals. But beyond the functional advantages of teamwork, cooperation forges social connections and, as we saw in [Chapter 1](#), social connections are critical to our psychological and physical health. Importantly, cooperation saves us from the oblivion of social isolation. Life simply isn't worth anything without meaningful connections to other people.

TEAMWORK

Tommy Caldwell, arguably the world's greatest free climber, made some of his first ascents with his wife, Beth Rodden, and in the early stages of each of their careers they were incredibly important together as a cooperative romantic team. They met in their teens and early photos show their fresh-faced, sun-kissed enthusiasm for life.

But in their early twenties and during a climbing trip in the Kara-Suu Valley in Kyrgyzstan they shared a truly traumatic experience – they were held hostage by rebels from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. After enduring severe threat and starvation they were rescued and returned to the US. But, several months later, in a freak DIY accident, Tommy cut his left index finger off with a circular saw. His doctor told him to forget his career as a professional climber. But, supported by Beth, Tommy went back to the climbing gym and spent the next six months training 14 hours a day for months in order to climb El Capitan in Yosemite. Grit and companionship helped Tommy and Beth make it through troubled times and, together, they went on to complete the most difficult free climbs on the planet. You can count on one hand (actually Tommy's left hand) the number of humans who can complete such climbs. You might think this is the end of the story. And indeed it does show the power of cooperation – in this case a romantic bond – as a way of pushing through tough times. But their marriage deteriorated and they divorced – Beth started a new relationship, remarried and had a child.

Suddenly Tommy had lost this critically important connection and this was his darkest phase – not his near-death experience as a hostage or the possible end of his climbing career through losing his finger. What led him to the brink of despair was the thought of being alone. His thoughts turned to his one constant – climbing – and, in particular, the huge rock slab on El Capitan known as the Dawn Wall.

Not only was this route harder, it was impossible. And impossible is enticing to the elite. This 3,000-foot smooth face route would be a free climb requiring ropes – and that meant, as before when he climbed with Beth, he'd need a climbing partner. He found one in Kevin Jorgeson.

No normal human would contemplate the Dawn Wall – holds are either little more than the size of a mosquito bite or are so razor-sharp that they strip flesh from bone. But, after examining every possible route up and several years' training, they began the ascent together. After six days they made short work of the first 14 pitches (pitches are the various sections up the face of the wall). Pitch 15 was brutal. You have to traverse a thin strip of rock, arms and legs extended in an iron cross formation. A tiny slip will result in a fall and you have to start again. After a series of failures, Caldwell finally traversed the section. Having now made it past Pitch 15, he waited for Kevin.

But Kevin couldn't make it. Sometimes, almost as soon as he sets out from the tiny canvas tent hanging off the Wall, he slips. Other times he gets 50–70 per cent of his way across and a finger slips and he falls. Kevin's body slaps against the rock and he must start again. Every attempt is extremely demanding. Kevin can't possibly complete it but he will not give up. He tweets from the rock face, 'As disappointing as this is, I'm learning new levels of patience, perseverance and desire. I'm not giving up. I will rest. I will try again. I will succeed.'

Meanwhile, Tommy nearly collapses on a small ledge higher up El Cap, having just completed the final and most demanding of the extreme pitches – just a final push to the top. Commenting on that moment, Tommy later said, 'It kind of crashed down on me that night that getting to the top without Kevin was going to be devastating.' Tommy looked crushed, not elated. He couldn't bear the feeling of the loneliness at the top. So, in the most heroic moment of the whole climb, Tommy doesn't climb to the top but back down to Kevin. 'I decided in that moment that we were going to go to the top together.'

Clambering back down to the small tent, Tommy encounters an utterly broken Kevin. Boiling up a hot drink for them both in the darkness in their tiny tent, Tommy uttered a hesitant awkward sentence like a nervous teen asking a girl to prom. 'I want to do this thing with you.' He paused and smiled, 'Er ... and I would love for ... er, ahh, yeh, it's like ... it's ... it's cool but, er, I mean, I mean – it's awesome but when I take ...' then

(clearing his throat) ‘I just really want you to be with me ...’ Caldwell does not put any pressure on Jorgeson. They will go again when Jorgeson feels ready. Until then, he’s happy to wait.

It is a tender and intimate moment of friendship and sacrifice. Caldwell was not in it for the glory – he wanted to do the right thing, the collaborative thing. And then, unbelievably, on the next attempt, Kevin made Pitch 15. They completed the climb together. Caldwell’s moral code was not ‘achieve the mission at all costs’. Instead it was ‘leave no man behind’.

IT’S NICE TO BE NICE

Barbara Fredrickson, principal investigator of the Positive Emotions and Psychophysiology Lab (PEPLab) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and colleagues have found in their research that positive emotions bring out the best in us, making us more creative, open-minded, resilient and connected to others. Happy people tend on average to be healthier, more physically active, more successful, more productive, and even more generous. They report having more satisfying romantic relationships, more meaningful conversations and better friends.¹ Some studies have established that they may even live longer.²

There are many advantages to the Monkey approach. It is the most sociable, warm and pleasant style of interacting with others. It also generates the same sort of warmth and support in return.

Monkey also seems like it should be the easiest and most straightforward approach to adopt – smile, be friendly, be conversational and people will be the same back. But Monkey is a little more than this and what if making conversation brings you out in a cold sweat? What then?

LEARNING TO BE SOCIABLE

Conversation is often referred to as an art, requiring interpersonal finesse and skill. For some people, mastering the ebb and flow of good conversation just seems to be part of their DNA. But what if you just don’t naturally have that ability? What if being friendly, warm and sociable is your own personal Everest?

The great revelation is that the art of conversation is not about saying the right thing. Good conversation is much more about listening. Adding Monkey elements to your interactions with others is about allowing them to

do more talking than you. Your goal should be to try to understand where they are coming from, what motivates them and what they value. This could sound quite daunting, especially if you are naturally introverted and reserved. If you struggle with a conversation about the weather, it might seem impossible to start uncovering people's meaningful values and beliefs.

If that feels like a big ask, there are some specific steps you can practise to improve your Monkey conversation style:

Step 1: Listen

Listen very closely to what is said for clues about the person's interests and values. Good conversation is about listening and picking up on what has been said – use the reflection skills discussed in Chapter 4. Once you have some information from the other person, you can expand and develop that thread until you have a full picture. It actually makes your job extremely easy because you simply have to reinforce and encourage whatever the other person says. And you don't have to talk about yourself, unless of course you want to!

Step 2: Share

Find shared experiences to help bond and create similarity. Shared experiences are a great way to start conversation as they immediately establish some common ground between you and the other person. Studies have found that we consistently label people more positively if we feel we are similar. Commuters commiserating over a delayed train, students over a difficult assignment or parents of toddlers over their sleep deprivation all feel a natural bond with each other due to their shared experiences.

If you are unsure about the experiences of the person you are trying to start a conversation with, choose those experiences that are likely to be common to us all, such as holidays, work or family. The magic key to conversation is getting the person to speak in the first place. Once they are talking, you have some raw material to work with. You have probably been on the receiving end of such strategies from a socially astute hairdresser or cabbie.

Step 3: Seek

Get more from them than they get from you. Psychologists are notorious for being able to get information from others while revealing very little about

themselves. This is because people often find it easy and enjoy talking about themselves. A few open questions and guidance towards a topic they care about and they are away. This doesn't mean you shouldn't chip in and contribute your own stories and experiences. But when you do, try to stick to a 2:1 or, even better, 3:1 ratio of how much the other person is speaking versus you. Good Monkey gives the conversational ball back more than it takes it.

LISTEN, SHARE, SEEK: THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF GOOD CONVERSATION

Emily: Consider the following interaction I had recently on a train:

Me: Sorry, is this seat taken?

Commuter: No, I've just got my bag there, I'll move it.

Me: Sorry, I wouldn't ask normally but the train is really packed. There was a delay to the train before, apparently.

Commuter: Oh, I know, I've been travelling for three hours already.

Me: Oh! What a nightmare! Have you got much further to go?

Commuter: Yes, I'm going to Swansea and it's a real pig to get to.

Me: Oh, that route is terrible – it takes hours. You could be somewhere tropical with palm trees in the time it takes to get down the Welsh coast.

Commuter: Yeah, and Swansea isn't exactly tropical ... (*polite laughter*)

Me: So, do you like a sunshine holiday?

Commuter: No, not really. I prefer something like that (*points to canal boats out of the window*).

Me: Canal boating! What's that like then?

Commuter: It's great – so peaceful, just floating along from pub to pub. It's so natural.

Me: Natural and peaceful ... it sounds lovely – no stress. Where's your favourite place to do that then?
Commuter: Norfolk Broads. There's this one route where you finish at a little pub in the middle of nowhere. It's not even wired up to the national grid – they have candlelight in the bar and all their electricity is off a beat-up old generator.
Me: Candlelight! It sounds like you like a holiday that is a bit off the beaten track.
Commuter: Yep, the simpler the better. No Wi-Fi, no email, no crowds – just the sound of the water, being in the fresh air and a pint in my hand.

This may not be a particularly riveting interaction but it was very pleasant. However, look back at what the commuter has revealed in a very short space of time about his interests and his core values and beliefs. He obviously prefers simple, natural pursuits and likes to relax in nature. He also clearly likes a pint. This information has come out of a few simple exploring questions that follow on from his previous answer and so the story of him and what he is interested in starts to emerge. We aren't going to be going on a canal holiday together, but he enjoyed the conversation so much he insisted on giving me a packet of wine gums for my sore throat before he got off the train. The whole experience was warm, friendly and much nicer than a resentful silence at having to move his bag for me.

Now look at my side of the conversation. What have I revealed about myself? Not much. I have been to Swansea and I agree – it is a pain in the arse to get to on the train. That's it really. But as a natural Monkey, that's how I prefer it.

The frustration or joy, depending on your perspective, of being a good conversationalist is that you end up doing very little talking about yourself. The more you pick up on something the other person has said and reflect it back or ask for more information, the more they tell you about themselves. Through this process, you are likely to learn a lot about them. It can be useful to reflect not just on the specifics of what they've said but on the

deeper values they have revealed – remember the first date conversation we saw on [page 119](#).

MONKEY AT THE OFFICE

Bosses who adopt a Monkey approach to leading a team often inspire high levels of devotion and loyalty in their staff. Because a Monkey leader is prepared to muck in and help, whatever the task, teams feel a deep sense of respect. When they are asked to stay on late or work an extra evening due to staff shortages, they say yes out of willingness to help rather than any fear of consequences (T-Rex leader) or a sense of obligation (Lion leader). Monkey-style leadership produces that critical factor in team performance: goodwill.

However, bad Monkey behaviour occurs when this friendliness drifts into overfamiliarity, obsequiousness and desperation. In a professional environment, this is most often expressed by poor boundaries and oversharing. If your conversational boundary drifts too far and, for instance, you start sharing with staff how hungover you are on a Monday or how annoying you find one of the senior board members, you can inadvertently give them permission to blur their own professional boundaries. They may feel it is OK to gossip about other colleagues, bad-mouth managers they don't like or operate on 'go slow' after a heavy weekend. Staff may also feel that if they arrive late or miss a deadline, surely you will overlook it as you are such good 'friends'. For Monkey management strategies to work, you have to have a team that understands the clear boundaries between professional teamwork and intimate friendship. You also need to understand them yourself.

It can be very challenging not to blur boundaries between working teams and friends, especially if you are naturally drawn to and connect with certain members of the team. When you really like someone as a friend, you are often more forgiving of their faults or errors and you may find it harder to effectively confront them about a problem (for instance by using the good T-Rex strategies discussed in [Chapter 6](#)).

A good measure of whether you have lost this balance is to think about the goals you are trying to achieve. If you are letting things slide or overlooking behaviours that are getting in the way of the overall 'goal' of the project/team/organisation, it is likely you have lost your objectivity and

have fallen into bad Monkey behaviour. You are entirely allowed to form very close even life-long friendships with colleagues – the question is whether it is impacting your goals. If you do identify an issue, reasserting a boundary once it has slipped can be very tricky.

It is a ‘bottom line’ scenario so we are back to using the toddler/T-shirt approach mentioned on [page 86](#), but this time to acknowledge your feelings honestly and openly rather than theirs. This might look something like this:

I really value our friendship and being able to speak openly to each other, but I have to bring something up with you that is a bit awkward. I know you have been going on social media and online shopping quite a lot during the day and I have to ask you to stop. Unless it's on a break or lunch. It's what I would ask of all the staff and I can't just let it slide because we're friends.

There's no doubt this is an awkward conversation and it's better not to let the boundary slide in the first place. However, if the person reacts badly or defensively you may want to re-evaluate your friendship with them anyway. A true friend would understand your position and treat that with respect, not take advantage.

THE MONKEY PARENT

There are some lovely qualities to being a Monkey-style parent – the focus is on sharing experiences with your child, listening to each other, and expressing love and affection. Monkey-style parents value their child as a companion and friend and spend time with them because they want to rather than out of a sense of duty or obligation. They are warm, supportive and kind. By modelling this sort of behaviour towards your child, you encourage them to behave the same way towards you.

The significance of this may not become apparent until they enter their teens and you suddenly find yourself trying to cling to your positive relationship for dear life through the roller coaster of hormones and inevitable conflict as they assert their independence.

It means that when you ask your child to bring the avalanche of laundry that has accumulated on their bedroom floor downstairs, they do so (even if it is begrudgingly) because they want to help and they know it is the right way to behave. They do not do it because those are the rules (Lion

parenting) or because they are scared you'll take their phone off them if they don't (T-Rex parenting).

Obedience based on mutual respect and love is an important lesson for them to carry forward into adult relationships. It is about instilling a moral compass that guides them to do the 'right thing' whatever the situation – whether someone is watching them, whether everyone else is doing it, and whether the other person is bigger and stronger. Monkey parenting allows your child the space to figure out their own views as well as the guidance and attention needed from you to develop a strong moral compass and strength of character. The ultimate lesson you want to teach them is that the reason you do the right thing is because it is the right thing – and that is enough.

Building a solid good Monkey-type relationship with your child can become an issue when we voyage into the territory of discipline or enforcing rules. As we mentioned in the office example, Monkey can sometimes be pushed into being a Mouse if they lack authority or start to view their child as a 'friend' rather than someone requiring their guidance and boundaries. All parenting, even good Monkey, requires a dose of Lion to maintain balance. The parent is the leader, not the child – when we turn the lead position over to our child we are stepping away from our responsibility as the adult.

NO BOUNDARIES

Emily: I have worked with a large number of families where the parental role has been blurred by lax or overfamiliar parenting. For example, one of our cases was Steve (aged 24), who had not been allowed contact with his two children (Dylan, aged six, and Gracie, aged four) for over six months due to exposing them to a number of incidents of violence between him and their mother, including holding her against the wall by her throat until she lost consciousness. Despite his propensity for violence as an adult, Steve still looked and acted like a teenager. He was lean and lanky and constantly had a slightly open-mouthed, surly expression like you'd just insulted him even if you hadn't said a word.

One of the critical aspects of our work with Steve was to reinforce the negative impact exposure to such terrible violence

towards their mother was likely to have on the children in terms of their emotional and behavioural development. This included discussions about Gracie's frequent tantrums at nursery and Dylan's aggressive behaviour at school and towards his sister at home. Steve felt that the children were too young to be affected and these issues were just normal stuff that kids do, certainly nothing to do with him.

We also had concerns about his inability to recognise appropriate adult-child boundaries. A classic tip-off for me is when an adult uses 'adult-type' terms in reference to their child. He would regularly make comments like Gracie is 'acting like a little bitch' and Dylan is my 'wingman'. Remember, Gracie is four and Dylan is six.

When challenged about allowing Dylan to play *Grand Theft Auto* his response was, 'Well he liked to watch me play so I let him have a go and he's really good at it – I don't tell him how to unlock the strip bars or stuff like that! The graphics are really amazing though you know, so ... I don't see the big deal.'

When asked about how Dylan had come to want to dress as Jigsaw from the *Saw* movies for Halloween, he matter-of-factly said, 'Oh, he was on my Netflix account and the films were in my list, but he hasn't had nightmares or anything, he just loves the Jigsaw character! He's not scared. It's not like it's real you know!'

Much to the social worker's consternation and ours, Steve was granted contact with Dylan and Gracie (under the supervision of Steve's father) by the family court. The children's first overnight stay resulted in the police being phoned. Dylan and Gracie had been seen running up and down the stairwell of the flats where Steve's father lived at 2am. When Steve was spoken to by the officers, his response was, 'What's the problem? It's not a school night!'

Steve simply could not recognise that the children were not just 'mini-adults' for him to hang out with and share his interests with, and that what was appropriate for him was in no way appropriate for them at their age and stage of moral and cognitive development. Steve's poor parenting behaviour is very

extreme overfamiliarity and demonstrates almost no ability to parent as an adult. He simply behaves as if the children are his age or, in his worst moments, as if he is theirs. If we mapped his relationship with his children on to the interpersonal circle on [page 171](#) it would be bad Monkey when they are friends and bad T-Rex when they argue. In a parental relationship, there is almost no worse position.

It can be very tempting to want to accelerate a child's interests and to share some of the things that you enjoy with them. It means you can do or watch things together, and that both of you enjoy those experiences and have common interests that bind you. Any parent who has sat through endless Disney TV dramas or played hours of 'My Little Pony' or 'Bob the Builder' will sympathise with the desire to get to the stage where you can do more grown-up things with your children.

But one of our responsibilities as parents is to protect and cherish their childhood – to let them be kids. It is such a short but important time in their lives and we need to exercise caution about rushing them through it on the grounds that 'they are very mature for their age' or 'they enjoy watching or playing things I like'. These decisions should be objective and about the needs of your child rather than what you yourself want.

As we mentioned earlier, good parenting demands that parents adopt some level of Lion behaviour with their children – as parents we are in charge of guiding and supporting our child's development by providing them with structure and boundaries. Even if you spend the vast majority of your time in a cooperative, friendly relationship with your child, there will be times where you are called on to step into Lion mode and give direction to establish the guidelines of what is OK and what is not.

This does not mean parenting should be all about imposing rules and restrictions. There is huge variation in what parents find an acceptable boundary for their children. Some parents may adhere to a very strict sleep routine or a total ban on artificial colours or sugars. Some parents may have no problem with an indoor water fight and eating a jumbo bag of sweets before bed. Unless they are objectively damaging to a child, it is fine to hold to your own set of principles and values as a parent (although your dentist may object!). As is often said, there is no manual for raising children.

What is not OK is expecting the child to set those principles and values for themselves without your support and guidance. It may sound like bliss to a 14-year-old to be able to stay out as long as they want, drink, smoke, watch porn and bunk off school if they feel like it. But, ultimately, they will feel chaotic, untethered and unloved. Children crave structure – it provides security, familiarity and reassurance at a level we don't have as adults. It also provides the template for how they will conduct themselves as they grow older and more independent. Structure and boundaries provide them with the skills to self-manage and regulate their desires, emotions, impulses and behaviour as life continues to become more demanding and complex when they enter adulthood.

The bedrock of parenting is often not about giving children what they want, but about giving them what they need. Sometimes this puts us in very difficult positions as adults, where we know our decision may be upsetting or difficult for the child to accept or understand. Sometimes, Monkey must become Lion in order to support and keep children safe.

DATING A BAD MONKEY

In a romantic relationship or friendship, a bad Monkey style also shows a lack of boundaries. Telltale signs may be a very accelerated rush forward in the relationship. Suddenly, there is an assumption that you will spend every weekend together or that staying over is no longer a discussion but a given right. If intimacy feels uncomfortable and awkward, things may have moved far too quickly into overfamiliar bad Monkey.

Bad Monkeys tend to seek reassurance of affection to the point that you actually stop feeling affection. Extravagant gifts or nights out where you begin to feel obligated to keep seeing the person may be one tactic to try to bind you to the relationship. Bad Monkeys do not ask permission, they assume it. Any time you feel that your space, time or influence over decisions is being intruded on you may be dealing with a bad Monkey.

In some ways, this is more insidious than a bad T-Rex or a bad Lion. When someone shouts or is demanding, their attempts to control us are overt and upfront. When someone tries to control us through social obligation ('I can't say no, they've been so kind to me'), the control and influence can seep into the relationship silently. Always ask – is this person respecting me and my autonomy? Check whether the relationship is in line

with the HEAR principles (see [page 55](#)). If it isn't, it may be on the bad wheel even if it seems filled with friendliness on the surface.

KINDNESS IS NOT A WEAKNESS

The good Monkey position is a very bonding, encouraging place from which to interact with others. It means providing a supportive, non-judgemental attitude and encouraging others to share their views and values with us. This translates into taking an interest in what other people are passionate about, even if you don't necessarily share that passion.

So many of the parents Emily works with where the relationship with their teenager has broken down seem to be a result of them failing to communicate or 'know' their child. When she asks them, 'What does your child enjoy? What are they interested in?', they often say 'I don't know' or they only have a vague idea: 'video games, watching crap on YouTube, hanging around with their friends, eating everything in the house!' The first step to repairing and rebuilding that relationship is often getting them to start conversations with their child that don't involve instructions or sound like a performance review, but are about what inspires them or what they enjoy.

Thoughtfulness to your child is not weakness; it is a wonderful gift that should lift them up and make them stronger and more caring themselves. Professor Steven C. Hayes, from the University of Nevada and creator of ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy), has said, 'Love isn't everything, it's the only thing.'³ He suggests that love should be the centre of all of our relationships – with colleagues, our communities, as well as in our homes. He advises that what the world needs is for us to learn how to be with ourselves and others in a way that is empowering and loving. Kindness shouldn't be something we hold back for those who are worthy or most deserving. It can only grow and build into the fabric of our society if we sow its seeds far and wide with as many people and in as many contexts as we can.

The Harvard 'Making Caring Common' project has identified five factors of parenting that they have found improve the likelihood of raising a 'kind' child.⁴ There are lessons that can be drawn for other significant relationships as well, such as with our partners, work colleagues, family members and friends. Think about a relationship you want to improve in terms of intimacy and warmth and try to apply as many of these as possible:

1. **Model kindness.** Be a role model: model kindness, empathy and global concern for others; when you get it wrong, be humble and acknowledge your mistakes.
2. **Practise empathy.** Consider the thoughts or feelings of others, even those you don't agree with or even like. Try to understand the other side of the argument, not just your own view.
3. **Value feelings.** Make others feel valued and considered – give them your exclusive attention and ask questions/show interest in the things they care about; show affection and affirm their efforts and achievements.
4. **Reinforce 'heroic' behaviour.** When someone is prepared to put their own needs second to those of others or to make an effort to fight injustice, unfairness, distress and harm coming to others, highlight and reinforce these moral messages.
5. **Encourage 'grey' thinking.** Do not shy away from moral complexity, try to avoid describing situations in black-and-white terms – good or bad. Instead, encourage a more thorough understanding of situations and others.

The good Monkey encourages and sustains connection in order to maintain cooperation. So if you are thinking something nice, say it! Don't hold these thoughts back for greeting cards and special occasions. Take the time to really get to know the people you care about – their strengths as well as their weaknesses – and encourage them to develop their own path to success and happiness, even if it wouldn't be the one you would choose.

LESSONS

1. **Monkey is about teamwork and cooperation.** Therefore, even if you are in an authority position (manager, parent, coach) it means creating a sense of unbreakable togetherness: we are a team and we are working towards the same goal. The message should be: 'We're all in this together.'
2. **It's nice to be nice.** Kindness promotes kindness from others. It also makes the giver of kindness healthier, happier and more content. It is not a sign of weakness to be nice; it is a sign of strength that even in the face of apathy, anger or demands you can rise above it for the greater good as well as your own.

3. ***Monkey parenting/management/partnerships give the space and guidance to encourage independent growth and decisions.*** It allows others to develop and test their moral compass and build up their own independent resilience and fortitude to deal with what life throws at them.
4. ***Beware overfamiliarity.*** Blurred boundaries with children or in the workplace can be extremely hard to re-establish once you overstep. It is hard to put the genie back in the bottle once you let it out. You are not your child's friend, even if you are friends. You are not your employees' friend, even if that would be easier. When your role demands leadership and authority, you need to be able to assert it so beware the bad Monkey's blurred boundaries.
5. ***Learn the art of conversation.*** There are three helpful steps for being more warm and sociable if it isn't something that comes naturally.
 - ***Listen*** more and talk less: get the building blocks of the conversation by listening to what the person cares about and is interested in.
 - ***Share.*** Find shared experiences to bond over. If you don't already have some, test out experiences that we are all likely to share to start to build up the conversation and picture of the other person.
 - ***Seek.*** Get more from them than they get from you. Try to make sure you pass the conversational ball back at least twice as much as you hold it. People like to feel listened to, not to be talked at, so try to encourage them to speak rather than put pressure on yourself to be full of witty and entertaining anecdotes.

CHAPTER 10

IMPROVING RAPPORT-BUILDING

Never set a child afloat on the flat sea of life with only one sail to catch the wind.

– **D. H. Lawrence**

Most people develop a style of behaviour that they are most comfortable with and then tend to adopt this across most of their relationships. They develop a habitual way of dealing with the world. But in order to grow you need to move out of your comfort zone and try different styles of communication – even those you dislike or find awkward, or which make you break out in a cold sweat. If you decide, ‘This is the way I am – other people will have to just deal with it’, you are limiting your ability to get the most out of your relationships.

The more you expand your skill set the more benefits you reap. In fact, interpersonal flexibility is related to concepts such as emotional intelligence and empathy, and research has found that the best communicators are versatile – they can do all four modes and change between them.¹ Investing the effort to build up your versatility and master all four styles, even the one you feel least comfortable with, will mean you can handle any situation with calm confidence.

HOW TO BECOME MORE VERSATILE

Broadly, interpersonal research has identified three key components to building expertise in rapport:

1. **Competence.** Removing any of the traits on the maladaptive (bad animal) circle from your repertoire.
2. **Sensitivity.** The ability to correctly diagnose the other person's style of communicating – what sort of animal you are dealing with.
3. **Versatility.** The ability to use any of the behaviours on the adaptive (good animal) circle as and when required.

COMPETENCE

Interpersonal competence is the ability to manage interpersonal relationships by avoiding 'lapsing' into bad behaviours. In simple terms, it's being able to avoid slipping from the good circle on to the bad. This can be extremely challenging as we have to deliberately override the impulse to respond to people's bad behaviour with bad behaviour of our own. Occasional slips are fine, but if you are getting it wrong more often than not, you need help to remove that bad habit from your repertoire. This is easiest in long-term relationships where we have the time and space to try to correct things.

It can be even more challenging to avoid the bad circle when your interaction time is limited or you are trying to make a good first impression. First date behaviour is a classic example where small interactions can make or break the possibility of a second date, so it's important to stay off the bad circle or correct things if you accidentally strayed into maladaptive communication.

First date nerves

Marta and Jake are in the same maths class at college. They have chatted a bit to each other but now they are on a first date. They are both feeling a bit nervous but things are going well so far; they are both being warm and conversational.

Jake: So, have you ever been to this place before?

Marta: No – it's cool. I love the lights all around the bar.

Jake: Yeah, they're cool ... Could you believe Mr Humphreys today?! It was like he had a brain meltdown in the middle of class!

Marta: (*Laughs.*) Oh my god, I know! How could he just forget the entire formula? When Brad started helping him it was so embarrassing ...

Jake: Ugh, I know, it was so cringe! Brad is such a swot; he might as well run the lesson! (*Both laugh.*)

So far, so good. They are sharing conversation about the current experience at the bar (nice lights) and are discussing shared past experiences (Mr Humphreys) – it is warm, sociable and conversational. Recognise these as ‘good Monkey’ qualities from [Chapter 9](#).

Marta: I had no idea what to wear tonight – I didn’t know how formal this place would be. I must have changed clothes 12 times! (*Uncertain.*)

Jake: (*Pause.*) Well, you look great – really pretty. But I think you could make a paper bag look pretty.

Marta: Aw, thanks Jake – that’s really sweet (*blushing*).

Well done Jake. Marta showed a bit of modesty and uncertainty (bad Mouse) and he responded with a supportive compliment to reassure her (good Lion/Monkey).

Jake: In fact, maybe we should have both worn paper bags – easy to tear off at the end of the night and they’d be recyclable!

Marta: (*Awkward pause.*) Um, OK ... That’s a bit weird ...

Jake: Oh no! I didn’t mean torn off by me! I meant by you! ... No, wait! Not that you’d tear mine off! Like you could tear yours off and I’d tear mine off ... I mean like separately ... not together. Oh god, sorry ... That isn’t what I meant. Sorry ... just never mind. Ignore me, pretend I didn’t say it!

Jake was trying to use a bit of humour and accidentally trod into awkwardness. He’s fallen into bad Monkey (overfamiliar) and then ended up in bad Mouse (hesitant, uncertain) trying to explain himself. He will need to repair it if he’s going to salvage his date with Marta. But how? He

should not just try to pretend it didn't happen (bad Mouse). If he does, it will just hang there in the air between them.

So what then? How can you repair an interaction if you step on to the bad circle? The quickest recovery manoeuvre is to think 'Where am I on the bad circle?' and immediately try to shift your behaviour to the 'good' version. In Jake's case, he's in bad Mouse so he needs to shift to good Mouse (modest, humble, seeking guidance). What does this look like?

Jake could say something like: 'Marta, I'm really sorry. I'm just a bit nervous and when I'm nervous I have a terrible habit of sticking my foot in my mouth. Forgive me.'

What is her likely response? It's hard to hold a grudge or carry on thinking he's some kind of sex pest with such a heartfelt open apology.

She's much more likely to say something like: 'Honestly, don't worry about it – I'm nervous too! Let's just get another drink.'

Being interpersonally competent means never, or at least very rarely, using any of the bad animal behaviours. The most important aspect of improving your social relationships is to try to shift your communication style over to the good version of wherever you are on the bad circle. You should not pressure yourself to remove behaviours from the bad circle entirely. All of us end up on the bad circle at various points, usually on a daily basis. We teach these skills for a living and still regularly slip into bad circle behaviour. But, do make a conscious effort to minimise slip-ups occurring and correct them when you can. The mantra is, if you go bad, recognise it and correct it.

SENSITIVITY

This brings us to our second strategy for improving interpersonal skill: sensitivity.

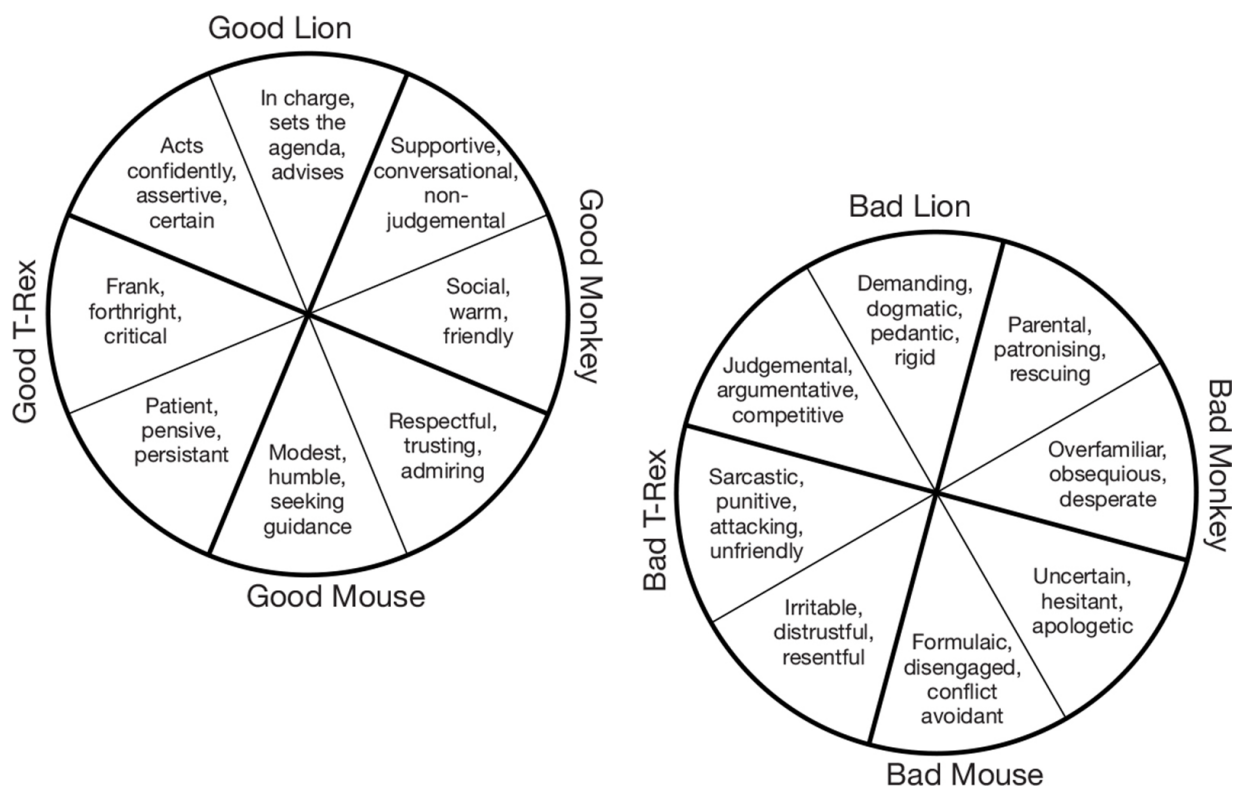
The term 'interpersonal sensitivity' means you accurately perceive others and, as a consequence, you are more likely to engage in behaviours that are appropriate and that they will respond to favourably.² Studies of interpersonal sensitivity have demonstrated links to greater self-awareness and better social adjustment. Individuals who are interpersonally sensitive are more empathic, have greater social intelligence and are less rigid in dealing with other people.

Sensitivity requires paying close attention to the style others are using to communicate. Within any interaction, you may be presented with a range of

interpersonal cues, some of which could be difficult to notice, judge or interpret. Diagnosing who you are dealing with only really requires that you ask yourself the two questions introduced in [Chapter 5](#): Higher or lower? Scrap or hug? (See [page 174](#).)

Simplifying your interactions on the basis of whether the person is seeking the Lion or Mouse position (control or capitulate) or the Monkey or T-Rex (conflict or cooperate) means you do not have to consider an entire list of non-verbal and verbal cues. You will find it easier if the behaviour is more intense but, in most interactions, you will quickly get a sense of whether the person wants to lead or follow, have an argument or cooperate.

The next step is to be able to recognise the bad or good version of each archetype. If you've worked out you have a Lion in front of you, have you got a bad one or a good one? If you have a bad one, it may take a bit more effort and time to draw them on to the good circle. You will need all of your good Mouse patience to do so. But persist and your behaviour will begin to have an influence over theirs.



Being able to observe and analyse other people's style of communication builds up your own interpersonal sensitivity and recognition skills.

Practising by diagnosing other people's behaviour can also help you further develop empathy and understanding. To practise this, have a go at diagnosing firstly what animal you think the dad in the following story is being in each possible response, and then whether it is the good or bad style.

It's 10.30 on a Wednesday night and Jasmine, who is 15, hasn't come home yet. Her dad, Jerome, got home from work at 6.30pm and has tried to ring her about eight times. She's not answering her phone ... He has also driven past some of the places she normally hangs out with her friends – the park, One Stop, Tesco car park – but he can't find her anywhere.

He's phoned all the parents of friends he has numbers for. It's embarrassing to have to phone round all the parents and basically admit he has no idea where his child is!

He's about to phone the police when she strolls in through the front door. She is talking on her phone and laughing and starts to walk up to her room.

'Jasmine could you come down here please?' he says, trying to stay calm.

There is no response. He can still hear her chatting on the phone as she carries on upstairs.

A. Jerome stomps up to Jasmine's room, grabs the phone off her and hangs it up. He says, 'Jasmine, what do you think you're playing at?!? You're grounded for a month and this (phone) is mine now!' He slams the door and goes back downstairs.

This response is clearly bad T-Rex/Lion. The focus is on control and punishment. The tone is angry and attacking. It is understandable that Dad feels this way, but what is the likely impact on Jasmine? If you go bad T-Rex/Lion, what do you get back? Remember the model: Lion attracts Mouse; T-Rex attracts T-Rex. So, Dad is going to get back bad T-Rex/Mouse.

Bad T-Rex is mouthy, sarcastic and stropky. Bad Mouse is resentful, sly and sneaky. Dad's reaction is not going to get him what he actually wants,

which is Jasmine's cooperation and obedience to the rules. It is more likely to get him another argument and Jasmine getting better at sneaking around.

B. Jerome follows Jasmine upstairs and knocks on her bedroom door.

'Jasmine, can I talk to you please?' She ignores him.

'Jas?' he pokes his head in the room.

'Dad! Get out of here! I'm changing! Jesus, you could knock! What do you want anyway?!'

He pulls the door back to. 'Sorry!' he shouts, feeling stupid.

He goes back downstairs, seething, but decides he just can't be bothered with her crap tonight. It's too much effort to tell her off so he just grabs a beer and sits in the lounge feeling totally ineffective.

This is Dad in bad Mouse form. He has tried to address the issue, but when Jasmine has shouted at him about walking in on her changing it has pushed him into uncertain, hesitant, apologetic behaviour. His power position feels totally undermined and so he becomes bad Mouse – conflict avoidant – and decides to just ignore the bad behaviour. The problem is that this leaves Jasmine at the top of the power position as the Lion. She is left with the view that what time she comes home is her decision, not Dad's, because the boundary has not been enforced.

C. Jerome waits until he can hear Jasmine has stopped talking on the phone. He makes himself a cup of tea to steady his temper and decides to make one for Jasmine as well. He goes upstairs and knocks on the door; he has to knock three times because she must have her headphones on now ...

Finally, she says, 'Yeah?'

He opens the door and pokes his head in. 'Jas, I brought you a cuppa.'

'I don't want it,' she says, almost before he's finished speaking.

He takes a deep breath ... 'OK, can I have a word? I need to talk to you – it's important.'

Jasmine says, 'Why? What's it about?'

'Could you just please come downstairs in a minute so I can speak to you?'

Jerome pulls the door shut and goes downstairs with his cup of tea to try to compose himself, thinking ‘don’t shout, don’t shout, don’t shout’.

This is Dad attempting good Lion/Monkey. He is respecting Jasmine’s personal space by waiting for her to answer when he knocks. He is building cooperation by offering a cup of tea (even though she rejects it) and he is asking for a conversation with her about the issue. The problem will come if Jasmine just never comes downstairs. Avoidance is bad Mouse behaviour so Dad will have to increase his good Lion in order to stay in charge of the dynamic. He will need to adapt if his first tactic doesn’t work. Discipline is hard to do well from a Monkey position, especially if the other person is not in Monkey mode.

D. Jerome follows Jasmine up to her room. He waits until she is off the phone and then knocks on the door and puts his head in.

‘Jasmine, this is not an acceptable time for you to be coming home on a Wednesday. I’ve been worried sick about you all night. I was about to phone the police. You didn’t answer your phone when I called, and you never checked in. If you can’t respect your independence, you will have to earn it back.

‘No phone credit for two weeks and you need to be in every night this week by 7pm, including this weekend.’

‘But Dad, that’s not fair!’ Jasmine protests.

Dad keeps going. ‘Any night you’re not in on time is another week’s phone credit gone. If you manage to stick to it, your curfew can go back up to 8pm next weekend. We’ll discuss it properly in the morning, now go to bed please.’

Jerome pulls the door shut.

This is Dad in good Lion/T-Rex form. He is clear, direct and assertive. He states facts – he does not insult or criticise. He is clear about what is going to happen as a consequence. There is no space for debate. He is clearly in charge, but he is also offering her a pathway to repair the damage done rather than just punish her.

This exercise is simply to warm up your diagnostic skills in practically applying the circle to real-life situations. Try to do similar exercises as often

as you can, whether it is when you are watching interactions on a soap opera, reality TV drama, strangers in a café, or even colleagues at work. The more you practise using the skills the quicker and more naturally you will be able to read other people when they interact with you. We also have a section at the end of this book for you to practise diagnosing various scenarios to help build up your interpersonal muscle (see [page 307](#)). Being able to read the other person allows you to adapt, which is the final way to improve your expertise at rapport-building.

VERSATILITY

The final way to increase rapport-building is to improve your versatility or ability to adapt to use any of the animal styles when called upon. Versatility differentiates between novices and experts when we examine our sample of interrogators. To build versatility, you must first identify the areas you struggle with on the positive circle. Look back at the results of your ‘Find Your Animal Type’ quiz ([page 169](#)). Is there a style you find more difficult to adopt; an animal type you struggle with more than the others?

Experts can do all of the animal styles and do them well, and this leads to more effective communication. When someone is ‘stuck’ in an interpersonal style, even if it is a positive one such as good Monkey, they are simply not as effective over time because they can’t adapt to the style of the other person. Someone continuously being friendly, warm and social to someone being aggressive, attacking and sarcastic will start to grate and feel false, leading to an eventual break-down in communication.

If you are interpersonally versatile it means that you are able to match different behaviours to the right situations. For example, knowing that sometimes in dealing with a Lion you may need, at least for a period, to adopt the role of a Mouse is critical, even if you are really a natural Lion yourself.

INTERPERSONAL FLEXIBILITY

You now know how the model works and what response it suggests, but in situations where you don’t feel confident or comfortable with that response, you can also play to your strengths. You can start where someone wants you and then gradually start to move towards where you are most comfortable on the circle. We call this ‘twisting’ the model to your advantage. What you

should keep in mind is that the further away someone is from where you want them on the circle, the longer it will take to move them there and the more patience it will require. This is an interesting challenge and draws out some of the more complex considerations when using the animal circle.

Consider Officer Thurber's interaction with Thomas at the start of the book (see [page 42](#)): a five-foot female police officer, with no backup other than a petrified undergrad, versus a drunken enraged six-foot beast of a man. Mary Anne went to where she wanted Thomas on the circle with a friendly cooperative (Monkey) style – encouraging him to cooperate, reassuring him that she was listening and ignoring all of his aggressive, hostile behaviour. She set the dynamic and stuck with it persistently until he followed – she did not follow him. This is an interesting strategy as it played to Mary Anne's strengths; her calmness, kindness and her firmness all worked to draw Thomas towards cooperation (good Monkey) and away from aggression and violence (bad T-Rex).

Little did Emily know then that she would have her own dangerous situation to attempt to tame with just her interpersonal skills. This incident wasn't with an angry, drunk, would-be arsonist. It was with a notorious killer.

CIRCLING A KILLER

Emily: Early in my career, I worked with a man who had committed a truly horrific murder of a little girl.

On his release from prison, 24 years after his horrific offence, he had been sent to a secure halfway house for rehabilitation into the community. This was a nearly impossible task due to his notoriety and he was effectively on house arrest and confined to the facility that was not really equipped for long-term detention. Because of this, management were working hard to find ways to provide him with opportunities that did not require leaving the premises. This included making him the house chef as he had a talent for cooking.

I was working there as a case manager and, during my first supervision with him, he came into my office with a 12-inch butcher knife that he had been using to chop carrots for that night's chilli. He had been allowed through the secure office and

into my office, still holding the very large knife. When asked afterwards, desk staff said they simply didn't see it in his hand.

I stood up from my desk as he entered the room, which happened to be via the only door in or out. When I spotted the knife, I said hesitantly, 'Hi George, is anything wrong?', my voice catching slightly, my heart now racing like a freight train as I focused on the large shiny blade.

'As a matter of fact, yes there is plenty wrong,' he said. George was always perfectly groomed and polite in our previous interactions. As he began ranting and raving at me, his greying strands of hair were flying loose from their normal gelled down position and his cheekbones looked scalded red.

It was the first time I'd glimpsed the rage underneath his facade of compliance. He was angry about never being allowed out of the facility like the other residents. He was not even able to shop, go for a walk or visit the dentist without a huge production.

As he angrily listed his complaints, he was waving the knife from side to side, his voice growing louder and louder. It was obvious that he wanted an argument, and I am convinced that he also wanted to scare me by making sure I saw the knife.

'Why don't you come sit down and we can talk about it?' I said, looking at him in the eyes, rather than at the knife.

'I don't want to sit down,' he shouted.

'OK,' I said, trying to keep my voice from wobbling again, 'I'm going to sit but that's fine, you don't have to sit.'

He continued his tirade about the unfairness of it all, still waving the knife. I tried to keep eye contact but also keep my eyes on the knife, all the while hoping staff would hear what was happening. They didn't. Part of me was willing someone to come and interrupt this interaction. The other part of me was worried he would stab anyone who came through the door. Regardless, no one came.

Eventually, he sat down across the desk from me. I wasn't sure if that made me feel better or not. On the one hand, he was no longer pacing with the knife, but on the other it also meant

that he was now closer to me and certainly within stabbing distance.

As we spoke, I remained calm and listened carefully to him, acknowledging each of his complaints: 'I appreciate it is really frustrating George. I get what you're saying to me – you feel as if you are still in prison and that you are not getting the same privileges as other residents and that feels unfair.'

'Honestly, it was better in prison Emily,' he said. 'At least I could go out for walks in the rec yard and I could work in a proper kitchen. This place is just awful,' he said with resignation now in his voice, rather than anger.

Eventually, he was holding the knife in his lap, no longer waving it about. We shared a moment of eye contact where both of us seemed to recognise what the other was doing – him trying to scare me, me trying not to be scared.

At this point, I said, 'OK, I've listened to everything you've said, and I think you have some really valid points. I'm going to write all of this up and I'm going to submit it to management. I'd also like you to go and write this up as a formal complaint as well.' (*He loved writing complaints.*) I looked at him and then paused ...

'Just before you go,' I said. 'Could you please put the knife on my desk and I will make sure it gets back to staff?'

I held my breath, and then ...

He put the knife on my desk, thanked me for listening, got up and walked out.

I then remember flopping back into my chair and exhaling the longest sigh of relief, my hands shaking like leaves.

I phoned my manager who phoned the police, who promptly came and arrested him.

Looking back on that interaction, I can see us circling each other. When George entered the room, he was clearly in the bad Lion/T-Rex position on the circle. Anyone with a 12-inch butcher knife in their hand is the one in charge (Lion) and he was clearly angry – raising his voice a number of times,

swearing and waving the knife around; obvious threatening and intimidating behaviours (bad T-Rex).

As much as I wanted to just curl up under my desk (bad Mouse – conflict avoidant) and hope for the best, I felt I had to keep interacting with him. I chose to be respectful, patient and humble (good Mouse), to use a calm tone of voice, say his name several times and keep eye contact with him (starting to move towards good Monkey).

I figured that letting him be in charge and remaining friendly even while being threatened was the best strategy for me. I felt this was my best chance at ensuring I'd leave the room in one piece at the end of the day. And that was my goal – I didn't need to show him who was in charge, I just needed to keep things from escalating.

As we spoke, I tried to be warmer and more supportive (good Monkey). I was trying to get him to follow me around the circle rather than me follow him. Then at the very end, I tried to swap our positions: 'Could you please put the knife on my desk?' (good Lion). Direct requests to do something are inherently Lion no matter how politely they are delivered.

That was the moment the power axis tipped and he would either capitulate or he would hold his ground and refuse. If he had been 100 per cent committed to doing me some harm on that day, it is likely that whatever I had said would have had no effect.^{[fn1](#)} But I felt my best chance of escape was to stay calm and listen, and try to get him to match my calmness – rather than for me to match his aggression and demands with my own ('Put that knife down!', 'Stop shouting at me!').

My boss discussed the incident with me the following day. He listened carefully to my description and said, 'I'm glad nobody got hurt. But what you should have done was to say immediately when you spotted the knife in his hand, "George! You can't come in here with that – go give it back to staff right now."' This is, of course, a straight-up Lion approach. And maybe that would have worked. Maybe George would have backed down and saved us all a lot of trouble. If he was a more Mouse-like character, this definitely would have been a good strategy. If I

had been more of a Lion, like my boss, maybe I could have pulled that off.

But he was not a Mouse – not with women in particular and certainly not in that moment ... It would also mean that if he refused, he would have approximately five to eight minutes alone with me and a 12-inch butcher knife until the police arrived. I didn't fancy my chances with that scenario.

In addition, my boss was about six-foot-two, built like a tank, male and had been doing the job for over 20 years. I was five-foot-three, 23 years old, female, and had been in the job two weeks. 'Out-Lioning' him was not an option for me.

When telling this story during a training session, a student recently asked me if I was in the same situation now, whether would I do the same thing. Now, with 20 years of experience under my belt and more confidence, I may have done things differently. There still would not have been any shouting, but I may have calmly and firmly asked him to return the knife before we could start. Maybe that would work with the person I am now.

But I know that 23-year-old me would not have been able to pull that off and the consequences of trying and failing were too high to take the risk, so I went Mouse and hoped for the best.

The decision I had to make is what we call the 'stick or twist': do I stick with the response that the other person is seeking? Does it fit with my goals? Or do I try to move them instead? My boss would have stuck – he would have confronted firmly and directly (T-Rex), trying to retake the power position. George wanted a face-off – my boss would have given him one.

I chose to twist – to try to draw him over to cooperation by starting as Mouse, being humble and respectful, and then moving to Monkey, being warmer and more supportive to simply get him to put the knife down without incident. In the end, he left the office cooperatively and calmly and everyone went home safely. To me, that was the only thing that mattered.

Throughout this book we have been encouraging you to develop your skills and expand your interpersonal repertoire. But you are still you. It is also possible to play to your strengths and go where you are most comfortable and hope the other person will follow. If you are in a situation where you feel desperately uncomfortable or the stakes are extremely high, it may be better to go to the area you know you are best at on the good circle.

You will still need to be switched on and responsive to how the other person is responding. If it is not having the intended effect, you may need to adapt and just do your best to change style but stay on the good circle.

THE BENEFITS OF ROLE PLAY

It is better to be prepared before you find yourself in that challenging situation. As one of our colleagues is fond of saying, ‘Ten minutes before the ball is not the time to learn to dance.’ This is why, when we are teaching rapport-based skills to our interviewers or interrogators, we subject them to some of the most rigorous and challenging role-play scenarios possible. These range from the most basic examples, such as quick-fire challenges of how to respond, to some of the most difficult statements suspects have made during interviews, such as:

- A. *‘People are dying, children are starving – and the government who pays your salary is the murderer. How does it feel to work for a government that starves children to death?’*
- B. *‘I’m content with my decisions and at peace with my God. Can you say the same? You look filled with uncertainty and confusion. Your face gives you away.’*
- C. *‘This was just a lad’s holiday. Just because you see a group of more than three Asian men with beards doesn’t mean we’re a bunch of terrorists, you know? Isn’t that racial profiling? Are you allowed to do that?’*

How would you respond to each of these statements?

- A. *‘It’s obvious you care very deeply about what is happening to people trapped in the war zone. Tell me how you know about these things.’* (Reflect emotion underneath what is said/roll into the resistance rather than argue back.)

B. *‘Decisions?’ (Simple but tactical reflection.)*

C. *‘So, here’s where I’m at – on the one hand you’re saying it’s just a holiday for you and the lads, but on the other you have things like army fatigues and balaclavas in your bags. Why?’*

(Honesty/develop discrepancy/ double-sided reflection.)

Think back to the HEAR principles for building rapport: honesty, empathy, autonomy and reflection. To maintain rapport, it should not contain judgement, leak uncertainty or falseness, or provoke an argument. And it should use one or more of the SONAR techniques we discussed on [page 123](#). It should also show your interpersonal competence, sensitivity and versatility. Oh, and also, it should move the conversation forward constructively and in a direction that is relevant to the investigation. After attempting this exercise, you can start to appreciate the challenges our interrogators face!

We also run much more complex, fully immersive live exercises where a terrorist attack or disaster is simulated on a large scale. We ran just such an event the week before the Westminster attack on 22 March 2017, when terrorist, Khalid Masood, deliberately drove into pedestrians on Westminster Bridge, killing four and injuring over 50 people. He then fatally stabbed an unarmed police officer before finally being shot and killed by armed police. Many of the responders to this horrific incident had attended the simulation training with us the week before. Their feedback to us was that participating in the simulation had left them feeling ‘match-ready’ when they were confronted with the shock and complexity of managing a real-life terrorist attack only a week later.

Clearly, these circumstances are more complex and challenging than negotiating a business deal with your rival or trying to build rapport over Christmas dinner with your girlfriend’s parents! However, the concept of role-playing and building up your interpersonal muscle to prepare for the interaction is the same. The reality is you may have to generate opportunities to practise these skills yourself. Role-playing important conversations is a key way to develop and push your skills in a safe environment, crucially where it won’t matter too much if you get it wrong.

You can start to build up your interpersonal muscle by understanding the areas that need the most work. If you have amazingly strong arms, you do not need to spend time doing pull ups. Work the areas that need work, not

those that are already well developed. We often say to our participants on training: ‘Do not spend your time with us showing us what you are already good at – spend it developing those areas you know you struggle with. That is how you will make the most progress.’

The effort and the time put in should not feel burdensome. Rapport-building is something you can use and develop naturally as you interact with others. As with all things, effort in is usually proportionate to results out. See trying out new skills as a fun challenge that you can take at your own pace and get more comfortable with before you put too much pressure on yourself. With physical exercise, you have to make a conscious effort to find the time for it. With rapport-building you know for a fact that you will, throughout the day, be talking to various people. Use those interactions as a way to practise. At first you might feel ‘safer’ practising on everyday interactions; with the barrista, the cabbie and so on. Try something that you wouldn’t normally try in these interactions. For example, on your next trip with a cabbie try some of the reflection skills discussed in [Chapter 4](#)

These interactions are a great way to try new things and see how effective they are. You will also be honing these skills for those interactions that are much more significant and meaningful.

If you have a particular skill you are trying to build, set yourself specific challenges, when you can, to support this. If you want to be better at good Monkey – building cooperation and conversation – challenge yourself to start a warm, confident conversation with someone each day. Forgive yourself for failing and feel good that you took a risk and tried. Failing provides feedback. Not trying means inertia and stagnation. Importantly, try the things that do not come naturally.

Laurence: I recently deliberately tried a really clunky version of Monkey with a lady who was serving drinks at the bar. I wanted to experience how it felt to do something that is not the norm for me, and which was not my strong point on the interpersonal circle. As I approached the bar, I thought of something that made me feel really happy before I ordered my drink (sitting in my kayak looking at the sea). Immediately this put me in the right mindset and made me smile. So, facially I was already showing a Monkey non-verbal. Then, really awkwardly and

deliberately unimaginatively, I said (in response to the recent unusually hot weather in the UK), ‘Summer is here at last.’

It felt like a crushingly terrible opening line maybe, but it quickly led to her saying, ‘Oh I’m so glad it’s here at last, but knowing my luck it’ll pour down with rain when I am off.’

Then I used a bit of reframing: ‘So, have you been working in this heat for the last few days?’

‘Yes,’ she said, ‘but I can’t wait until tomorrow because I’m going sailing.’

‘Awesome,’ I said, smiling again, ‘where do you do that?’

And with that she began to enthusiastically tell me where she was going sailing, what she liked about it, how she wanted to take her nine-year-old out with her at the weekend, and so on. Even with a dreadful and unimaginative opener, we ended up having a warm and social interaction. In my mind I had two goals: I wanted this to feel like a happy, warm but non-intrusive interaction, and I wanted to try something I don’t normally use.

When selecting an existing or new relationship, recognise that you will have setbacks and old habits that re-emerge. Don’t give up when you slip up. That is normal. First attempts will feel clunky – hence trying some of them, as we suggested, in safer environments first. Behaviour takes time to change. These are fun new skills to try out and, with practice, they get much easier. You should be realistic about the rate of change. Your relationships will not improve after one attempt at using one skill on one occasion – keep working your rapport muscle and your effort will pay off.

CONCLUSION

THE RAPPORT REVOLUTION

Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?
– **Abraham Lincoln**

We seem to have entered the Age of Conflict. People seem more divided than ever in relation to their views on politics, race, gender and sexuality. We appear to have become a society motivated by cultural tribalism and you are either with the tribe or against it. There is no more room for the boring diplomacy of the moderate middle. What we need is a Rapport Revolution. When we are able to extract someone's core beliefs and values, we often find that they are more similar to ours than we imagine. And when they are not, we don't have to agree but we should seek to understand. As forensic psychologists, everyone who crosses our professional path has in some way failed to communicate effectively with others. Often, they have tried to use force, threat or violence against others to try to get what they want. It is almost always a failure to build connection or communication with others that has led them down that path.

Rapport is a book that we hope provides something for everyone. Whether seeking to make a new connection or to deepen an existing one, our hope is that it will help you build rapport. With this book, we set the bar for interpersonal skill and we challenge everyone, including ourselves, to uphold these principles with our loved ones and in our communities – both real and virtual.

Creating behavioural change can be demanding. We all mess up. We are allowed slips, errors and even massive failures. No one should put so much pressure on themselves that they are constantly worrying about every word

they utter. But if we can recognise when we slip up and aim to correct it when we can; if we can invest the effort in building up positive communication with our most significant relationships; if we can seek to understand others even when we don't agree with them, we can reap the emotional and tangible rewards of interpersonal expertise. You don't have to get it right every time – just most of the time – in order to benefit.

Honesty, empathy, autonomy and reflection – the HEAR principles – provide a solid foundation for positive communication and relationships with others. In your interactions, ask yourself these four questions:

1. Am I being honest or am I trying to manipulate the other person?
2. Am I being empathic and seeing things from their perspective or just concentrating on my own point of view?
3. Am I respecting and reinforcing their autonomy and right to choose, or am I trying to force them to do what I want?
4. Am I listening carefully and reflecting to show a deeper understanding and build intimacy and connection?

Understanding the animal circles helps you to avoid bad behaviours and cultivate a more versatile set of positive skills to navigate life's challenges. Of course, an absolute fundamental is to remove bad behaviour from your repertoire, in particular, removing any aggressive or negative forms of conflict. This attribute is so destructive.

Fortunately, and with regards to the circles, great gains can be made not by learning new things but rather by removing bad habits that have been learned in the past. For example, every time you think of responding with bad T-Rex behaviours directed at initiating conflict, ask yourself 'Is this worth it?' Once you've got into the habit of making T-Rex extinct, you can start to work on removing any other bad animal behaviour (bad Mouse, bad Monkey and bad Lion). Simply stopping doing bad things will mean a very significant upswing in your successes with family, friends and loved ones. The first principle we adopt when training cops in interviewing is not to ask 'What does this person need to learn?' but 'What does this person need to unlearn?'

Go back to the results of your 'Find Your Animal Type' quiz (see [page 169](#)). Consider your strengths and weaknesses on the circles. What style are you best at? Why? Where has that skill come from? Have you just always

naturally gravitated towards that style because it suits your personality? Or did you learn to develop it based on situations you had to deal with?

Consider which style of communication you're not very good at. Why haven't you ever developed this area of social skill? Have you avoided these sorts of situations? Did you have a very bad experience that put you off managing those sorts of encounters? Or have you just learned a different but not necessarily fulfilling way of dealing with such situations?

Change comes through challenge. Often that challenge comes in the form of life's difficult situations or new experiences. Select the relationship that you feel is most worthy of your time and energy – that you care about more than all others – and set a small but positive goal to improve it. And then keep working at it.

Once you have eliminated any bad habits, you can start adding new behaviours. Begin with humility. The good Mouse requires listening to others and focusing on supporting their goals and ambitions, and not immediately seeking your own personal gain or control. To help you think of others before yourself, try to get a sense of perspective on the world and your place in it. Forget your ego, your needs, the desire for control, getting ahead and rushing on with things, and have the mantra of 'I am lucky today to be able to have this moment.' Be mindful of small, simple pleasures that connect with your senses; listen to a bird sing, stroke the fur on your pet, take in a beautiful sunrise or sunset – do whatever simple pleasure you need to do and nurture gratitude, not entitlement.

Grounding yourself in a degree of humility will open you up to learning the other behaviours. Then you can focus more on the aspects of social warmth required to master Monkey, the confidence and assertiveness that are the hallmarks of Lion, and even the inner calm and fortitude required to confront as the good T-Rex.

Of course, one key thing you can do is refresh your memory by looking again at the lessons learned, and there is a summary of these on [page 291](#). And, of course, if you are about to embark on, for example, challenging your boss on something you strongly disagree with, you might want to specifically target the T-Rex chapter. If you are about to take on a leadership role, you may want to dip back into [Chapter 8](#) – Taking Control: The Lion. Use the book in a strategic way when you know you have certain things to tackle.

Of course, we all seek to make the most effort with the people we care most about. It is ridiculous to imagine we will make the same amount of effort with everyone. None of us are endless reservoirs of rapport. But, do try a little bit every day – even if it is one tiny interaction with the single most important person in your life. Even if it is biting your tongue in the face of your teenager’s dripping sarcasm or histrionic drama. Even if it means walking away from your toddler redecorating the lounge with their crayons until you are calm enough to respond without shouting. Even if it is resisting firing off that 20-second tweet in the middle of the night. Refrain from saying that thing that pops into your mind but that you know will make the next interaction more negative than positive.

Is it possible to remember all these things at all times and in all interactions? Absolutely not. Should you be able to master them all having now read the book? Of course not! The first thing we hope you will take away is the idea that failing (regularly) is fine. It is human. Sometimes not having the energy to even try is also fine. Making an effort with rapport-building is just that – it requires effort. So forgive yourself if you fail and forgive yourself if you can’t be bothered. You may have setbacks and old habits may re-emerge, but don’t give up. Keep working and not only will you eventually reap the rewards, but it will get easier and less effortful. Remember, it is not how much you can carry – it is how far you can go with what you are carrying.

We should seek, at the very least, to not make things worse. The sideways comment when you are tired, the carelessly fired-off tweet, email or Facebook comment – these are the small, negative communications that have just ruined someone else’s day. That behaviour is contagious. In the same way that a kind fellow driver letting you out at a junction makes you more inclined to let other drivers out, a careless petty act that you have been on the receiving end of can nudge you towards a similar careless act towards others. These small careless acts can create a culture of disregard for others. Instead, we should strive to create the culture we want to live in, even if it isn’t the one we’re living in right now. Be patient, be reflective and seek understanding. Do not succumb to the impulse to argue. Do not turn away from challenging injustice or hatred, but do not incite it.

Improving your rapport with others is not only a gift to them; it is the route to your own happiness, health and contentment. Rapport is the key to improving your interactions with others, deepening your intimacy with

loved ones, connecting to your community and contributing more understanding and less conflict to the global society in which we live.

Rapport doesn't just make your life better; it makes the world a better place to live. That certainly has to be worth the effort.

APPENDICES: SUMMARY OF LESSONS

MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

- *Rapport can be learned.* Whether an extrovert or introvert, you need other people. But rapport skills are about helping to make connections deeper and not necessarily just adding friends. It is the depth of relationship that matters, not the breadth. So don't rush out and try to get more friends on Twitter. Instead focus on the people who you really want a deeper and more meaningful relationship with. And for people you regret falling out with, try to reconnect. You cannot and should not be alone.
- *Work the rapport muscles.* Several studies have shown that feelings of loneliness and lack of connection to others is not just bad for our mental health but for our physical health too. So, as well as watching your diet and going for more walks/trips to the gym, consider what efforts you will make to enhance your relationships. Seek out people who share your values and interests; get involved, join in and be a part of your community through clubs, social events or volunteering.
- *We are one world, one tribe.* Try to avoid being drawn into divisive/tribal language against others. Do not big yourself up by attacking others or making them feel small. Even when someone is your enemy or opposed to your values in every way, seek to understand them. You do not have to like them and you do not have to agree with them, but do try to understand. It is the key to resolving the issues that divide us. No matter how tempting, do not stoop to abusive, hate-filled insults. Such behaviour does not debase them – it debases you.
- *Connect and care about others.* Work on increasing your connection and compassion for both the young and the old in your social circles. Connection between generations is the absolute hallmark of healthy

communities. Make an effort to connect: meet your neighbours, learn their children's names, do the postal run for an elderly neighbour or offer to include their front patch of lawn when you mow. If these things are too much effort for hectic modern schedules, then at least try to connect indirectly. Sponsor or support a youth club, green space or other community initiative that you feel connects with your wider values.

- *Connect and build intimacy with those closest to you.* Make time to genuinely listen and find out what is important to your children, your parents and your grandparents – not just whether they have homework, have been to the dentist or have taken their pills.

WHY WORDS MATTER

- *Be wary of trickery and deceit.* Do not be seduced into using trickery or deception to get your way. It may seem like a legitimate strategy. However, as we saw in the next chapter, honesty is one of the core values that underpins rapport and healthy communication. If you sacrifice this principle, you corrupt the integrity of the relationship and people's ability to trust you. Often whatever you gain in the short term, will not be worth the price it costs you in the long run.
- *Do not ever be a bully.* Do not be tempted to gain compliance by the use of threat or force. Taking a rapport-based approach means seeking cooperation by agreement. It can feel like the long way round to solving a problem – it can seem quicker and easier to simply shout or intimidate to get the job done – but no one respects a bully; they only fear them. Don't sacrifice your moral compass in an effort to get your own way.

THE CORNERSTONES OF RAPPORT

HONESTY LESSONS

- *Avoid being deceitful or dishonest to gain influence over others.* The truth may hurt, but being deceitful, even if you think you are trying to protect someone or do what is best for them, breaches trust in a way

that is difficult to restore or rebuild once broken. Be as honest as you can, whenever you can.

- *Be direct and clear with the message.* Try not to opt for passive forms of communication when you have an important statement to make – forms of communication such as email or text are easy to misinterpret or misread. Being able to deliver a difficult message upfront is a very rare skill which requires courage and sensitivity to execute well. Practise, practise, practise it until you feel more confident and comfortable with being direct.
- *Control your emotions enough so the message can be heard.* This is the most difficult skill, especially in situations where emotions run high and are deeply felt. But honesty means reflecting reality as objectively as possible. Try not to cloud the message with high drama and emotion. This can be very challenging but try these tips to help you:
 - Slow your reaction down by counting to ten or overtly say you need a bit of time to think before you respond.
 - Try to distract your emotional brain (try doing this by pressing your thumb and index fingers together hard or giving yourself a calming word such as ‘serenity’ which you say three times to yourself before responding).
 - Lastly, when you do respond, make sure you stay focused on the goal: what is it that you want to resolve the issue? Concentrate on resolving the issue rather than just offloading emotion on to someone.

EMPATHY LESSONS

- *Be more self-aware.* Practise building up your self-awareness by linking up your behaviour to the thoughts and feelings that underpin them.
- *Empathy is not a competition.* Try to relate to others by seeing things from their perspective as much as possible. Do not be tempted to make it a competition of who’s most deserving of empathy. Give it openly and often and the people around you will feel respected and understood and eventually give it back.

- *Understand others from their perspective rather than your own.* Try to stay open-minded, explore options and recognise that just as you have a bundle of life experiences that will have shaped the way you think and feel about things, so will your teenager, partner, work colleague, and so on. Don't be too hasty in judging others based on only your experiences. Try to see things through their eyes, even if their actions are counter to your own values and beliefs.

AUTONOMY LESSONS

- We like to be in charge of our own destiny. If you are feeling trapped or controlled by a situation, look for ways to exercise choice, even if they are small things. If someone is taking decisions from you that you can easily make, ask for them back. Often people restrict autonomy unknowingly, in an effort to be helpful or efficient, without recognising the impact.
- Recognise other people's need for independence and choice and endeavour to respect this wherever possible. Ask about and listen to what people say they value and care about and try to build these qualities into their situation, even if it is difficult or challenging. Consider when choices really matter and when they don't. If your toddler wants to wear something ridiculous, does it really matter? They can't wear flip-flops in -4 degrees, but they can still help you with the shopping dressed as Batman.
- Even when there are high stakes, try to start from a position of choice – remember the scenario about Dad's driving licence. There may come a time when you have to firmly insist that he stops driving, but try to implement a way for him to choose if you can. The outcome will be more palatable for you both and he is likely to suffer less as it was his own choice.
- Even in situations where the only choice is between the devil and the deep blue sea, we want to be allowed to choose which way we jump.

REFLECTION LESSONS

- Reflection is about listening carefully to what has been said and then repeating back or paraphrasing what has been said to the person. It is important to select what you want to know more about, not just parrot the last thing that was said.

- Reflection is the key to keeping a conversation moving forward. It is simple but powerful and is worth the effort it takes to master.

REFLECTION: WHAT LIES BENEATH

- *Appreciate the value of values.* Reflection can help you to uncover the deeper core values and beliefs that are actually underlying people's motives and behaviour. This understanding is useful in building connection as well as gaining more information from people.
- *Avoid the 'righting reflex'.* When we hear someone explaining why they can't control their eating, smoking or drinking habits, or indeed asking for advice on whatever topic, the immediate temptation is to offer advice or criticism. Consider that in order to help someone, it is often better to help them work out how to help themselves rather than just offer possible solutions or try to shame them into changing.
- *Practise sending SONAR signals.* The rapport-based version of SONAR includes a set of techniques that enable you to grasp some of the fundamental reflection tactics. These range from simple reflections of keywords to reframing the deeper values you uncover. You may already use some of these in conversation. Try to widen your repertoire and practise those you are less familiar with using.
- *All things in moderation.* In any rapport-based efforts, you need to be able to use techniques in a fluid and organic way. Clunky and endless simple reflections or constantly saying 'on the one hand A, but on the other B' will of course backfire. In the early days of practising such things, it can be painfully robotic but, as with any complex skill, practice makes perfect. Recognise that conversations with others are opportunities for practice and are also likely to improve your understanding and connection to people, especially those closest to you.

POWER, INTIMACY AND THE ANIMAL CIRCLE

- *Learning starts with awareness of self.* Before you begin to contemplate changing any part of the way you interact with others, you need to do a little bit of inward examination. Think about your strengths and weaknesses and rely less on going with your instinctive reactions. Try to be more tactical and focus on the goal.

- *Only you control you.* You can't control other people's behaviour – only your own. So, don't get into the habit of thinking, 'He or she made me behave that way.' You might feel that someone always pushes your buttons, but that is because you are letting them set the tone of the interaction. It is worth being more mindful of how to respond in a way that fits with your goals rather than just bouncing off the other person.
- *Higher or lower?* In any interaction consider the 'power' dimension. If something is not working it may be that both of you are jockeying for power. Sometimes it is worth considering, in the spirit of longer-term rapport-building, where it is best for you to position yourself, even if it is not where you feel most comfortable.
- *Scrap or hug?* Also, consider the 'intimacy' dimension. If someone is in confrontation mode it is sometimes worth taking that head-on. Similarly, if someone is after warmth and social interaction, ignoring this and being more functional about solving a problem may not be the way ahead. Of course, both modes (confront, cooperate) can be done well or badly but, as with the power dimension, you need to consider being more versatile than simply adopting the role you are most comfortable with.

AVOIDING CONFRONTATION: THE T-REX

- *Make bad T-Rex extinct.* If you have identified that you have any of the bad T-Rex attributes, it is worth making a concerted effort to remove them. Where possible, prepare what you are going to say ahead of time. Plan it and practise saying it a few times. Concentrate on losing any insults or language that is demeaning or aggressive. Be factual, clear and ensure accuracy. Repetition alone can take some of the feelings of your own anger away. When you are going to make a complaint, take a moment to practise it and ensure you aren't derogatory in your language – that doesn't mean you can't be factual and direct.
- *Choose your battles.* Ask yourself, before you embark on any likely issue of confrontation, 'Does this really matter?' or 'Can I let it go?' (Be absolutely certain that this is not merely something that is a bit

annoying but rather is important.) Conflict is best avoided but not always possible to avoid – make sure it is worth it.

- *Have a specific goal.* Think through your goal(s) and bottom line: what do you want/not want to happen? Be fair, proportionate and objective. In examining what is fair, imagine you are on the other side of the argument ('If I had been in their position, what would I think was a reasonable solution?'). Don't fall into the trap of just wanting to be right or taking what you can get.
- *Avoid personalising it.* Once you are clear on your bottom line, make sure you do not fall into using any of the following: sarcasm, personal slights, aggression, anger or any attempt to degrade or make the other person feel small. If necessary, do a 'dry run' or role play with someone you trust and ask them how it feels being on the receiving end of it.
- *Don't deny the other person's feelings.* Understand that they also have an emotional reaction. Don't deny them this and do appreciate that it may be 'normal' (as we have said, the most frequent reaction to confrontation is to bite back). Even if their reaction seems abnormal (disproportionate, odd, extreme) try to be curious about it rather than punitive (for example, when your teenager has 'lost it' over being asked to do their homework, rather than thinking, 'How dare you backchat me!', think, 'What is going on for them that this seems like such a big deal?').

LEARNING TO CAPITULATE: THE MOUSE

- *Gain perspective from the big events of your life.* These might be good or bad, but most of us will have had a significant one. Occasional reflection on this and appreciation of it should keep you humble. Some people benefit from appreciating other aspects that enable them to see themselves for what they really are – only a small cog in a massive universe – and they do this by appreciating nature, spirituality, religion, and so on. Being spiritual, religious, atheist or agnostic are all fine – they just aren't fine when any one of them is used to assume a position of superiority over others.
- *Listen.* Say less, listen more. Find out what someone else is interested in and ask them about it. Be curious about others rather than seeking

any possible opportunity to talk about yourself. We recommend waiting at least seven seconds to allow someone to think about their reply. Try not to verbally jump into the space and learn to let it sit comfortably as the person considers their response.

- *Own your shit and apologise.* It is irrelevant who you have wronged – someone you hate or someone you love, criminal or cop, teenager or pensioner, boss or employee. Apologise without the expectation that they will accept it or that you want anything back. If you have erred, you have erred, and it is a weakness not to own it and admit it.
- *Be patient. Persevere. Persist.* Your learning on Mouse will not end. Curiosity is a joyful experience and once embraced is not an effort or a chore. It will bring very great pleasure even in small things. As well as reflecting on the really big events, do slow down occasionally and take time to enjoy the things you love, and really appreciate and reflect on how lucky you are to have them – a piece of music, chatting to your child on the way to school, a walk on the seafront watching the waves. Look for the small details that you may have taken for granted – whether these are sights, sounds, tastes, feelings or even memories.
- *Build your quiet confidence.* When you feel hesitant or uncertain about a situation, try not to leak this. It is OK to be unsure, but allowing it to be a consistent style can lead to people losing trust in your decisions or walking over you. Take three deep breaths, swallow that uncertainty and keep moving forward.

TAKING CONTROL: THE LION

- *Leading requires other lessons first.* There is no automatic right to lead. It is true that sometimes individuals are put into a role of responsibility, but we all know leaders who cannot or should not lead. The first step to being a good leader is to remove bad attributes that get in the way of effective leadership – being pedantic (micromanaging), being attacking and competitive, leaking disinterest or uncertainty, and being overfamiliar or blurring boundaries. Most importantly, do not be tempted to lead through fear. It may be true that you can be very effective in the short term leading through fear, but don't expect that to last.

- *Know when to lead from the front and when to take a step back.* Great leaders don't need to be in charge of everything all the time and under all circumstances. They are able to support those around them to develop and grow, rather than simply expect others to follow orders and do as they are told without thinking. A good leader wants a team filled with critical thinkers who are able to bring their experience and intelligence to the table rather than simply look to them for a list of instructions. There is responsibility in leadership, and one of those responsibilities is nurturing the leaders of tomorrow.
- *Reap the benefits but accept the responsibility.* Being in control comes with many benefits: you can set individual and team goals; you can push through hard times; you can be ambitious for yourself and for the people you love. And all this can be achieved without you having to do all the work. You can delegate, you can get others to work hard for you and help carry the load. But recognise that when you are in charge, the responsibility for not only your actions but those of your team will rest on your shoulders. When it goes well, a leader shares the glory with their team. When it goes wrong, they know that the lion's share of responsibility will rest on them and they accept the consequences.
- *Lead with your moral compass.* Long-lasting leaders excel because they not only look after their team but they consider the wider implications of their actions. Although they may be highly competitive and may say they seek to achieve a goal at any cost, their underlying and most sacred value is to lead and protect, not lead and defeat. When you lead, lead with your moral compass intact, considering your core values, not just the desire to conquer, defeat or achieve at any price. History has shown us that when leaders lose their moral compass, often their followers soon slide into the muck alongside them.
- *It is a choice to follow as well as to lead.* Great leaders do not impose their will on others. They lead because their followers accept, freely, a choice to have them lead. Asserting authority over someone against their will may sometimes seem necessary, but recognise that the longer-term consequences may be resentment, resistance and ultimately rebellion. The more you can provide choice for followers, the more they will respect you and the greater will be their dedication and motivation to work with you and for you.

BUILDING COOPERATION: THE MONKEY

- *Monkey is about teamwork and cooperation.* Therefore, even if you are in an authority position (manager, parent, coach) it means creating a sense of unbreakable togetherness: we are a team and we are working towards the same goal. The message should be: 'We're all in this together.'
- *It's nice to be nice.* Kindness promotes kindness from others. It also makes the giver of kindness healthier, happier and more content. It is not a sign of weakness to be nice; it is a sign of strength that even in the face of apathy, anger or demands you can rise above it for the greater good as well as your own.
- *Monkey parenting/management/partnerships give the space and guidance to encourage independent growth and decisions.* It allows others to develop and test their moral compass and build up their own independent resilience and fortitude to deal with what life throws at them.
- *Beware overfamiliarity.* Blurred boundaries with children or in the workplace can be extremely hard to re-establish once you overstep. It is hard to put the genie back in the bottle once you let it out. You are not your child's friend, even if you are friends. You are not your employees' friend, even if that would be easier. When your role demands leadership and authority, you need to be able to assert it so beware the bad Monkey's blurred boundaries.
- *Learn the art of conversation.* There are three helpful steps for being more warm and sociable if it isn't something that comes naturally:
 - *Listen* more and talk less: get the building blocks of the conversation by listening to what the person cares about and is interested in.
 - *Share.* Find shared experiences to bond over. If you don't already have some, test out experiences that we are all likely to share to start to build up the conversation and picture of the other person.
 - *Seek.* Get more from them than they get from you. Try to make sure you pass the conversational ball back at least twice as much as you hold it. People like to feel listened to, not to be talked at, so try to encourage them to speak rather than put pressure on yourself to be full of witty and entertaining anecdotes.

APPENDICES: TOP TIPS AND EXAMPLES

In the following appendices we set out some concrete examples of how to get in the mindset to use each of the animal styles effectively. We outline what to do and what to avoid, and give one personal and one professional example for each mode: how to engage in conflict (T-Rex), to capitulate (Mouse), to exert control (Lion) and to cooperate (Monkey).

Remember, though, that whatever mode you are in you need to always ensure you keep the HEAR principles ([page 56](#)) in mind throughout since these are the absolute foundations of rapport; even someone excelling in using, for example, Lion skills will quickly falter if they are being dishonest or failing to show empathy, provide personal choice or fail to use reflection skills to examine thoughts, values and feelings. The HEAR principles must permeate throughout any interaction to be successful.

APPENDIX 1: T-REX

T-Rex behaviours are most likely to be needed in situations of conflict. You should avoid conflict wherever you can and in all but a very small minority of situations it is usually desirable to let it go ... whether that involves someone insulting you in a bar, aggressive driving behaviour or even something more intimate like a family argument or argument with friends. Most of the time you should ask yourself, 'Is it really worth me engaging in this?', 'Is it worth getting in a bar fight, a road accident or falling out with family over what is, ultimately, not that critical?'

When you can avoid pulling out T-Rex-type behaviours you should – you have the other three animal styles to use in most situations. Don't underestimate the power of capitulating in situations – the Mouse is often a really powerful way to control a rapidly escalating interaction. Equally, the

warmth of the Monkey can be disarming, and sometimes you might need to just ignore the confrontational elements, get on with the task and adopt a more Lion-like approach. Only allow the normally extinct T-Rex to emerge when it is critical, unavoidable and where you must engage in confrontation. So, our first tip with T-Rex is answering the very simple question: 'Is it worth bringing this side of me out?'

We have chosen two examples here: one professional and one personal.

In our work example, Aiden is the boss of a large textile firm and has received a report from one of his employees, Grace, that she has been receiving inappropriate text messages from Owen, her line manager. Aiden sees some of these messages and they are indeed inappropriate. Aiden calls in Owen for a meeting and listens to his side of the story. Owen admits he has sent them but refuses to accept that the messages are inappropriate. At this point, we know we are going to have conflict. Aiden has recognised that Owen is putting Grace at risk and has decided that Owen will receive a written warning. He would like Owen to consider apologising and would like him to understand how inappropriate the messages are. Finally, Aiden will need to make clear that any further similar behaviour will be met with a final warning and thereafter dismissal.

We will get to the Aiden and Owen meeting in a moment but, before we do, let's consider our more personal example. Leah and Julia are long-time school friends. They have known each other throughout school and now have their own children, Ruby (Leah's daughter) and Isla (Julia's daughter). Ruby and Isla are 12 and 14 respectively and both attend the same school. Although Isla is two years ahead of Ruby they sometimes hang out. Both families (mums, kids and husbands) get together on a regular basis. Recently on days out Isla often rolls her eyes when Ruby makes an enthusiastic comment about her favourite TV show, or interrupts and talks over her. This has gone on for a few weeks and Leah notices that Ruby has got more and more withdrawn and avoidant on days out. In a conversation with Ruby, Ruby reveals to her mum, Leah, that Isla ignores her completely. She says that last week Isla sent her a gif saying 'snoozefest' in response to Ruby texting 'Can't wait to see you next week.' Yesterday, when Ruby went up to Isla at school, Isla apparently told her to 'just fuck off'. When telling the story Ruby started crying and saying that she didn't want to grass on Isla and now feels like she has 'ruined everything'. Leah does make some effort to explain to Ruby that teens can sometimes be mean and that it

is maybe a stage that Isla is going through. In doing so, Leah, quite rightly, tries to build Ruby's resilience and not automatically go to the confrontation stage prematurely. But that evening, Ruby gets a Snapchat video message from Isla (with a bunch of Isla's friends sat behind Isla laughing), with Isla saying, 'If I was as ugly as you I'd have to hide away in the loos all day.' At this point, we would argue, Leah does need to intervene – and most parents would likely feel the same way. Though there is not an inevitable confrontation on the horizon (either with Isla or her mum), it is at least possible.

So now let's return to how to get in the right mindset for T-Rex, as well as what tips and hints we can use to engage in conflict without anger or aggression and, importantly, how to achieve our desired goals.

MINDSET

To help you get in the right frame of mind here are some tips. First, *be clear on your goals* – where you want to end up in the interaction. For Aiden it would be to make sure that Grace is protected from any further harassment, feels safe and is content with any final outcome. And also to make sure that Owen recognises the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and that he never repeats them. It may also be to ensure that he retains both staff and makes sure no other employee has to endure such behaviour again.

For Leah, it is to look after her daughter Ruby, ideally to retain a friendship with the other family and also, preferably, not to upset Julia or Isla.

In both cases there may be some goals we might have to prioritise and be clear what is and is not up for negotiation, and what we can and cannot control. In Aiden's example, he can't allow Owen to do this again to Grace or anyone else in the company. However, he can't make Grace or Owen stay with the company and he can't change Owen's mind if Owen remains stuck in the idea that these sorts of text messages are OK. Equally, Leah can't make Isla like or involve Ruby or be more kind, and nor can she convince Julia that Isla's behaviour must be changed if Julia has the rather skewed view that Isla's behaviour is acceptable. With T-Rex you only control you; you can only affect your own behaviour and response to things and can neither insist nor expect others to change their mind or simply accept your viewpoint. But you must be clear on your goals and especially what is and is not negotiable.

Once you are clear on what the goals are you need to concentrate on what you are not going to do if and when you engage in conflict. You have to now focus on what you must avoid. Lose all thoughts of aggression, attacking, sarcastic or argumentative behaviour. This is NOT about you being mean to other people. It is a resolute, unwavering and non-negotiable clarity of purpose about what you think, not what you want to make someone else think. For example, you can't stop someone thinking racist thoughts or saying racist things. But you can, with utter clarity, say that you don't think that way, find it surprising that they do or ask (but you cannot insist) that they don't say such things in your company. You control you but you don't control other people. As soon as you engage in the emotional aspect of an argument you have lost control. Stay steady, stay resolute but do not get angry, aggressive or take out your ire on the person you are in conflict with.

The key to T-Rex is to keep things simple. Know what it is that you are clear on and say it in as clear and simple a way as possible. Here is a mantra in the form of the mnemonic CALM that you should seek to repeat before you engage:

1. **Cool:** I won't lose my cool. I will be objective and neutral and stick to my goals.
2. **Angry:** I won't get angry. I won't get drawn into anger or allow things to escalate. I recognise that the other person might get angry but I can't control what they do – only what I do.
3. **Language:** I won't use bad language or personalise anything. I will keep the message clear, short, firm and resolute. I know that this is a thing that I will not negotiate on. I know I can't force the other person to accept it, but I do need to be very clear on what my line is and ensure that they understand it. I need to show empathy and consider that perhaps if I were in their shoes I might not like it. I do care what they think and will recognise how they might feel.
4. **Measured:** I won't escalate things or make the situation worse, even if they do. I will listen to their view and seek to understand – even if I may not agree with – their perspective. I will explain why I see things this way – i.e. I will say, 'I think A, B and C and the reason I think that is because of X, Y and Z.' I will not overegg or harp on about the reasons, but provide them in a brief and measured way.

Often with T-Rex you don't need to stay there long – say what you have to say and make it clear, concise and then retreat. You might then need to rapidly adapt to the response you receive to your delivery of the T-Rex bottom line depending on the outcome. For example, you may need to back down to Mouse or warm things up with Monkey if you get a conciliatory response. After you've said what you need to say you don't need to labour it and sometimes it is better to let the other person absorb the message.

To help you actually deliver T-Rex think of the opposite attributes of the things you want to avoid. Instead of losing your cool, stay calm; instead of getting angry and emotional, if anything get calmer and less emotional; instead of using aggressive language, use conciliatory, peace-seeking language; and instead of blowing things out of proportion, keep them measured (but that doesn't mean play them down – just be accurate and know what the facts are).

Here are our two examples:

Aiden: Hi Owen, come in and take a seat.

Owen: Hi. What's this about then?

Aiden: I spoke with Grace the other day about a series of four text messages that you have sent her. She was quite upset about these and so I have said that I would speak with you to clarify things. What can you tell me about them?

Owen: Do you mean the jokey ones that aren't really anyone's business but mine and hers? That is not even work stuff ... I can't believe she has bothered you with this ...

Aiden: I understand if you are saying that they were not meant to offend and I'm reassured to hear that was not your intention. No one at our firm should be deliberately setting out to offend. But the comments in those messages did upset Grace ...

Owen: (*Interrupting.*) For fuck's sake. That's ridiculous. You aren't going to buy into that are you? (*Muttering.*) Political correctness gone mad.

Aiden: ... and what I wanted to add is that I do not want messages like that to be sent to anyone within our firm, via work phone or indeed any device, whether in an email, over the phone or face-to-face.

Owen: Jesus ... talk about a storm in a teacup.

Aiden: Owen, I need to be really clear here. For Grace's sake and for yours. You are saying this is trivial and not offensive. I am saying it is not trivial and it has caused upset. I recognise all you do for this company and, as you know, that does not go unnoticed. In the past few months you have worked hard for us and certainly on many occasions I can see you have provided great support to Grace ... But, I want to be direct and also not shy away from any behaviours that I consider inappropriate. So, I am going to outline this in a written warning.

Owen: No, don't do that ... that's unfair.

Aiden: Owen, this is not personal or designed in any way to get at you.

Owen: She is out to get me.

Aiden: I am here to protect everyone in this company. Grace, you ... everyone. My decision is to provide you with a written warning that will make clear neither I nor the company tolerate such messages. To be clear, this is the single and only issue I have with your attitude or any of your work but it *is* an issue and this behaviour is not acceptable from you or anyone else. Ideally, I'd like you to apologise to Grace for the upset but I can't and don't want to enforce that. That is between you and Grace. But, you do need to work together and I know what an excellent professional relationship you have had in the past.

Owen: Are you saying that I have to watch everything and anything I say or do here?

Aiden: If you don't recognise that what is in those texts is inappropriate then you do need to be more vigilant, yes. Is there something in any of those texts specifically that you don't see as inappropriate?

Owen: Well, what is wrong with a compliment?

Aiden: OK, so one of the messages says, 'I always let ladies go first upstairs ... especially you.'

Owen: Yeah, so ...?

Aiden: What did this message mean?

Owen: It's just a stupid ... like saucy postcard thing, you know?

Aiden: So it does have a sexual innuendo?

Owen: Well only insofar as I am actually complimenting her figure. It's not abuse. She *has* got a great figure. I've known her for years. This is just banter. Are you saying you don't notice when she wears some of the things she wears?

Aiden: So, you're saying that because a woman wears certain clothes and if you have a close professional relationship, anyone might send or say the same type of thing?

Owen: Yeah, if you are down with banter like me and not part of some mad woke culture bullshit.

Aiden: Owen, if this were a single comment Grace may not have mentioned it. I agree, we all have thoughts; we are all allowed private thoughts. But this is not about what you are privately thinking. This is one of four messages that have been sent, uninvited, and, as I understand it, not reciprocated.

Owen: Humph ... Well, yeah, she didn't send anything back I guess.

Aiden: They all relate either to something Grace has been wearing or her legs or her bottom. I want to be very clear – it is not appropriate, it has caused upset and you will receive a written warning. I can see you are angry about this and that you think it is unfair or disproportionate. You have said you did not want to cause offence and I know that you and Grace have a long-standing excellent professional relationship. I am sure that will continue. I know that in every other respect you are an outstanding and supportive colleague. I know and have recognised that you have helped Grace in the past as well as many other colleagues. But I am not going to change my mind on this and it is only fair to you that I am open, direct and clear about it with you. I'll send the letter this afternoon. You should feel free to come and see me about it if anything remains unclear or if there is anything further you'd like to talk about.

In this example Aiden has a clear, unhesitant start – he makes clear what we are here to talk about. Although Aiden doesn't hesitate to get to the point, he does invite Owen's views. He also considers that Owen may genuinely not have meant to have caused offence. (But, note, he does not collude with that view.) Aiden also tries to move towards a peaceful resolution but reinforces the key issue that a staff member has been upset and offended.

He is clear and direct. Without anger and without shaming Owen he sets clear parameters. Critically, he doesn't try to pass the issue over to Grace, but makes clear that it is his decision as a boss and not Grace's decision. As such, and with clarity and taking ownership of the issues, he sets out what will happen next. He also depersonalises the consequences and directly addresses Owen's 'this is unfair' statement. Aiden provides clarity on the non-negotiables. He recognises that an apology would be good but it must be heartfelt and notes that such mediation cannot be real unless it is actually genuinely felt.

Aiden also seeks clarification of Owen's understanding of whether he recognises that he has done wrong. He is upfront about having to be more mindful if he just doesn't get it but doesn't fall into the potential trap of inferring Owen must be stupid or a caveman to not know the behaviour is out of order.

The key issues here are objectivity, calmness, sticking to the goals and knowing that shame, accusation and aggression are very likely to create defensiveness and further aggression from Owen.

But what about a situation that is more directly personal and where you don't have the benefit of automatically being in control by virtue of being the boss? Let's turn now to Leah's dilemma about her daughter Ruby and the apparent bullying by Julia's daughter Isla.

In this situation, there are many anxiety-inducing elements. Leah doesn't want to upset Julia or Isla, she doesn't want Julia to feel like she is stepping in on her parenting and it may well be that Isla's meanness is related to some other issues that Isla herself is struggling with. Recognising the complexity and stress of being a teen and not wanting to escalate anything in Julia's family circle, but also knowing that she has to look out for her own family, Leah must tread very carefully indeed. But at the same time, if Julia is a long-standing friend who Leah trusts and loves dearly she cannot avoid speaking about this – not least because she could keep resentfully holding on to it every time they see each other. Fundamentally, though, she will quite rightly want to protect her own daughter who is clearly being negatively affected. Think again of the mnemonic of what to avoid and what to do: the key is to be CALM (calm mindset, amicable outcome, language appropriate, measured response).

In this case Leah might be able to manage this on the phone or in person. Either method might be acceptable depending on their relationship, but this

is not for texting or email and certainly not to appear in any other electronic passive means. Friends talk directly about problems.

Leah: Hi Julia, how are you? Is now a good time to speak?

Julia: Hi Jools. Yeah, no problem ... We've just finished tea – are you guys still all good for this weekend?

Leah: Yes, of course. Looks like we might get rained on but we can all get wet weather gear. But, look, I wanted to talk about something that's been on my mind ... I don't want to freak you out at all and know that when I say this. It's so hard because I love you to bits, but I just can't not mention it ...

Julia: Blimey! Now you're freaking me out. Are you OK?

Leah: Yes, of course. It's nothing traumatic and I so don't want to worry you. Let me just explain and then hopefully we can sort it out. It's to do with Ruby and Isla.

Julia: Oh no ... have they fallen out? I did worry about that ... Isla has been so moody recently. I hope she hasn't upset Ruby ... I'm sure it's nothing but Isla being difficult.

Leah: God, I remember hitting 14 and it was a nightmare. I was all over the place. It's hard for kids these days. And I know with Ruby being that bit younger she idolises Isla and that might feel like Ruby always trying to hone in on things ... and at school that could be very annoying to a teen but ...

Julia: (*Interrupting.*) Yes, I'm sure whatever looks and sighs Isla is sending out is what I get every day. It's not personal – Isla wouldn't mean anything by it.

Leah: I know. But it did escalate the other day – first with a gif that was sent and then a video on Snapchat. If it had just been the sighs and eye-rolling I wouldn't phone. Anyway, the gif simply said 'snoozefest' when Ruby WhatsApped Isla about the weekend and then when she went up to her at school Ruby has said Isla told her to 'fuck off'. Then this evening Ruby showed me a video Isla sent on Snapchat saying, 'If I was as ugly as you I'd have to hide away in the loos.'

Julia: Oh my God, that is so awful. I'm so sorry – are you sure that is what she said or is that just Ruby making things up?

Leah: No. I did see the actual message. In fact, there were some other girls in the background behind Isla as well. I'm just pulling my hair out here. I was very anxious about even mentioning it because we are all so close and love you all to bits and I don't want to make things worse. But Ruby is in a really bad state and I couldn't not mention it to you and Gavin and then be constantly thinking about it.

Julia: And are you sure Ruby didn't do something to provoke it in the first place? Did she first send something to Isla? I know Isla can be moody but that is not like her to just lash out spontaneously like that. She does have friends here at the moment. Are you saying it was sent this evening?

Leah: Julia, all I know is what Ruby told me, as well as the message I saw about an hour ago. Of course, Isla will not have meant that Ruby should actually go and hide in the toilets. My worry is – and I have nothing else to suggest this – that things could get worse and more stressful between our two girls, between our families and maybe even at school. I wanted to bring it up as soon as possible so that instead of me just hanging on to this and Ruby and Isla getting further apart we could help calm things down. I'm totally not bringing it up to make you, Gav or Isla feel bad or have a rant, or even take sides, and I know that we need to think about things that give Isla some space from Ruby. I can talk to Ruby about that – I understand how a 14-year-old might feel towards a 12-year-old who is into things that are too immature and Isla has always been very good to Rubes in the past. But I do get it. I should have thought about this before and how they might grow apart. Would it be an idea for you and I to grab a coffee before the weekend to help soothe things? We both want the best for our kids and love them to bits. I'm sorry to now pass this problem on to you as well but as a very dear friend I felt we could sort it out. What do you think?

Crucially here you will see there are lots of efforts to show empathy – 'I don't want to upset you', 'There may be understandable reasons why Isla might say this', 'Isla may be having a hard time', 'I don't want this to get

between us’, ‘I want to be able to discuss it’, and so on. Leah avoids shaming anyone and is devoid of anger. However, she presents the facts and sticks to them. She doesn’t embellish or ratchet things up and, even when Julia has the audacity to suggest that Ruby might have been responsible for her own bullying at the hands of Isla, Leah does not react by aggressively attacking this ridiculous idea. Instead, she remains calm, her language is measured and proportionate and she seeks resolution and a peaceful outcome not retribution. It’s clear, though, that she is not prepared to let it continue and, importantly, she has not tried to hide these things from her friend. She could sit and seethe and then let it all out the next time she directly sees Isla bullying Ruby – and that would be catastrophic. So, she has the honesty and ability to be direct, calm and upfront about the issue, with the assumed idea that this is resolvable.

In summary, the T-Rex style is objective, brisk, straight-up and goal-directed, but it is never mean and there is room for empathy as well as all the other HEAR principles. It does not require that the other person accepts the resolution, but you do have to make clear what your non-negotiables are. In Aiden’s case he will not accept this behaviour in his organisation and in Leah’s she will not allow Isla to continue to bully Ruby.

APPENDIX 2: MOUSE

Mouse behaviours help you to listen to and learn from others. Often under-utilised (at least in the West) the Mouse is key to self-improvement and psychological growth. It is frequently neglected in favour of wanting to be in control, to be the centre of the universe and to attend to our own needs. Although we enjoy the feeling of power over things and other people, we should also dignify and enjoy the benefits of letting go and giving into things. This is the best mode to increase our knowledge and wisdom about other people. The joy of Mouse is its disarming power in bringing about deep and enduring relationships.

As with T-Rex, we present two examples: one professional and one personal.

In our work example, Mika joins a team of actors for a theatre production of *Brooklyn: The Musical*. She is part of a small cast. Aysha, Karen and Brett have all worked together on a previous production and know each

other well, but Mika is new to the production and hasn't met any of them yet. She is less experienced and this is her first big role. She knows it will be hard to break into such a tight-knit group where she may be seen as the outsider. How can she make her own mark and integrate into the group? Easy! By adopting the Mouse style when she first meets them ...

We will join her in a moment, but before we do let's set out our personal example.

Noah, 18, lives in Dundee. He describes himself as a 'fantasy nerd'. He is about to meet – for the first time – the like-minded Willow. Willow, like Noah, is into comic books, anime and manga. Although they've talked for a year online, this is their first meeting in person and they are meeting at an anime convention in London. Noah is keen to find out more about Willow, including whether there are any romantic possibilities. They decide to meet for lunch at a café near the convention and their first conversation, although a little clunky, goes well. They have a fun first day at the convention though most of their discussions are about the creators, the films and comics that they enjoy. Willow asks Noah if he wants to go to the pub and have a few drinks at the end of day one. How can Noah find out a little more about Willow and, if an opportunity should arise, is there a way he can explore her feelings?

Before we show how Mika and Noah navigate their way around these two situations, let's help them get into the right mindset for Mouse.

MINDSET

To help you get in the right frame of mind here are some tips. First, and as with T-Rex, *be clear on your goals* – where do you want to end up? For Mika it is to get a better appreciation of who she is working with and, ultimately, to get on with them all. Noah also wants to get more insight – he wants to see what Willow thinks about their current relationship.

Mouse helps us to stay on 'receive' more than 'send' mode. Mika and Noah will need to be adaptive and relinquish all ideas about controlling the other person or trying to make them think or feel a specific way. They need to open themselves up, go with the flow and be OK about letting the other person do most of the talking. That means gently asking questions, listening carefully and showing real interest and curiosity. They need to adopt the mindset of 'I am here to listen to you and to learn about what you like, what you value and what you believe.'

However, they must avoid bad Mouse attributes. That means remaining calm. In Mouse mode you can't simply sit back and be a wallflower. You can't just blend into the background or be pushed around or be made to feel invisible. Mika and Noah are lucky here because they are with pretty easy, considerate people but you should recognise that in adopting Mouse mode you can neutralise unreasonable people quickly and effectively. You can open your mind up to new experiences, new knowledge and personal growth – even when you are with people you dislike or don't get on with.

Happily, with Mouse, there are a few things you can do that are quite specific and easy to implement. The absolutely critical thing at the heart of Mouse is listening first and then thinking about what you want to say before talking. With Mouse, you want to create an almost meditative state. Be at peace. Be serene. Before entering into such an interaction, you might want to take some deep breaths in and out to a slow count of four. You could repeat a calming word or visualise a calm scene (gentle waves on a shore, slow-moving clouds or a leaf gently falling). You could also repeat in your mind a peaceful mantra. This could even be the mnemonic we have for you – which spells out 'EASE':

1. **Explore** what the other person has said before making assumptions about it. Have you heard right? Have you interpreted it correctly? Don't make assumptions about what people mean before you have fully checked what you have heard. Use what you have learned in [Chapter 4](#) to help you understand what people mean and don't simply keep throwing in question after question to make your own mark or get your own opinion in. Use expressions like, 'Tell me more about that' or 'Explain what you mean when you said that' or 'Can you describe that a bit more?' Also, ask about feelings and thoughts after someone has explained something – 'How did that make you feel?' or 'What were you thinking at that time?'
2. **Advice** from others. Seek out and carefully consider other people's counsel even if, after consideration, you won't necessarily adopt any of it. In some cases, you may assume that certain people are so unlike you that they won't have a clue about how to help you. You might think they couldn't possibly offer anything. This is a common mistake we see time and time again. The young fail to listen to their elders; older people fail to listen to youth. Sometimes students fail to take advice from teachers and sometimes teachers fail to take advice from

students. It is common to put your own views forward before considering how others could educate *you*. Ask more questions in conversations and seek to find out more about others rather than always talking about yourself.

3. ***Slow down and give space.*** Leave plenty of pauses and spaces for others to fill in conversations before filling them in with your own ideas. The average time people wait for an answer to a question is between five and seven seconds before interrupting. Instead, slow down and allow space for people to think before they answer – particularly if it is a complex or emotionally heavy question. The silence always feels more awkward for you as the listener than for them, the person responding. Get used to giving more space in conversations where appropriate. If you are in Mouse mode you should speak less than 20 per cent of the time, leaving the other person the remaining 80 per cent.
4. ***Examine*** what is in your mind before you speak. Better to think slowly and mindfully about what you want to say and then say it rather than rush into a comment, question or statement. Listen, *think* and then speak, and make sure it is in that order.

You can perhaps see with all of these tips that they are about helping you be on receive, being at ease, being at peace and leaving the ego at the door.

Let's turn now to our examples of Mouse-type behaviours.

First, let's look at how Mika gets on with Aysha, Karen and Brett. She has just walked into the theatre to meet with them. This is going to be their first read-through and this is their first proper meeting as a cast.

Mika: (*Brightly.*) Hi, I'm Mika ...

Aysha: Hey Mika! (*Walks up to greet her and hugs her.*)
 Congratulations and ... welcome to the team! (*They both walk over to the others.*) This is Brett – he's a bit of a diva (*Brett laughs*) and Karen who has to manage him! Guys – this is Mika (*hugs all round*).

Karen: We've been together as a team on this for a while, but we sadly lost Gina at the end of the last run in Oslo.

Mika: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. When you say 'lost' ...

Karen: Oh my God. Sorry, I don't mean she died ... No, no, she had some personal issues.

Brett: Jesus, that's underselling it ...

Karen: Brett!

Brett: What?! Thank God she's 'lost' ... Nightmare. The end of the last run was a catastrophe. I'm not as tolerant as these two to be honest. Our last director was too weak to bin her and use an understudy on the last night, but that final night was awful.

Mika: *(Inquiring.)* Awful?

Aysha: Yes, we definitely ended on a downer. It nearly killed the possibility of us getting another run, but I guess because we are all so close we kind of were able to cover for her.

Mika: *(Thinking.)* That's cool you are so bonded that you can do that as a team ...

Karen: *(Interrupting.)* Yeah, it's like a sixth sense, you know, partly I suppose with us working for so long together – well at least me and Brett have been together for nearly six years and then with Aysha we just clicked.

Aysha: Yeah, I found these guys very accepting as long as you know what you are doing ...

Mika: So, it's not just the time you guys have worked together that gives you that intuition and insight ...?

(A ten-second pause as Brett and Karen look at one another with a knowing look wondering whether to reveal this. Mika looks on and gives space as they consider.)

Brett: Yeah, me and Karen are actually gonna get married soon, though it took some time for us to professionally click I think it's fair to say, but with Aysha, cos she blends with the two of us and understands us so well and, actually, I guess is pretty different to both of us – it's kind of, I dunno, complementary.

Aysha: Yeah, I keep you two from arguing ... I was practically serving as part of the UN on the last production between you two!

Karen: Let's not go there ... that was to do with Gina constantly bitching to me about Brett and then bitching to Brett about me.

Mika: Sounds like Aysha was ying to Gina's yang – the romantic matchmaker too?!

Brett: She definitely helped neutralise tensions and yeah – absolutely – helped us two get together and not be split apart ...

In this short and simple interaction Mika has said very little. She has a quiet, enquiring, but by no means weak, tone. She shows warmth and genuine interest. You'll note she uses a lot of reflection skills here – some simple reflections, some reframing. And, critically, she leaves space for others to speak. Note, the space she leaves while Brett and Karen consider whether to reveal their relationship. Mika has learned a great deal about these three people – she now knows that Karen and Brett are an item; that Gina made things tricky in the last production and got between Brett and Karen; that Aysha gets on well now with them and may have been responsible for bringing them together. Karen seems quite a dominant person, maybe Brett too. Importantly, Mika has learned a lot about what these people value and what makes them tick. She has said very little about herself so far and yet she doesn't come across as frosty or withholding – just genuinely interested in them. She does less than 20 per cent of the talking and by giving space, coming across as relaxed, interested and exploring for more details and thinking about what she is saying, learns a great deal very quickly. She is now in a better position to understand them and with some more work is likely to learn more. Of course, she should, before too long, offer some information about herself but this is early on in the interaction and we are less than ten minutes in.

Now, how about Noah? Let's join him and Willow down the Wheatsheaf pub, a quiet, small London pub, after a full-on day at the convention. At the point at which we listen in they've been talking about the convention, but now the conversation changes tack:

Noah: So, how's it feel knowing you'll soon be liberated from the shackles of school? I know how much you think that place sucked.

Willow: I know ... I guess it wasn't all awful ... And anyway at least it's done and I can do my own thing now. I guess the issue was I never really fitted in there.

Noah: Did you feel kind of alone?

Willow: Yeah ... Um ... (*Pauses, clearly thinking. Noah recognises that she needs time to think – he is pretty sure he hasn't made her feel awkward but just recognises she needs some time to process her thoughts.*) It wasn't so much 'bad' alone if you know what I mean ... I had a few people I hung around with and they were all actually really nice. I'd still definitely want to keep in touch. Um (*still thinking and processing*) ... I guess, um, I guess I just felt like I was waiting to get on with my life ... Maybe I'm not making sense. Do you know what I mean? (*She sounds unclear on how precisely to get across what she means.*)

Noah: I think so ... Do you mean that as you were going through school you kind of knew that there was something else out there for you?

Willow: Exactly! I just felt like I was riding it out and, like, doing what I had to do to get me on to the fun stuff – I mean – not like I think life is gonna be easy but like school was just a thing that was gonna lead me to *the* thing ... I'm not making much sense am I?

Noah: (*Smiling and with a supportive tone.*) And *the* thing? Tell me about that ...

Willow: You know ... freedom, not being judged, meeting people that get me ... not just the sporty types or the swotty types but the weirdos, the geeks. (*Another long pause and clearly thinking again.*) I dunno though – maybe I don't even fit in with them ... (*Long pause.*) Hah! (*Seems to find the realisation almost funny.*) I guess I've got so used to not quite slotting into whatever is going on around me.

Noah: But you seemed so chilled today ...

Willow: Yeah – I loved it. It was cool to wander, chat and catch ... But I think I'd have still felt like, like I was on my own, and ... (*Willow struggles to find the word.*) Um, not just a weirdo like all the other weirdos but like someone who doesn't even fit with the real weirdos – but, like, an *ultra* weirdo ... Do you know what I mean? If I was on my own ...

Noah: So, you wouldn't've gone alone.
Oh my God no ... I needed another ultra weirdo – like you!
Willow: (*Laughs.*)
Noah: Hey! (*Feigning offence.*)
Willow: (*Gently and genuinely.*) Thanks for taking me Noah ... My fellow ultra weirdo!

We can leave Noah and Willow now, knowing that maybe, just maybe, there is a little more than just a friendship here. As with Mika, Noah has, without pushing, given space, stayed relaxed, been gently curious and without any force at all has left Willow the space to think through her own thoughts. There were plenty of occasions where he could have given his view (of school, of friends, of the convention, of his feelings), but in surrendering the conversation to her and showing real interest in how she thinks, he has allowed her to explore her own thoughts. Of course, it's nice that it's turned out this way for him, but Noah seems like the sort of guy who would have had the strength of character to let the girl opposite him say whatever she wanted knowing that things can't be forced or leveraged out of someone.

In summary, Mouse is a really powerful way to understand someone's thoughts, feelings beliefs and values.

APPENDIX 3: LION

Lion behaviours are required in situations where you must lead others. Whether you are in charge of a theatre company, a battalion or a school project, you need to take charge. But this does not mean 'my way or the highway'.

As with the other animals, we have chosen two examples here: one professional and one personal.

Our work example: Sofia leads a team that delivers a one-day stress buster course for senior managers in high-profile corporate companies. She has a small but successful business that has been running for two years. She employs three other people – Trish, who has worked with her from the start (and also knew her at university), Louis, who has worked for the company for 12 months, and a newly appointed, fourth member, Chester. Chester

joined three days ago. All staff (Trish, Louis and Chester) are expected to deliver the actual stress busting course in order to meet the increasing demand from clients. Chester also has the added value of being a very competent analyst and statistician. In fact, for the first two days Sofia has allowed him to work from home to analyse and then produce a series of slides about the success of their business. The slide deck he has produced is impressive. But the complexity of the facts and figures means that he is the best person to present it. Today, the team (led by Sofia) have a critically important pitch meeting scheduled. The potential investor is considering whether to invest in the business. A successful pitch could mean an upswing of 200 per cent for Sofia's business. Sofia's intention is for her to lead the pitch, and then have Chester present the analytical slides. The entire pitch is to last 30 minutes: 15 minutes for Sofia, 10 for Chester's facts and figures and 5 minutes for questions.

As planned, Chester turns up to meet with Sofia and the rest of the team before the actual pitch. It is 12.15pm, three quarters of an hour before the actual pitch meeting with the potential investors. Trish, Louis, Chester and, of course, Sofia are at the pitch meeting. Just before they all meet as a team Chester pulls Sofia aside.

'Sofia,' he says, 'I'm so sorry, I'm not sure I can do this ... I might have to back out.' He looks worried but then walks into the meeting with Trish and Louis and starts talking to them about how nervous he is.

Clearly, Sofia is going to need to make some decisions. She is going to need to manage the whole team. But, before we get to that, let's outline our more personal example.

Mark, Darren, Luke and Chris have been hiking in North Wales. They are all lads in their late teens. None are hugely experienced climbers but they have a decent knowledge of the Snowdon range since they live locally. Having said that, none have been in the sort of weather that they now find themselves in, near the top of the north ridge of Tryfan mountain. The four lads have on several other occasions been around various mountains in Snowdonia National Park. As is often the case, weather near the summit can change quickly and in this case what started as a sunny day for the friends has become, in the last 30 minutes, sheeting rain and high winds. Chris is starting to freak out and says, 'I don't want to go to the top ... This is freaking me out. I think we need to go immediately back down.'

Luke responds with, ‘No way – you go down if you have to, but we are less than five minutes from the top. I’m going up.’

Luke then begins to ascend. Mark and Darren look at one another and both think, ‘What are we going to do?’ In this case there is no obvious leader, though some decisions need to be made. Arguably it is not Luke because he has already decided to abandon one member of the group. Also, it’s unlikely to be Chris as he, in his own words, is freaking out. This situation is potentially trickier as it has immediate peril and no clearly defined leader–follower structure.

Let’s return to how to get in the right mindset for Lion.

MINDSET

To help you get in the right frame of mind, here are some tips. First, and as with the other animal mindsets, *be clear on your goals* – where do you want to end up? For Sofia it would be to make sure she secures the best pitch from her team as well as to make sure Chester feels confident and less nervous. She will also want to convince the others in her team that she has made the right decisions for the business.

For the lads their absolute key priority is to all get down safely. Less important, but a goal might also include retaining their friendship or, less importantly still, having that great feeling of getting to the top. These other goals, though, are relatively insignificant if they compromise their actual safety.

Unlike T-Rex, where you set out only your own lines in the sand and your own non-negotiables, in Lion you *are* seeking to exert a degree of control over the group. But, crucially, you must take into account the needs, values and beliefs of all members of the group. For example, Mark and Darren might also want to get to the top of Tryfan but whoever ends up leading here is likely to take into account all the lads’ perspectives. Again, you can’t insist that when you lead you must demand that others follow and, in fact, the more demanding, insistent and rigid the behaviour (bad Lion) the less effective will be the result (as well as resentment further down the line).

Once you are clear on what the goals are you need to concentrate on what you must avoid doing if and when you engage in leading. You have to focus on what you must avoid. You must avoid bad Lion attributes. You must not be rigid or demanding. Lose the idea of force or threat to get your way and forget the idea that this is about you and your needs, desires and wants.

Instead, you must quickly recognise a bigger picture that includes views and needs that are different from yours. You must seek the best way to bring people together and pull in the same direction. Hard though this may be, recognise that to lead does not mean you'll get any recognition for it. You may well even not be clearly marked or remembered as the person who generated the best outcome. Often the best leaders leave their ego at the door. Lions in the wild lead for a long time because they are good at looking after their pride. No more, no less. They don't get a badge for it – they just happen to be good at protecting the pride. Your reward is that the job gets done and everyone sticks together and pulls together.

As with the other animal styles, we have a mnemonic to help you remember what to avoid as well as what to do instead. In the case of the Lion the mnemonic spells out ROAR. So, when you are engaging a Lion mindset ask yourself the following questions:

1. ***Rigid or Reciprocal?*** Am I being rigid and trying to do everything myself and do every element of the task (bad Lion) or am I thinking about reciprocity and what each team member may be able to contribute individually to the team (good Lion)?
2. ***Only me or Others?*** Am I thinking only about my needs and what I want (bad Lion) or am I considering others' needs to find a solution that respects the wider issues and not just my own (good Lion)?
3. ***Anxiety or Achievement?*** Am I seeking control through creating anxiety, fear or threats (bad Lion) or am I seeking to focus more positively on a feeling of achievement, autonomy and empowerment for each individual (good Lion)?
4. ***Resentment or Resilience?*** After the event is over will I have created resentment towards me (either because I thwarted goals or railroaded decisions without consultation – bad Lion) or will I have created further resilience and bonding within the group (good Lion)?

You can see that with all of these they are about taking care of the pride and not only one person's needs (and certainly not just the lead lion). Lion leaders take care of the *whole* group and help them to all pull in the same direction. That means in Sofia's case that, while the goal might be to secure the contract, she must also take into account that Chester is anxious about performing and that both Trish and Louis are going to want this to work as well. How can she inspire them to all pull together? Similarly, either Mark

or Darren is going to need to step up. Someone is going to need to take control and, on the one hand, stop Luke going off on his own while on the other stopping Chris from making his own way down.

Let's start with Sofia:

Sofia: OK, guys, all take a breath. We've got roughly 40 minutes before they arrive. I want us to pull together here so that we get the right result. Trish, Louis, I'm going to come to you in a moment for a view, but Chester I know that you are feeling anxious and that there is some pressure on you in this pitch ... What are your thoughts?

Chester: Like I said, I'm really, really nervous. I scared I'm gonna screw it up and, being the newest member here, I don't want to let anyone down.

Trish: Sofia, do you need me or Louis to step in?

Sofia: Hang on. Let's focus for a moment on Chester. He has prepared an excellent slide deck but I for one would feel less well-skilled in presenting the details of that than I know Chester could. Having said that, one option is that I bring you and Louis in as backup since it may be that there are elements between all of us that we could support one another on. But, my worry there is that we could end up tripping over one another and we have very little time. And I think there are at least five quite complex slides which neither you nor Louis have seen yet. And it's not fair to expect either of you to wing that. Chester, tell me a little more about your specific concerns. Is it just the anxiety about public speaking or are you actually concerned about the content of the slides and their meaning?

Chester: No, no, I know exactly what the slides mean and I know they are accurate and really show what you guys have achieved so far. It's ... just I've not done public speaking.

Sofia: OK, I understand. Would it help for you to talk us through it now? I'm sorry, I should have tried to support us doing this before the actual pitch but maybe if you just explained the slides to us now – while we still have 35 minutes or so – it may help us make a decision about whether me and Trish can pick

this up or, having presented to us, you may feel you are more comfortable with it.

Chester: Er ... sure, here let me open it. So, like, do you want me to do a practice run or just like, informally, go through the slides so you get what I mean?

Sofia: What are you most comfortable doing?

Chester: Maybe like a mix. Kind of present it but not worry too much about it – like, informally.

Sofia: Sure. Give it a shot.

(Chester then goes through the slide deck. After which Sofia feels that, although Chester was very hesitant, he does know his stuff and it has also enabled her to get a better grasp of each slide.)

Sofia: Chester – that was great. Sure, you seemed nervous but that's fine. Did I get what you meant and did the results show off what we have achieved? Yes! Trish, Louis, what are your thoughts?

Louis: I thought it was outstanding. It was really clear. I wouldn't want to be questioned on it but I got what you were saying.

Trish: Me too. I think I could present that if that would help.

Sofia: Thanks Trish. Cool – well, look, maybe we should all go in as a team. What do you think now Chester?

Chester: Uh, yeah – I think I could probably do that again. Maybe if I know I've got backup in there that'd help me.

Sofia: OK, cool. Look, let's stick with you presenting it as you did here. Trish, Louis, if you can accompany us in we can all be present and one of us will step in if Chester is struggling.

In this example, Sofia uses the word 'we' as opposed to 'I'. She is signalling that the group matters and that her decisions are to support everyone. She seeks views from everyone but also has the clarity of vision to help them all move in the same direction. You can see that there is no rigid, immutable agenda that is imposed on the group – she is open to solutions and feedback based on clarifying everyone's input. You can feel that the solution that Sofia focuses on is arrived at through consultation and

establishing how each member can contribute. She isn't simply imposing her own needs ('I need this pitch to work') nor using threats or the creation of anxiety to get what she wants ('and you need to perform and do your job or we will lose this contract') – both of which would likely escalate anxiety and create division. Finally, the feeling that the team will experience going into the meeting is one of inclusivity and being led by a person who cares about each of them, considered how each can contribute and how they can look out for one another. Crucially, though, Sofia is still going to do the heavy lifting at the front end and neither expresses her own anxieties nor individual needs at all. She neither seeks nor wants recognition for any of her own work – she just puts her energies into the team. Leading is selfless but the final reward for her is a team that is fully functioning and working at peak capacity.

And now the more personal example:

Darren: Woah, Luke, hang on, hang on.

Luke: What? Look, I'm just gonna get to the top. It's literally five minutes. I am NOT going back down.

Darren: OK, look, we need to try to stick together here. You're right. It's not far. Mark what do you think?

Mark: I think Luke is right – we are so near.

Darren: OK, cool. Chris, are you sure you don't want to get to the top given it's so near? I know what you're saying – you're right the weather is shitty but if we get to the top we can get down via the south ridge.

Chris: I am fucking freaking out here. I know the path we just came up and I can get down that way. I'm not doing the south ridge when I've never done that route and it means going further up. Just fucking leave me then.

Darren: No, we stick together and we sort this out. Luke, Mark, are you happy to go together to the top so at least no one is on their own? I'll hang back with Chris until you get back and we can all go back down together. What do you think?

Luke: Sure – we can get to the top and back easily within ten minutes, but you should do it too.

Darren: It's fine. You go. Be quick but take care. I'll hang back here.

- Luke: But, like you said, don't you think south ridge is the better option?
- Darren: It probably is a little safer but Chris is more comfortable with what he knows and I know you and Mark have also descended this route and we can nail it together, and Chris is right we've literally just come up this way. The other issue is time. South is longer and the weather is looking worse and worse. You guys get to the top. We will catch our breath here, calm down and gather our thoughts and then we will need you two guys again to help guide us all down together.

In this interaction Darren does two things in quick succession: he stops Luke and tells Luke that he is right – 'Yes, you could get to the top Luke' – rather than berate him. Bad Lion would say, 'No, stop you fucking idiot. Don't you give a shit about the rest of us?' As friends (and note this is not military training of new recruits where that latter, more forceful, feedback may actually be appropriate) you need to consider potentially fragile egos. Also, in this case, Darren empathises with Luke – he knows the last few yards are easy, achievable and safe for him and deeply frustrating if rigidly thwarted. And so, to his own personal detriment with regard to also wanting to reach the top, he offers to stay with Chris to support the other two lads. Again, leading can be hard because your own desires and needs are not as important as keeping the group together, keeping them safe and maintaining control. Note also that Darren's language is uncomplicated and directive ('You do this', 'You do that'), but it never comes across as dictatorial. Instead it is firm, confident but consultative. Options are generated, compromises sought and egos massaged. Darren outlines the facts (Chris isn't going up and won't go down south ridge). Then, after consulting, he seeks the other lads' views about their own competencies and appeals to their skills and desire to show how they can contribute. Crucially, at no point does he make Chris feel further anxiety. He does all he can to calm him down. At the same time, he recognises and has a reasonable response to enable the other two lads (together) to reach the top. So, throughout, there is no rigid agenda or dictating but controlled consultation. This provides progress and forward movement by seeking a solution that works for the group and not the individual.

In summary, the Lion is about self-sacrifice, thinking of others but ultimately directing them with confidence. The end result is to create an atmosphere of achievement and a feeling of continued resilience for the group. Firm but fair.

APPENDIX 4: MONKEY

Monkey behaviours help you to collaborate with others. The Monkey style is key to warm, nurturing relationships with friends and colleagues. It is useful in working with teammates in sports or other activities that require collective action. It is also the secret to enduring, deep and loving romantic relationships. Mastering the Monkey style is key to avoiding the incredibly damaging psychological and physical effects of social isolation. It works well once you have learned more about a person and have some awareness of their thoughts, feelings, values and beliefs. A leap straight to Monkey when you first meet someone new can be a bit overbearing and you can end up drifting into a bad Monkey style (overfamiliar and a bit desperate). With that in mind, let's fast-forward now and see how Mika and Noah are getting on in their professional and personal relationships. Imagine that both relationships have moved on. In Mika's case she is now four weeks into full rehearsal, and she has learned a great deal more about her fellow cast members. We will join them as they seek to overcome some issues that could jeopardise their work. Similarly, we will join Noah and Willow after they have been on another ten dates and are six months further on since the convention. Happily, they have been an item since the convention and it was Willow who asked Noah to go out as more than just friends. We will join them as they seek to resolve the issue of the geographic distance between them.

MINDSET

Before we do, though, as with all the other styles, a mnemonic that may help you get in the right mindset to think about how to adopt a Monkey style of interaction. For Monkey, the mnemonic is 'TEAM':

1. ***Think it, say it.*** If you have a positive feeling, thought or compliment in your mind about the other person just say it. This is a good example where, if timed wrong and too early would be weird. Imagine if Noah chose to say out loud the first thought he had when he first met Willow

in person. This might have been, ‘Oh my God, you are so gorgeous.’ Or if Mika had said, ‘Wow, you guys seem really awesome people to work with.’ It would just be odd. But, once you get to know someone better and if it is appropriate, why not say something nice? Too often we are reticent to give out compliments – to our parents, our kids, our friends and colleagues. This could be a compliment about a physical aspect (‘Those boots are amazing – where did you get them?’), about performance (‘The work you did here is really excellent ... it got such a fantastic result and, against all the odds, you really smashed it’) or thoughtfulness (‘It means a lot to me that you’d say something so kind and supportive’). Perhaps you feel a bit cheesy saying such things – especially if it is not your natural style – but if you actually had that thought then it does mean that you are genuine when you say it. And, if it is honest, why shouldn’t we say nice, kind things to one another?

2. ***Easy and relaxed.*** Being around people who are natural Monkeys is relaxing. Why? Because they are relaxed! They are chilled out. And so, giving off relaxing vibes is contagious. In contrast, being nervous and neurotic is contagious. So, for Monkeys to work in a group successfully they need to all feel like things are running with ease. You need to do your own bit to create that vibe. Various people have different ways of doing this but here are two simple ones. The first and often most successful is breathing. Simply taking three breaths can help chill you out. Anxiety is often accompanied by rapid, shallow breathing so you need to break that cycle by first pushing air out of the lungs with a long exhalation. Pause. Now you’ll need to take a big breath in. Now try to extend your next breath for longer – a gentle but longer exhalation than the first one. Now a big inhale and, if you can, a final, even longer inhale. You want to try to work on your final exhale being roughly twice as long as your inhale. This ‘three-point’ breathing helps you disrupt the shallow, rapid breathing that sustains an anxious mindset. You can practise this before you get into an interaction, but once it becomes second nature you can use it in the middle of an interaction more covertly without it looking weird or like you’ve suddenly dropped into a yoga class mid-conversation. The other thing you can do to disrupt anxiety and keep calm is repeat a mantra or calming word. You might accompany relaxing your forehead and your jaw – these are two areas that often tense up.

3. **Animated.** Similar to creating a relaxed state you also want to give off a happy, animated vibe. Monkeys don't just sit around and chill. They like to play – they get excited about things and are animated rather than still. So, once you have started to relax you need to smile, think happy thoughts and give off a positive, animated energy. A good way to put yourself in an animated, jolly, play-type mindset is to visualise a thing, place, event or person that you love. It might be a photo of your son or daughter that you have where they have a big beaming smile, it might be you snowboarding, kayaking, doing a landscape painting, scoring a goal, or thinking about a particular place you love or a ridiculous joke that made you laugh – it might even be thinking about the sound of someone's laughter. The more concrete and specific the image the better as it will be a quick way to evoke a happy thought. And a happy mindset immediately makes your outward appearance change for the better. Critically, it will make you feel more positively inclined to the people in your immediate vicinity, as well as thinking positively about possibilities. Monkey thinking and problem-solving is optimistic. It is about suggesting concessions and compromises with the intention of resolving problems as a team. As good Monkey you have to keep thinking, 'What can I do to help make this work? What can I do to make this a warm, social and loving experience? How can I make things better for *us*?'
4. **Mirroring.** The final piece of advice to help you get in the Monkey zone is to consider watching and then mirroring other Monkeys. Note, don't mirror any negative behaviours you see but rather work with the other Monkeys in the room who are making you feel good. Often, for example, it is because they have got very animated and are throwing their arms around enthusiastically or enthusing wildly about something. Monkeys like to mirror and be mirrored. So, if you enjoy what you see, consider joining in. If you are a team you work together and synchronise your actions.

Now let's return to Mika, Aysha, Brett and Karen.

Let's imagine that they have a problem to solve. Karen is pregnant and is having terrible bouts of nausea, which is making her feel exhausted. She is three weeks pregnant and the musical is due to start in another four weeks. Originally, she was keen to go ahead with the production but now she is not so sure given how rough she feels. One option available to them is to use

Gina – who, as you’ll remember, has done the production before. She knows Karen’s role well and they all know she has the ability, but they are reticent to suggest her. You’ll remember, Gina caused a lot of problems between Brett and Karen and we will see that Brett in particular seems to have a problem with this suggestion. Let’s see if, between them, they can make this whole thing work.

Mika: Dare I say it, maybe we should consider Gina?

Brett: Er, no ... that would be a no ...

Mika: She does know the role well ... I know you guys said that she’s a pain but ...

Brett: (*Interrupting.*) No, no, no and ... by the way ... no. I’m sorry, she is a bloody nightmare. It’s not just about knowing the role or being good in it ... You have to get on with the rest of the cast or it just does not work. (*Pauses.*) And that bloody woman just nearly ruined us.

Mika: OK, so although you’re saying she is tough to work with she is good – I mean, she *can* do this?

Karen: God, yeah! She *is* good ... I thought she originally should have played my role. It’s not her ability, it’s her personality ...

Brett: Mika, I know you mean well, but you just don’t know her. And, well, the thing with her and me and Karen ... Can you imagine that?! While Karen is feeling so crappy.

Karen: Brett, you know I can’t do this. I’m just not able and, actually, I just don’t want, don’t need it ...

Aysha: We are desperate here guys ... (*They all pause and think.*)

Mika: Brett, I know you say she is trouble and I get it ... She’s caused you guys a lot of hurt so you *both* need to be OK with this.

Brett: It just isn’t going to work – I can’t work with her – and not with Karen out at ...

Karen: Come on, Brett – you can be a pro about it. Don’t not work with her because of me.

Mika: Karen, how do you feel about it?

Karen: You guys are right. Brett, she can be a bitch but maybe she has changed since then – and you and I are together now anyway.

She's not an idiot, she isn't going to interfere with that – and, more importantly, she can do it and I can't. Don't not do it because you are worried about me.

Mika: God, no. Brett, you can't drop out ... Brett, do you think maybe Gina has matured a bit? When did you last work with her? Maybe things have moved on. And you know she'd be stupid to even contemplate getting between you guys now. This is such a happy time for you. She can't break that – you know that. And, besides, me and Aysha can tag team her ass if she gets out of line. Mika and Aysha ... WWE smackdown! (*Laughs.*)

Brett: Jesus ... (*Stifling a laugh.*)

Aysha: Look, (*calmly*) there is no rush ... You guys think about it.

Mika: Yeah, look ... talk it through. We will support *whatever* you decide to do. Why don't me and Aysha go grab some food and leave you guys to talk through what you wanna do. We will respect your decision – give you guys some space. We are here for you both. And, if you wanna give us a buzz and then all get together this evening that's fine too – we can pick some food up for you. Or if you want to talk about it, sleep on it and decide tomorrow, that's cool too. What do you think?

In this interaction Mika is showing positive regard for everyone – she doesn't pooh-pooh Brett's feelings and of course she also acknowledges the more positive and maybe logical solution Karen seems to be comfortable with. But, critically, although she might think Karen is right she doesn't make Brett feel he is wrong, nor does she take sides. She allows them the space, time and autonomy to choose. She also involves Aysha, who seems to be a natural Monkey too. Brett is the most negative force in this group but neither Mika nor Aysha bring attention to that. Instead, gently, warmly and with good humour, they try to stay positive, provide some possible (but in no way forced) solutions that help give support to everyone's perspective. It is warm, positive and understanding. They solve this together – no one takes precedent over anyone else and everything is up for negotiation in respect of everyone's feelings. Gina may or may not need different handling if they choose to use her but even there, there is the optimistic possibility that stays open – maybe she has changed!

Now, let's rejoin Noah and Willow in a discussion at Willow's house in Dorset where Noah has made the long trip down from Dundee.

Willow: I can't stand the fact that it takes you nearly ten hours to drive. It's shit for you and cos I can't drive I feel bad ... I'm so sorry.

Noah: It's fine. I love you. What's wrong with driving ten hours to see the person you love?

Willow: It's not just that ... (*Seems angry/upset.*)

Noah: C'm here. (*Hugs her.*) What then?

Willow: It's not often enough.

Noah: Ahh, well that's understandable. Who in their right mind wouldn't want to see a legend like me every second of every day (*laughs*)?

Willow: Ha ha.

Noah: I hate it too ... I wish I lived here or you lived near me. But, look, I have no issue coming once a month over the weekend. The journey is fine. You are good to put me up. You have to make all the preparations to, like, host me and you know your way around and you are the one who shows me all this cool stuff along the coast I'd never have seen and people I'd never have met. I love the fact I've experienced all this. And then we have trips to London. It gives us the chance to see things together.

Willow: I just feel bad – I want to come to you ... Maybe I could get a train?

Noah: Or fly? I was looking into that. I could get a flight to London. That's quick. And then maybe rent a car. Or you could fly to me? And then I can drive you around ... That'd be cool.

Willow: I know. Can we look into that?

Noah: Sure. You wanna look now or you wanna go out and enjoy the time we have? I don't mind. I was just thinking of enjoying this time with you and we can sort travel and stuff when I get home. I can check flights, cars, all that if you want – both ways. Distance doesn't matter ... At least we aren't in different countries – wait a minute – we are!

Willow: Dork (*laughs*)!

As with the example with Mika, Noah keeps things light. He never complains, he stays calm and continues to give support. He says lovely things about how much he loves Willow and that nothing is a problem for him. He seeks solutions rather than reiterate problems. He lightens the tone with humour but also doesn't dismiss Willow's worries and concerns. He also wants them to have a good time in the here and now and stay present – perhaps this can be solved with some more thinking when they both get back home. But for the here and now he suggests that they enjoy one another's company. They can work this out together.

In summary, Monkeys stay calm but like play. They bring humour to the party and warmth. Monkeys stay relaxed, look for the good in things, frame things positively and work for the group as a group. In that way, they make joint tasks possible, achievable and even fun. They want to find a solution that considers everyone. They give space and time to other people and want to make them happy. They don't dwell on the negatives but seek to spread a positive vibe. Even in dark and difficult situations, this ability to keep things light, to keep going, to be happy and want to make others happy is a lovely attribute of the Monkey style. And adopting it and practising it will bring you happier times, sunnier outlooks and fun relationships.

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People are just as wonderful as sunsets if you let them be. When I look at a sunset, I don't find myself saying, 'Soften the orange a bit on the right-hand corner.' I don't try to control a sunset. I watch with awe as it unfolds.

– **Carl Rogers**

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Footnotes

INTRODUCTION RAPPORT: THE KEY TO COMMUNICATION

1 Strategies ranged from sleep deprivation, stress positions and exposure to instructive noise, all the way to constriction in boxes filled with insects and waterboarding.

CHAPTER 1: MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

1 See Keramet Reiter's compelling and disturbing book *23/7: Pelican Bay Prison and the rise of long-term solitary confinement* for more on this issue.

CHAPTER 2: WHY WORDS MATTER

1 For another example of a police officer putting their interpersonal skills ahead of brute force, see Thai police officer Anirut Malee of Bangkok police talking a man wielding a knife into giving up his weapon and then giving him a hug: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qv-OSyQkPXM>

CHAPTER 3: THE CORNERSTONES OF RAPPORT

1 Although the methods were not effective at securing information, they did secure Mitchell and his associates a reported £81million under contract by the CIA (<https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/cia-torture-report/cia-paid-torture-teachers-more-80-million-n264756>).

CHAPTER 5: POWER, INTIMACY AND THE ANIMAL CIRCLE

1 We would recommend that you complete this before proceeding with the remaining chapters but you can always go back and complete your profile whenever it suits you.

CHAPTER 7: LEARNING TO CAPITULATE: THE MOUSE

1 Page, somewhat disturbingly, was a psychological operations specialist when he served in the US Army.

CHAPTER 10: IMPROVING RAPPORT-BUILDING

1 Later, I treated an armed robber who had shot an 18-year-old lad behind the counter in a convenience store. He said that he hadn't intended to shoot him but when the lad turned and smiled at him and said, 'You don't have to do this, man' it enraged him so much that he shot him. Please don't interpret this story as friendliness always being able to protect you from someone who intends you serious violence – sometimes there is nothing you could have done.



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