

The Art of Connecting

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March 27, 2012

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EADM 424.3 Dr. Keith Walker

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How to overcome differences, build rapport and communicate effectively with anyone.

The Art of Connecting presents a variety of strategies to connect with people in an increasingly diverse workplace. The authors break these connecting skills down into five core principles: There is always a bridge, curiosity is key, what you assume is what you get, each individual is a culture and no strings attached. The practice of these principles is demonstrated through the use of numerous examples of people, such as talk radio host Terry Gross, who the authors consider to be masters of connection. The book also explains the different perspectives when making connections and the keys to working with diverse groups. The final two chapters focus on case studies and learning activities to implement the ideas presented.

Masters of Connection



**Terry Gross, host of
Fresh Air on NPR**

Héctor Orci

Hector is an accounts executive at one of the biggest advertising agencies in the world. His strengths when making connections come from:

- Being confident
- Listening intently
- Eliciting the criteria for success
- Putting the “right words” together.
- Being creative
- Knowing two cultures
- Being responsive to the other party's needs.

Richard &

Michele Steckel

Richard and Michele travel around the world taking photos for “The Milestones Project”, a non profit initiative to assist parents when teaching children about values and respecting those different from ourselves. The Steckels are able to connect so well with the people in the communities they visit by:

- Having a clear purpose
- Being unobtrusive, focusing on others
- Responding to cues
- Building trust
- Relating to individuals
- Listening and remembering
- Using stories

Terry Gross

As a renowned talk radio host Gross exhibits masterful connecting skills. She connects by:

- Putting the focus on the other person.
- Being nearly invisible
- Listening
- Creating an atmosphere for unhurried conversation.
- Researching
- Staying up-to-date with people, events, trends, etc.
- Respecting individuals

Accepting different beliefs, values, lifestyles, etc.



“I had this belief that if I just shut up and listen and then say then right things everything will turn out all right.”

- Héctor Orci

The Titanium Rule

Do unto others according to their druthers.

There is a difference between the Golden Rule, do unto others as you would have them do unto you, and the Titanium Rule. The Golden Rule can cause disconnect as it assumes others share the same likes and dislikes as you. The practice of the Titanium Rule, however, requires getting to know people as individuals so we can learn their preferences (druthers) and connect based on this information. The base behind the concept of the Titanium Rule is that people connect via similarities and requires empathy, awareness and understanding from all parties.

PRICES: When Interactions Go Away	PAYOFFS: WHEN WE CONNECT
Managers and salespeople fail to meet their goals	Teams collaborate to create better solutions
Joint ventures end in lawsuits	New alliances are formed and strengthened
Teamwork dissolves in unconstructed conflict	Teams develop efficient communication synergy
People pigeonhole others	People erase stereotypes
Markets close their doors	New markets open
Everyone misses learning opportunities	Everyone learns and becomes more masterful at connecting through difference.

Chapter 2 The Core Principles

There is Always a Bridge

People who are successful at making connections with others in the face of difference believe in commonality and there is always *something* we have in common. When interacting with others we put forth pieces of information with the hope of finding a bridge. These offers can be either accepted or rejected by those around us.

Curiosity is Key

People who are curious generally:

- Are open minded
- Learn from everything and everyone
- Are focused
- Are more satisfied
- Seem younger than their years
- Stay mentally sharp and strong longer.

Curiosity tends to lead to flexibility, which is essential for working in constantly changing environments. In fact, curiosity is good for you and is one of the top five qualities of people who are the most satisfied with life. Curiosity can be a detriment, however, when faced with differences that are hard to ignore.

What You Assume Is What You Get

Our expectations affect our own behavior, but what we often do not realize is how our beliefs can contribute to the outcomes of others. For example, if another teacher conveys his/her negative feelings to you about a student you may automatically assume the student will not perform well and, as a result of these beliefs, they won't.

Each Individual Is A Culture

Getting to know people as individuals is a must. Some elements that contribute to the culture of an individual include country of origin, race and ethnicity, religion, parenting, generation, abilities and disabilities, personal style, sexual orientation, political affiliation, thinking style, values and beliefs, etc.

No Strings Attached

Those who excel at connecting across differences do not expect reciprocity. Essentially, just because you make the effort to connect with someone does not mean they will want to make the same connection.

Offer	Blocked	Accepted	Building on the offer
"I'm working on a new policy manual"	"I'm working on the annual report."	"It's about time." "That should be interesting."	"Is there any way I can help?" "Which part do you think will be most challenging?"

Pathways To Connection

Chapter 3

There are five different pathways that can be used when creating a connection. By no means are these steps but rather things to consider that could make the establishing connections an easier process.

Clarify Your Intention

Define for yourself what you would like to accomplish ahead of time to guide your interactions with others. Ask yourself what you are trying to accomplish with a conversation. For example the goal of the interaction could be to establish rapport, increase openness between you, overcome hesitation or provide reassurance. When people know they “why” behind your questions they will be more open to your approach.

Notice Your Own Reactions

Emotional triggers within ourselves can often kick in

when interacting with others and we can find ourselves labeling or stereotyping others as a result. At times like these we need to ensure our emotional responses do not hinder the relationships we are trying to establish with people. Personal reactions we need to be aware of include fear, defensiveness, self-righteousness, apathy, boredom, intimidation and denial.

Search For Similarities

Finding and creating shared experiences helps us keep in contact with each other. These links can be created through something as simple as enjoying food, attending celebrations, enjoying music or dancing or recalling similar learning experiences.

“No matter how skillfully you may clarify your intentions, notice and manage your own reactions, search for similarities, and use cues to identify preferences, Connecting well is always a work in progress” (p. 94).

Use Cues

The ability to pick up on subtle and not-so-subtle body language and verbal cues is a very important skill to have. Some examples of cues that indicate a person's preference include hair/clothing style, grooming, energy level, posture, eye contact, physical touch or lack thereof and personal environment.

Experiment and Adjust

Connections rely on reflection. It is important to take risks, reflect on the responses and adjust your behavior/methods accordingly. Great connections are the result of trying something new and adjusting your methods based on feedback from others.



Three Perspectives: A Passport to Flexibility

→ When you step outside a situation to see it through the eyes of an observer, you step into third person perspective.

→ When you step into the other person's shoes to see things from his or her point of view, you step into second person perspective

→ When you see things from your own point of view, you are in first person perspective. (p. 104)

Points of View Chapter 4

Strengthening the First Person Perspective

In order to communicate effectively with others you have to be at home in your own body. It can be difficult to honor your own feelings and perspectives as others do. To strengthen this perspective you need to allow your biases to come through and your way back to objectivity to be fully aware of your own experiences. When you have a strong first person perspective you are able to clearly state your goals, needs and wants in a situation without internal conflict.

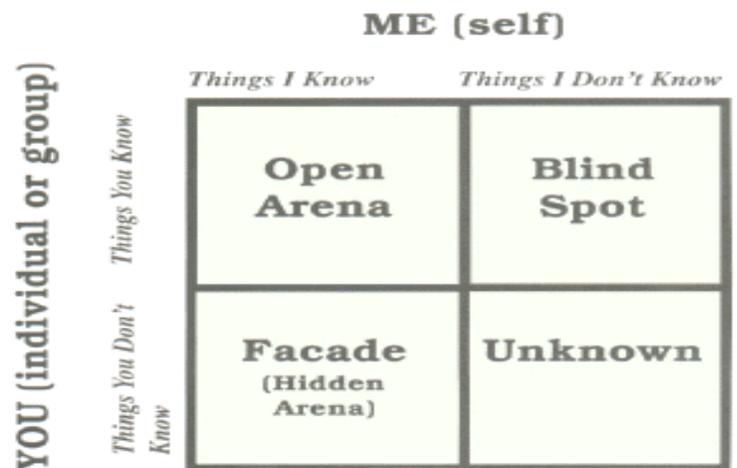
Second Person Perspective (You)

In this perspective we see a situation from the eyes of another person. This is gained through putting yourself in the other person's shoes, understanding the way they would think and act in the situation. The second person perspective can be improved on through observation. These perspectives allow for improvement in flexibility in range of choices and look deeper at other beliefs before you dismiss them. This perspective should be taken when you want to increase empathy, understand more fully or predict reactions. You will know your second person perspective is accurate when you have make the same choices as the other person in the same situation. However, one must be cautious of staying in this perspective for too long as it can cause a loss of objectivity.

First Person (Me)

The first person perspective involves seeing things as you would normally and defines who you are. This is the perspective one takes when setting a course of action and, eventually, making decisions. The better we understand ourselves and what makes us tick, the better you become at connecting with others. The awareness model (as pictured below) displays the four aspects of awareness of ourselves and others' awareness of us. Open, the top

left quadrant of the model, represents what you know about yourself. The private, or façade, includes things you know about yourself but hide from others. The blind spot quadrant includes things that others know about you, but are unaware of yourself such as how certain comments you make are taken by others. Learning about your own blind spot is important for expanding your first person perspective. Finally, the unknown segment of the chart contains things that no one knows about you.



Third Person Perspective (Them)

This perspective is useful when we are overcome with emotion, taking something too personally or are stuck and need to find alternatives. We can step out of the situation and view ourselves as the person or people we are trying to connect with, imagining how you see yourself from a distance. The third person perspective gives us rational assessment and the ability to be more effective communicators. You have a strong first person perspective when you no longer have any biases toward one part over another. However, if we get stuck in this perspective we will be great at processing information, but lose the emotional side of things.

Working With Differences in Groups

Chapter 5

Opening Your Presentation

- Do your homework and learn about the audience you are presenting to. Doing this will show that you honor and respect them, thus creating a better connection with them.
- Establish a rapport with them right at the beginning by touching on what they believe in and what they are hoping for.
- Be aware of the feedback you are receiving from the audience, read their cues and make adjustments accordingly.
- Include a warm greeting and expression of appreciation for the opportunity to meet the person or group

"The critical window for connecting with is the first three minutes" (p. 133).

Reading Cues In Groups

- Observe facial expressions.
- Watch body language.
- When feedback suggests you are connecting do more of what you are doing at the moment.
- Learn the cultural cues.

Helping Diverse Groups Connect

- Ensure each person's voice has been heard in the group.
- Highlight and welcome diversity and differences.
- Create a nonhierarchical community, a level playing field for everyone.

Bridging Disagreement in a Group

- Clarify intention
- Search for similarities from the get go.
- There is strength in the initial bond.



Implications for Education

As teachers the ability to connect with people is a very highly valued skill and is used on a daily basis. These interactions include students, parents, colleagues, administration, the school division, etc. in addition we will be working with a very diverse population of students and families and have to get to know them as individuals as well as their cultures to avoid offending anyone or mistake their actions as being offensive. Chapter three discussed evaluation and adaptation as one of the pathways to making a connection. This is one of the points that really resonated with me in its application to education. As teachers we create plans, but we need to be able to read our students and see what their cues are telling us and make adaptations to the lesson as necessary and, sometimes, on the fly. It is also very important to consider points of view discussed in chapter four. Not only do we have to understand what we believe should happen in our classroom and school we need to understand how the students feel as well as the community in order to make an effective and positive connection.



Analysis

"The Art of Connecting" is a fairly quick read and, although not based around education, discusses some very important ideas surrounding communication and interacting with others on different levels. Through the use of extensive practical examples it is easy to see how and when Raines and Ewing's ideas can and should be applied in an education setting. It is also interesting to see the last few chapters contain learning activities and case studies that can be used to greater enhance and reinforce what has been discussed throughout the book. Overall, I thought the book was pretty good, but could benefit from the inclusion of an example or two from a teacher's point of view or educational setting.