

Overflow Account: How to develop healthy relationships that develop healthy relationships

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If I make deposits into an Emotional Bank Account with you through courtesy, kindness, honesty, and keeping my commitments to you, I build up a reserve.

-Dr. Stephen R. Covey

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Happy Friday folks! In spite of everything going on around us, I hope 2022 is treating you well thus far.

Let's chat a little about relationships today. I have read numerous relationship books and attended several relationship classes. Therein, I found one reoccurring metaphor: the emotional bank account. I first learned about this concept from one of my favorite authors, Dr. Stephen R. Covey, so this is an exciting topic for me! But before we dive too deep, let's quickly define the "emotional bank account" for those who don't know.

What is the emotional bank account?

I'm glad you asked! Dr. Covey, the author of several great books to include *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families*, creates a **beautiful** metaphor that aligns an emotional bank account to our relationship with others. He explains it like this: "By proactively doing things that build trust in a relationship, one makes 'deposits.' Conversely, by reactively doing things that decrease trust, one makes 'withdrawals.' The current 'balance' in the emotional bank account, will determine how well two people can communicate and problem-solve together."

I absolutely love that metaphor because there is so much we can learn from it. With that in mind, let's build upon that definition. Let's learn **how** we can make deposits into others' emotional bank account and **why** it is so important.

Applying this metaphor to our relationships

As a community of parents, teachers, and mentors, we are [voluntarily or involuntarily] put into leadership positions. Whether we are leading a tumbling toddler, a superstar athlete, a company of Marines, a church, or any other person or group of people, we all share one common imperative: the need to build healthy relationships. I submit to you that the way to build those healthy relationships is to liberally deposit into the emotional bank account of those you lead. I'm going to break that account down into seven categories: **love, compassion, peace, patience, knowledge, values, and redemption+restoration.**



Let's start with "why."

Why are we making these deposits? Simply put, by overfilling the emotional bank account of those we lead, we give them an abundance to share with others. These liberal deposits create a ripple affect; one healthy relationship begets another which begets another (and so on).

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Now, let's break down those categories.

Love. “Love” is such a broad yet sublime virtue. It is also the root of the other six categories. Even so, love is often hard to define. In fact, Oxford languages defines love as, “an intense feeling of deep affection.” But what does that really mean? In my humble opinion, that definition does not truly encapsulate the powerful meaning of love. Since love often invokes a strong physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual response, I believe we need a more thorough definition.

Regardless of our theological belief, the Holy Bible provides one of the most universally accepted definitions of love: “Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.” -1 Corinthians 13:4-7 NLT

The foundation of “love” as described above highlights one’s willingness to **sacrifice** his or her life (time, service, ego, and emotional responses) for another. A continual, selfless sacrifice (love) for another is the most important daily deposit we can make as leaders! It is the foundational virtue from which all other categories stem.



Compassion. I shared my thoughts on compassion in another great blog post "[The Three Day Mental Health Guide: Major Payne Edition.](#)" Here's what I said: Compassion requires you to validate and value others' thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Do not fall into the trap of saying, "it's really not that big a deal." Instead, allow others to share their feelings with you, so you become empathetic enough to have a strong desire to help. **Don't try to be "Mr. (or Mrs.) Fix It,"** but at least express the desire to help! For example, someone once stole a very rare unicorn from my oldest daughter in an online game that she enjoyed playing. It seemed silly at first, but I realized this really hurt her feelings. So first, I had to verbally validate her feelings and emotions. Then, I shared the moment with her until she felt better. Simple but effective!

Liberally depositing compassion instills confidence and a sense of loyalty in those you lead.

Peace. Albert Einstein said it best, "Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding." The "understanding" that Einstein is referring to is driven by the empathetic listening (compassion) that I mentioned above. *Hopefully, you are starting to see how all of these deposits intertwine.* Without compassion, we are unable to maintain a peaceful environment. But a peaceful environment usually leads to a productive environment. This productivity leads to loyalty, confidence, and positive mental attitudes. Ultimately, a peaceful environment is one of the major keys to developing the synergy we require for relationships to thrive.

I won't continue to dwell on why maintaining peace is important, because I believe most of us already understand. Instead, I'd like to answer what is peace and how do we deposit peace into others' lives?

I personally view peace as harmonious living. (Now [Ebony and Ivory](#) is stuck in my head. Haha) Anyway, back to the topic.

Some view "harmonious living" as the absence of arguments and violence. With that in mind, we can deposit peace by simply avoiding the other person, right?! 🙅 Wrong! 🙅🙅 This passive method will only appear to work until you cross paths. Then the "peace" you thought you had will quickly disappear.



Depositing peace into your relationships requires **action**. Your overall objective is to create a culture of mutual respect and dignity. Here are a few tips:

- You must actively listen to understand, not to respond.
- You must become genuinely intrigued with the other person's thoughts, interests, emotions, and hobbies.
- You must eliminate judgement while extending grace (undeserved kindness).
- You must be forgiving (seriously, let it go).
- You must learn to enjoy the other person's company and find a common ground (common interests).
- You must identify the value the other person brings to the table and create a safe/secure environment for them to grow, develop, and thrive.

Patience. Here's a little known fact about me and my brothers (and our close friends growing up): we all wanted to be music producers from Middle School through High School. We would go into our computer room, hop on the music studio software that came with the Windows 98 and XP Operating Systems, and record our own albums. *I have been searching for some of our old work. It would be great blackmail material 😊.* In one of the most infamous/hilarious songs that our buddies AJ and Nick created, they said, "Patience is a virtue. What you can't wait on may hurt you." At the time, they thought they created a hit... We thought they created a comical jingle. I never knew that little jingle would give me a profound revelation almost 20 years later. I subconsciously learned a lesson about the importance of patience. That lesson greatly contributes to my own philosophy.

I discussed that philosophy a bit in a previous great blog post "[How to shift your perspective and live a better life TODAY!](#)" Therein I asserted patience requires action and we build our capacity to accept delay/troubles without frustration (patience) by hoping and anticipating that life's situations will turn out just fine. That's great for life in general, but how do we develop patience with others?

First, we must internalize this fact: we are all flawed human beings. We all make mistakes. Once we digest that, we must realize **patience requires practice**.



- Practice being attentive and eliminating judgement.
- Practice waiting on others without getting frustrated.
- Practice relaxation and breathing exercises when you feel like you are growing impatient.
- Practice being more optimistic in any given circumstance. I.e. identify the opportunities and progress instead of focusing on the “failures” and regression (although the latter may appear more blatant).

AJ and Nick had it right! Failure to deposit patience into our relationships can be detrimental or hurtful. Contrarily, patience deposits will help grow the healthy relationships we all want and need.

Knowledge. I love the word “knowledge” because it is information we gain from both experience and education. Thereby, our job as leaders is to create an environment where those we lead have an opportunity to gain relevant experience and continued education.

Examples: For a parent, this may look like showing your child how to maintain a car while systematically teaching them the mechanics of a car. For a corporate leader, this may look like appointing a worker as “team lead” and sending him or her to certification training that will make them better at their job.

Creating this environment will pay dividends in the long run because it encourages critical thinking and problem solving, instills confidence to take action, and promotes continual growth and development. This all leads to a positive culture and an overall successful household, classroom, or organization.

Values. Shared values are some of the most valuable currency we can deposit. *See what I did there?* Values are defined as, “a person’s principles or standards of behavior.” I believe our values guide our moral compass (i.e. a person’s determination of and subsequent action on what they deem right and wrong). Some questions to think about:

- What are your values? What do you stand for and/or believe in?
- How do you decipher between right and wrong?



- What values do you clearly and concisely teach?
- What values do you consistently demonstrate?
- How do you incorporate and enforce a shared value system?

Answering these questions and—more importantly—applying what you learn will help you develop shared values with those you lead which creates a collaborative spirit and informs daily decisions.

Redemption + Restoration. One day, I was so disappointed. My oldest daughter did something (can't remember what she did) that utterly frustrated and disappointed me. Accordingly, I administered the punishment I felt her wrongful act deserved. I believe I grounded her and restricted her electronic time for two weeks! She was heartbroken yet unapologetic, but I immediately mumbled to myself, "well, don't do the crime if you can't do the time!" Then I probably beat on my chest and celebrated being a firm dad/leader.

Of course that celebratory moment was cut short. *My dad/leader*, who has an uncanny way of sensing when I have made or will make a mistake, contacted me. I gave him my version of what happened. He responded with a calmness that did not match my high emotions in that moment. He simply told me, "Ok. Make sure you give her an opportunity to redeem herself."

I initially neither comprehended nor appreciated how profound his advice was. As time progressed and my emotions waned, my dad's words began to sink in. I went back to my daughter and gave her an opportunity to correct her mistake. She was immediately remorseful and understood *why* what she did was wrong. That's when it hit me. She learned more from her restoration than my condemnation of her.

"She learned more from her restoration than my condemnation of her. "

I'm proud to admit she's always been a "daddy's girl," but that's when I feel our relationship (and my relationship with my other two children) became even closer. I learned a much-needed lesson as a father and leader, and all of the other categories began to make more sense. I had to sacrifice my previous beliefs, ego, and judgement to truly understand my daughter and provide her



the leadership she needed in that moment. I accepted that she (and people in general) will make mistakes, and my dad helped me adjust my perspective to view each mistake as a learning opportunity and an opportunity to make decisions based upon a shared value system. As a result, my patience has grown, and I have made a concerted effort to create an environment of respect that allows those I lead to constantly grow and develop. I truly learned that liberal deposits produce healthy relationships.

Though it may seem like a daunting task at times, we have an obligation to invest in the emotional accounts of those we lead. Those investments will pay dividends as those we lead become leaders themselves and develop their own healthy relationships. Ultimately, our emotional deposits will create a lasting legacy for generations to come! Start depositing today!



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