MANAGING INFLUENCE

SITUATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS, INC.
THE INFLUENCE COMPANY
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Readings have supported classroom activity in the *POSITIVE POWER AND INFLUENCE*® Program from the beginning. Many participants learn through reflection, and the readings support a reflective learning style. In the early days of the Program, trainers carried books and pamphlets with them into the classroom for participants to use as reference materials. Later, we developed our own articles and incorporated them into the Participant Workbook for assigned reading. These readings helped clarify difficult topics, such as the use of Bridging as an Influence Style, or situational diagnosis. Later, we added readings on topics not specifically addressed in the Program, such as the use of influence in meetings and in managing teams. We also developed an in-depth reading on continuing self-development to support participants’ post-program work.

In the Fifth Edition, we expanded previous articles and added new ones. Shorter Programs reduce the time available to cover certain topics in the classroom. In response, we added a separate reading on each Influence Style and Disengaging for participants to review during the evening assignments as well as after the Program. We have also expanded the readings on situational diagnosis, dissolution of blocks, and application planning. Most trainers recommend certain articles for scanning during the Program, and participants can choose to read articles that best support their learning needs.

Additionally, participants requested more support for their post-program self-development work. We surveyed participants to identify the most difficult influence problems they face during this critical time. New or revised readings address these problems. These include a discussion of positional power issues, working relationships, and the self-development process itself. We also added new insights to the readings on meeting management and team leadership.

The Sixth Edition introduces two new readings: Influence Energy (Reading 1, in Part 1) and Brain Science: Neural Networks and Influence (Reading 9 in Part 2).
While the readings will support the work you do during the Program, their main purpose is to keep the Program concepts alive and fresh after you leave the Program. We encourage you to use the book as a reference tool to review Program concepts. Use it in tandem with your Self-Development Journal to plan for Critical Influence Situations and as a troubleshooting guide when facing difficult influence problems. Unlike the Participant Workbook, which most people archive, we have provided the readings in convenient book form for inclusion on your bookshelf, or as an eBook which can be downloaded to an electrical device. We trust you will find it to be an important resource that you will use again and again as you continue along your self-development path.
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THE INFLUENCE STYLES
READINGS PART
INTRODUCTION TO THE INFLUENCE STYLES

This section of the book provides a separate reading on each of the four Styles and the Tactic of Disengaging. Before reading about each Influence Style, the first chapter explains Influence Energy and how to manage your influence energy. Then each reading is organized as follows:

- **Background.** Discusses the Style from a developmental point of view.

- **Impact on Others.** Looks at the effect the Style has on the influence target, both during and after the influence attempt.

- **Appropriate Use.** Explores the situational conditions that support the use of the Style and how these conditions may affect your success.

- **Effective Performance.** Focuses on correct application of the Style to create the highest impact.

- **The Example.** Demonstrates the use of the Style in a conversation between two colleagues, one of whom is causing problems for the other.

Some articles may be more important for you to read first. You may want to read about the Style or Styles causing you the most problems. Later, you might devote time to the other Styles, to refresh your memory and reinforce your learning. For example:

- If your general experience in the Program shows that you have a grasp of all but one or two Styles, then read about your weaker Styles first.

- If your use of Persuading seems inefficient, ineffective, or leads to unproductive arguments, then read about Persuading first.
• If your ISQ results show that you use lots of Persuading, Asserting, and Bridging but little Attracting, then read about Attracting first.

• If your attempts to use Asserting in a self-assessment exercise were unsuccessful, then read about Asserting first.

• If your unproductive ISQ situations show a predominant use of Bridging, then read about Bridging to discover why it is not working for you.

As a reminder, the different Behaviors in each Style will be relevant to either explicitly stating your influence objective or taking care of the relationship. These will be referenced at the beginning of each chapter.

You will find the readings on the following pages:

INFLUENCE ENERGY ........................................................... 7
PERSUADING ............................................................................ 13
ASSERTING .............................................................................. 25
BRIDGING ............................................................................. 35
ATTRACTING ........................................................................ 49
DISENGAGING ...................................................................... 59
The Positive Power and Influence® Program (PPIP) is grounded in Karen Horney’s theory which focused on child development. In her work, she discussed how children, when faced with difficult situations, would energetically move against, move toward, or move away from the person or circumstances. Karen’s work focused on the dysfunctional use of these energies in children, however, in the process of designing PPIP, our researchers observed these energies in adults and they were relabeled Push, Pull, and Move Away. The Influence Styles and Behaviors were then aligned according to the observational research with each of these energies.

The purpose of this article is to discuss influence energy and personal power, which is communicated through words, tone of voice, and body language. In PPIP, we define your power in a situation based on your levels of physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental energy. Many people understand this intellectually, but what about living it? What does it look like? When you are at your best, physically you feel strong, confident, and comfortable in your body. Your feelings are neutral to positive about the person, the situation, and yourself. This is also true about your spiritual energy, which involves your values and beliefs about right and wrong. You have clearly thought through the situation and have mental clarity as well.

Here are some tools for managing the Self that will help you determine if any of these elements are not aligned with your objectives. Let’s start with a look at physical energy, as that is usually the first indication that something is not quite right.
PHYSICAL ENERGY

Very often, discomfort begins on a physical level: your stomach feels queasy, shoulders ache, heart hurts, or there can be a feeling of insecurity. Your body houses who you are and, when you are mindful, i.e. aware, present, and paying attention, alerts you that something is not quite right. Think of your body in three ways: what you put into your body (Nutrition), what you do with your body (Exercise), and your body mindset.

Nutrition: What you eat and drink is critical to your wellbeing. Find a diet that keeps you at a healthy weight and is satisfying. For many people, simply managing portions versus going on highly restrictive diets brings them success when combined with exercise. There are scores of health experts and diets to choose from, but in the end, the most important objective is that you be mindful about what you ingest. If you pay attention to what happens to your body after you eat, you may begin to recognize that some food doesn’t sit well and your body reacts negatively to it. When you notice this, stop eating that food for a few months and then experiment by eating the food again. Does the negative response return? If yes, then stop eating that particular food altogether. Perhaps the biggest challenge is giving up an addiction to eating specific foods. For example, if dairy makes you feel sick, leave it alone. If grains cause your joints to swell, cut them out of your diet. Ultimately, you need to think about what would make you feel good, and then develop your own personalized diet, as the mindful you is the best person to determine what is best for your body!

Exercise: Move your body! Find something that you enjoy. Hike with friends, do yoga, run, walk the stairs instead of taking the elevator. Do something – anything! Build your muscles. Work with someone to help you if you need it. Get a coach, a body worker, a physical therapist, a personal trainer, or talk with your doctor. Feel strong! Also, being outside requires a different kind of awareness. Go for a walk in the woods and just listen.

Body mindset: Accept your body the way it is – today, now! Love your body! Appreciate your body! It is the vehicle with which you move through the world. Or, visualize the body you want, and then go for it!
Next, let’s take a look at emotional energy, because soon after the heavy feeling in the pit of your stomach comes the emotional reaction.

**EMOTIONAL ENERGY**

If you happen to miss the message from your body, feelings usually awaken your unconscious mind to tell you that something is wrong. On the one hand, emotions are a great alarm system, as they tell you that you need to pay attention and alert you to what is happening. On the other hand, they are counter-productive when you get lost in your emotions and start blaming your perceived aggressor, or lament what has been done to you. You blame your reactions on the other person. As long as you stay in a blaming mindset, it is difficult to think clearly. If you are feeling that way, the essential thing to do is to stop feeling powerless and like a victim. How do you do that?

**Licking your wounds:** First, you need to acknowledge that you feel hurt and focus your attention into the hurt feeling. All emotions are made up of energy. Sit for a moment and feel the difference in the energy between anger and happiness. Become aware of the sensations in your body. Notice that anger has a tighter feeling and happiness generally relaxes your body. Identify and compare what happens to your body while you are feeling negative and positive emotions. Every thought causes a chemical reaction in your body. Observe what pain versus joy feels like. Your goal is to become neutral.

**Meditate:** Find a phrase, find an online course, or attend a class. There is abundant research that demonstrates over and over again that people who mediate are calmer, healthier, and more emotionally intelligent.

**Use humor:** Laugh at yourself! Laugh about how that individual “has done you wrong”! Lighten up…many studies have shown that laughter can reduce stress, burn calories, and even protect you from heart disease!
Disengage from the situation: Make sure that you separate from the negative emotions. Many times we get stuck in the drama and negative feelings. Do whatever you need to do to break away and separate from the situation and your negative emotions. Go for a walk or ride in the car, whatever you need to do to disentangle yourself from unproductive and powerless feelings.

Appreciate and disclose (from Bridging): Before you say anything to the other person, find something that you appreciate about him or her. Do not only think about your appreciation, feel it in your heart. Then, speak to the person, but don’t blame them. Take responsibility for your own emotions and reactions—do not give your power away by being reactive or judgmental! Tell them that you are not saying anything about their intent, but let them know that when they do “x”, you have reaction “y”. Again, take responsibility. Disclosing is not slapping someone else with your feelings!

Reframe: We make snap judgments about situations and quick decisions all day. Stop for a moment and analyze your thinking. What did the person actually say or do? Did you misinterpret what they said? Did you mischaracterize their intentions?

Breathe: Oxygen is your friend. Take a moment to sit back and breathe deeply.

Power poses: Do one of the power poses - please see:

https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are?language=en

You can simply Google Amy Cuddy and Power Poses to find the TedTalk video.

Ground yourself: Sit in a quiet place with your feet flat on the floor; breathe deeply, sigh, and exhale all of that air. Focus your attention on your feet. Feel inside your feet: bones, nerve endings, muscles, tendons, etc. Now, feel the skin that encases your feet – don’t leave out your toes. Repeat this up through your entire body, feeling and focusing on everything inside and out. Keep breathing deeply and sighing, even exaggerate your sighs. Once you can hold that feeling for your entire
body from the top of your head to the bottoms of your feet, send roots down into the earth and feel the connection with the planet. Take a deep breath, sigh one last time, and do a power pose!

Now that you have managed your emotional reaction, perhaps you can figure out why you’re reacting.

**SPIRITUAL ENERGY**

Generally, we have emotional reactions because we feel that something did not go as expected, or someone disrespected or attacked us. What thoughts do these types of situations trigger? Why are you reacting? Why do you feel victimized and powerless?

Very often, emotional reactions are linked to basic issues of trust, respect, consideration, caring, fairness, or inclusion. Which one of these is it? What would it look like if the person was trustworthy, respectful, considerate, caring, fair, or included you? What do you need? Deeply feel both ends of the spectrum—feel the negative on one end and the positive on the other. Deeply feel the entire range of emotions at the same time. This places you into a neutral mindset.

Once your emotions and spirit are identified and resolved, you can think with more clarity about what you want.

**MENTAL ENERGY**

Mental clarity about what you want and need is, obviously, critical. Even though you know that you cannot influence someone else if you are not clear about what you want, sometimes the situation can be complicated and your thoughts are unformulated. As long as you are emotionally neutral or positive about the person or situation, the task of deciphering what you want is easier. Maybe!
Write it out: Sit down in a quiet place and write down what you want, using a decision-making process that you are comfortable with. For example, make a list of the pros and cons, or simply write down your wants and needs in a short paragraph, walk away from it for a few hours, then come back and review the list, and rewrite it. You may need to do this multiple times. Make sure you have identified if what you want is about the relationship or a task. If it is both, write out two separate wants. We use different neural networks to think about relationships versus tasks.

Be specific and descriptive: You may want your boss to treat you better but if you say that, maybe she/he will simply take you out to lunch when what you really want is for her/him to stop taking over your project meetings!

Have a timeline and an outcome: When does it need to happen and how will you know it has happened?

Share It: Talk to someone you trust so they can tell you if you’re being unreasonable or irrational! Get feedback and revise your approach. Practice the conversation with the person you trust. Revise again. Record yourself, review, and retry. All of this will increase your clarity. Have a plan!

Now, you are ready to tackle the situation with your physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental energies centered and steady. Your tone of voice will not betray any negative emotions, your words will be clear and thoughtful, and your body language will be confident and supportive of your message – no weird looks on your face! You will be strong, positive, powerful, authentic, and influential!
THE INFLUENCE STYLE OF PERSUADING

BACKGROUND

As children, we were taught to be rational and learned that facts, figures, logic, and reason are important forces for change. We discovered the power of rational argument in getting people to agree with us. In turn, we learned from others when they had new information or data that contradicted our view of the world. We learned the personal satisfaction of intellectual exchange; some of us chose debating as a hobby or even a career. Above all, we discovered that factual decisions and rational agreements could help us meet our objectives and form strong and productive relationships with others.

IMPACT ON OTHERS

Persuading is PUSH energy based on facts and logic. It comes from the mind and involves two key Behaviors: Proposing (objectives) and Reasoning (relationship).

Many ideas grow better when transplanted into another mind than in the one where they sprang up.

Oliver Wendell Holmes

People do not always respond to problems with logic. Instead, they base their reactions on intuition, feelings, or personal judgment. Perhaps they do not realize that a problem exists, so they fail to think about the facts or data surrounding it.

Persuading encourages others to think, analyze, and join in rational dialogue. It brings facts to the foreground and encourages thoughtful consideration of this information. Persuading appeals to our need to behave logically and to respond to evident problems or realities with objectivity.
The Influence Style of Persuading

Persuading has a positive impact both during and after the influence attempt if the logic makes sense to the target. By using logic tailored to the target, you set a tone and create a climate for rational treatment of the problem at hand. By analyzing the situation objectively, you set the stage for continued testing of the facts and evaluation of results with sound criteria and standards. Persuading supports the systematic and logical implementation of next steps after the influence attempt.

Your use of Persuading will prompt others to assume that you are open to influence by the data and logic they can present. Your decision to advocate your Influence Objective as a rational proposal invites others to assess that proposal rationally—so do not be surprised if others respond with counterproposals or alternative analyses of logic and reason. Remember, Persuading is head-based rational push energy.

APPROPRIATE USE OF PERSUADING

Persuading has the highest impact when:

- **You and the other person are willing to be objective.** Many problems are subjective. They do not involve hard facts or they do not respond to logic. Persuading is most effective in situations that appeal to objective reason. It is not as effective when strong intuitive opinion or personal judgment is driving the issues.

- **Relevant, hard facts are available.** Without specific, comprehensive, and verifiable facts about the situation, Persuading cannot have a strong impact. What you consider a fact may be considered opinion by the other person. A fact is something that both agree to be true.

- **The situation is more cooperative than competitive.** When you or the other person have a high personal stake or vested interest in winning, the climate may not support calm, thoughtful, rational analysis. The data should draw out the other person and you can reach conclusions together.
• **Alternative positions can be tested by facts and logic.** The other person may respond to your data by asking you to back it up. It is very impactful when you are able to do so. Your ability to weigh the facts on each side, offer options for testing, or demonstrate the weight of your evidence will add great power to your proposals and reasons.

• **You control exclusive information.** If the other person has exclusive information that you do not have, you will need to Listen and not Persuade. Conversely, when you have exclusive data that the other person does not have, you will have more power than the target—after all, knowledge is power. Persuading will be effective only if you use that power positively.

• **You are respected as an expert in the situation.** The person who does not view you as a competent authority is likely to argue or doubt you based on your perceived lack of expertise. Persuading is strong especially in situations where you have credentials as an expert or can establish such credentials.

• **You are viewed as wanting a rational solution.** Effective Persuading demands that you be reason-able. You must be willing to listen to the person’s data and counterproposals as rationally as he or she listens to yours.

• **You and the other person’s emotions are under control.** The continued use of facts in emotionally charged situations is likely to inflame resistance and make rational agreement impossible. Since facts do not change feelings, Persuading is not a good Style to use when emotions run high. In addition, being emotionally charged when Persuading tends to have a negative impact. You may be seen as angry or frustrated.

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**High impact Persuading requires both appropriate use and effective performance.**
Note: Quantum physics teaches us that facts are sometimes biased by the observer. When deciding whether or not to use Persuading, assess the true facts of the situation, not facts that have been distorted by your own biases. Be prepared that others may perceive what you consider facts to simply be opinions.

EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE OF PERSUADING

• Balance your Behaviors: use proposals and two or three reasons. Use the Persuading Style completely by stating both a proposal and two or three reasons. When you state a proposal but no reasons, you risk losing control of the argument. When you state compelling reasons but no proposal, the other person may reach a conclusion other than the one you intended.

• Structure the presentation as an influence event. “Label” and outline Behaviors. Summarize; present conclusions. Having a structure means that you will make your proposal first, give your reasons, and then summarize by going back to your proposal. Also, label it by telling them that you will be making a proposal and giving reasons. This structure and labeling will call attention to the fact that you are about to influence them.

• Be specific, direct, and concise; eliminate qualifiers. Generalized proposals and reasons may lead to vague reactions or commitments by the target. Lacking specific direction, the conversation will drift off course as energy is wasted in irrelevant discussion rather than focused exchange. Too much detail may impede momentum just as too little information will. Keep your outline in focus and add detail only when it will have real value for the target.

• Tailor your reasons to the target. Do not assume that the other person thinks exactly the same way you do. Everyone’s rational processes develop out of personal nature and experience, so people’s reasons will differ. Failure to recognize the target’s concerns may lead to argument or gridlock. Make your proposals and reasons compelling to the target: anticipate the other person’s rational priorities and way of thinking.
• **Recognize the limits of logic.** People’s capacity to absorb and process new information is limited by their interest, level of resistance, and energy at the time you present it. Protracted Persuading can result in loss of energy and momentum. Persuading is best done incrementally in smaller, concisely presented bites.

• **Beware of argument dilution.** Do not dilute your argument by giving lots of reasons—quantity is a poor substitute for quality. By giving numerous reasons, you make yourself vulnerable to attack on your weaker points. Instead, present two or three strong reasons and modify or add to them to fit the other person’s response.

• **Encourage active debate: emphasize rational exploration of issues.** The purpose of Persuading is to reach a rational solution to a problem. This requires engaging the target in a full exchange of available data. When the target fully participates, he or she is more likely to be convinced—and to work hard to implement the solution as well. Persuading should be two-sided, not one-way.

**STYLE STEMS**

The following phrases express or signal the Persuading Style.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposing</th>
<th>Reasoning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I propose that…</td>
<td>The reasons are…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have an idea. Let’s…</td>
<td>Here’s how I see it…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let me suggest that…</td>
<td>Let me explain…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How about…</td>
<td>The data indicate…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therefore…</td>
<td>Let’s look at the research…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider this…</td>
<td>Our studies show that…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suppose…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**SUMMARY OF PERSUADING**

Persuading is PUSH energy based on facts and logic. It involves two key Behaviors: Proposing and Reasoning.

### Appropriate Use

- You and the other person are willing to be objective.
- Hard facts are available.
- The situation is more cooperative than competitive.
- Alternative positions can be tested by facts and logic.
- You control exclusive information.
- You are respected as an expert in the situation.
- You are viewed as wanting a rational solution.
- You and the other person’s emotions are under control.

### Effective Performance

- Balance your Behaviors: use proposals and two or three reasons.
- Structure the presentation as an influence event. “Label” and outline Behaviors; summarize; present conclusions.
- Be specific, direct, and concise; eliminate qualifiers.
- Tailor your reasons to the target.
- Recognize the limits of logic.
- Beware of argument dilution.
- Encourage active debate: emphasize rational exploration of issues.
OVERDUE REPORT: PERSUADING EXAMPLE

The following example demonstrates the use of Persuading in a conversation between two managers. (You may have heard this conversation on a demonstration video shown earlier in the Program.) Margaret is the manager of a department that prepares business forecasts. Sam is the manager of a department that compiles raw data into standardized monthly reports on the company’s year-to-date sales performance. Margaret needs Sam’s sales reports to prepare her business forecasts. This month, Sam’s report is late. This is not the first time Sam has missed a deadline. Margaret has asked to meet with Sam to discuss the problem. Her objectives are to influence Sam to complete his business forecast by four o’clock this afternoon, and to develop a plan for meeting future report deadlines.

PART ONE

Margaret: Sam, I suggest a quick progress review of that sales report you’re working on. Now, the schedule says it was due this morning, and I need to get the next step done before the two o’clock management committee meeting tomorrow. Let’s take a few minutes to discuss it.

Sam: Well, I’m afraid the report’s going to be a little late, Margaret, because I had some last minute problems that I didn’t expect. But I will get it to you as soon as I can. I’m headed back to my desk right now. Maybe we can talk a little later.

Margaret: Sam, I suggest we talk about it now. The management committee meeting is at two o’clock tomorrow afternoon. That’s thirty hours from now. Now, with some sensible planning, the report can be done on time and I can work your numbers into my business forecast.

Sam: Okay, okay, tell me what you have in mind.

Margaret: Well, Sam, I suggest that you get your report to me by four o’clock this afternoon.
The Influence Style of Persuading

Sam: Four o’clock?

Margaret: Yes. Let me explain why. It’ll take me at least five hours to complete my business forecast once I get your numbers. Then I can work late tonight and organize the final forecast, type it up, and make some copies. Now, that way, the forecast will be ready with plenty of time for me to review and proofread tomorrow morning. I’d even have a few hours to absorb the data before I make my presentation.

Sam: Look, Margaret, I’ve got a basic problem here, and that involves the numbers I got from the field. You see, I thought I’d be on schedule this time. But when I reviewed the data a few days ago, I realized that some of the numbers were wrong. So, I had to phone back the sales organization for corrections. Now I have to redo all my calculations. That’s gonna take some time.

Margaret: Okay, well, then I suggest you lay it out for me—all the steps it’ll take to get the report done and how long each one will take.

Sam: Well, okay. Let’s see, in terms of steps, I guess the first thing I need to do is cross-check the numbers. But, ah, I don’t know, four o’clock, Margaret. That’s cutting it close. I still don’t think I can get it done by then.

Margaret: Now, Sam, think through all the steps before deciding that you don’t have enough time. Once you get all the tasks laid out, it might turn out that the report won’t take as much time as you think.

Sam: Whoa, that’s optimistic of you, Margaret. But, ah, I know I can’t do it unless I get some help and at this point I don’t know who could jump in and really be useful.
Margaret: I know that’s the way it looks, but consider setting aside the resource issue for a minute. Let’s deal with one thing at a time—use a logical approach—you know, set your feelings aside for awhile. What’s your estimate on how long the cross-checking will take?

Sam: Oh, something like ten hours, you know, I have the data from ten regions—so about an hour a region.

Margaret: Okay, then what? List all the steps.

Sam: Okay, ah well, then the calculations will need to be done. That will take about two hours worth of data entry time. The spreadsheet I can do in about an hour. Text summary graphs—about two hours. Ah, and then an hour for final proofing and photocopying.

Margaret: Okay. Now add it up and see how many hours it’ll take.

Sam: Okay, well, let’s see, ten, 12, 15—about 16 hours total.

Margaret: That’s with one person doing the work.

Sam: Yeah. Me.

Margaret: Well, that puts you beyond the four o’clock deadline and it puts a lot of pressure on you, too. So, now let’s look at the resource problem. Now, I think it makes more sense to spread out the workload. Not every task needs your personal attention and I know there are a few people available to help out. So, I suggest blocking out what you have to do and what other people can do. If you analyze the tasks and figure out who can do what, you should have yourself a reasonable solution.
Sam: Okay, well if we could get three people to do the cross-checking on the numbers simultaneously, then we could conceivably get this done in what, three hours?

Margaret: There you go!

Sam: I could do the calculations and the spreadsheet, while someone else is setting up the graphs, and that would cut some time off…

PART TWO

Narrator: Through some additional problem solving, Sam and Margaret figure out a way to meet the four o’clock deadline by using some staff members from each of their departments. Now, Margaret will use Persuading to influence Sam to get his reports done on time in the future. Notice how she uses Persuading at the end of the conversation to disengage.

Margaret: Sam, I have another suggestion. Why don’t you set up a work plan for getting these reports done on time in the future? Now, let me explain why. Your reports have come in late twice in the last year. One of those times, the management committee got an incomplete forecast from me and without all the data they needed. The second time, I had to ask the managers to postpone the meeting, which...

Sam: ...caused us to take a lot of heat. Yeah, I know, I know.

Margaret: That’s right. And this situation has been a close call, too—you’re right down to the deadline again.

Sam: Yeah, I hate being hit with these unexpected problems that take so much time to fix.
Margaret: Well, that’s a good reason to have a work plan. It would give you some early warning if there were problems like you just went through—getting incorrect data from the field. You could build in some extra troubleshooting time to fix the problem. So, what do you think? Tell me if a permanent work plan makes sense to you.

Sam: Well, yeah, of course. I’d be willing to develop a plan. But we really need to get the field organizations on board, too.

Margaret: Okay, point taken. Tell you what, Sam. I suggest you take one step at a time and focus on getting this report done first. Then afterwards, you can work on developing a work plan, using this experience as a reference point.

Sam: All right, all right. That makes sense to me.

Margaret: How about we discuss it further at lunch tomorrow?

Sam: Fine. Lunch it is. Ah, for now though, let me get busy on this report. I’ll get back to you with my data at four, maybe five—let’s see how it goes with my number crunchers, okay?

Margaret: Okay, Sam, thanks!
THE INFLUENCE STYLE OF ASSERTING

BACKGROUND

At birth, we began to express our personal needs to those around us—often very directly! While parents and relatives usually complied because they were “supposed to,” a more subtle process was at work. At this early stage of our lives, we recognized that these important others felt rewarded by our smiles and felt unhappy or even punished by our tears. We built quickly on this fundamental discovery as our needs became more complex. We learned to state our likes and dislikes more clearly to support our demands. We discovered the value of bargaining—appealing to others’ personal needs in order to meet our own. We learned that it was not always necessary to give reasons for our needs, that it was possible to establish and maintain our rights without constantly having to explain ourselves.

IMPACT ON OTHERS

Asserting is PUSH energy based on personal need. It involves three key Behaviors: Stating Expectations (objectives), Evaluating (relationship), and Using Incentives and Pressures (relationship).

People do not always see your side to problems. They may not understand the consequences their actions have for you or the intuitive decisions you must make to solve a problem. Arbitrary acts on the part of others may result in losses for you; on other occasions, your actions may cause the target significant difficulty. Asserting encourages the target to see the benefits of working with you. It clearly lays out the situation, and shows what you like and don’t like, what you want and what you would be willing to exchange. The exchange occurs...
The Influence Style of Asserting

because your request inconveniences the target in some way who resists. It requires that the target make a choice one way or another.

Asserting has a positive impact both during and after the influence attempt. Through the Asserting Behaviors, you set a tone and create a climate in which both persons’ needs are legitimized. You and the target reach a short-term agreement on specific next steps. Such agreements set the stage for mutual satisfaction: you deliver your incentives and the target meets your expectation.

APPROPRIATE USE OF ASSERTING

Asserting has the highest impact when:

• **You have legitimate needs in the situation.** Asserting enables you to clearly communicate your needs. An appropriate expectation that appeals to others will give you added strength. Knowing what you want and being clear about it will increase others’ willingness to take action.

• **You will lose something if your needs are not met.** Asserting involves approaching others and making your needs heard. Let them know exactly and clearly what you want. A current or potential loss for you in the situation can motivate you to invest this energy.

• **You and the other person have a stake.** Asserting may not work if either party is detached or indifferent to the problem (as in some bureaucratic situations). This is one reason why people with positional power, who do not have a personal investment in the situation, would not be able to effectively use Asserting in this scenario.

• **You prefer commitment, but compliance is enough.** Asserting your influence objective may be a one-time deal. It does not guarantee that your relationship with the person will continue to be productive over time. However, a track record of agreements that are honored contributes to deeper, more productive working relationships.
• **You are willing to monitor compliance.** With Asserting, the other person must fulfill the expectation and you must deliver the incentive or pressure. Failure to deliver a promised incentive or apply a forewarned pressure will erode your credibility and have a negative impact.

• **The other person’s need to control is low to moderate.** Asserting does not work very well when the person is highly defensive or when various external factors make compliance difficult. In these situations, you may have to offer incentives and pressures well beyond what you are willing or able to deliver.

• **You control incentives and pressures.** You must be able to deliver your side of the bargain. You must own the incentives or pressures you are using. Incentives need to be stronger than pressures and entice the other party. Also, remember that pressures are simply real consequences that will result from the other party’s inaction.

• **Your incentives meet the other person’s needs.** The other person will respond more positively to your demands when your incentives meet deeply felt needs. Sometimes people have hidden or unrecognized needs that you must uncover first before shaping the bargain to meet them.

**EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE OF ASSERTING**

• **Balance your Behaviors: use all five Asserting Behaviors.** The Asserting Behaviors complement each other and should always be used together. The expectation tells the target your present need (what to do now). Positive and Negative Evaluation judges past behavior concerning your need (what has helped me; what has not). Incentives and Pressures offer future enticements and consequences that you control (what I’ll do) if the person does or does not meet your expectation. When
analyzing your ISQ results, you may have found that you do not use all these Asserting Behaviors equally.

- **Balance your exchanges: be careful not to force or avoid.** With Asserting, you ask something of the other person and you offer something in return. What you ask for and what you offer should have relatively equal value and force. If what you offer the other person has less value than what he or she has to give you, you are Forcing to meet your objective. If what you offer the other person has more value than what he or she has to give you, you may be Avoiding to preserve the relationship. Be conversational in your tone of voice and body language. Do not use Asserting if you are feeling strong emotions. Do not use threats.

- **Be specific: each Behavior should be clear and directly relevant to your objective.** Be very specific with each Behavior so that the target is clear on what has worked or has not worked, what you want, and what will happen. Your Evaluation and Incentives and Pressures need to be related to and based on what you want in order to make sense to your target.

- **Leave reasoning out: needs are non-rational. Eliminate qualifiers.** Asserting helps you expose and address your own and the other person’s needs, not your or their analytical thinking. Since Asserting goes for the gut, Persuading dilutes it. In the same way, Persuading goes for the head and Asserting dilutes it. Additionally, the target would prefer discussing the reasons than having to make a choice!

- **Keep your tactics positive; create incentives.** Sensitive, innovative incentives drive Asserting. Without incentives, you run the risk of Forcing. This does not undermine the value of pressures, however. Pressures prevent you from falling victim to aggressive targets who respond with anger or resistance to your expectations or who devalue your incentives. Without a pressure, you run the risk of Avoiding. (When and how to use pressures is a tactical consideration that is part of effective influence planning.)
• Seek and recognize the target’s needs: “Hear the need.”
Your demands may create needs for the target, such as costs or difficulties for meeting the expectation. Offer incentives to relieve these difficulties or to replace the other person’s loss with a gain in another area. People invariably resist Asserting with need language. This provides fertile ground for bargaining and exchange. Hear the need behind the resistance and frame incentives to meet it.

### STYLE STEMS

The following phrases express or signal the Asserting Style.

#### Stating Expectations
- I want you to…
- I need you to…
- I’d like you to do this by…
- I expect you to…
- You must…
- My standard is…
- Please correct this now.
- What I need from you by Friday is…

#### Positive Evaluation
- I like it when you…
- It really helps me when you…
- I’m delighted when you…
- What’s working here for me is…
- A and B meet my standards for…

#### Negative Evaluation
- I don’t like it when you…
- It doesn’t help me when you…
- It annoys me when you…
- What’s not working is…
- C does not meet my standards for…

#### Incentive
- If you will do A, then I will do B.
- I’ll offer A if you can do B.
- I would be willing to do A, if you would do B.

#### Pressure
- If you don’t do A, then I will do C.
- I’ll be forced to do A if you can’t do C.
- If you can’t do A, then I will have to do C.
SUMMARY OF ASSERTING

Asserting is PUSH energy based on personal need. It involves three key Behaviors: Stating Expectations, Evaluating, and Using Incentives and Pressures.

Appropriate Use

- You have legitimate needs in the situation.
- You will lose something if your needs are not met.
- You and the other person have a personal stake.
- You prefer commitment, but compliance is enough.
- You are willing to monitor compliance.
- The other person’s need to control is low to moderate.
- You control incentives and pressures.
- Your incentives meet the other person’s needs.

Effective Performance

- Balance your Behaviors: use all five Asserting Behaviors.
- Balance your exchanges: be careful not to force or avoid.
- Be specific: each Behavior should be clear and directly relevant to your objective.
- Leave reasoning out: needs are non-rational. Eliminate qualifiers.
- Keep your tactics positive; create incentives.
- Seek and recognize the target’s needs: “Hear the need.”
OVERDUE REPORT: ASSERTING EXAMPLE

Sam is late completing a sales report that Margaret, his colleague, needs to finish her business forecast. Margaret decides to influence Sam to complete his sales report by four o’clock this afternoon, and to develop a plan for meeting future report deadlines. Margaret will try to reach her objectives by using the Push Style of Asserting. By setting up a process of exchange, Margaret will attempt to meet Sam’s needs as well as her own. In other words, she will bargain for what she wants from Sam.

PART ONE

Margaret: Sam, I need a progress review of that sales report you’re working on. I admire your style of going it alone sometimes, but I need to get involved now.

Sam: Well, I’m afraid the report’s going to be a little late, Margaret, because I had some last minute problems that I didn’t really expect. But I will get it over to you as soon as I can. I’m heading back to my desk right now. Maybe we can discuss this later.

Margaret: I need to talk now. Now, I appreciate your hard work, but it isn’t helping me with my problems. Now, if you give me a few minutes now, I’ll do what I can to help you get the report done.

Sam: Okay, okay. Just a few minutes, though. I really do want to get back to it.

Margaret: Sam, I need your field report now. I have to finish my work in time for the management committee meeting tomorrow.

Sam: Well, I don’t want to make you late for the meeting, Margaret. But I’ve got a basic problem here, and that involves the numbers I got from the field. You see, I thought I’d be on schedule this time.
But the numbers I got from the field didn’t add up, so I had to go back to them for corrections. Now, I have to redo all my calculations.

Margaret: Sam, look, I’m glad you told me what’s happening. But you’re holding this project too close to the vest. Now, I’m willing to wait till four o’clock this afternoon to get your report—now, that’s eight hours from now—but only if you let me get involved.

Sam: I don’t know, Margaret. Four o’clock! Look, what about tomorrow morning?

Margaret: No, Sam, that’s not okay. Listen, I’m willing to help and to extend the deadline to four o’clock, but only if you get me involved. And I’m willing to drop the things that I have to do in order to help you make it happen. Now, if you can’t get the report done by four, then I’m going to have to protect myself this time. I won’t take joint responsibility for being late. And, I’m not going to sit quietly and let the management committee think that I was responsible for the delay.

Sam: Well, if I’m going to get the report done by four, then I’ll definitely need your help.

Margaret: Okay, if you lay out all the work and the amount of time it’ll take, I’ll work with you to help figure out where I can pitch in. Now, some of my staff might be available to help, too. I want to know what parts of the report others can do, and what part you need to do yourself.

Sam: Well, first of all, we need to double-check all the numbers. That’s something that you and the others could do, I guess. In the meantime, I could set up…
PART TWO

Narrator: Sam and Margaret work out an agreement with one another where Sam will share the load, Margaret will extend the time, and both will finish their work in time for the management committee meeting. Now, Margaret will use Asserting to influence Sam to get his reports done on time in the future. She will use Asserting to disengage from the discussion at the end.

Margaret: Sam, I like the quality of your reports. They’re detailed and they’re accurate. But I don’t like getting them late. It bothers me when you miss deadlines and it causes me to miss mine. I want to prevent this from ever happening again.

Sam: Well, what are you suggesting?

Margaret: I want you to develop a detailed work plan for your future reports.

Sam: Even if we have a plan, that won’t prevent these data problems from happening.

Margaret: Sam, if you’re willing to develop a standard plan that we can follow every time you do these reports, I’m willing to work with you and deal with any obstacles that come up. But if you don’t do a plan, don’t count on any last minute help from me anymore. This is the last time I’m going to dig you out of this hole.

Sam: Well, I’m willing to develop a plan. I mean, that should be easy enough. But the key problem is the numbers from the field that we have to spend so much time fixing. I already told you about that.

Margaret: Yeah, well, I’m glad you see we need a plan. But you’re a little too preoccupied with the field data. It’s not something that you can control. Now, I want you to focus on what you can do to manage the process.
The Influence Style of Asserting

Sam: Well, I’m willing to go along with you, if you’re willing to put some time in on it with me.

Margaret: Okay, I think we’re getting somewhere. Look, get this report done, then meet me for lunch tomorrow. I have some ideas on how to handle the field data that I’m willing to share with you. That is, if you’re willing to take charge of the problem.

Sam: Oh, I am, I am. I want a smoother process, too. Yeah, lunch is fine. You’re buyin’, right?
THE INFLUENCE STYLE OF BRIDGING

BACKGROUND

As children, we learned about ourselves and others by talking with people about who they were and what they thought and felt. We asked questions and learned to listen and pay attention to the answers. This was an active process: it took perseverance to uncover ideas and feelings, to discover the meaning behind people’s words, and to involve them in solutions to problems. It sometimes took courage to ask them for help, especially when we felt vulnerable or unsure of ourselves. Along the way, we discovered an interesting paradox: that paying attention to others could help us achieve our own goals. People were more willing to work with us when we showed an interest in them. Their desire to meet our needs was greater when mutual trust was high. Connecting with others was not just a way of making people feel good, it was also a way of achieving tangible objectives and building good relationships.

IMPACT ON OTHERS

Bridging is PULL energy based on involving others. It consists of three key Behaviors: Involving (relationship), Listening (relationship), and Disclosing (relationship and objectives).

The purpose of Bridging is to connect with others, build trust, and develop relationships. To pay attention to another person without judging them or wanting to change them is a unique experience for many
The Influence Style of Bridging

people! The key is to be very present with another person. The information you gain through Bridging also makes your use of the other Influence Styles much more effective.

Sometimes, people don’t cooperate or give us the help we need. Such resistance can be puzzling. Perhaps you did something in the past that alienated or offended them. Perhaps they feel at risk or fear losing something by working with you or by meeting your objectives. Bridging helps you uncover and resolve these misgivings.

Bridging can overcome people’s fears and win their commitment to working with you. It encourages people to collaborate. Through Disclosing, you develop a trusting climate in which others feel free to reveal their concerns. By Involving, you make them feel useful and valued as contributors. By Listening, you build understanding and attention. It opens up lines of communication. When you use Bridging, your targets will often mirror your Bridging Behaviors: they will Disclose, Involve, and Listen to you just as you have been doing with them.

Bridging works to your benefit both during and after the influence attempt. By becoming involved in reaching your objectives, targets are likely to develop an investment in the outcome and to make a long-term personal commitment to the solution. By participating in the action, they can gain power and control over issues that may have frightened them in the past. Bridging fosters cooperative attitudes and mutual trust, thus helping you build and maintain a productive working climate over time.

**APPROPRIATE USE OF BRIDGING**

Bridging has the highest impact when:

- **You need the other person’s commitment.** Investing the time will inspire the person to participate fully in solutions or action steps. (Spend time now, save time later.)
• **You value the other person’s contribution.** The other person’s ideas, skills, or participation may be vital to your success. Bridging elicits that person’s knowledge, opinions, and the critical data you need to meet your objectives. Most importantly, it draws him or her into the action with you.

• **The other person can work with you without losing.** Involving people and gaining their trust carries one responsibility: you cannot break the trust or future interactions will be difficult.

• **You are open and flexible about the final decision.** For Bridging to work, you must be willing to let the other person influence you in return. If you have made up your mind about the outcome or have a fixed idea about what the solution should be, you will not be able to use Bridging without Forcing. People will not cooperate if you manipulate them into agreeing with you, ignore their input, and exclude them from making decisions. Openness and flexibility about your Influence Objective does not mean that you must abandon your desired outcome (Avoiding).

• **You are unclear why the other person is resisting.** Sometimes, it is easy to understand a person’s resistance; you can see it and work with it. Other times, it may seem puzzling or illogical. Bridging can help you get to the bottom of the other person’s resistance, uncover hidden concerns, and find efficient ways to solve the problem. It can restore goodwill and place you and the other person on the same wavelength.

• **You are willing to admit past mistakes.** Through Bridging, you can turn a negative past experience into grounds for working together constructively in the future. If there is a valid reason for the other person to mistrust and resist you, then accept it, admit it, and begin the process of reconciliation.
The Influence Style of Bridging

• **The other person is upset or visibly stressed.** Bridging can unblock this negative energy and rechannel it in a more positive direction. Bridging can help focus on positive results by legitimizing (Disclosing), directing (Involving), and clarifying (Listening) the other person’s emotional response.

• **The issue is emotional for you or the other person.** Bridging can help you uncover and handle all emotions constructively, with some degree of safety. It transforms emotional energy into cooperative action, making you and the other person better able to work together. Bridging enables you to channel your own emotions in a positive way. Your positive behavior, in turn, gives permission to the other person to express emotions constructively.

**EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE OF BRIDGING**

• **Balance your Behaviors: use all three Behaviors to create the “bridge.”** Involve (ask questions), Listen (paraphrase) and Disclose selectively to reduce emotion or stress and build understanding and commitment. Maintaining balanced Behaviors is critical. Omitting a Behavior—Involving, Listening, or Disclosing—may result in missed opportunities and result in a negative impact. Infrequent Involving leads to unfocused discussion and reluctance to participate. Poor Listening results in limited understanding and superficial interaction. Absence of Disclosing reinforces low trust. On the other extreme, repetitive Involving can create an interview climate, making the other person defensive. Perfunctory Listening can seem insincere and manipulative. Overuse of Disclosing can come across as Avoiding.

• **Interrupt as necessary to Listen, ensure understanding, and guide the discussion.** Look for opportunities to demonstrate or test your understanding of what the other person has said. Encourage the other person to prioritize concerns or resistance. Seek clarity when you feel you may have misunderstood, or were unable to hear everything the other person told you. Intervene in the flow of discussion to return to a topic the other person raised earlier but which you have not yet explored.
• **Use Listening to summarize before moving to a new topic.** Asking one question after another may make the other person feel as if he or she is being cross-examined. Questions should be open-ended rather than leading. A new question should emerge only from active Listening Behavior: summarizing or paraphrasing what the other person has just said, and testing your own understanding of what you have heard. Listening conveys respect and politeness; it signals to the other person that you are paying attention and that you are willing to correct your understanding if necessary.

• **Disclose selectively to build trust or motivate the other to provide more information.** Setting aside your own defenses entails some risk, especially if there is not much trust between you and the other person. Therefore, seek opportunities appropriate to the situation to share your own uncertainty, vulnerability, or empathy with the other person’s circumstance. Build trust one step at a time: when your act of Disclosing prompts the other person to Disclose or share privileged information in return, encourage that act of trust building with an additional disclosure. If you actively participate in managing the risk of Disclosing, you may motivate the other person to open up as well.

• **Legitimize the discussion of feelings, needs, and implications.** If the other person’s resistance does not make sense to you, he or she may have fears or concerns about losing something in the outcome. Understanding and resolving such resistance is vital to your success. Involving puts a priority on exploring the other’s feeling, concerns, and anxieties. Listening and expressing empathy convey your acknowledgment of the other person’s feelings as real and important. Disclosing your own feelings sets the stage for the other person to do the same. Put yourself in the other person’s position and try to identify valuable implications in what you hear. Sometimes others reactions are governed by worrisome future consequences that have not yet been verbalized, or even thought about clearly. Your willingness to patiently pursue these hidden concerns may help the other person identify solutions.
The Influence Style of Bridging

• **Withhold disagreement: draw out the target without arguing.** Assume that you and the other person have different viewpoints, but do not focus on your own position during the influence attempt. Draw out the other person without arguing. Hear the other person’s concerns, justified or not, and integrate them into your own thinking. Give yourself time to consider the merits of the other person’s concerns. Express interest and request elaboration. Help your influence target to express him- or herself constructively. Disclose your doubt or uncertainty and listen supportively to the other person’s doubt and uncertainty. Express openness and flexibility.

• **Ask follow-up questions that help to develop meaning and explore implications.** Do not be satisfied with receiving an answer to one question. Without specific direction, your discussion will drift off course as energy is wasted in irrelevant conversation rather than focused dialogue. Keep your Influence Objective in mind. Interrupt to ask a follow-up question that helps shape and focus the discussion. Seek the other person’s involvement in proposing solutions that move you toward your Influence Objective. Helping the other person to participate in resolving the situation promotes ownership of the outcome and thus commitment to it.
STYLE STEMS
The following phrases express or signal the Bridging Style.

**Involving**
Help me understand…
Tell me more about…
I would like to know more about…
What are your thoughts on…?
Why is X important to you?
What would getting X do for you?
You mentioned A, B, and C.
Which is most important to you?
How do you see…?

**Listening**
So, you are saying that…
Do you mean…?
If I understand you, then…
Let me try to summarize your points.
What I have heard so far is…
So you want…
Based on what you just said, you must be feeling…
It sounds to me like your main concern is…

**Disclosing**
I really need your help on this…
You’re right. It was a mistake to…
Perhaps I don’t have all the facts.
The Influence Style of Bridging

SUMMARY OF BRIDGING

Bridging is PULL energy based on involving others. It consists of three key Behaviors: Involving, Listening and Disclosing.

Appropriate Use

- You need the other person’s deep personal commitment.
- You value the other person’s contribution.
- The other person can work with you without losing.
- You are open and flexible about the final decision.
- You are unclear why the other person is resisting.
- You are willing to admit past mistakes.
- The other person is upset or visibly stressed.
- The issue is emotional for you or the other person.

Effective Performance

- Balance your Behaviors: use all three Behaviors to create the “bridge.”
- Interrupt as necessary to Listen, ensure understanding, and guide the discussion.
- Use Listening to summarize before moving to a new topic.
- Disclose selectively to build trust or motivate the other to provide more information.
- Legitimize the discussion of feelings, needs, and implications.
- Withold disagreement: draw out the target without arguing.
- Ask follow-up questions that help to develop meaning and explore implications.
OVERDUE REPORT: BRIDGING EXAMPLE

Sam is late completing a sales report that Margaret, his colleague, needs to finish her business forecast. Margaret’s objectives are to get Sam to complete his sales report by four o’clock this afternoon and to develop a plan for meeting future report deadlines. Margaret will try to reach her objectives by using the Pull Style of Bridging. By using Pull energy, Margaret will influence Sam to generate his own ideas on how to meet his deadlines. To use this Style positively, Margaret must be willing to be influenced by Sam.

PART ONE

Margaret: Sam, I know you’re really busy, but I need some help. I’m behind on my deadline for the business forecast. It’s due at two o’clock tomorrow, but I can’t get started until I have your numbers.

Sam: Well, I’m afraid it’s going to be a little late, Margaret, because I had some last minute problems that I wasn’t expecting. But, I’ll get the report over to you just as soon as I can. I’m headed back to my desk now. Maybe we can talk later.

Margaret: So, you’re saying you can iron the problems out. You’re on track, but you just can’t get it to me on time?

Sam: Well, yeah, that’s it, more or less.

Margaret: Sam, tell me what’s going on with your time schedule on the report. I’d like to understand the problem better.

Sam: Look, I don’t mean to make you late, Margaret, but, the problem is I got inaccurate numbers from the field again. So, I had to phone back the sales organization for corrections. Now, I have to redo all my calculations.
Margaret: So, you have a lot more work to do. And it looks like I’m pressuring you for the report and you’ve been let down by the field. If I were you, I’d be feeling panicked at this point—sort of caught in the middle, huh?

Sam: Well, not panic exactly, more like extreme frustration. It seems I have this problem a lot. I don’t know, maybe it’s the way I work with them.

Margaret: Twice in the last year, if I remember correctly, right?

Sam: Yeah. Well, at least.

Margaret: Sam, the last thing I want to do is to add to your frustration. But I’m worried about what the management committee’s going to do if I try to postpone the meeting or hand in an incomplete business forecast again. Remember how angry they got the last time?

Sam: Oh, yeah! They went and complained to our boss. And ah, you took some heat on that, as I recall. So did I.

Margaret: That’s right, it hurt a lot. And I’m feeling that if I don’t get my forecast done this time, I’m going to get burned again, so to speak. I wonder how fast you think you could get it done?

Sam: Well, with all the data checking I have to do, I don’t think any sooner than tomorrow morning. You know, if I pull an all-nighter I could do it, I guess.

Margaret: Sam, are you saying you have to do this all alone? I don’t know exactly how it works in your department, but aren’t there others to help? It feels to me like you’re all alone with this. I’m really sympathizing.
Sam: Well, some of the work could be done by others, I guess. I mean, I don’t have to be personally involved with things like data-checking here. You know enough about the data that you could help.

Margaret: Well, I certainly have some time while I wait for your final calculations. Who are the others? What could they do? You know, I’m really thinking we could make that four o’clock…couldn’t we?

Sam: Whoa, whoa, Margaret, not so fast! I need to work it out. It may be possible, but I can’t make any promises.

Margaret: Okay, Sam. Don’t let me get carried away. But, tell me how it would work?

Sam: Well, if we have a few people helping with the data checking, we could get that done in about fifteen hours. I’d have to look over their shoulder for a little while, but still it would…

PART TWO

Narrator: Sam and Margaret lay out a work plan using some of Margaret’s time and people from both of their departments to help. Next, Margaret will use Bridging to get Sam’s ideas on how to meet future report deadlines. She will then use Bridging to disengage from the conversation at the end when it is clear that more time is needed to discuss the issue.

Margaret: Sam, I want to check something out with you. I feel really uncomfortable asking you for these last minute crisis meetings. I’m wondering if there’s some way to make things go a little smoother.

Sam: Yeah, well, all this makes me crazy too—this crisis mode. Basically, I think we need a more systematic way of working together, so we’re a lot more on top of what each other is doing.
Margaret: Well, I’m open to suggestions on that. When you say “systematic,” what type of system do you think would work?

Sam: Well, first I need to figure out how to get more accurate numbers from the field, so I don’t need to spend all this time correcting them. That’s the main thing.

Margaret: So, you think if you work on that first issue—getting good numbers from the field—that would be a step in the right direction?

Sam: Yeah, yeah, I think it would. I mean, that’s the main issue, right there. I don’t expect to get much cooperation from the sales organization, though.

Margaret: I see! Well, assuming that you can’t get their cooperation—or that their cooperation is minimal—could you do something else to stay on track and meet the deadlines? I’m feeling uncomfortable being at the mercy of the sales organization all the time.

Sam: Yeah, I am, too. So, the obvious thing would be to build more time into the schedule to troubleshoot problems with the field sales data. Ah, list out what the tasks would be. And then, I guess, line up some people in advance, so we don’t go knocking on doors for help at the last minute.

Margaret: So, it sounds like you need to revise the work process.

Sam: Yeah. Yeah. Come up with some sort of game plan. I mean, we’ve always had an informal plan that we verbally agreed to, but it’s been so vague that it’s too easy to get off track. These reports are way too complicated now to just wing it anymore. Hey, what do you say we work up a plan right now!
Margaret: Well, frankly, I’m too pressed for time right now. Plus, I don’t think I can really focus on that level of detail. I’m feeling swamped.

Sam: Well, when would be a good time to get together?

Margaret: How about a victory lunch tomorrow, after the report’s in?

Sam: Okay. That sounds like a great idea. Ah, lunch tomorrow on me, what d’ya say?

Margaret: All right!
BACKGROUND

As we grew up and began to explore the world away from our families, we developed special relationships with people who felt like family. These were people with whom we shared our hopes, dreams, and aspirations. They inspired us to achieve, to take risks, and to exceed our goals. With their encouragement, we were able to accomplish more than we ever thought possible alone.

Some of these special people may have been peers who then became partners. Others may have been teachers, mentors, or leaders whose interest and belief in us linked with our admiration of them. Many of us actively sought such relationships and took the initiative in forming them.

Eventually, many of us found that we too were able to inspire, encourage, and energize others. We too could be partners, mentors, teachers, and leaders. We could make people feel special and motivate them to achieve specific purposes. We engaged people to work with us by aligning them with our goals and exciting them about the possibility of forming successful alliances. Our passion found a way to be expressed!

IMPACT ON OTHERS

*Attracting is PULL energy based on alignment. It involves two key Behaviors: Finding Common Ground (relationship) and Sharing Visions (objectives).*
Attracting energizes and motivates people to achieve mutual goals. When people identify with you, they are likely to rouse themselves and align their energy with yours. When they are able to envision success, their energy increases. They discover that what they cannot do alone, they can do together better with you and others.

Attracting has a positive impact both during and after the influence attempt. It establishes a climate of optimism that supports the pursuit of long-term objectives. The details of implementation become less important than the drive to resolve them. Energy is sustained, not drained by negativity and complaining.

**APPROPRIATE USE OF ATTRACTING**

Attracting has the highest impact when:

- **You are personally committed to the objective.** Your energy and enthusiasm are crucial ingredients of success. Your sincere commitment to joining with or supporting others will build their confidence and optimism, making them want to join with you, too.

- **You and the other person share common goals and aspirations.** This is essential for creating a unified vision of possible outcomes. If you do not know enough about the other person to create a Shared Vision when planning your influence attempt, you will have to engage the other person in generating the Vision during the influence attempt itself.

- **The other person trusts your motives.** An atmosphere of distrust or disbelief weakens the possibility of joining together. You must be sincere and convincing when
establishing Common Ground and when expressing optimism about future possibilities.

- **Each of you has a critical role to play; synergy is possible.** While the future must involve mutual action, it is not necessary for each party to carry out the same or equal tasks. Two talents or capabilities may complement one another. For example, your manager may be able to clear bureaucratic hurdles for you, your peers with different power bases may form a coalition with you, and so on.

- **You can make or support a continued joint effort.** Your relationship with the other person must have a lifespan, even if it is narrowly centered on your Influence Objective. Your personal commitment and perseverance over a designated period of time is crucial for Attracting to be successful.

- **Generating energy and a sense of purpose is a high priority.** Specific next steps or the details of implementation are less important than aligning energy. The motivated person may have different ideas than you do about what actions to take next. Once the target is aligned with you, Sharing Visions offers this person the freedom to contribute ideas on next steps. This will cement your partnership.

- **The other person is unsure or directionless.** Confusion and alienation are fertile ground for Attracting. When people see the possibility of developing a partnership leading to a positive future, they will be motivated to align themselves and respond with energetic action.

- **The other person’s feelings are under control.** The other person must be able to hear and join with you in Finding Common Ground and Sharing Visions. Responding to you may be harder when he or she is emotionally distracted or disturbed. You may have to defuse or harness this energy first, before working toward your Influence Objective.
EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE OF ATTRACTING

• **Balance your Behaviors:** let Finding Common Ground work with Sharing Visions. Finding Common Ground and Sharing Visions work together like a kite and its tail. While Finding Common Ground is a good way to emphasize agreement, it lacks staying power—without a Shared Vision it stays on the ground. Without Common Ground, a Vision lacks a solid anchor—like a kite without a tail it has erratic and unpredictable results.

• **Eliminate Persuading:** avoid facts and logic; use imagery, your senses, word pictures, metaphors, or analogies. Facts place a heavy weight on the kite’s tail, pulling it down to earth. Focus on possibilities based on reality instead of realities based on possibilities. Use imagery, metaphors, analogies, and word pictures to reduce the chances of pushing the Vision down to earth under the weight of Persuading. Describe the future event and enable people to see themselves in your Vision.

• **Commit yourself to the outcome:** show enthusiasm and intensity. Describe your future vision as though it has already occurred. The major appeal of Attracting is the deep intensity and enthusiasm that you bring to the process. Your commitment is the wind that raises the kite.

• **Be genuine.** Flimsy kites do not last very long; neither do halfhearted or insincere Attracting attempts. The other person will quickly sense your lack of personal integrity and dedication to the outcome and not take you seriously.

• **Establish strong Common Ground:** identify shared goals, values, and aspirations. When the string on the kite is strong, it can withstand the strongest wind. Common Ground based on elements such as shared goals, values, and aspirations holds the target’s energy on course. Other elements that can strengthen Common Ground include: agreement around issues, similar history or background, common experiences (both positive and negative), unusual circumstances that brought you together, synergy, and so on.
• **Engage the target in the process.** Kites with more than one airfoil fly farther and faster; two heads are better than one. Finding Common Ground is more productive when both of you do the finding. Not only will you find more, you will likely agree on its mutual power. You can feel the energy change when you connect through common ground. Similarly, by involving the other person in Sharing Visions, you will likely see his or her ideals more clearly and be able to merge them better with your own. Use “we” and “us” language, not “I” and “you.”

**STYLE STEMS**

*The following phrases express or signal the Attracting Style.*

**Finding Common Ground**

- We both believe in…
- Together, we can…
- I see we agree on…
- I share your concern about…
- This really appeals to our values about…
- From our past work together…
- I know we both…
- We’ve come a long way together.
- With your experience in…
- and my ability to…

**Sharing Visions**

- Picture this…
- What I see us doing is…
- A year from now, others will be saying…
- When this is finished, it will be…
- Imagine…
- It will be like…(an analogy)
- Envision it this way…
- (a metaphor)
SUMMARY OF ATTRACTING

Attracting is PULL energy based on alignment. It involves two key Behaviors: Finding Common Ground and Sharing Visions.

Appropriate Use

- You are personally committed to the objective.
- You and the other person share common goals and aspirations.
- The other person trusts your motives.
- Each of you has a critical role to play; synergy is possible.
- You can make or support a continued joint effort.
- Generating energy and a sense of purpose is a high priority.
- The other person is unsure or directionless.
- The other person’s feelings are under control.

Effective Performance

- Balance your Behaviors: let Finding Common Ground work together with Sharing Visions.
- Eliminate Persuading: avoid facts and logic; use imagery, your senses, word pictures, metaphors, or analogies.
- Commit yourself to the outcome: show enthusiasm and intensity. Describe your future vision as though it has already occurred.
- Be genuine.
- Establish strong Common Ground: identify shared goals, values, and aspirations.
- Engage the target in the process.
OVERDUE REPORT: ATTRACTING EXAMPLE

Sam is late completing a sales report that Margaret, his colleague, needs to finish her business forecast. Margaret decides to influence Sam to complete his sales report by four o’clock this afternoon and to develop a plan for meeting future report deadlines. In this example, Margaret will use the Pull Energy of Attracting. She will establish Common Ground with Sam on their mutual need to get the report done and get Sam to share his vision of how to meet the deadline. Margaret must remember that, with the Attracting Style, energy and a sense of purpose are more likely outcomes than specific next steps.

PART ONE

Margaret: Sam, lately you and I have been like two ships passing in the night.

Sam: Yeah. We’ve hardly had time to say anything but hello.

Margaret: Right. We’ve both been really busy, but I know when we talked a couple of weeks ago, we were both excited about this report you’ve been working on—you mentioned that you were going to display the data in different ways with some splashy graphics. I’m really looking forward to seeing what you’ve come up with.

Sam: Well, I’m gonna be a little late on that, Margaret, because the numbers I got from the field were wrong again, so I had to spend a lot of time correcting them. And now I have to redo the calculations. Now, I don’t mean to make you late, Margaret. Believe me, I want to finish up this report just as much as you do.

Margaret: Looks like both of us have a strong need to get the report done.
Sam: Sure, sure, it’s just gonna take a lot more work.

Margaret: Well, I have a feeling we can put our heads together and come up with a way to get the report done really fast. Instead of two ships passing in the night, maybe we could design a really fast ship to sail together. I can see us arriving in port by four o’clock this afternoon.

Sam: You mean get the report done by four o’clock this afternoon?

Margaret: Well, yeah. I told you it was a fast ship! You know, I really think we can do it!

Sam: Yeah, well, the problem isn’t with the ship, it’s that there aren’t any crew members on board. I mean, no one’s available to help. To stay with this nautical theme, Margaret, the captain needs a crew. I feel like the ship may be sinking.

Margaret: Well, I’m available to enlist. We can recruit some others, too.

Sam: Well, I’m still not sure anyone’s available. And even with the extra help, I don’t know that I can meet a four o’clock deadline. I mean, all the tasks we need to do take time and some of them can’t be done until the others are finished.

Margaret: Well, what if it were possible to get it done by four? Ideally. How many crew members would you need?

Sam: Well, okay, to get started I’d need at least three people.

Margaret: And what do you picture them doing?

Sam: Well, they could start right away on the cross-checking, which is about a ten hour job. But, I guess, if they worked simultaneously, they could get the job done fairly quickly—maybe in about
three hours. Then, the calculations and the spreadsheets would have to be done. And, maybe by that time we’d have some numbers in.

**Margaret:** Yeah, I think we could do this. This could work.

**PART TWO**

**Narrator:** Together, Margaret and Sam work out a plan. Margaret gets more deeply involved in the work process, becomes energized by the possibilities, and engages Sam in solving the problem. Later in the conversation, Margaret uses Attracting to get Sam to envision a more positive work process to use in the future. This time she uses Attracting to disengage.

**Margaret:** Sam, I’m getting really excited about the possibility of getting both our departments involved in finishing this report. You know, not just this time, but in the future, too. No more separate voyages. We’ve got a chance to really make a difference here.

**Sam:** Right, right. I think it’s time our departments got on board together.

**Margaret:** Yeah! To stay with the shipping analogy, I can see us sailing into calmer waters. You know, no more leaks in the boat. With you navigating the numbers, and me steering the vessel through the reporting process, this could be smooth sailing from now on. And those admirals on the management committee will be absolutely delighted with our new, improved ship!

**Sam:** Sure, sure! When do we set sail?

**Margaret:** After we get this report finished. You know, we should have a lunch, or a launch—a lunch-launch. Let’s get everybody who worked on this together and plan our next voyage—you know, a new
way to do these reports. No more last minute crunches.

Sam: Well, we do need to figure out a new way to work together. Map it out. After we do that, we can have a champagne christening of sorts, to set the ship on course.

Margaret: Oh! That sounds great!

Sam: The only problem is getting the sales organization on board, too. We need to get accurate numbers from them from the beginning. If not, all this will...

Margaret: I know, I know, they’ll sink the boat!

Sam: Yeah, exactly!

Margaret: Okay, well, now we’re getting somewhere. We’ll get the sales organization on the crew, too...

Sam: Recruit them!

Margaret: Yeah, find a way to get them on board. Let’s set sail tomorrow at our lunch-launch.

Sam: Okay, okay. We can talk about the field organization then, too. But, if I hear one more maritime metaphor out of you, Margaret, I’m feeding you to the sharks! Lunch-launch. What is this? You’re really doing a job on me here!

Margaret: Aye, aye, captain.

Sam: Oooh!
BACKGROUND

Early in our lives, we responded to conflict and anxiety with the instinctive “flight or fight” response. As we grew up, we found a third path. We learned to handle internal or external conflict constructively, to hold off instinctive reactions, and to find more positive ways to solve problems. We found it beneficial to withdraw from heated situations long enough to cool down or change, to think about things and reflect on our feelings, and to return ready to work through the tension successfully. When we discovered that others had as much difficulty dealing with tension as we did, we became more sensitive to their inability to cope under certain circumstances. We pulled back to give them room to regain their equilibrium. We learned the advantages of tactically withdrawing when others needed time to think, sort out their options, or reconsider the arbitrary nature of their positions. We found that being patient and backing off was a strength, not a weakness.

IMPACT ON OTHERS

Disengaging is Moving Away energy used constructively. It involves four optional actions: Postponing, Giving and Getting Feedback, Changing the Subject, and Taking a Break.

People perform best at moderate stress. If stress is too high, you or the target will be too preoccupied with your own feelings to have a constructive interaction. It is not necessary to persevere against all odds. The
skillful influencer paces the interaction and manages tension positively.

Disengaging encourages the target to maintain a constructive pace. It allows both parties to think and reflect, to express concerns about working style and process, and to proceed at a pace that is productive for both of you.

**APPROPRIATE USE OF DISENGAGING**

Disengaging has the highest impact when:

- **Tension is unmanageable.** No matter how good you are at using influence skills, there will be times when you unexpectedly overload the other person or yourself. A temporary halt in the action will lessen tension and restore a productive balance in the situation.

- **You unintentionally slip out of Style or perform a Style ineffectively.** Failure to stay with the Best Style for the Objective (BSO) may jeopardize results. Going off-track or not performing well are normal occurrences. Anticipate this possibility and describe in your Action Plan the conditions in which you might Disengage.

- **New or unknown facts arise.** New information may disrupt or jeopardize your Action Plan. While it is possible to anticipate and plan for some new developments, it is not possible to anticipate all of them. (A “known unknown” is possible to anticipate; an “unknown unknown” is not.) Disengaging may be a better option than stumbling around in the dark.

- **The other person needs time to think.** Be realistic about the other person’s ability to absorb and react to influence. Control your pace accordingly. Moving too fast may cause him or her to agree superficially with your position at first and react negatively later.

- **One of you starts Forcing or Avoiding.** The other person may overreact to you or be caught off-guard and
respond inappropriately by pulling away or attacking you. If this occurs, stop influencing. Disengage to plan more constructive behavior. Remember, the other person has the same need you do to manage tension and stress. Disengage if you cannot stop Forcing or Avoiding. Get back on track with positive Influence Behavior.

- **The other person reacts with low energy.** When the other person does not return your energy, either intentionally or unintentionally, you might react by over-talking, exaggerating, or provoking him or her to respond. Be aware of this tendency and disengage before resorting to such reactive behavior.

- **The other person reacts very negatively.** Few people are able to manage themselves well in the face of outright hostility or ambitious attack. Sometimes this extreme behavior is not premeditated. In other cases, the other person intentionally may be trying to provoke you. Disengage to revise your objective toward handling or changing his or her negative behavior.

- **The other person reacts very emotionally.** Strong emotional responses or out-of-control behavior of any kind (extreme sorrow, anger, fear, and even glee) produce formidable barriers to thoughtful behavior. Give him or her time to reestablish physical and mental equilibrium. Calm people respond better to influence than agitated people.

**EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE OF DISENGAGING**

- **Refrain from Avoiding.** If you signal weakness and lack of commitment to your objective, the other person may perceive you as Avoiding. Make sure to have a specific Disengaging objective (Postponing, Giving and Getting Feedback, Changing the Subject, or Taking a Break) and

High impact Disengaging
requires appropriate
use and effective
performance.
The target must not
perceive you as Avoiding.
communicate this objective to the other person. Giving a clear functional rationale to the other person for Moving Away will strengthen your position and assure the other person’s positive reaction.

- **Declare your intention to reengage.** Resuming active influence is the key to effective Disengaging. Inform the other person that Disengaging is temporary and that reengaging is a certainty. This will add energy and purpose to your Disengaging actions. For example, Giving and Getting Feedback will be more productive when you discuss with the person how you might work together more productively when you reengage.

- **Convey strength and purpose.** Fading away does not support positive influence. Disengaging should be sharp, clear, energetic, and focused toward the specific actions of Postponing, Giving and Getting Feedback, Changing the Subject, or Taking a Break.

- **Do not let the other person provoke you.** If the other person makes you angry, consider Taking a Break. Even a few seconds to compose yourself and count to ten may help you to defuse your anger or redirect it toward solving the problem. Consider returning to the session by Giving and Getting Feedback.

- **Do not provoke the other person.** Use Disengaging to remain focused on the issue, not on personal attack. If the other person is behaving inappropriately, use positive power and influence to redirect your attention to your influence objective.

- **Make full use of an appropriate Influence Style if the other person resists Disengaging.** In some situations, the other person will welcome the opportunity to disengage. At other times, he or she will resist. When this happens, you will need to use a full Influence Style to accomplish the Disengaging objective. For example, when Changing the Subject you might use Asserting: *I want to table this now. I appreciate your comments, but I find your anger hard to deal with. If you’re willing to move on to the next topic, I’ll consider your position carefully and return to it later. If we*
keep arguing, I'll have to end the meeting and reconsider other options to working with you. Remember, if you use Bridging, you must be open to influence about whether or not to disengage!

**SUMMARY OF DISENGAGING**

Disengaging is Moving Away energy used constructively. It involves four optional actions: Postponing, Giving and Getting Feedback, Changing the Subject, and Taking a Break.

**Appropriate Use**

- Tension is unmanageable.
- You unintentionally slip out of Style or perform a Style ineffectively.
- New or unknown facts arise.
- The other person needs time to think.
- One of you starts Forcing or Avoiding.
- The other person reacts with low energy.
- The other person reacts very negatively.
- The other person reacts very emotionally.

**Effective Performance**

- Refrain from Avoiding.
- Declare your intention to reengage.
- Convey strength and purpose.
- Do not let the other person provoke you.
- Do not provoke the other person.
- Make full use of an appropriate Influence Style if the other person resists Disengaging.
The Influence Action of Disengaging

**DISENGAGING EXAMPLES**

There are four types of actions you can take when Disengaging: Postponing, Giving and Getting Feedback, Changing the Subject, and Taking a Break. You can disengage in any Style. Listed on the next few pages are four Style examples for each action.

**Postponing**

**Persuading:** I suggest we take this matter up again in a couple of days. There are some good reasons to do so. We both need to absorb the additional information, so let’s do so, and resume this conversation in two days.

**Asserting:** I like your willingness to talk about the issue. I’m not happy about entering the discussion unprepared. I want you to wait until tomorrow to have our meeting. If you do, I’ll bring in all my data and show how it can contribute to a quality solution. If you aren’t willing to postpone the meeting, I’ll be unable to answer the hard questions.

**Bridging:** From your reaction, it seems that I’m raising this question without having alerted you in advance. I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to catch you off-guard. What might we do that would give you the time you need to prepare?

**Attracting:** I know that both of us believe in this project and we want to have the right people in the room. Next week, we can add Jennie and Jim into the conversation and the team will be complete!

**Giving and Getting Feedback**

**Persuading:** Let’s review what we’ve done so far. We’ve spent an hour working on this project and we’ve made some real progress. We’ve come up with two new approaches that we hadn’t thought of before. If we exchange data now on the pros and cons of our working process, we should be able to pinpoint some additional ways to make us even more productive.

**Asserting:** I like your commitment to this project, but I need you to be more constructive. I want us to exchange some direct feedback
on this issue. If you’re willing to hear me out, I’m willing to listen to you and make my behavior more constructive, too.

**Bridging:** I’m missing some important information here. Help me out! How is this approach working for you? Is there anything I can do to make it work better?

**Attracting:** We’re really making progress on this project, and I know we both want it to succeed. I see us emerging from this effort as a really powerful, unified team. Let’s set our sights really high! What do you see as the best way to work together?

**Changing the Subject**

**Persuading:** I suggest we table this subject for now and take it up again after we review the other issues. Think it through with me! We’ve been at it for an hour, and our work is halfway done. I believe the other topics will give us a perspective on this one.

**Asserting:** I’m glad you brought up this topic, but I’m unwilling to discuss it yet. I am willing to think about it in detail if you’ll take up the next subject first. We can come back to this topic later, when I’ve had a chance to put my thoughts together on it. If you insist on taking it up now, I’ll have to say ‘no.’

**Bridging:** Help me out! I’m unprepared to discuss this issue adequately right now. What other issues could we cover now that would give me some time to think about this one?

**Attracting:** It’s really clear that we both feel that this issue is critical and that it will take a long time to resolve. We’ve done a lot of work listening to each other and we agree on many points so far. We’ve built up a lot of momentum, and both of us seem eager to keep moving ahead. Let’s put our heads together on another issue now and see how far we can go on that. I bet we’ll hit our stride right away. When we come back to the issue you just brought up, nothing will get in our way. It’ll be easy.
The Influence Action of Disengaging

**Taking a Break**

**Persuading:** I suggest we take a break. My thinking is that we’ve spent two hours so far, and we have some good issues to think about. A ten minute break now makes a lot of sense if we’re going to go on for the rest of the day.

**Asserting:** I’m glad you’ve been willing to work so hard on the problem, but I need you to allow me some time to think. Give me until after lunch to review your reactions. If you do that, I’ll answer your specific questions in detail when we get back together.

**Bridging:** I need some help here because I’m really overloaded. I’m looking for a way to get some time to think about your proposal. How about you?

**Attracting:** The two of us have accomplished a lot this morning. With a few minutes to reflect, I can see us coming back recharged, ready to give it an even bigger jolt of energy! We’ll be able to bore through this mountain and find a vein of gold!
INTRODUCTION

Blocks are mental messages and/or physical sensations that interfere with your performance of the Styles or Behaviors. If you have difficulty mastering one or two Styles or Behaviors, you may be “blocked.”

Here are some typical symptoms of blocks:

• You are unable to overcome a skill gap in spite of repeated attempts to use a Style.

• You truly believe that a Style is consistent with your values and beliefs, but negative thoughts about it often creep into your mind.

• You are able to perform a Style correctly but you feel physically uncomfortable using it and are often disabled by these feelings.

HOW BLOCKS WORK

Blocks are complex. They interact with each other and with the influence situation in a self-reinforcing, closed loop or chain reaction. We call this chain reaction the negative circular process.

Here is how the process works:

1. Mental blocks lead to physical blocks or (sometimes) Avoiding Behavior. Mental and physical blocks create stress and divert your attention from the influence task.
2. The stress and discomfort caused by mental and physical blocks lead to ineffective performance. You are unable to perform the Style correctly or your overall performance suffers.

3. Ineffective performance leads to negative results or failure to reach your objective.

4. Negative results confirm and reinforce mental block(s).

5. Reinforced mental blocks.

This repetitive cycle of negative thoughts, feelings, actions, and results makes most people want to avoid using the new skill altogether. After all, how much negative reinforcement are you willing to endure before you give up trying?

** ELEMENTS OF THE NEGATIVE CIRCULAR PROCESS **

The following pages explore how each element of the negative circular process evolves and interacts with the other elements.

1. **Mental Blocks -** Mental blocks lead to physical blocks and, sometimes, Avoiding Behavior.

Mental blocks stem from negative beliefs about the situation and self-doubts about your ability to handle it.

You are especially vulnerable to negative beliefs when developing new skills. Perhaps there are valid reasons to think that your negative beliefs are true. You may not know exactly what you are doing, or you may not be perfect the first time. Knowing that making mistakes is normal can be comforting, but this knowledge will not necessarily stop you from having negative beliefs anyway.

Negative beliefs are not always bad; they often protect you from harm. Suppose you wanted to learn how to rollerblade, but you also believed you were too uncoordinated. This belief would increase your caution the first few times you put on your
rollerblades. A number of warning thoughts would flood your mind. You might picture yourself lying in a tangled heap at the bottom of a hill. You would stop and compare your self-perception to the reality of the situation. Looking down the slope of the hill, you would assess your ability (balance, agility, coordination, and so on) to skate down it safely.

**These normal, constructive concerns would protect you from danger and unnecessary risk-taking.** However, these same concerns would be disabling if they prevented you from skating when conditions were safe or from trying to skate at all. Negative thoughts would distract you and jeopardize your success. Bad experiences from the past—old fears—might come back to haunt you. You might think yourself into failure and experience the disastrous results that you feared.

![The Negative Circular Process](image)

**The Negative Circular Process**

**Negative beliefs are not always under our conscious control.** Eliminating them is not just a matter of placing them into perspective or dismissing them as irrational. Talking yourself out of them is not easy to do.

**When negative beliefs become disabling they form a mental block.** Mental blocks often occur in learning situations: normal concerns get magnified and healthy caution becomes a disabling fear.
Learning new skills can be even more difficult when people are watching you. Imagine learning to skate in the presence of people who are experts—real or imagined. You would probably feel even more self-conscious than if you were alone. Fears that they might judge or laugh at you would intensify, deeply affecting your performance.

Because influence always involves an audience, mental blocks can be very powerful. The opinions of others magnify in importance. Self-consciousness, worries, concerns, and fears about performance multiply. Some mental blocks come from comparing yourself to others (Will I do as well as they do?). Others stem from fear of losing power (Will I jeopardize my position by doing this?). Self-image may come into play (How will I look in this situation?). Be aware of how the presence of others affects your negative thinking. This awareness will provide clues to the exact nature of the block.

When faced with a mental block, we often take refuge in Avoiding—and for good reason. Few people would enter a door marked “Danger.” Mental blocks are danger signs warning us about the use of the Influence Styles. The sensible response to danger is to take an alternate route where no such danger exists. If you were learning to rollerblade, you might remove your rollerblades and walk, instead of rollerblading down that big hill. The downside is that you would miss the opportunity to increase your skills by learning to skate in risky situations.

The safer alternative in influence situations is to use a more comfortable or familiar Style. It becomes our “default” Style. However, the safer, more comfortable Style may not be the Best Style for the Objective (BSO). You might achieve less because of your caution. For example, if your BSO is Persuading, a block you might have is, “I am not good at thinking on my feet.” You might fall back on a less thinking Style like Bridging, thus losing the opportunity to engage the target in a rational discussion, and sacrificing the many other benefits Persuading has to offer.
2. Physical Blocks - Physical blocks stem from mental blocks. They develop when you cannot or choose not to avoid a situation in spite of your mental blocks. Physical blocks occur when you force your body to do something that your mind thinks is dangerous. They appear in a variety of stress symptoms such as rapid heartbeat, sweaty palms, and shaky knees. Sometimes, these physical symptoms are visible to others, such as poor eye contact. Other times, they are hidden from view but still very much felt by the influencer.

It is normal to experience physical stress when taking risks. Your body tries to hold you back to prevent you from failing or jeopardizing your survival. You feel internal discomfort, unpleasant feelings, sensations, and other organic symptoms.

Physical stress, like negative beliefs, is not always bad. Think of what your automatic response might be to oncoming traffic if you crossed a busy street on new rollerblades. Your adrenaline would pump and you would probably be afraid. Your entire body would try to get you out of the way of something that might hurt you. Your physical stress would save your life.

When physical stress becomes disabling, it forms a block. Like mental blocks, physical blocks divert your attention from the influence task and lead to Avoiding Behavior. Instead of focusing on your Influence Objective, you focus on quieting your shaky knees, pounding heart, or jumpy stomach. It will be hard for you to remember the correct skating movements when your teeth are chattering and your knees are quivering.

3. Ineffective Performance - The stress and discomfort caused by mental and physical blocks lead to ineffective performance.

While mental and physical stress can protect you from harm, they can also impair your performance. If you rollerbladed into busy traffic in the grip of physical stress, you would not perform very well. You would probably stumble, fall, lose your form, or slow down—none of which would be a good idea in busy traffic!
Blocks can lead to performance disruptions in influence situations, too. They can interfere with your concentration and undermine your confidence, making it hard to perform the Style or Behavior correctly with strength, purpose, and conviction.

4. Negative Results - Ineffective performance leads to negative results.

If you lost your balance, looked awkward, or slowed down to a stop when rollerblading, you might feel like a failure. If you fell, pulled a muscle, or chipped a tooth, the memory of this event would be even stronger and more painful. If a car narrowly missed you, this frightening experience might permanently reduce your confidence. You might even decide to put away your skates forever.

Failure to perform well in influence situations can lead to negative results as well. The target may react negatively and you may fail to meet your needs. You may even end up with a bigger problem than the one you started with, such as a damaged or more precarious relationship with the target.

5. Reinforced Mental Blocks - Negative results reinforce mental block(s).

If your attempts to rollerblade resulted in injury, the message would be clear: “See, you were right to worry. Stay off your skates on busy streets. Forget about any plans you had to rollerblade to work. Walk or take the bus like you always have.”

If your attempts to use influence skills led to negative results, the message would also be clear: “Don’t ever use that Style again. You tried and the target reacted badly, just as you expected. All the misgivings and reservations you had have come true.”
When your original negative belief (or other mental block) is repeatedly verified and reinforced by negative results, you may eventually Avoid. Avoiding Behavior protects you from the pain of negative results, but it also keeps you from achieving successes and accomplishing goals.

The following pages contain some examples of the negative circular process for each Style.
EXAMPLES OF THE NEGATIVE CIRCULAR PROCESS

- Persuading:
  - **Mental Block:** “I am not good at thinking on my feet.”
  - **Physical Block:** I freeze when the target surprises me with strong counter-arguments to my proposal and reasons. My throat gets dry and I have trouble speaking.
  - **Ineffective Performance:** I repeat the same proposal I opened with, without tailoring it to the target. I generalize and lose my focus.
  - **Negative Results:** The target engages in heated debate with me. I either deadlock or give in.
  - **Reinforced Mental Block:** “I am not good at thinking on my feet.”
  - **Avoiding:** Eventually, I avoid making logical arguments or use a “default” Style—the safe, familiar programmed response, maybe Bridging.
• **Asserting:**

  - **Mental Block:** “If I bargain, I will give too much away. I’ll end up losing.”
  - **Physical Block:** My heart beats fast when people make counter-demands of me.
  - **Ineffective Performance:** I hear the target’s needs, but miss opportunities to create incentives. My pressures are weak or I withhold them altogether.
  - **Negative Results:** The target resists or takes advantage of me by adamantly demanding more. As a result, I begin to give up more than I intended.
  - **Reinforced Mental Block:** “If I bargain, I will give too much away. I’ll end up losing.”
  - **Avoiding:** Eventually, I fall back on Persuading, hoping that I can get what I need on the merits of the argument. I still end up losing.
• Bridging:
  
  ▶ **Mental Block:** “If I get too personal, I will become emotional and lose self-control.”
  
  ▶ **Physical Block:** I cross my arms, avoid eye contact, and send other defensive body language signals, instead of warmth and openness.
  
  ▶ **Ineffective Performance:** I stop Disclosing and Listening to the target’s feelings. My questions seem irrelevant or manipulative.
  
  ▶ **Negative Results:** The target remains insensitive to my problem. My emotions surface and I get extremely angry.
  
  ▶ **Reinforced Mental Block:** “If I get too personal, I will become emotional and lose self-control.”
  
  ▶ **Avoiding:** Instead of being seen as manipulative, I start Persuading and adopt an interview mode.
• **Attracting:**

  - **Mental Block:** “I will look silly and feel childish being so optimistic.”
  - **Physical Block:** I laugh and avoid eye contact when painting word pictures.
  - **Ineffective Performance:** I dilute my vision with Persuading and fail to share it with the target.
  - **Negative Results:** The target responds in a logical mode while I ramble on about the future. The target dismisses my optimism as ill-founded and foolish.
  - **Reinforced Mental Block:** “I will look silly and feel childish being so optimistic.”
  - **Avoiding:** Confirmation of my mental block eventually drives me to use Persuading rather than Attracting. I miss opportunities to build energy and enthusiasm when I really need to.
- **Disengaging:**

  - **Mental Block:** “If I stop focusing on my Influence Objective, I will lose control of the situation.”
  - **Physical Block:** My voice gets too soft and I feel weak in the knees.
  - **Ineffective Performance:** My attempts to relieve tension are halfhearted.
  - **Negative Results:** I signal Avoiding to the target, who then escalates the attack.
  - **Reinforced Mental Block:** “If I stop focusing on my Influence Objective, I will lose control of the situation.”
  - **Avoiding:** Instead of Disengaging, I concede, or just give up altogether. The target feels that I am Avoiding, and the relationship is at risk.
WORKING THROUGH BLOCKS

There is only one way to find out whether or not you have a block: to experience it during an influence attempt.

In this Program, you have forced yourself to try each Style, then recorded your experiences in your Personal Learning Journal. The Personal Learning Journal pages that you completed during Tracks are a good source of data about your blocks. The Tracks required you to use each Style at low external risk. Therefore, your experience of barriers, especially blocks, was very acute and your observations about them unusually clear.

Perhaps you identified skill gaps that have resisted your attempts to fill them or value conflicts that mask blocks. Perhaps you experienced a physical block without being aware of the mental block behind it. Review your Personal Learning Journal pages and reflect on these experiences. Determine whether you gave yourself any negative mental messages as you performed the Styles. In your skill practice and self-development work, we will encourage you to work through your blocks instead of around them.

The process for working through blocks is described on the next page.
THE PROCESS FOR WORKING THROUGH BLOCKS

Think of a persistent problem you have had with a particular Style or Behavior or a situation where you used the Style unsuccessfully (in a Track, Self-Assessment Exercise, or at work).

- **Diagram the negative circular process.** Using a blank diagram like the one below—you might wish to photocopy this page for this activity—list the mental and physical blocks that emerged from your negative beliefs.

![Diagram of negative circular process]

**AVOIDING**

- **Mental Blocks**
- **Physical Blocks**
- **Negative Results**
- **Ineffective Performance**

**NEGATIVE CIRCULAR PROCESS**
How did your blocks lead to ineffective performance? What were the negative results of your influence attempt? How did these results reinforce your blocks?

You do not necessarily have to begin your diagram at the top. Start anywhere and then fill in the blanks. If your most vivid memory is of your “physical block,” begin your diagram at that point on the circle. It may be easier for you to start at “ineffective performance.” What did people tell you in the feedback session about your ineffective performance? Perhaps you remember most clearly a negative result. What happened? What did the target do that caused you to fail in your influence attempt?

- **You may have difficulty identifying or describing your mental block.** Many people have this problem. It is sometimes difficult to recall the negative mental messages that cross your mind as you prepare to use a Style or Behavior. Do not resist if this occurs. Ask yourself what kinds of negative beliefs the average person might have for such negative results to occur. Write down these beliefs now. Perhaps later, more detailed and personal insights will come to you.

- **Fill in the missing pieces.** As you diagram the negative circular process, elaborate on each part. You will probably remember more information about the event than you recorded in your Personal Learning Journal. You can usually recall minute details of your failed experiences. Fill in these details as you think of them.

- **Diagram the negative circular process either before or after your influence attempt—not during it.** It is extremely difficult to think through the process when you are caught up in it. Avoiding or negative thinking will inevitably invade your mind. You will blank out or not be able to see the separate parts of the cycle and how they link together. As a result, you will have difficulty understanding and analyzing them in greater depth.

Diagramming the negative circular process unravels the mystery. Recording your experience with the Style makes plain how the cycle feeds upon itself through each step of the
Diagramming transforms subjective memory into concrete written information that you can view objectively. It makes visible what your mind would prefer to keep hidden.

**Focus on improving your performance.** The negative circular process is a chain reaction. Like all chains, it is only as strong as its weakest link. That link is ineffective performance. By working to improve your performance, you will begin to break down the control the process has over you and reverse its course.

**THE POSITIVE CIRCULAR PROCESS**

Something interesting will happen as you try to improve your performance. A positive circular process will emerge out of your negative circular process.
Here are the elements of the positive circular process:

1. Effective performance produces positive results.

2. Positive results erode mental blocks and create mental energy.

3. Mental energy reduces physical blocks and creates physical energy.

4. Physical energy leads to effective performance.

1. **Effective performance produces positive results.**

While working to improve your performance in low-risk situations, you will immediately see the benefits of using the Style or Behavior effectively. By getting direct feedback from your influence targets or by observing their behavior, you will learn to be more effective and begin to experience more successes than failures. This may take repetitive practice. Remember that some of your blocks are deeply ingrained. Take your time. Stop and start as needed. Approach your work as you would a laboratory experiment. Collect data on your successes. Be realistic about what skills you still need to improve, but do not deny your progress. Progress is the source of your recovery from the block and your entry into Style mastery.

2. **Positive results erode mental blocks and create mental energy.**

Open up your mind for discussion! Let your negative beliefs battle with the positive results achieved in your experiments. Bring some fresh air into the way you think about yourself and your influence skills. Ask others to tell you how strong you are and to point out your successes. This is more than simple positive thinking, although some of that might help, too. Giving yourself permission to hear positive feedback
means a willingness to accept new data about your progress. The mind is no fool where success is concerned. Success will encourage you to proceed with your experiments—carefully, of course!

3. **Mental energy erodes physical blocks and increases physical energy.**

At this point, your mental block will not have disappeared. It will only have stepped aside for awhile as you experiment safely. You will be introducing new thinking, data, and experiences. As a result, your interest in experimenting will increase and the stress of poor performance will begin to lift. You will have enough energy to keep trying. Relax and stay in touch with your feelings. Center yourself. Disengage if you feel too nervous to go on. If appropriate, disclose your discomfort to your target and observers. Tell them that you are trying something new and difficult. This may make them more receptive and help you relax.

4. **Physical energy leads to more effective performance.**

Closing the loop on this new positive cycle may not occur immediately. Several repetitions may be required to set each new step into place. Before long, the positive cycle will occur every time you perform the new Style or Behavior. The cycle will reinforce itself—each new experiment will yield more positive results and further erode your blocks.
Examples of the Positive Circular Process

Here are some examples of the positive circular process for each Style.

Persuading:

Your mental block tells you that you cannot think very well on your feet, so you decide to improve your ability to respond to logical arguments. As you practice in exercises and simulations, you produce positive evidence that you can respond to arguments effectively—perhaps haltingly at first and with great effort—but you can do it. You develop the ability to stand up for your ideas and to provide rational justification for them. Others listen to your arguments and respect them—and you—as well. You develop a belief in your ability to think clearly when others challenge you. The more you practice, the more comfortable and energized you feel. As your performance improves, your blocks no longer control you, nor will you avoid by slipping into easier but less appropriate Styles.
Asserting:

You have never had confidence in your ability to bargain, so you practice using Incentives and Pressures in low-risk situations. To your surprise, you frequently succeed in reaching agreements with your targets and get what you want. You start believing in your ability to confront others. Your heart does not beat as fast as before in these situations. Bargaining becomes less stressful, perhaps even fun. You work even harder to create Incentives that will appeal to the target, while holding firmly to your position. You get more out of agreements than you expected, and your confidence in your ability to bargain grows.

Mental Energy

If I bargain, I will get what I want.

I feel calmer; my heart beats normally.

Physical Energy

I offer valuable incentives to the target and use pressures when needed.

Positive Results

I get more than what I asked for.

Effective Performance

POSITIVE CIRCULAR PROCESS

POSITIVE RESULTS

MENTAL ENERGY

PHYSICAL ENERGY
**Bridging:**

Your fear of showing your emotions blocks you from Disclosing, so you decide to practice Disclosing to see if you really do lose control. As you practice, you notice that when you disclose, the target does the same. You learn that Disclosing relieves emotional tension rather than adds to it. You remain relaxed, focused, and attentive. You do not break down. You come to realize that you can handle emotional situations. Sitting through intensive disclosure sessions is not as painful as it used to be. You see the value of going below the surface to explore the difficulties between yourself and others.
Attracting:

Your feel embarrassed using word pictures when visioning, even though you really do have some rich mental images of what you want to have happen in the future. By sharing these images in a safe environment, you energize others and get them to share your optimism. Your embarrassment fades and your natural optimism takes over. You relax and let the mental imagery flow freely. These positive results energize and motivate you to continue practicing and improving.
Disengaging:

You fear losing control if you let go of a tense situation. You decide to practice the four Disengaging actions with strength and purpose. You feel less shaky and your voice becomes stronger. You begin to gain agreement from others to back off and cool down. You reenter the process and achieve your objective. People clearly respect you more. They do not perceive you as Avoiding. You begin to see that you can actually gain control of a situation through Disengaging. This gives you the courage to use Disengaging more tactically.
Use the diagram below to turn the negative circular process you described on page 80 into a positive circular process.

**SUSTAINING YOUR PROGRESS**

In time, the positive circular process will take over. However, your old negative patterns may not disappear entirely. When risk escalates, they may return. By that time, you will know and recognize them for what they are. They will have less power over you. Continued practice and careful planning will eventually displace them.
**TYPICAL BLOCKS TO DEVELOPING PUSH STYLES**

**Avoiding Conflict Block**

**Mental Blocks**
- If I actively oppose others, I cannot cope with their disapproval.
- Others get irritated at me and criticize my behavior rather than address the issue.

**Physical Blocks**
- If I do oppose others, I become oversensitive to their displeasure; My throat gets tight and I perspire.

**Ineffective Performance**
- I become tentative and lose control of the conversation. Sensing a loss, I become hostile.

**Low Aspiration Level Block**

**Mental Blocks**
- If I expect too much, I will fail to meet my objectives.
- Others do not take my demands seriously.

**Physical Blocks**
- If I ask or demand a lot, I get nervous and worry that I will not get anything.

**Ineffective Performance**
- I justify and qualify my demands. I apologize for my position.

**AVOIDING**
- I do not express my needs directly; I avoid controversy.
- I wait for others to make offers or I make relatively low demands.
Blocks To Developing New Skills

**Low Participation in Meetings Block**

- **Mental Blocks**
  - I do not present myself well in meetings.
  - When called upon to participate, I offer my position tentatively and with low energy.
  - Most of the ideas I put forth get lost in the general discussion.
  - If I attend meetings, I feel isolated and withdrawn. I do not offer much.

- **Physical Blocks**

- **Ineffective Performance**

**Argument Dilution Block**

- **Mental Blocks**
  - People do not view me as analytical. I am not very good at rational debate.
  - People attack my weaker reasons, question my logic, and do not give my ideas much consideration.
  - If I become engaged in a logical argument, I feel slow and inarticulate.

- **Physical Blocks**

- **Ineffective Performance**

**AVOIDING**

- I do not participate in meetings; I wait to influence others one-on-one.
- I stay out of logical argument; I fall back on other Styles, usually Asserting.

**Negative Results**

- I do not present myself well in meetings.
- When called upon to participate, I offer my position tentatively and with low energy.
- Most of the ideas I put forth get lost in the general discussion.
- If I attend meetings, I feel isolated and withdrawn. I do not offer much.

- People do not view me as analytical. I am not very good at rational debate.
- People attack my weaker reasons, question my logic, and do not give my ideas much consideration.
- If I become engaged in a logical argument, I feel slow and inarticulate.

- I do not participate in meetings; I wait to influence others one-on-one.
- I stay out of logical argument; I fall back on other Styles, usually Asserting.
**TYPICAL BLOCKS TO DEVELOPING PULL STYLES**

### Reluctance to Involve Others Block

**AVOIDING**
I try to anticipate others’ needs, but do not solicit them actively.

- **Mental Blocks**
  - If I ask for others’ ideas, thoughts, and feelings, I will not meet my own objectives.
  - I get impatient and lose my concentration while listening to others go on about their own ideas.
  - I interrupt and disagree or I push my own ideas and objectives.

- **Physical Blocks**
  - Others resist, become argumentative, and try to defend their ideas even more vigorously.

- **Ineffective Performance**
  - Ineffective Performance
  - Negative Results

### Inability to Listen Effectively Block

**AVOIDING**
I discourage lengthy discussion of others’ ideas, if I have a preferred position.

- **Mental Blocks**
  - If I listen carefully to others who disagree with me, I will be overwhelmed and not get my ideas accepted.
  - The speaker does not feel listened to and repeats his or her position even more forcefully.

- **Physical Blocks**
  - When others are talking, I get impatient and irritated and want to break in.

- **Ineffective Performance**
  - Ineffective Performance
  - Negative Results
Blocks To Developing New Skills

**Overuse of Pressure Block**

**Mental Blocks**

- My ideas will not be accepted unless I push very hard on other people.
- I feel hyperactive in consensus situations; I worry about not having control.
- I talk too much and do not listen to others.

**Physical Blocks**

- I get into a lot of battles and conflict with others. People try to undermine my position.

**Negative Results**

- People try to undermine my position.
- I get a tight knot in my stomach.
- If I show uncertainty or admit mistakes, others will not have confidence in me.

**Ineffective Performance**

- I use Positional Power to get things done and avoid consensus decision situations.
- I stay out of any situation where I am not sure of myself.

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**Low Self-Disclosure Block**

**Mental Blocks**

- If I show uncertainty or admit mistakes, others will not have confidence in me.
- When I am uncertain, I feel anxious and begin to perspire. I get a tight knot in my stomach.
- I try to appear confident, but my insecurity shows through.

**Physical Blocks**

- People do not trust me when I say that I can handle the situation.

**Negative Results**

- When I am uncertain, I feel anxious and begin to perspire. I get a tight knot in my stomach.
- People do not trust me when I say that I can handle the situation.

**Ineffective Performance**

- I stay out of any situation where I am not sure of myself.
CONTINUING SELF-DEVELOPMENT

READINGS PART
This section of the book provides readings that will support your post-Program self-development.

We suggest that you study the first reading in Part 2, “A Guide to Low-Risk Skill Practice,” as soon as possible after the Program. Organized by Style, it provides many examples of influence use in everyday situations. Low-risk situations provide the best opportunities for pure skill practice. Combined with the work you do in moderate-risk Critical Influence Situations, your work in low-risk situations will contribute greatly to your growth as an influencer.

The second reading, “Brain Science: Neural Networks and Influence,” is a brief explanation of how neural networks in the brain impact how you influence.

An imbalance of positional power can exist in both low- and moderate-risk situations. The third reading, “The Positive Use of Positional Power,” will help you deal with these power imbalances whether you have high, low, or equal positional power.

“Continuing Self-Development” focuses on the experiential learning process that you began in the Program and that you will continue as you develop your skills. “Influence on the Run” gives a personal account of both the pain and pleasure people experience when engaging in challenging activities. Both readings will give you ideas on how to keep your energy alive and growing as you practice your influence skills.

“Positive Influence in Group Meetings” discusses the use of influence with more than one person in situations where complex group issues may prevail. “Using Influence to Maintain or Build Relationships” and “The Case of the Curmudgeonly Condo Owner” present a strategy for influencing difficult people.
You will find the readings on the following pages:

- **A GUIDE TO LOW-RISK SKILL PRACTICE** .......................................................... 99
- **BRAIN SCIENCE: NEURAL NETWORKS AND INFLUENCE** ........................................... 123
- **THE POSITIVE USE OF POSITIONAL POWER** ........... 125
- **CONTINUING SELF-DEVELOPMENT** ................................. 133
- **INFLUENCE ON THE RUN** .................................................. 141
- **POSITIVE INFLUENCE IN GROUP MEETINGS** ....... 149
- **USING INFLUENCE TO MAINTAIN OR BUILD RELATIONSHIPS** ............. 163
- **THE CASE OF THE CURMUDGEONLY CONDO OWNER** ................................................. 173
Some situations are better than others for practicing new influence skills. This reading will help you identify these situations in your everyday life. It includes guidelines for choosing practice situations, examples of practice situations, and short exercises to try for each Style. We encourage you to find opportunities to practice that fit your particular needs.

**GUIDELINES FOR CHOOSING PRACTICE SITUATIONS**

Most people feel a little uncomfortable when practicing new skills. Your discomfort is likely to increase when you practice in situations where there is something significant to lose (high risk). It can be painful and frustrating to try new Behaviors in chronically difficult relationships with family members or to remedy long-standing problems with co-workers (high stress). Certain business situations may be too tense or conflict-laden to qualify as good practice opportunities (high risk and high stress). Insecurity, stress, and fear of failure will make it difficult for you to do a good job. In such situations, you will probably avoid using the new skill altogether.

**Low-risk situations are best for pure skill practice.** By reducing or eliminating risk, you can concentrate on improving your performance. While your stress level may be high, there is nothing to lose objectively in such situations. Soon, you will experience success. Success will increase your competence, build your self-confidence, and reinforce your desire to keep practicing and improving.

*For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them.*

_Aristotle_
In general, choose practice situations where:

- **Your expectation of success is high and your fear of failure is low.** Although some of the “practice targets” will be strangers, others will be old friends. Practice in situations where there are few, if any, barriers to success. Disengage from critical situations where serious consequences might result if you fail to influence the target on your first try. These situations will require a full process of planning and rehearsing.

- **You can specify an Influence Objective.** Do not seek vague or general agreements from targets. Do not stop when they have superficially accepted your position. Go further, and get their commitment to a specific next step. Decide who will take the step and when. The extra effort can make the difference between success and failure.

- **You can get clear and immediate feedback.** Practice in face-to-face situations where you and the target decide the outcome very quickly. Complex situations that drag on for a long time are the least helpful for practicing new Behaviors.

- **You intend to carry out agreements.** Do not play at influence skill practice. Failure to carry out agreements is the weakest way of exerting influence. Listen for and be aware of the small inner voice that tells you not to follow through if you can avoid it. Force yourself to say “yes” or “no” aloud to the target’s position. This will require you to develop your own position and defend it. Disengage if you need time to prepare your position, then return to the situation later.

- **People will not be surprised by a sudden change in your behavior.** Although some “practice targets” will be strangers, others will be old friends. If you change your behavior without warning those who know you, they may think you are unpredictable and react with discomfort, suspicion, rejection, or attack. This can happen even when others have asked you to change. Human beings like being able to predict how other people will act. **When practicing new skills, inform people of your intentions and ask for their help.**
Situations that fit these guidelines might include:

- Interactions with friends, colleagues, or others with whom you have good relationships. You should feel comfortable explaining to them what you are doing and enlisting their support and feedback.

- Less important interactions of limited duration with tradespeople, service and professional personnel, and strangers.

- Minor conflict situations in which neither party has a big stake, including isolated transactions with limited consequences for the future of the relationship.

- Joint problem-solving situations where neither party has a strong vested interest and both you and the target are open to alternative perspectives and solutions. These situations might include deciding where to go to dinner, setting specifications for purchasing a new piece of office equipment, determining how to format a report, and so on.

The following pages list examples of situations that support the low-risk practice of Influence Styles and Behaviors. Use these examples to stimulate your thinking and to identify practice situations of your own. Practice opportunities that you identify will be as valuable (or perhaps more so) than the ones we suggest here.

**PERSUADING**

**Business and Professional Situations**

There are so many opportunities to practice Persuading in business and professional situations that it is easy to overlook them. Doing business as usual may cause you to miss important practice opportunities. Look for specific opportunities, develop concise Influence Objectives, and focus on practicing a specific Behavior. Push yourself to go a little further than you normally would in performing at least one aspect of the Style.
• In meetings, offer suggestions that you normally might withhold. Make straightforward proposals and support them with strong reasons. Structure the meeting by suggesting an agenda. Use hard data to summarize your thoughts on a particular issue.

I suggest that we change our procedure by setting an agenda. That way, we can see what work we need to do. We can also set up a specific plan to use our time efficiently.

• Respond objectively to suggestions or proposals. If you disagree with someone’s proposal, give your reasons and make a counterproposal. If you agree, give clear reasons for supporting the proposal.

I see that differently. I suggest that we continue without an agenda. The data about our regular work groups says that too much structure reduces creativity. We need to remain open to new ideas since the old ones just aren’t working. After all, our profits have fallen 23 percent because we haven’t come up with any recent innovations.

• State your proposal first. When opinions are sought or the floor is open for ideas, be the first to speak up rather than waiting until everyone else has spoken.

I have an idea! Let’s develop an agenda but leave time at the end of the meeting for brainstorming. My thinking is that we can do both. An agenda will help us to structure the meeting. A brainstorming session will let us get all of our creative ideas out in the open.

Commercial Situations

• With salespeople or managers, suggest changes that will make you a happier customer.

I notice that you have the display of new books behind the counter. I suggest that you place it in front of the cashier’s line. I like to browse, and it gives me something to do while waiting my turn. Also, if I pick up a book, there’s a greater chance that I’ll buy it.
• **Suggest additions or deletions to the standard product selection and give reasons for your suggestions.**

I propose that you carry the standard shift transmission model of that car in addition to the automatic. Automatic transmissions are less fuel efficient, and cars with standard shifts handle better in bad weather. Besides, some people don’t like driving automatics, and you’ll sell more cars if you carry both models.

I suggest that you stock red leaf lettuce as well as iceberg. The iceberg variety is less nutritious than red leaf, and having both will give your customers more choice. It’s also a fact that iceberg lettuce signals a lower class of dining. Food critics often refer to iceberg lettuce as the “polyester” of vegetables.

• **Answer truthfully when asked, “Is everything all right?”** Respond succinctly, suggesting specific changes that you would like made. Point out unsatisfactory service, merchandise, or decor. Give reasons for your suggestions.

The waiter served us promptly, but he only took our beverage orders before he left. I suggest that you tell him that many of us who come in for lunch are in a hurry. It would be a good idea for the staff to take the entire order at the very beginning.

I think that you should turn up the thermostat a few degrees. I’ve already put on my sweater and I’m still cold. I see that others are bundled up, too.

• **If you do not like something, suggest a specific improvement.**

Please tell the chef to cook the Bearnaise sauce more slowly—over, not in, boiling water. The egg yolk’s setting is more controllable that way, and the sauce will have a better texture.

I suggest that you move this table over by that wall. It’s only three feet away from the service bar, and two people have tripped over my chair since I sat down.

Perhaps one of your supervisors can take over at another cash register until the rush is over. The checkout lines are very long.
and getting longer. Your employees look unhappy, not to mention the customers. I saw two people put their merchandise down and leave the store.

• **Persuade a service-provider to do something for you that is sensible but not the norm.**

  I have a different idea. Deliver the new sofa to me later in the day. That way, I’ll be here to let you in. You won’t have to make a special phone call to see if I’m home yet, and you’ll reduce the risk of having to come back.

  I suggest that you hold these items aside for me until I can return with the exact measurements. It doesn’t make sense for you to show me other models until I know which size will fit. Besides, once I have the measurements, I can analyze your recommendations more objectively.

• **Ask a service-provider to personalize a job for you.**

  Please butter my toast in the kitchen. That way, it’ll melt faster and be much easier for me to spread. You’ll also waste less butter.

  I suggest that you return this fixture and get a chrome finish. This one is sturdy enough, but it doesn’t match the other fittings. Also, you told me yesterday that chrome fittings are more accurately machined and easier to work with.

• **Question the advice and opinions of experts.** Ask physicians for information on medications that they prescribe for you. Ask automobile mechanics what repairs they intend to make and why the repairs are necessary. Experts are not infallible. Do not avoid making choices by letting experts and professionals choose for you. Instead, get the expert to give you enough information so that you can form an opinion and decide for yourself. Persuading is not one-sided. The target should also convince you.

  Doctor, I suggest that you write me a prescription for that new medication for migraines. The one I’m taking now makes me sleepy, and I understand from my reading that the new one has fewer side effects.
Listen, before you go ahead and order a new set of windshield-wiper arms, why don’t you try thoroughly lubricating the springs? That way, we’ll test the easy solutions first. Besides, I recently read that the wiper springs are the part least likely to be serviced in the entire car!

Social and Family Situations

• **Express an intellectual opinion at least once when discussing topical subjects.** Use supporting facts. Voice your agreement or disagreement clearly. Do not be pushy or argumentative, just communicate your thoughts. It will help liven up the conversation.

Studies show that good posture at the table aids digestion. The research also suggests that you’ll feel less full and be more energetic after eating. Good posture also sends a message that you like the people around you and that you’re interested in talking with them.

• **Develop and express logical opinions about issues, even when the issues are complex and you are unsure your opinion is well-founded.** Those who talk the most and loudest do not necessarily have all the correct facts either. Decide which way you lean on issues, then identify two or three good reasons for your position.

There are five classic films showing in town and we can’t see them all this weekend. I suggest that we pick the one we’d really enjoy seeing in a theater. We can always see the others on video. Besides, you’ve always said that “Gone with the Wind” was meant to be seen on the big screen, not on a television monitor.

• **Persuade a family member to do a small task for you.** The task should be something that the person might not volunteer to do but does not fundamentally oppose.

As I look at our to-do list, I see you handling the laundry this weekend. I have to pay the monthly bills and I also have to spend two hours with the relatives. Besides, you love to browse in bookstores. There’s one just around the corner from the laundromat where you can hang out while you’re waiting for the clothes to dry.
• **Use Persuading instead of “I don’t care.”** Consider this exchange:

_Would you like to have the Smiths over for dessert and coffee tonight?_

_I don’t care._

You almost always do care and have an opinion, but rather than think about it, you avoid. Try Persuading instead:

_I suggest that we invite the Smiths over tomorrow night instead of tonight. I’d like to visit with them, but we have to be up early tomorrow. I’d also like to prepare a special dessert for them, and I won’t have time today._

• **Listen to how you express agreement or disagreement with other people’s suggestions and proposals.** Do you state your position and give the reasons straightforwardly? Or do you make emotional evaluations of their positions, dismissing them as wrong or stupid?

_Do you sound like this?_

_I can’t understand how you could wait so long! The facts are clear. There are only four days remaining until the filing deadline, and you have a full year of tax receipts to go through!_

_Or, do you sound like this?_

_I suggest that you go through the tax receipts first. There are four days left until the filing deadline and, if you do that first, you’ll have a much better idea of whether or not you’ll need to file for an extension. You can plan for all the possibilities._

_When Persuading, try to keep your opinions free of judgmental language._
ASSERTING

Business or Professional Situations

• **Before a meeting, clarify your personal wants and needs.** Focus your attention on what you want the group to accomplish: items to discuss, issues to clarify, decisions to make. Write a personal agenda. Begin each item with the words “I want...” or “I need...” Keep track of the number of times you make your wishes known and move the meeting through your personal agenda. Take initiatives!

  - *I want five minutes to discuss this problem.*
  - *I need to cover the inventory question today.*

• **Try saying “no” when someone asks you to do something that you would rather not do.** Saying “no” does not necessarily mean that others will think you are uncooperative or rude. If you say “yes,” try to bargain or negotiate for something in return.

  - *I can’t help you right now. I’m too busy. But if you’re willing to substitute for me at this Thursday’s conference, I’ll handle your job then.*

• **Encourage people to consider personal as well as rational issues when making decisions.** Very often, people base decisions on logic and not on the personal needs of the parties involved.

  - *I want to look at this from another perspective. I like the logic of your proposal. I’m not pleased that my department will be doing most of the work. I need to talk to you about how this affects me personally.*

Commercial Situations

There are many opportunities to make legitimate statements of personal need or desire in commercial situations. Persevere. If the target resists or evades the issue, offer personal incentives
for what you are demanding. If the target continues to resist, bargain or use a pressure. Remember to use incentives and pressures that you personally control. Be assertive and not aggressive. Recall that, with Asserting, you may not get what you want, but others will rarely dismiss you lightly.

• **State your requirements clearly.** Ask salespeople for what you want, rather than search for the item yourself. Then, ask to see something bigger, smaller, cheaper, or in a different color.

> I want you to special-order these styles in my size. I like your selection, but I’m upset that you don’t carry my size. If you’re willing to order it so that it arrives by the 15th of this month, I’ll become a regular customer.

• **Return something you dislike.** Ask for your money back. In restaurants, return food that does not taste good or ask the chef to prepare it differently.

> This sauce has an unpleasant aftertaste. Please take back my plate and give me a steak without the sauce.

> I don’t like the color of this shirt in outdoor light. I want to return it and get my money back.

• **Ask for a price reduction for buying a larger quantity or for not using your credit card.**

> I’ll take four of these now if you give me a 10 percent discount.

> I’ll buy this if you will give me 5 percent off for cash.

• **Ask for what you want instead of settling for the standard offer.** Request a different table, clerk, hair stylist, hotel room, another seat at a formal event, and so on. In a restaurant, ask for something that is not on the menu. Or, ask a nearby employee for help rather than waiting for your assigned waiter or waitress.

> I specifically requested a table by the window. Please get me another table. I am willing to take a table in the corner, but it has to be away from the kitchen area.
• **Request a change that will improve the atmosphere or climate.** Ask someone to lower the music volume, increase the heat, turn off the television, and so on.

If you agree to keep the heat turned up a few more degrees, I’ll pay 5 percent more than my usual share when the bill comes next month.

• **Ask for redress of minor wrongs.** This includes poor merchandise or service, an improperly done job, overcharging, or shortchanging. Try not to worry about whether you win or lose—it is all good practice.

*I want you to take back this shirt and give me credit for it.*

*The seat of my car has oil spots from your overalls. Please clean it off.*

*The register tape shows $5.00 for an item I did not buy. Please ring up my order again.*

• **Try Asserting in money matters, especially where there is no fixed price or standard of value.** While the seller has the right to set a price for merchandise or services, you have a right to offer what it is worth to you. Suggest a smaller figure than what the seller asks and see what happens.

*I find this suit very attractive, but $30 is not enough of a discount. Increase the discount to $50 and I’ll buy it.*

*I want the salad plate without the cheese and meat. Please take a dollar off the price.*

• **When someone annoys or offends you, ask that person to stop.** Ask a person who cuts ahead of you in a checkout line to move back, or ask the cashier to serve you next. When people talk during a film, use positive influence to let them know they are disturbing you. When sales people are inattentive or rude, point this out to them.

*I don’t respond to high-pressure selling. If you want to make this sale, please give me time to take your proposal home and think about it.*
This is the last time I’ll ask. If you don’t stop whispering during the movie, I’ll call the manager and ask him to handle the problem.

Social and Family Situations

• **Take the initiative when making decisions.** Express your wishes, goals, suggested courses of action, or preferences before asking for the other person’s opinion.

  Instead of asking: *What would you like to do tonight?*

  Say: *I feel like going out to dinner tonight instead of cooking. I’ll call the restaurant, make the reservations, and drive us there.*

• **Do not automatically go along with other peoples’ suggestions.** If you prefer a specific alternative, say so, though you may have to compromise or concede later. The other person may be willing to do it your way.

  *I don’t feel like going to the movies tonight. I want to stay home and play cards instead.*

• **Give yourself permission to change your mind after agreeing to something.** Without going back on your word, you can still describe how your feelings have changed or how circumstances have altered. Then, ask the other person to let you out of the agreement. Of course, it is usually better to disagree before committing yourself. But, often people who are just beginning to use Asserting do not find out that they mean “no” until after they have said “yes.”

  *I’m not able to go to lunch with you tomorrow. I enjoy your company, but going out will prevent me from completing an important project. Getting it done is also important to me. If you give me a rain check, I’ll cover the tip the next time we eat together.*
BRIDGING

Business or Professional Situations

• **Practice with people you work with infrequently or non-intensively.** Work hard to get beyond abstract ideas and into the person’s underlying beliefs or feelings. Paraphrase and seek a thorough understanding of the other person’s position before presenting your own. Focus people’s attention on your need to understand or be helped.

  *Help me understand why you’re taking such a hard-line position on this issue.*

  *I’m not sure I understand how you reached that conclusion. Can you describe your thinking to me?*

• **Practice in situations where you are flexible about results.** Use Bridging to influence others to work with you toward solutions you both can accept.

  *In your opinion, how can my department help your department speed up the loan approval process?*

• **Ask for help in solving problems when you feel dubious or blocked.** Use Disclosing or Involving to elicit the person’s ideas, point of view, or experience. Remain flexible on how you will use their ideas to solve the problem. If the person suggests a promising approach, involve and listen until you hear a specific idea you can use. Then disclose that you find the idea valuable and that you intend to use it.

  *I’m having trouble working out these numbers. Can you show me how you calculated your solution?*

• **Involve and listen in meetings as often as you can.** Take initiatives to influence others. Count the number of times that you engage people who are inactive. See how often you can summarize a complicated, lengthy, or rambling discourse neatly and accurately.
A Guide To Low-Risk Skill Practice

Anne, I’d like to hear your ideas about this. You have more experience than I do. What are your thoughts on the issue?

Let me interrupt to see if I’m getting your point. This issue isn’t easy for me to grasp.

Commercial Situations

• **Express understanding and empathy when service personnel are busy or harassed.**

  You seem to be having a really busy day today.

• **Reveal something about yourself when making a request, instead of just asking for what you want.** Disclose what you plan to do. Do not slip into Persuading.

  Can you recommend something to make this old refrigerator look better? I got it from a friend and though it works fine, it looks awful. I’m not sure what to do.

• **Ask for information about a product and how to use it, or ask for help if you are uncertain about something.**

  Which stereo system do you think is the better value for the money?

  Can you tell me anything about the reliability of this product? I’ve never owned one before.

  How does this spreadsheet work? I seem to have scrambled my formulas.

• **Find out more about the person.** Ask how long the person has been working or doing business, or ask how business is going. Look for opportunities to personalize the situation by Involving, Listening, or Disclosing.

  I’ve always wondered what it’s like owning your own business. What’s it been like for you?

  I hear you’ve been working two shifts. I don’t know if I could handle it. That must be hard for you to do. What do you do to make it easier?
I don’t think I could remember all those lines. How do you go about memorizing a script?

- **Ask for help, opinions, information, guidance, and advice.** You do not have to follow the advice, but let others know when you do.

  *I’m a little confused. There are so many types of running shoes here. Could you give me some guidance? You have a lot more experience than I do.*

**Social and Family Situations**

- **Casual meetings, parties, or trips are ideal situations for practicing Bridging.** Show an interest in what others say. Ask discreet questions and show that you understand and accept the answers. You may learn some extraordinary information. Act as a catalyst among strangers. Introduce those on your right to those on your left. Help them talk directly to one another.

  *Marge, my friend Dave is thinking of going to Italy. I know that you just got back. What suggestions do you have on where he might stay when he’s over there?*

- **With family or friends, pick a chronic area of disagreement and admit that you may be wrong.** Ask for help in understanding the other person’s point of view. If a past discussion ended in deadlock, paraphrase your understanding of where things stand. Try to get the conversation moving again by Disclosing that you were wrong, or by Involving to hear more about the other person’s position. Try to focus on the parts of the problem first. This will help you see the big picture later.

  *I’ve been thinking it over and I feel like I may have overreacted to your vacation suggestion. I’d like to open up the topic again and hear you out.*

- **Talk to strangers.** Be careful not to be pushy. Give them an opportunity to talk about themselves, too.
I notice you brought an umbrella. Did you hear the weather report today? I forgot to listen.

- **Routinely ask for more information.** Ask people to tell you more about their opinions, points-of-view, or suggestions before expressing your opinion. Help them articulate the idea in more detail so that both of you can fully understand it. If necessary, intervene to prevent people from evaluating or rejecting an idea prematurely.

I’m interested in how you juggle so many projects at once. Can you tell me more about your approach to time management?

- **Be open and forthcoming with information that might make you less threatening to others.** Tell more about yourself than usual. Describe a weakness as well as a strength. Share mistakes that you have made in similar situations.

You’ll have to be patient with me. I have a strong tendency to have rigid opinions about this issue.

**ATTRACTING**

**Business or Professional Situations**

- **Identify common interests, similar backgrounds, or points of view.** You might begin with side issues or issues of marginal importance to the business relationship, then gradually explore riskier topics.

I noticed your class ring. You went to the same school I did.

You took this photograph at my favorite spot in the city. I imagine you really enjoyed being there.

I heard you mention that you just returned from a training workshop. I attended one last week as well.

- **Play “who do you know?”** Identifying common acquaintances is one of the safest ways of building connections.
Did you study with Professor Lopez by any chance?

I have a good friend who worked in that department when you did. Perhaps you knew her.

So, you’re from Milwaukee. My brother introduced me to several people there when I visited him. Maybe you know one of them.

- **Spend several minutes asking visioning questions before meetings.**

What’s the best outcome that we could hope for in today’s meeting?

- **Share your vision of the meeting’s outcome.** Let your imagination explore possibilities so that you can envision results beyond the mundane outcomes of most meetings. See if you can formulate a vision that really could happen, or a possible outcome that energizes and interests you. Commit yourself to making it happen.

You know we’re capable of doing more than working on this one difficult issue. I can see us ironing out all the details together and finally signing the contract today. We’ll even have time for a small celebration!

**Commercial Situations**

- **Share personal information with the people serving you, and make it easy for them to do the same.** You may discover some fascinating beliefs, values, or experiences that you have in common with people that you previously viewed only in their service roles.

I used to work for a supermarket chain, too. I really liked the people I met there. Of course, when you work with the public, you see all kinds of behavior. It can be a fascinating view of the world.

Tell me about that pin you’re wearing. It looks like one my mother wore.
• **Listen to other peoples’ conversations and share any common experiences you may have had.** Perhaps you have seen the same film, traveled on the same tour, attended the same concert, sports event, parade, or other activity. Try to compare experiences and establish common ground.

*I overheard you talking about the new exhibit at the museum. I went yesterday, too, and really enjoyed it. I found myself really caught up in it—it was so exciting. What was your reaction?*

*You obviously enjoy your grandchildren. I have two who are about the same age. My whole perspective on life has changed! What about you?*

**Social and Family Situations**

• **Try to get people excited about what you are doing or thinking—a project, vacation, trip, and so on.** Think about how you can best present your thoughts and ideas to excite them. Use words and images that are colorful and compelling. Try to communicate your enthusiasm.

*I had an inspiration this morning. I suddenly saw the two of us in that sailboat, skimming across the waves, taking the wind hard in my face, and getting splashed with that cool water. The sun was bright, there wasn’t a cloud in the sky, and we were overflowing with excitement.*

*You know, I’ve always wanted to have a cherry tree in the yard. We can make that happen. I can see us picking out a sapling and finding the ideal spot to plant it. Imagine every year we can enjoy sharing one of the earliest and most beautiful signs of spring. And the cherries—I can just taste them.*

• **Try getting family members or friends to plan and carry out an activity together.** Take the lead. Try to identify a value or interest that you all have in common. Pick an activity based on that value, such as exercising, trying new foods, traveling to new places, and so on. Try to get them interested in participating. Increase your enthusiasm by
imagining how much fun, useful, or productive it will be. Then, share your visions with them. Try to make everyone feel that if you all get involved you can create a really exciting event.

As we were talking about that sailboat race, I realized that this is an interest that everyone in the room has, though none of us is a sailor. I have a fantastic idea. We could all go together to the river tomorrow morning and watch the boats. We could prepare picnic lunches and bring cushions and blankets. It will be a beautiful day, and sitting out in the breeze will be wonderful. We’ve all talked about how we should get outside more often. Now, we can spend time outdoors and have a great new experience, too!

DISENGAGING

Business and Professional Situations

Postponing

• When you need more time to prepare, delay a meeting or appointment until conditions are more favorable.

  I know, we expected to meet tomorrow at 9:00 A.M., but I’d prefer to wait until the next day. By then, I’ll have all the data you’re asking for.

• Do not insist that others meet with you if they are not ready or are under stress.

  It sounds like you’re in a difficult spot. Let me change your meeting until next Tuesday at 3:00 P.M.

Giving and Getting Feedback

• When a meeting or discussion is not going well, step back from the situation and try to change it.

  We’re having trouble making progress. I wonder if there’s another way we can work on this problem that’ll be more productive?
We’ve stopped listening to each other and are just repeating the same old arguments. Why don’t we spend some time looking for a different approach that we all can live with?

• **Try to mediate arguments or confrontations that you are not a part of.** Be the cool one when others feel upset or angry. Help defuse the tension, but acknowledge the legitimacy of others’ feelings.

Everyone’s talking all at once and no one’s really listening. Let’s go around the table and give everyone a chance to express an opinion one at a time.

**Changing the Subject**

• **In meetings, try not to react to caustic comments or irritations.** Use humor or other diversions to lessen tension, emotion, or conflict. When people focus on differences, emphasize areas of agreement and common goals to steer the subject in a positive direction.

It’s really clear that we both feel this issue is critical. We’ve done a lot of work listening to each other. We agree on many points and we’ve built up a lot of momentum. I can see us solving this issue successfully, beyond our expectations. Let’s put our heads together on another issue now and see how far we can go. I bet, we’ll hit our stride right away. When we come back to the issue you just brought up, nothing will get in our way.

• **Return to an earlier point, or start another line of discussion when energy decreases or people feel blocked and frustrated.**

You had an idea earlier that we didn’t pursue. I suggest that we go back to it now and return to this point later.

**Taking a Break**

• **When you feel yourself getting overloaded, tell the other person that you want a few minutes to work alone.**

I need to go back to my office and read your proposal. If you can give me about an hour, we can get back together and I’ll give you my decision.
• **Look for physical signs of fatigue or stress.**

    *I notice that we’re all out of coffee and it’s been over two hours since we started working. Let’s take a break for ten minutes.*

**Commercial Situations**

*Postponing*

• **Give yourself permission to change your mind and break or postpone an appointment.** This might be an appointment that you made to use a service or to call in a service provider. Delay the action to think it over. Do not commit yourself until after you have had a chance to reconsider thoroughly.

    *I’ve decided not to purchase additional insurance at this time. I need to step back and consult with my accountant first.*

• **Take as much time as you need to make decisions.** If someone tries to pressure or hurry you, say that you need time to decide and that you will contact them later.

    *I appreciate your following up with me, but I’m not ready to decide now. I’ll call you in a week. Please wait until you hear from me. (Be sure to follow through with your commitment.)*

**Giving and Getting Feedback**

• **If salespeople and customers are arguing, get involved and try to calm them down.** It will be good practice for you, and it may be helpful to them.

    *Yelling at each other isn’t getting you any closer to a solution. I suggest that the two of you back off and talk about what led up to this on both sides.*

• **Maintain distance by addressing others by their last names and asking them to do the same with you.** If people who try to sell you something become too familiar, keep the conversation impersonal. Over-personalizing is a common sales tactic.
Excuse me, but I don’t know your last name. My name is Ms. Strassel.

Pardon me. I did not get your last name when you introduced yourself.

**Changing the Subject**

- **Move to another topic or ask to see another item.** Do this if you need time to decide or if you are upset about the way people are treating you.

Incidentally, before I forget, I want to look at some glass items, too. Tell me what you have in that department.

While we’re here, tell me about your company. How long have you been in business?

**Taking a Break**

- **During a sales situation, excuse yourself.** Say that you want to get some air, take a walk, or see another display.

I’m going to walk around the store for a little while and think this over. I’ll be back in ten minutes or so. I’d like you to be available when I return.

**Family or Social Situations**

**Postponing**

- **Try not to argue or respond impatiently when others are unreasonable or provocative.** Disregard evaluative statements, and do not respond judgmentally. Express willingness to work on the issue, but only if everyone is calm and polite. Model the Behavior that you want others to use.

I suggest that we discuss this tomorrow morning when we’ve both had a chance to cool off. We’re so upset with each other right now that there’s no way we can agree, anyway.
Giving and Getting Feedback

• **Intervene in arguments.** Try to calm people down and help them deal with issues rationally. Avoid taking sides in the argument. Help the parties identify areas of agreement and specify areas of disagreement.

You and John agree that it’s important to limit the children’s television viewing to one hour per day. What you don’t agree on is what kinds of shows they should watch. I have a suggestion. Why don’t you both write down five shows that you think are suitable and see if any of your choices overlap? Those can be the programs that you let the kids watch.

Changing the Subject

• **Encourage people to focus on one issue at a time and return to the most difficult issues later.** Try to define optimal conditions for dealing with the most difficult issues. Suggest that people handle these issues after they have rested or had time to think them over.

We still haven’t resolved the issue of whether or not to sell the house and move to a smaller apartment. It’s such an important decision that we really should deal with it when we’re both fresh and alert. Tell me what happened in your big meeting today.

• **Stop heated or difficult discussions when they become painful or stressful.** Take a short “vacation.” If possible, do this with your partner. A joint excursion into a new topic will do wonders—it will cool you down and lead to creative breakthroughs.

Hey, let’s talk about the schedule for tomorrow. We’ve made some progress on the agenda today. Maybe if we look at the work ahead of us it will reduce the pressure.
Taking a Break

• Do not struggle to reach an immediate solution when you reach a block.

  *Let’s go for a walk and watch the snow fall. We can try to balance the checkbook again when we get back.*

• Recognize that intimacy may prevent you and another person from solving a serious problem together.

  *We’re too close to this and to each other to solve this problem without personal reflection—alone. Let’s take small breaks every 15 minutes and then come back to the problem together.*
In the Positive Power and Influence Program, we define positive influence as the ability to balance taking care of relationships and getting work done, or achieving objectives. When we prefer to be task focused and achieve objectives, we may neglect relationships. In addition, we may also have a very negative impact if we are too forceful and actually damage relationships. On the other hand, when we prefer to take care of relationships, the negative result can be chronically missed deadlines and underperforming on goals. The ideal is to understand our preference and then mitigate either our procrastination on tasks and goals due to the fear of damaging relationships, or our need to forcefully get the job done and the resultant damaging of relationships. This article will shed some light on our preferences by providing a little insight on how the brain works.

In 1997, two studies analyzed nine positron emission tomography (PET) studies. This technology was used prior to functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) but attained the same results of blood flow to activated parts of the brain. The first of the two studies was looking for similarly activated regions of the brain while doing a variety of tasks and they found that there were not many common regions used in the different tasks. The second study examined what happens if the brain is not doing a task. This was the first time a network of brain systems was observed when the brain was at rest.

In study after study, the default mode network (DMN) was noticed when participants were asked to rest after completing a task involving the task positive network (TPN). The default mode network (DMN) is the part of the brain that supports our social intelligence, meaning that when we are at rest from task-related thinking, or using the TPN, we think about our relationships with others. In fact, evolution has raised the need to be socially interactive to the same level as the need to be
physically safe, so it is essential to the survival of the human species that we are born with strong social needs.

Many neuroscience studies are conducted on research participants while they are undergoing functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) of the brain. In these studies, the participants are performing a task or playing a game while being scanned to see what sections of the brain are activated. When a part of the brain is activated, the fMRI image shows increased blood flow and oxygen changes in specific regions of the brain.

What this tells us is that if these two networks are negatively correlated, meaning that when one is turned on the other is turned off, then it is difficult to both achieve objectives and take care of relationships simultaneously. Understanding this is helpful when looking at those we need to influence and seeing that they are stuck in either the TPN or the DMN. Also, we can more easily identify those who prefer to operate in one of these networks most of the time. Using Disengaging tactics will enable others to shift neural networks when they are stuck. For example, if an unproductive team is only task focused and members are unhappy, using Disengaging: Giving and Getting Feedback will focus the discussion on relationship issues and how the team is working together.

In summary, to be effective at influencing, we need to both achieve goals and take care of relationships. If we find this difficult to do, we need to examine our own preference and then compensate by being mindful in unproductive situations. We can then choose how to handle the situation and potentially easily resolve the conflict at hand.
INTRODUCTION

Power is the potential you have to get things done or to make them happen. In your organization, your power—your potential—derives from many sources: expertise, experience, knowledge, reputation, position, perhaps sometimes your personality. Some of these power sources are personal, some are positional and many are a mix of the two. The POSITIVE POWER AND INFLUENCE® Program helps you identify how to use your influence skills to implement any aspect of your power. This is personal power. However, you may also be facing influence situations where positional power issues are present and important. Handling these well requires some careful consideration of the issues involved.

Positional power is neither positive nor negative. Its impact depends on how you use it. Whether you have positional power, or do not, you can use personal influence skills to neutralize, remove, or set aside positional power issues. However, even skillful influencers sometimes find themselves in situations requiring extra effort to resolve positional problems. These situations include:

• Influencing others who have more positional power than you do. Some people experience insecurity or blocks when dealing with their supervisors. In influence situations, these barriers can result in low impact or outright Avoiding. Even when you overcome your personal limitations, others may limit your effectiveness by “pulling rank” and using their positional power in negative ways.

• Influencing others who have less positional power than
you do. Building constructive relationships with your direct reports is fundamental to motivating and developing them. Their productivity and high-quality performance depend on being fully committed to carrying out their jobs. If you rely too heavily on positional power your direct reports may misinterpret your influence attempts as arbitrary, seeing use of position where there is none. If these conditions exist, both sides will experience an energy loss and an erosion of the working relationship.

• **Influencing others with equal positional power.** Influencing peers can lead to boundary conflicts, authority questions, and resistance over territory or turf. People may get caught up in defending their position instead of focusing on the Influence Objective. Appeals to higher authority may result, diluting both parties’ power in the situation.

**Positive influence requires that neither person lose total power or perceive they are losing it.** Positive power and influence involves meeting personal objectives and building or maintaining productive relationships. Both influencer and target should be as powerful—or more so—at the end of the influence attempt as they were at the beginning.

**Positive influence requires a power balance by definition.** The primary cause of influencer Avoiding or target resistance is the **actual or anticipated loss of power.**

• Influencers lose power if they fail to achieve their Influence Objectives.

• Influence targets lose power if the relationship is not maintained or strengthened.

• Both parties lose power if they fail to achieve the objective or do not maintain and perhaps weaken a positive relationship.
The total power each person has in an influence situation is the sum of their positional power and personal power.

For positive results to occur, the total power each person has must be balanced, even when their positional and personal power vary. Balancing total power can be accomplished by exercising either positional or personal power according to the situation.

- **When you have low positional power,** you can maintain or expand your total power by exercising your **personal** power—by exerting personal influence.

- **When you have high positional power,** you can step away from your positional power in the situation by exerting personal influence and/or you can enhance the target’s personal power.

- **When you and the target have equal positional power,** you can maintain or expand your positional power, work to balance both parties’ personal power, and/or agree that each party step away from their positions in any specific situation.

As an influencer, how might you maintain or expand positional power, especially when it has formal limits? How can personal influence skills help you use positional power more constructively? What role does planning play in creating a power balance?
MAINTAINING AND EXPANDING POSITIONAL POWER

Positional power is limited. The organization divides power and resources among individual positions to achieve its mission. Position or job descriptions provide a roadmap or template of how individual members of an organization should work together. Each job description authorizes a functional group or manager to conduct a specific aspect of organizational business. Delegation of power and authority by others is finite.

Individuals often place limits on their own positional power. While positional power is already finite and limited, many people do not use or claim all that is available to them. They may fear conflict with others, but more often they may not understand what behaviors support the positive use of positional power. Furthermore, certain value conflicts may exist in the organizational culture that prevent the full use of positional power. Many organizations, groups, and supervisors are ambivalent about how they should use their allocated or delegated positional power. The mixed message they get from others in the organization is that the use of positional power is risky or even negative. As a result, people are very careful about its use.

Influence skills support the positive use of positional power. It is possible to use all of your positional power to

![Diagram](image-url)
meet objectives and to build relationships to achieve positive influence goals. You may even be able to expand your positional power in productive ways. Consideration and open exploration of positional power problems will lead to a more effective organization as well as to greater personal achievement.

To maintain and expand positional power by claiming all that the organization has allocated:

- **Influence your managers to support you.** Ask them to:
  - Grant you the necessary authority to carry out assigned responsibilities.
  - Provide you with backup when conflicts arise.
  - Delegate tasks to you clearly and distance themselves appropriately while you do the work.
  - Give you constructive feedback on how well you have met your responsibilities.
  - Use a feedback process to clarify and expand positional power.

- **Influence your direct reports to claim the positional power allocated to them.** Practice the same principles you expect from your supervisors:
Grant your direct reports the necessary authority to carry out assigned responsibilities, and provide them with backup when conflicts arise.

Delegate tasks to them clearly and distance yourself appropriately while they do the work.

Give constructive feedback to them on how well they have met their responsibilities.

Use a feedback process to clarify and expand positional power.

Influence peers to clarify roles and negotiate or temporarily set them aside. This will allow you to:

- Renegotiate roles as the situation and the relationship change.
- Recognize each party’s authority.
- Respect boundaries.
- Keep yourself involved in important decisions and other key events.
- Use a feedback process to clarify and expand positional power.

ENHANCING PERSONAL POWER

When your positional power remains low even after you have attempted to expand it, enhance your personal power.

Performance skill and reputation—a positive influence history—enhance personal power. By using effective influence skills you will enhance your personal power. Your reputation as a fair and effective influencer will strengthen your personal power and make other people want to deal with you fairly. Their experience of your positive actions will help you build a personal power base as strong or stronger than power based on position.
PLANNING FOR POSITIONAL POWER SITUATIONS

Planning is the key success factor in resolving positional power issues. Conduct planning Steps 1, 2, and 3 of the Five-Step Planning Process.

- **Step 1: Clarify Your Influence Objectives.** If you have not claimed all the positional power allocated to you, this step will help you take maximum advantage of your authority. Is your objective compatible with your authority and responsibility in the situation? If not, expand your positional power by clarifying your role, or by renegotiating or moving beyond it through the use of personal power and influence.

- **Step 2: Choose the Best Style for the Objective (BSO).** When using the Diagnostic Checklist to answer the questions for each Style, keep the positional power issues clearly in mind. In Persuading, does your job description make you the expert in the situation? If so, can you use your position of official expert to your advantage? In Asserting, does your position give you control of useful and appropriate incentives and pressures? In Bridging, has your use or nonuse of positional power created an emotional problem in your relationship with others? If so, you may want to disclose to build greater personal trust or involve to encourage the target to share feelings. In Attracting, positional power problems offer a major opportunity to find common ground (synergy, shared
aspirations, common experience, and so on) as a means of equalizing different positions around a single challenge.

- **Step 3: Construct an Influence Style Action Plan.** At this stage, plan necessary actions to prepare the groundwork for your influence attempt. Preliminaries may include:
  
  - **Verifying delegated power with a supervisor:** detailing both parties’ understanding of the extent and limits of roles; seeking to balance authority with responsibility; maintaining a proper degree of independence in the situation, and so on.
  
  - **Allocating positional power to direct reports:** ensuring that you are giving appropriate authority to others so that they can meet responsibilities; dealing with issues they may have with your positional power; getting information about how positional issues involving third parties may be affecting your subordinates’ performance; and helping them resolve these issues positively without using you as a go-between or enforcer, and so on.
  
  - **Clarifying roles with peers:** reviewing territory, boundaries, and ground rules; renegotiating roles when necessary; contracting for continued recognition and support of your authority and responsibility, and so on.

**SUMMARY**

Positive power and influence—whether personal, positional, or both—requires you to balance meeting your objectives with maintaining productive working relationships. In situations where positional power issues are present and significant, you can maximize your positive influence and the results that you achieve by working to balance the power of each person involved—including yourself.
INTRODUCTION

You are ready to take more responsibility for your own learning. After the Program is over, you will be working on your own. New skills are vulnerable and you will need to nourish them carefully as you make the transition from the classroom back to work. Most learning declines quickly after a workshop, but we do not want this to happen to you. We hope that your results will tip the other way—that you will become a stronger and more effective influencer as time goes on. You can make this happen by continuing to practice and use your skills.

You have already begun the self-development process. During the Program, you have enriched your understanding of positive influence and have begun to practice new skills. You have set learning goals and made some choices about what to work on and with whom. In some exercises, you probably felt successful. In others, you probably felt uncomfortable with your grasp of the concepts or your ability to use them. We expect this. Both types of experience—success and failure—are important to your continued development as an influencer.

The key to successful self-development is ongoing experiential learning. The POSITIVE POWER AND INFLUENCE® Program uses an experiential learning process. You test and refine new skills as you apply them. By carefully planning your influence attempt, consciously applying your skills, and thoughtfully researching the results, you can revise your learning goals and plan for the next round of application. This process will accelerate and support your growth as an influencer.
influencer. You learn how to learn about positive influence in the process of influence itself.

Your success will depend on continued experiential learning in real-life situations. Skills fade without practical application: “If you don’t use ’em, you’ll lose ’em.” This reading discusses how to sustain the experiential learning process after the Program is over.

SUCCESS FACTORS IN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

When you return to work, you will face the challenge of choosing appropriate situations for practicing influence skills. These situations will range in difficulty. Some will be easy situations in which your chances of success will be high. Others will be difficult situations in which your chances of success will be lower. The perception of an influence situation as easy or
difficult is highly personal. What one person may think of as an easy situation, another person may think of as extremely difficult, stressful, or demanding.

You can determine the relative difficulty of an influence situation by assessing two factors: external risk and internal stress. By understanding and evaluating these factors, you can assess your chances of success in influencing others.

- **External risk depends on the personal stake you have in the situation.** If your personal stake or investment in the situation is small—if you have little to gain or lose—your external risk is low. If you have a lot to gain or lose, your external risk is high. You can determine your degree of external risk by analyzing the situation, measuring the gains to be made by reaching your objective, and assessing the degree of personal power you will gain or lose based on the result.

- **Internal stress depends on your discomfort in using the Style.** In the Track exercises, you developed personal data on how you feel when performing each Style. You identified specific barriers—skill gaps, value conflicts, and blocks—that interfered with your performance. Since you performed these exercises in the relative safety of the workshop environment, your external risk was low. There was little or nothing to lose if you performed them poorly. Internal stress caused most of the difficulties you may have experienced.

Be realistic about the influence situations you will face. Carefully assess your external risk and internal stress. Assessing your external risk will help you determine the benefits or potential gains to be achieved by conducting the influence attempt. Assessing your internal stress will help you determine the costs or difficulties involved in conducting the influence attempt. You can then do a traditional cost-benefit analysis to decide whether to go ahead with your influence attempt or find a better situation where you can practice.
HIGH-RISK SITUATIONS

If you face a high-risk situation early in your development, **disengage from it!**

- **Defer acting until you feel more comfortable using the Style.** This will occur sooner than you think. As you gain experience and skill in using the Styles and Behaviors, your stress will diminish. The number of situations that you find moderately but not highly stressful will increase.

- **Assess risk more objectively over time.** The personal stake that you have in a situation may not change, but your level of self-confidence in handling the situation will increase. In some cases, you will attain a degree of detachment from the situation, since you know that there are many optional ways of handling it. As a result, your personal stake in the situation may even decrease.

- **Include risk management as part of your plan.** You will learn to moderate risk by carefully analyzing the influence situation and setting more manageable, achievable objectives. You will learn to think more tactically about applying influence and become more adept at Disengaging to manage tension. Consulting and rehearsing with others will have a dramatic impact on your risk level and allow you to see the situation more objectively.

MODERATE-RISK SITUATIONS

Moderate-stress/moderate-risk situations are the most productive for experiential learning. When honing your influence skills, choose situations that are neither too easy nor too difficult. By picking situations where your stress and risk are moderate, you can challenge your abilities without endangering yourself. You have already engaged in moderate-stress/moderate-risk situations in the Program, and you should seek additional opportunities after the Program concludes.

Here is how you can make the most of your experiential learning efforts in moderate-stress/moderate-risk situations:
• **Plan your influence attempt.** Use the Five-Step Planning Process to provide structure and to support your continuing development. Rigorous and disciplined planning is important for sharpening your influence skills. Planning will help you to identify various Style issues and force you to consider Style alternatives. It will enable you to choose the most appropriate Style for the situation, given your current skill level.

The previous readings on the Five-Step Planning Process will give you information on dealing with moderate-stress/moderate-risk influence situations. The five steps will help you to control your risk and stress levels and get the most out of the experiential learning process. Once you master the moderate-stress/moderate-risk situations, you will be able to try your skills in more difficult situations.

• **Apply your skills.** Once you are in the influence situation, focus and concentrate on your performance, try new Behaviors, and stretch the limits of the Style.

• **Research the results.** After your influence attempt, assess the actual results against your performance. This will help you to determine the value or benefit of correct Style use. It will reveal shortcomings to remedy in your next influence attempt, as well as constructive and practical ways to modify your behavior for greater success.

• **Reset your learning goals.** You can make decisions about future self-development activities more confidently after you have obtained results, identified your shortcomings, and specified ways to improve your performance.

**LOW-RISK SITUATIONS**

As you engage in moderate-stress/moderate-risk situations, you will notice specific Styles and Behaviors requiring repetitive drill and practice. Moderate-stress/low-risk situations provide perfect opportunities for this type of skill development. You have engaged in some moderate-stress/low-risk situations in the Program, such as the Track exercises.
We ignore hundreds of potential moderate-stress/low-risk situations daily. Either the situations themselves are not important, or we find ways to meet our needs elsewhere. Perhaps we fear the consequences of failure, or we feel too tired or distracted to act.

Here are some examples of moderate-stress/low-risk situations:

- **People who are chronically rude or discourteous.** A clerk at a local store who is always rude or uncooperative provides a perfect opportunity for skill practice. You have nothing to lose—how could this person’s behavior possibly get any worse? Use positive influence to change the way this person treats you.

- **Bureaucrats who treat you impersonally.** All of us make assumptions about what is acceptable behavior in certain situations, based on our experience or arbitrary rules set by others. Rarely do we question our assumptions. For example, do you assume that a queue for a ticket agent at an airport check-in counter always proceeds in order of arrival? Do you think that an express checkout line at a supermarket strictly enforces the “number of items” rule? Simple observation will tell you that these assumptions are not always true. People bend the rules. Use positive influence to get treated well, according to your needs.

- **Annoying everyday situations in which you routinely suppress your needs.** Lack of experience using personal power and influence can increase your sense of powerlessness in many situations. Practice your positive influence skills on people who talk during a movie, smoke in a designated non-smoking area, or cut ahead of you in a checkout line. You will suddenly recognize that you can change the little annoyances that whittle away at your energy during the day.

**LOW-STRESS SITUATIONS**

We have talked about practicing influence skills in low-risk situations. What about practicing influence skills in low-stress situations?
Most participants long for the day when they will respond automatically to influence situations with the right Style. This will happen soon if you continue to implement the experiential learning cycle.

Low-stress situations provide good opportunities to internalize your learning and make it automatic. The most important point to remember in low-stress situations is to **manage risk**.

- **If your risk is low, consider pursuing a more ambitious objective.** When you can use the Best Style for the Objective (BSO) comfortably and confidently, you are approaching a level of competence that supports greater risk-taking. If you have chosen an undemanding objective, be alert for the possibility that you are Avoiding—taking the easy way out. By limiting your objective, you may be cheating yourself of the opportunity to ask for more or to develop a more constructive relationship with the influence target.

- **If your risk is high, use the Five-Step Planning Process.** Careful and detailed planning will help you to control risk. Consulting and rehearsing your Action Plan with others will enhance your chances of success. Beware of the tendency to reduce your expectations in high-risk/low-stress situations. This would be Avoiding.

**SUMMARY**

The key to continuing self-development is ongoing experiential learning. This requires choosing appropriate situations for practicing influence skills. The appropriateness of a practice situation depends on two factors: your external risk and internal stress. Keep in mind that:

- High-risk situations are not appropriate for practicing influence skills. Disengage from these situations until you have achieved Style mastery.

- Moderate-risk situations are best for practicing influence skills.

- Low-risk situations are good for repetitive skill and practice.
• Low-stress situations provide good opportunities to internalize your learning and make it automatic. If your risk is too low in these situations, consider increasing it. If your risk is too high, consider decreasing it.

To make the most of your experiential learning efforts in moderate-stress/moderate-risk situations:

• **Plan** your influence attempt, using the Five-Step Planning Process.

• **Apply** the Style and stretch its limits.

• **Research** the results of your influence attempt to determine the value or benefit of correct Style use.

• **Reset your learning goals** for your next influence attempt.
I am a runner. Although I have been running for a few years, I am still in training: my best results are still ahead of me. I run for fitness and for fun. I like to run in different places to get perspectives on both the settings and the people in them. I like to run in my own backyard to get perspectives on myself. Though I do not run to reduce stress like some people do, running does shape me up to handle stress in other areas of my life.

I like to compete in races, but not too seriously. When I do compete, I am usually not in the front of the pack but in the “late-middle” or “early-back.” I feel good that I am a solid middle in my age group.

I enjoy the process of running as well as the results. I like to play with the numbers, competing with myself from day-to-day and year-to-year. I suffer the pain of running, sometimes gladly, because I know I am feeling the pain of improvement. At other times, I know that my pain or injuries result from carelessness, overreaching, or incorrect performance.

Most beginning runners do not realize that they will continually face new barriers as they improve their speed and distance. If they had realized how hard running would be, they might never have started running in the first place. Veteran runners, like me, know that facing new obstacles is part of the process. When trouble comes, it means going back to basics: slowing down, observing form, doing new drills, or cross-training. In short, it means revisiting the practice routines I did as a beginner.

If you’re never scared or embarrassed or hurt, it means you never take any chances.

Julia Sorel
Besides being a runner, I am an influencer. As with running, I am still in training: my best influence results are still ahead of me. I use influence skills to achieve serious results and for the pure enjoyment of it. I influence in my workplace and in as many other settings as I can. As with running, I like to learn about the settings, the people in them, and myself.

As an influencer, I try not to compare myself with others too often. When I do, I notice that I am usually as successful or sometimes more successful than they are. I do not lose as much energy as some people do or experience as much stress. My speed and efficiency as an influencer are good.

To me, the influence process is as enjoyable as the running process. I keep track of my results, using a log modeled after my running log. (Actually, I modeled my running log after my Personal Learning Journal, then added some refinements of my own.) Keeping a record helps me see the progress I have made over the years.

As with running, I have yet to reach my potential as an influencer. Just when I think I have influence all figured out, a new situation arises where I get stuck. Some of my old blocks and limitations resurface. Like a runner facing a setback, I go back to basics. I revisit the Five-Step Planning Process. I call friends who attended the Program to get their advice. While we sometimes get together to practice and rehearse, a phone conversation with them is usually enough preparation. I also reread my Program materials and review my Personal Learning Journal pages.

Over the years, I have discovered that the training involved in becoming a runner and an influencer have a lot in common. Many of the principles I have learned as a runner apply equally to influence. Perhaps these principles will help you as you learn to influence more effectively.

- **Do it regularly.** It is hard to motivate yourself to practice new skills regularly. However, if you do not practice often, you will lose your skills. Studies show that people who run several days a week—rain or shine, cold or hot, during vacations or work time—make more progress than people who exercise sporadically. The performance of runners may vary from day-to-day, but their long-term progress is greater.
The greatest threat to your influence skills is not to use them. As with your running muscles, you must use your influence muscles routinely to keep them in shape. As a runner, the longest break I can take without having start-up problems is about a week. The same is true for my influence skills.

- **Easy does it.** Be patient. Try not to overreach with overly ambitious goals. As a runner, do not expect to win a 10K race the first time you compete. As an influencer, do not expect to resolve difficult influence problems on your first try.

Taking too large a risk, as a runner or as an influencer, may lead to injuries. On a psychological level, failure to succeed or perform well can result in a serious loss of confidence. You may have to start over by relearning an old principle you have forgotten. Or, you may have to stay off the road for awhile until you can restore your skill and self-confidence.

It takes time and experience to develop influence skills. The safest way to do this, without risking injury, is to choose situations involving low to moderate risk. Continued practice in these situations will condition you to deal with a variety of demands and circumstances.

- **Get advice.** Just as runners benefit from coaching, so do influencers. When preparing for an influence situation, ask others for advice. Share your plan with them and conduct a dress rehearsal to get some performance coaching. If possible, ask your coach to go with you to the influence event to observe your performance. Get plenty of feedback afterward, regardless of how well you think you did. It is hard to stand back and objectively assess an influence situation you are part of. A third party can provide the objectivity and perspective you need to evaluate the situation and your performance.

- **Practice.** In addition to rehearsing Critical Influence Situations, do a lot of basic skill practice and drill. Find low-stress situations to do a Style workout. Set Influence Objectives for situations that you would normally just move through. Choose a Style to practice—not just the
Best Style for the Objective, but any Style you wish to improve. Try “climbing some hills”—high-stress situations involving low risk. Give it all you’ve got. Disengage if stress becomes too great or you do not get the results you seek. Back off, catch your breath, and try again.

- **Go for distance, then speed.** Endurance is a key factor both in running and influencing. You must be willing to stay with your influence attempt, instead of bailing out when the going gets tough. To develop influence stamina, develop a basic skill level for each Style. During the influence attempt, go the distance by starting over, repeating yourself, reemphasizing a point, cleaning up your performance, Disengaging, trying again, and so on. If you persevere, you will eventually meet your objective. You may be the last person in the pack, but you will eventually finish the race. Many people run out of energy too soon and give up. Once you have developed the stamina to complete your influence attempts, you can then work on increasing your speed.

- **Wear the right shoes.** Shoes are your most important piece of running equipment. They should be comfortable, fit well, and be the right shape for your foot. An influencer’s shoes are the four Influence Styles. In each situation, one Style fits best. Using the wrong Style, like wearing the wrong shoes, may get you to the finish line but may be extremely painful. Become proficient in choosing the Best Style for the Objective. Practice by diagnosing situations where you will not be the influencer. Watch what happens when someone else uses the wrong Style. Consider which Style you would have chosen if you were that person.

- **Watch and learn from others.** There is a lot more influence going on around you than there is running—the world is filled with both good and bad examples of it. Become a student of the sport. As a runner, I always learn a lot by watching other runners’ forms and listening to their feet. A smooth run in good form is virtually soundless; clomping feet means wasted energy. I try to imitate the good in what I see and hear. As an influencer, I watch and listen to the Styles people use. I notice how smooth people are, how much energy they expend or conserve, and then add the good qualities I see to my performance.
• **Cross-train.** Runners use pools, skates, and weights (or machines) to condition the muscles that they do not use when running. Similarly, successful influencers develop a wide range of competencies to augment their influence skills. Training in presentation skills, problem-solving, meeting management, or other influence-related disciplines can make you a better influencer. In turn, viewing other disciplines in the context of personal influence can enhance your understanding and practice of those activities as well.

• **Concentrate.** It is difficult to do two tasks at once and do a first-rate job. When I am running, I cannot hold a conversation and still concentrate on my form. This also is true of influence. If ringing phones, a busy environment, or worrisome thoughts distract me, I cannot maintain the self-awareness necessary to develop my skills and use them well. Furthermore, such distractions make it difficult to hear my influence target, and listening is an important part of influence. Influence drains my energy enough without also having to deal with noise, interruptions, and other people’s demands. Find a quiet place to conduct your influence attempts and clear your mind of distractions as much as possible.

• **If there is pain—STOP!** People who believe in the myth, “no pain, no gain” often get injured. Pain is not healthy for runners or for influencers. While it is normal to experience stress when developing influence skills, try to stay at moderate stress. Overdoing it can lead to failure and reinforce your blocks. Working through a painful situation may demand so much psychological energy that you perform poorly. Causing your target to experience pain also will have a negative impact. Disengage to manage tension.

• **Eat right and sleep enough.** Both runners and influencers need energy to perform well. The healthier you are, the better you will do. Try not to influence when you feel tired, hungry, stressed out, or in a bad mood. Postpone your influence attempt until you feel closer to the top of your form.
• **Watch out for traffic and dogs.** Every runner knows that dangers lurk everywhere. There are drivers who like to scare runners, and dogs that love to chase moving objects. There are unseen dangers in influence situations, too. For example, third parties who eavesdrop or ask to sit in on your influence attempt are potentially destructive. They may want to “stir up the pot,” get in the way, and cause trouble. Influence them to cooperate, be silent, or leave.

• **Set new training goals.** Runners always find new goals to set for themselves—going faster, farther, improving their form, and so on. Influencers can find new goals to set, too—for example, digging deeper when Bridging, or finding stronger incentives and pressures. To a large extent, influence involves dealing with the unexpected—that is why influence skills are important to have in the first place. Events can evolve in surprising ways and unanticipated developments can occur. Continued goal-setting can help strengthen your skills so that you can deal with surprises. Keep a strict practice plan in mind for your low-risk practice opportunities. Critical Influence Situations will take care of themselves.

• **Something always hurts.** New runners experience shin-splints, side-stitches, and muscle aches. New influencers experience awkwardness, anxiety, and stress. Certain aspects of your skills may be weak, ineffective, and need additional work. Expect to feel uncomfortable for awhile when learning influence skills. Be encouraged: you have an advantage over other people because you have a repertoire of skills that they lack. You are progressing and improving your influence abilities while others are stuck in unproductive patterns of behavior. Your new skills, however imperfect, will give you an edge.

• **Enjoy the scenery.** A benefit of running is seeing the country from a unique perspective. Planes, trains, and automobiles do not give you as good a view as running does, nor the time to savor it. Influence skills help you see normal human interaction in a unique way, too. For example, you might start noticing how people use and misuse their energy. You might begin to recognize the
predominant Styles of your co-workers, family, and friends. You might see the positive and negative effects of different Styles in different situations. Influence skills increase your awareness of the people and situations around you in a way that business as usual does not. Enjoy it. It is part of the payoff of influence training.

• **Do a warm-up.** All runners stretch to increase flexibility before a workout. They also do aerobic exercises to warm up their muscles and get the blood flowing. The Five-Step Planning Process, particularly the consulting and rehearsing steps, will warm you up for your influence attempts. If you lack the time or resources to conduct a formal consultation and rehearsal, do the best you can. Complete the five steps, even if it means rehearsing by yourself in front of a mirror.

• **Become a coach.** Everywhere I go, I meet runners who love to talk about running, or people who want to run and need advice on getting started. As an influencer, you will find people who want to know what you are doing and learn about influence for themselves. (These may or may not be people who have attended the Program.) You will always find people with influence problems. Listen carefully to people who complain about difficulties at work or problems they are having with others. Listen for the disappointment or anguish they feel when others will not cooperate with them. These are influence situations that you can help resolve. Share some simple ideas on how they might change the situation. Join with graduates of the Program to practice or exchange advice on upcoming influence events. (Teachers often learn more than their students do and they learn from their students as well. Many teach the very subjects that they most need to learn about themselves.)
• **Have fun and enjoy the payoffs.** Influence, like running, is hard work. If there is no payoff, you will not stay with it. Fortunately, influence has many payoffs. There are the positive results of your critical influence attempts to enjoy. There are the smaller rewards that come from practice, such as expressing a vision without laughing, or stating a pressure without skipping three heartbeats. Strive to bring humor to your labor. Do not take yourself or others too seriously. We are all in this for the long haul, so make influence a labor of love instead of a labor of pain and hardship.
INTRODUCTION

Group meetings present a major opportunity to use your power and influence skills positively. You can direct a group’s concentrated attention toward your objectives in a relatively short period of time. You can address issues or objections in front of all concerned parties. Your investment of time and energy in preparing for and participating in meetings has a high potential return.

Group meetings also present risks in using your power and influence skills positively. You may have difficulty achieving your goals. In groups, many complex interactions occur that you may not be able to anticipate or control. Time and space limitations may restrict your ability to maneuver. Person-to-person skills that work well in two-person meetings sometimes fail in groups. People tend to adapt their individual behavior to group norms, making personal contact difficult to establish. You may be driven off-purpose and off-style.

Faced with these complexities, you may fall into old behavioral patterns. In meetings where confrontation and risk-taking are not supported, you may lose sight of your original objective and lapse into bureaucratic responses or “group think.” In meetings where conflict is high or mismanaged, you may fall into the use of negative power strategies, or use your positional power without regard for personal relationships.

These barriers can be difficult to overcome. You could choose to limit your influence attempts to small congenial groups or to other situations that you can control. However,
you are avoiding when you simply withdraw from meetings that are mundane, low in energy, or unproductive. You also avoid when you passively tolerate digression, unfocused argument, or other people’s use of negative power. Failure to take personal responsibility reduces the productivity of any meeting you attend.

It is unrealistic to avoid meetings if you hope to widen the scope of your influence within your organization and to heighten the impact of your personal power. Your success as a professional depends on your ability to interact with a variety of people at all organizational levels. You are probably expected to attend meetings; working in groups may be part of your job description. Perhaps your primary contact with important people in your organization occurs in meetings.

In this reading, we will suggest how to use influence skills in meetings in ways that minimize risk and allow you to take actions appropriate to your skill level. We will discuss how to use influence skills to manage the meeting process. We will suggest ways to gain the support of others. At the very least, you will find that taking an active part in meetings will make them more interesting.

Any committee is only as good as the most knowledgeable, determined, and vigorous person on it. There must be someone who provides the flame.

Lady Bird Johnson

**USING THE FIVE-STEP PLANNING PROCESS**

As a practitioner of Positive Power and Influence, you have a number of skills that will cut through the complex dynamics that can make meetings unproductive. Approach a meeting as you would any influence situation, using the Five-Step Planning Process to prepare for it. (See the previous readings on each of the five steps.)

**Step 1: Set Your Influence Objectives**

A specific Influence Objective will help you stay on course and measure your progress—important elements of success in meetings. When setting your Influence Objectives, remember to:
• **Set at least one Influence Objective.** If you have no objective when the meeting begins, listen to what is happening and develop an objective from what you hear. If you cannot think of a concrete objective of your own, do what you can to help others meet their objectives. You may conclude that you are not needed at the meeting. In this case, your Influence Objective may be to disengage from it.

• **Make your Influence Objective realistic and attainable.** Meetings often fail because people’s expectations are too high and unrealistic. Focus on the feasible progress that the group can make and ways in which the group can serve you best. If you need someone to participate with you in an activity outside the meeting, make that your objective. If the group needs to solve a problem or reach a decision, make that your objective. Be specific about defining the end point or conclusion you expect to reach.

• **Make your objective clear and specific, so that each person knows what you expect.** Let others in the meeting know how they might help you achieve your objective. Try to ensure that no group member feels left out or bored; this person could create problems for you as a disinterested observer or a devil’s advocate.

• **Set secondary objectives if necessary.** You may have to develop secondary objectives that relate to your primary objective, separate objectives for different individuals or factions in the group, or separate objectives for different stages of the meeting agenda. These objectives should meet the same criteria as your primary objective: they should be realistic, attainable, clear, and specific.

**Step 2: Choose the Best Style for the Objective (BSO)**

Group meetings are more complicated than two-person meetings because you have multiple influence targets. If you target everybody at the same time using the same Influence Style, you may fail to influence the key person who can best help you achieve an objective. To choose the BSO, do the following:
• **For each objective, identify one person in the meeting who will be your primary target.** This should be the person who can best help you achieve the objective. Think of what you would do if you were alone with that person. Analyze the situation carefully. Use the Diagnostic Checklist to choose the BSO for him or her.

• **Consider who are the important stakeholders in the situation.** Who might support or resist your efforts to achieve your objective, and why? Who are the opinion leaders, whose position on an issue might influence others? Consider also the value of a coalition—who might be willing to ally themselves with you?

• **Determine a BSO for each objective that you set.** If you have more than one objective, you may need to choose a different BSO for each one. Determine who will be your primary target for each objective, and use the Diagnostic Checklist to choose the BSO for each person.

**Step 3: Construct an Influence Style Action Plan**

When developing your Action Plan for a group meeting, make sure to:

• **Sequence your objectives.** It is often necessary to win support sequentially or in stages. Plan to influence your primary target first. When you have won this person over, plan to move to your next objective and the primary target for it. Attempt to form coalitions without alienating those who are not a part of them.

• **Assess the impact your BSO will have on others in the meeting.** Besides your primary influence target, you also may have to influence this person’s manager, colleagues, and other decision makers or opinion leaders. Using the Diagnostic Checklist, determine whether your BSO is appropriate for these individuals and make appropriate adjustments. It may be necessary to plan a follow-up Style for each objective to bring others to your point of view.
• Prepare an Action Plan for each objective. Plan to raise related objectives in logical order or deal with them in an order appropriate to priority, time limits, and group energy. You may want to modify one of your plans to make it more compatible with another. For example, one objective may suggest an Asserting approach and another Attracting. It may serve your overall needs to address the Attracting issue first to unify the group and to set an optimistic tone before tackling the tougher issue. Then, you might use Positive Evaluation and Incentives while Asserting, to capitalize on whatever positive energy resulted from Attracting.

Step 4: Consult with Others

The next step is to troubleshoot your Action Plan with a consultant. Your consultant should be someone who knows your target(s), is familiar with the situation, and/or is familiar with the Situational Influence Model. It may be someone who will be attending the meeting and could become a valuable ally if involved first as your consultant. Having such allies in meetings can provide you with powerful coalitions. Review with your consultant the work you did for Steps 1 through 3. Seek input on your objectives, your BSO, and the sequence in which you plan to address each topic in the meeting. Given the results of the consultation, modify your Action Plan if you feel it is necessary.

Step 5: Rehearse

The final step is to rehearse your Action Plan. You can do a trial run in front of a mirror, mentally visualize the meeting process, or role play the meeting with your consultant or someone else from your organization who can convincingly play the role of your primary influence target. (By including this person in your rehearsal, you may be able to form a coalition with him or her!)

If you will be attending the meeting with others in your organization or on your project team, consider conducting Step 4 and Step 5 of the Planning Process with them. More
information on team preparation is provided below and on the next few pages.

**ORGANIZING YOUR TEAM**

In some cases, you may be attending a meeting with other members of your department, project team, committee, or task force. Your group might have to make a presentation to management, review a project for a client, or make a sales call to another organization. Assuming that you are the spokesperson for your team and the key influencer, it is a good idea to call a meeting with your teammates prior to the big meeting. In the team meeting, you should:

- **Clarify your role:** You are the key influencer—one spokesperson for your group is enough! Make sure that each person, regardless of positional power, knows that he or she will play a supporting role under your direction and understands how to best carry out that role. You may need to use your influence skills to accomplish this activity.

- **Clarify others’ roles:** Each member of your team is likely to have a useful role to play in the upcoming meeting: technical support, subject matter expertise, organizational endorsement (carrying the flag), and so on. In some cases you may have to negotiate these roles. This will be a good investment in your success no matter how long it takes, since confusion about roles during the meeting may undermine your efforts to accomplish your objective. Individuals without roles to play should not attend the meeting. Idle minds will find mischief unavoidable.

- **Drop the deadweight.** If anyone who does not have a functional role wishes to attend the meeting, suggest that they do not. This includes managers. Your most important use of influence skills may be to convince your manager not to come to the meeting. Besides the danger of taking over the meeting entirely, a manager without a solid functional role to play under your direction is a loose cannon—someone who may unintentionally sabotage your Action Plan with positional power.
- **Use your Influence Style Action Plan to prepare team members for the meeting.** The Five-Step Planning Process provides a useful framework for the design of your team meeting. Review with the team the work you did for Steps 1 through 3. Conduct Step 4 (Consult with Others) and Step 5 (Rehearse) with the team to get their participation in preparing for the meeting. Invite their input and arrive at an agreement on the Action Plan and how each person will contribute to its execution.

- **Ask team members to pay close attention to each attendee’s behavior and contribution during the meeting.** You alone, as the primary influencer, will be unlikely to register all the subtleties of others’ Influence Behavior, but your team members can do so easily. They can then share their observations with you during breaks.

- **Use the Situational Influence Model to coach team members.** First, the Model provides you with a simple framework for coaching and preparing team members to carry out their roles in the meeting. (For example, you might use Asserting to state your expectations of each person’s behavior.) Second, you might brief team members on your Step 3 Action Plan. This briefing might include a discussion of the Best Styles you selected and your “Core Style Statements.” Sharing this information may promote additional alignment and purpose among all team members.

- **Set guidelines for Disengaging.** Many complications can occur in group meetings that may prevent you from attaining your Influence Objective. (Some people believe that the number of potential complications grows exponentially with group size.) Prior to the big meeting, come to an agreement with your team on the conditions in which you will disengage. Decide which Tactics to use. If your team acknowledges and anticipates the possibility of Disengaging, they will likely feel less pressure and be much better prepared.

  When and if complications arise, disengage with your team and caucus to clear up misunderstandings, communicate insights and suggestions, and so on. Use the principles
and tactics of Disengaging: maintain control, signal a return, do not avoid. *Taking a Break* is usually the most appropriate tactic to use when Disengaging from group meetings.

A caucus or break is usually an excellent opportunity for team members to share information they have gathered about others’ roles, Influence Behaviors, and underlying needs or concerns.

• **After the meeting, debrief.** Do not miss this valuable opportunity for team building and personal research. What did you learn? What aspects of your planning were confirmed during the meeting? What, if anything, caught you by surprise? How will you use this experience to be more effective in planning for and participating in your next team meeting?

**GAINING THE SUPPORT OF OTHERS**

In some cases, you may be dealing with more than one person on the target’s side. For example, you may be meeting alone with someone else’s group or team. Or, you may be expecting a one-on-one meeting, but arrive to find that your influence target has brought along some supporters. Do not be intimidated; the preparation you have done for the meeting will give you an edge. You have a powerful set of influence skills, flexibility is in your favor, and above all, you have a plan! You may find that these conditions alone will give you the authority to make the meeting productive. People may look to you for leadership.

Whether you are dealing with one or more targets, your goals should be to:

• **Share ownership of the meeting.** If you have called the meeting, you are usually in a far better position than the target to influence the proceedings. Do not take this for granted, however, by simply expecting others to follow your lead or to submit to your positional power. Nothing destroys a meeting faster than people realizing that their needs are unlikely to be met.
To gain the positive participation of others, share ownership of the meeting. Allow for other peoples’ goals and objectives to be met. Adopt the attitude that you, like the others, are a participant. This will help you avoid the temptation to use negative power. Support others in accepting responsibility for the meeting’s process and outcome. Find ways to encourage their participation as well as your own. This will provide a climate in which personal influence can flourish.

• **Take an active role in meetings that others call.** When you are invited to meetings, do you assume that there is little for you to do except to listen or, if called upon, to answer? Out of boredom, do you invent unproductive ways of making things more interesting, such as arguing for the sport of it (playing devil’s advocate)? Do you decide to drop out of the discussion entirely to covertly read your e-mail or daydream?

You can rechannel this normal coping activity into more positive outlets. Be active rather than passive. Make the meeting an influence opportunity. It is entirely appropriate to fulfill the role for which you were invited and, at the same time, work to meet your own needs. Assume, until told differently, that the target desires your full participation. Look for opportunities to help facilitate the meeting’s process or make it work better for you. Clarify your position on what meeting outcomes you would like to achieve.

**MANAGING THE MEETING PROCESS**

When we participate in meetings, most of us focus on content—the information to communicate, the decisions to make, and the next steps to take. Unless the meeting is going badly, we do not ordinarily pay much attention to process—time and logistics, how the group is going about its task, who is doing what to whom, and emotional and interpersonal issues.

Here are some key areas of process management to address in the meeting:
• **Meeting purpose:** Make sure to state discussion topics clearly and work to ensure everyone understands them. Listen carefully to topics raised by others and test your own understanding when necessary (see agenda management below). Keep your action plan in mind when announcing your intentions. Your BSO will dictate how to define the purpose of the meeting. For example, if your BSO is Bridging, you might ask for help in clarifying the purpose of the meeting, or ask for others’ views on how to approach the issues. If your BSO is Asserting, you might state your expectations and offer incentives to the group for meeting them.

• **Meeting roles:** Clarify the specific contribution that you expect each person to make: information, experience, expertise, meeting facilitation, consultation, problem-solving, troubleshooting, help in reaching consensus, and so on. Consider how the topics under discussion might involve the organizational responsibilities or concerns of others. Acknowledge and clarify how each topic might affect individual contributions in the meeting.

• **Time management:** Begin with a time limit and outline a schedule for the meeting. Remind group members of time agreements and renegotiate times when necessary. This may require you to use Asserting as a support Style for your BSO.

• **Agenda management:** Begin the meeting by getting agreement on an agenda of topics. If there is more than one topic, subdivide the time, allotting sufficient time for each subject. Stay on track, check time agreements, and renegotiate times if necessary. Rearrange the agenda to take up items with a select group at the end, or disengage by Postponing to plan a more appropriate constituency or to allow for better preparation.

• **Resource management:** Be sure to make all necessary resources available, such as background data, expertise, representation of essential organizational functions, and so on. If the group does not have the appropriate resources, limit the discussion or disengage to obtain them.
• **Energy management:** Because meetings are extremely sensitive energy systems, concentration and energy level are critical variables to maintain and nourish. Sometimes, these energies become unstable: conflicts arise, people become fatigued and shut down, or the group loses its focus. If you are taking the lead, you are likely to feel some responsibility for making the meeting a success and for directing the action or exerting influence if difficulties arise. However, be aware that it may be better to disengage than to force others to achieve agreed-upon meeting outcomes. Do not forget Disengaging as an important option. It may well be the best possible alternative. For example:

- **Postpone** when people are not ready to proceed and group efforts will clearly be unproductive. Make the schedule flexible so that people do not become overly stressed.

- **Give or get feedback** when some or all members have lost focus, or the purpose of the meeting is not being achieved.

- **Change the subject** or table the issue if returning to it at a later time will be more productive.

- **Take a break** to restore the group’s energy, to think things over, or to get relief from intellectually or emotionally taxing issues.

• **View the activity of the group positively and optimistically. Be patient.** There is often a delayed response to influence attempts in meetings. With all the extra noise or interference in the environment, the target may take a while to receive, process, and respond to your energy. Do not be quick to assume you have failed—persevere instead. Once you know that others in the meeting have received your message, relax for awhile and observe how the meeting process unfolds. Wait for the next opportunity to move your influence attempt forward.
SUMMARY

Group meetings can be productive when you take personal responsibility for them and use Positive Power and Influence skills. Using these skills in meetings is not easy, but with careful planning and practice, you can take incremental steps toward meeting your objectives. To create a positive meeting climate, view the meeting as a joint effort. When you call the meeting, share ownership with the target. When the target calls the meeting, claim ownership and try to get your own needs met.

- **In preparing for the meeting, begin by setting objectives.** If you have none, try to identify one or more objectives early in the meeting. Look for opportunities to help others achieve their objectives as well as your own.

- **After setting objectives, select a BSO for each one.** Determine who will be your primary influence target and choose a BSO to use with that person. Consider the impact your BSO will have on others in the room and select a follow-up Style(s), if necessary.

- **Construct an Influence Style Action Plan.** Complete Step 3 in the language of your BSO, specifying how you will achieve your objectives. If you have more than one objective, arrange them in an appropriate, prioritized sequence, and develop an Action Plan for each one.

- **Prepare your team for the meeting.** Clarify everyone’s roles, including your own, and make sure that each person has a specific function to fulfill. Review your Influence Style Action Plan with your team, and seek their input and feedback on your planned approach.

- **Gain the support of your target(s) by sharing meeting ownership.** Make sure to meet your target’s goals and objectives. Encourage others to accept responsibility for the outcome of the meeting. If the target has called the meeting, plan to take an active role in the proceedings. Take the initiative in sharing ownership.
• **Manage the process as well as the content.** Observe and intervene to influence meeting purpose, roles, time usage, agenda, resources, interpersonal issues, and group energy.

When you have achieved mastery of positive influence in meetings, you will be able to make the best use of everyone’s time and energy, including your own. You will find that you no longer have to engage in negative power games, or adopt covert strategies to achieve your objectives. You will avoid the pitfalls of bureaucratic procedure that muffle dissent and suppress healthy conflict of ideas. You will look forward to meetings as enjoyable opportunities to work productively with others.
INTRODUCTION

Positive Power and Influence skills can help you meet personal objectives and maintain or build positive working relationships—simultaneously. Your challenge as an influencer is to pursue your objectives while fostering the stability and growth of your working relationships. High-impact influence skills, Style flexibility, and disciplined planning will help you achieve this balance between objectives and relationships in most situations.

Achieving a balance between objectives and relationships may be difficult when you and the target have strong personal differences. Balancing task objectives with relationships is difficult enough when you and another person have competing objectives—a common occurrence. Maintaining this balance can be even more delicate when you and the other person have a history of personality clashes or deep interpersonal conflicts. Some working relationships may be so ruptured and disagreeable that no amount of influence can heal them.

Relationship problems may make you reluctant to use some Influence Styles. For example, if you frequently disagree with the target’s logic, you may be reluctant to use Persuading. You do not want to hear the target’s proposals and reasons because you typically find fault with the underlying facts or data. You may not want to use Asserting with a person you view as needy or controlling. A needy person may insist on more incentives than you can give and a controlling person may refuse to agree to your expectations under any circumstances. If you distrust the target, you may avoid Bridging for fear of losing control of the situation or being taken advantage of. Attracting may not be useful if you and the target have deep value conflicts or a troubled history.
Relationship problems may make you reluctant to engage in any influence attempt with the target. You and the target may lack sufficient positive motive for a successful outcome to occur. The potential costs of trying to influence the target may outweigh the potential benefits. You may feel so exploited by the target that taking steps to improve the relationship may not seem worth the risk. You may have difficulty even imagining what an effective influence approach might be. On the other hand, the influence target may have trouble working with you! Your awareness of this makes you unwilling to awaken his or her anger.

Relationship problems can disrupt the climate for positive influence. If the relationship seems irreparable, you may find yourself Forcing. If the target’s resistance is so strong that you do not wish to challenge it, you may find yourself Avoiding. Forcing or Avoiding can occur whether you are the victim of another person’s grievance, the perpetrator of the problem, or a third party to a disagreement between others that affects your work.

Relationship problems make it hard to determine a clear Influence Objective. Such problems make it difficult to see beyond the incompatibility issue. Often, the relationship must improve before you and the other person can take any concrete next steps. Mutual respect and acceptance is necessary to ensure genuine agreements and commitments.

The hardest part of dealing with a relationship problem can be getting the other person’s commitment to resolve it. The person may have no interest in getting along with you and may even enjoy or derive power from causing you pain.

Fortunately, you are not powerless in this situation. You can use Positive Power and Influence to engage the person’s interest in getting on board with you to solve the interpersonal problem. You may have no choice if your job requires you to interact with this person! Project assignments, business priorities, or other situational factors may drive you and the target together despite your best efforts to stay away from each other. By focusing on this joint work—the task—you will increase your chances of improving the relationship.
Organizational issues are often the root causes of relationship problems. Character flaws or incompatibility factors are not the sole reasons people do not get along. Perhaps, the other person balks at completing an assigned project, blocks the attainment of a particular goal, or has a bad attitude. Your first inclination might be to dismiss the person as difficult, rigid, or egocentric. However, the real problem may have to do with the system or structure you have established to work together. For example, the problem may be with a formal organizational system—a set of organizational policies and procedures—that create antagonistic or misaligned working relationships. Perhaps, the problem might be with an informal organizational system that you have failed to recognize.

Most relationship conflicts involve a much smaller or less formal system. Small groups—two people, a work team, or a small task-force—often operate without defined policies and procedures because they assume such systems are unnecessary. However, these “micro-organizations” often have the most relationship problems because they lack a formalized system.

Systemic problems usually involve at least one of three sequential factors: goals, roles, and procedures. These factors work interdependently in a hierarchy, each factor affecting the other. People must clarify, understand, and align their goals before negotiating and assigning roles. They must agree on roles before establishing procedures. When any of these factors are misunderstood or overlooked, relationship problems can result. For example:

- Misunderstood or unclear goals lead to role confusion. When goals are misunderstood, some people may think they have greater roles than they really do. These people can cause interpersonal conflict by engaging in turf battles to establish dominance. At the other extreme are people who think they have lesser roles than they really do. These people can cause interpersonal conflict by appearing to evade their share of the work. Others may view them as lazy or incompetent. However, these people may be doing exactly what they think they should be doing, given their personal (but faulty) understanding of project goals.
• **Unclear goals and role confusion can cause misunderstandings about procedures.** Perhaps the other person carries out assignments differently than you would. You resent this person for behaving like a rebel or for disregarding the rules. This person may appear to have a rebellious attitude or a desire to upset the status quo. However, deviance from established procedures may stem from this person’s ignorance or misunderstanding of goals, roles, or of the procedures themselves. On the other hand, this person may have a clear understanding of goals, roles, and procedures, and simply have a better way of implementing them—one you do not prefer.

• **One major initiative that will direct interpersonal problems toward solution is to focus on the task.** The task is why you are working with this other person. The task is the tangible avenue toward results. The task defines the possibilities, not the adversities, of the relationship.

• **Misaligned goals, roles, and procedures will always lead to relationship problems.** Yet, we often put the cart before the horse: we attack the interpersonal issue without first aligning goals, roles, and procedures. Or perhaps, we fail to address the three factors in sequence. For example, we focus on procedures first, before agreeing on goals and roles. Attending to goals, roles, and procedures—in order—for any given task may defuse or end many relationship problems.

**MAINTAINING A TASK ORIENTATION**

There are many advantages to taking a task-oriented approach:

• A task-oriented approach is less threatening to people because the focus is on the task and not on personalities.

• A task orientation limits the problem to a narrower scope. We are not asking people to change who they are but rather how they work with us on a particular task. This brings remedial action within reach by making the
task itself the focal point for resolving the interpersonal differences.

- A task orientation defines an end point. The relationship we seek has a beginning and an end defined by the completion of the task and the results we hope to achieve. We can measure progress in the relationship when we and the target have accomplished the task.

**SETTING INFLUENCE OBJECTIVES**

Approach a relationship problem the same way you would approach any influence situation: use the Five-Step Planning Process.

**Begin by setting objectives.** Center your Influence Objectives on the work relationship—focus on tasks. Remember: we are talking about incompatibility problems in working relationships, not social or family relationships. (Hopefully, you and your contentious co-worker are not related!) The demands of working with a difficult colleague are much lower than those involved in intimate relationships. You and the target must work together to accomplish results. This common bond may see you through the problem.

**A task-oriented approach can help you identify specific Influence Objectives.** As you define goals, roles, and procedures, Influence Objectives will form as a direct result of your analysis. For example, if you believe that the target does not share your goals, you might make goal-alignment your primary objective. In other cases, your objective might be to get the target’s agreement to help you define roles or procedures.

**Remember that goals, roles, and procedures are interdependent and work together in a hierarchy.** Roles cannot be defined until goals are aligned. Procedures will not make sense until roles are defined. Make sure to work on these elements in sequence. Otherwise, you increase the risk of negative consequences to the relationship.
Below is a procedure for setting Influence Objectives by thinking through task and relationship problems.

• **Try to picture an ideal working relationship with the target.** What would it look like if you and the target could align your goals, roles, and procedures? What would your boundaries be for such a relationship? Be honest with yourself. You may not want anything more than a positive functional relationship with a minimum of contact and just enough civility. On the other hand, you may wish for a thoroughly collegial and thriving collaboration with the target. While it is hard to predict what the exact outcome will be, it is useful to think about the best possible scenario for the future of the relationship.

• **Define the overall task or mission.** Resist the impulse to address the interpersonal issue first. Confine the definition of task to external goals and results rather than internal, personal ones. Focus on the job you have to do together and how best to do it. Concentrate on the organizational or project-related results you wish to achieve at the end of your joint effort. These results should relate to the business or work at hand and should not be political, social, or emotional. Do not focus on what you feel about the other person or what you think are his or her problems. Having a good relationship at the end of the task is an important outcome of your influence attempt but is independent of completing the task successfully.

• **Translate the task into goal statements.** Divide the task into incremental parts. Write out all your goals—and the goals you think the target may have. Be inclusive. Do not worry about aligning your goals at this point. If some goals conflict, note them and move on. This will require personal discipline and empathy—do not mentally argue with your target. Remember, you are not yet committing yourself to any form of action. **This is only a planning step!**

• **Align both sets of goals.** Identify specific goals you and the target might agree on. Elaborate on these goals in sufficient detail so you can discuss them with the target at length. This material may be useful in resolving impasses caused
by other conflicting goals. If some goals are seriously out of sync, consider setting them aside or gaining clarity on them from those who assigned them to you in the first place (Disengaging: Postponing). Remember, you and the target cannot go further until you have resolved the differences between your goals.

- **Clarify or negotiate roles.** When your goals—both common and conflicting—are as clear as possible, focus on roles. Consider past interactions. Is there a history of how you and the target have divided tasks? If so, has the division of labor been satisfactory to you? What would you like your role to be this time? How will the target want to define roles? Will the target’s desired role conflict with yours? If so, what are you willing to do to get the role you want? While many of these questions will arise in Steps 2 and 3 of the Planning Process, think them through now as much as possible. Determine what the potential points of conflict might be.

- **Assess the effectiveness of current procedures.** Procedural problems are often the first symptom of a breakdown in interpersonal relationships. Your work in defining goals and roles will help you to develop procedures that will support a positive working relationship. Think about what you and the target may want the procedures to be. You may have to wait to develop the specifics until after you and the target have fully aligned your goals and roles. General procedural wishes and needs may be as far as you can go at this point.

- **Review interpersonal issues.** When you have finished defining goals, roles, and procedures, consider the interpersonal issue itself. By this time you may already have changed your view of the relationship problem. You may have discovered that a system problem—defects in goals, roles, or procedures—is the real cause of the behavioral problem. Write down your thoughts on this.

If the relationship problem persists even after you and the target have reached agreement on goals, roles, and procedures, then you may want to address the interpersonal issue directly. You might let the target know how his or
her behavior is disrupting your work or the work of the group. This type of discussion is often enough to cause the target to stop the behavior immediately. However, make sure to address goals, roles, and procedures first before addressing the interpersonal issue, in case the real problem is with the system, not the person.

As a result of your analysis, set your Influence Objectives. Remember to work on the problems of goals, roles, and procedures in sequence. For example, if the goals are clear, but the roles are not, work through Step 1 of the Planning Form and set an objective related to role clarification. This will automatically become your primary objective. If you wish, set secondary objectives related to procedural issues. After setting objectives, proceed with the rest of the Five-Step Planning Process.

**SUMMARY**

When dealing with a troubled relationship, use a task-oriented approach to identify possible systemic problems:

- **Define the overall task.** Put the interpersonal issues aside for the time being.

- **Translate the task into goal statements.** Define the expectations that you and the target may have.

- **Align both parties’ goals where possible.** Elaborate on the goals that both of you have in common.

- **Clarify or negotiate roles.** Figure out, from your point of view, who should do what. Speculate about the role the target may want to take.

- **Examine the effectiveness of current procedures.** Consider how the system is working now and how to improve it to meet both parties’ needs.

- **Review interpersonal problems.** Determine which ones are impeding completion of the task and which ones are irrelevant in this particular situation.
• **Complete the Five-Step Planning Process.** Set Influence Objectives related to goals, roles, or procedures—whichever element you have identified as the source of the relationship problem. Plan to address these elements in sequence. Perform the remaining planning steps as you normally would.

**Additional Resource**

For an example of how to apply the Five-Step Planning Process to a problematic relationship, please see Reading 15 “The Case of the Curmudgeonly Condo Owner.”
The case presented on the following pages shows how to solve a relationship problem by addressing goals, roles, and procedures. The case involves two condominium owners who have a difficult and unproductive relationship. One owner decides to influence a change in the other’s behavior. The case monitors the thinking process of the influencer.

THE SITUATION
I own a condominium. This means I am “wed until sale do us part” to several other condo owners. Our owners’ association was a pleasant enough group when we first bought our homes or “units.” We got along fairly well. We were all new to the scene and this was our first real estate venture. We were proud of our little building and its shared amenities. The building had its own small parking lot and a lovely yard. The Victorian Carpenter Gothic wood structure, with its brackets, grills, and other ornamental doodads, was hard to maintain but we all pitched in. Taking care of the place saved us money and was fun to do together. Our flower and vegetable garden was the envy of the neighborhood. We had a small but effective condo association to manage the business side. All was peaceful and serene.

A few years ago, one of the original owners transferred to another city. Another had a baby and started looking for larger quarters. The third owner and I felt abandoned and apprehensive about the new owners who would be arriving on the scene. When new people bought the first unit, we were relieved. They fit right in and life went on as before. Then, the second unit sold and all our worries came to pass. The new owner, Terry, was the human equivalent of Godzilla, the monster.
Terry was an attorney—not a problem. In fact, we thought that having an attorney around would be useful. We could use a little legal assistance from time to time. Not so. Terry brought legal work home, right to our doors. First, there was the condo agreement. We had to go over it together, chapter and verse. Suddenly, we had to vote and act on changes to rules that we had previously let slide. But the real problem was Terry’s attitude. Godzilla is not an exaggerated description. Combine an extremely threatening demeanor with an irritable disposition, a tendency to overreact to slights, and a mean way of expressing suspicion and anger, and you have Terry.

Terry traveled a lot, so he wasn’t around much. This was the good news—we all breathed easier when Terry was away. The bad news was that we all waited for Terry’s return with extreme trepidation. Terry would complain about the building, the bookkeeping, the monthly maintenance fee, incursions on owners’ rights, and so on. Descending on us in the hallway or yard, Terry would burst with complaints and sullied entitlement. After a while, we seldom said more than a frosty hello in the halls. I knew I was in trouble when I started looking outside to see if the coast was clear before I scooted out my door past Terry’s entrance.

We were particularly vulnerable since only two of us were old-timers. The newer owners pretty much stayed out of the way. There were no “good old times” for them to identify with and they had been in worse situations at their previous locations. We original settlers felt powerless. We represented just half the vote. We probably were overly sensitive to Terry at times, since our goal was to return to the peaceful kingdom of the past. Nostalgia and sentimentality were out of place. But, when the monster kicked up its heels, we knew we had lost something precious.

Clearly, it would not help to sit down with Terry to discuss the issue. We had no right to do so except where we were directly affected. I had no real interest in befriending Terry. It was also clear that Terry would not be available for such a meeting and it would cause more problems than it cured.
THE SOLUTION

Define the overall task or mission. I put my personal hurt and animosity aside. Terry was not easy to be with, but I was not sharing my life with Terry, only a condo association. The task we had to do was to conduct the condo association’s business in a competent legal manner; to abide by the rules of the association; and to carry out the work and financial obligations that the contract required. It was helpful for me to make a list of non-tasks. I was not required to say a civil hello to Terry in the morning, or to be nice when we bumped into each other on the street. It was not necessary for Terry to drop the attitude of entitlement and persecution, to stop acting like a jerk when asked to come to the regular meetings, and so on. If we could get Godzilla to focus on the structure and rules of the association, maybe that would help defuse his negative behavior as well.

Translate the task into goal statements. The condo rules already spelled out a number of goals, but I wrote them down anyway. It was difficult to clarify the gray area between the goals defined in the condo rules and the goals I had for good neighborly conduct. I decided that good neighborly conduct should be my main focus. Here’s what I came up with:

- **Goal:** to discuss condo business in official condo meetings, not in the hall or in the yard. I did not want to feel like an alien under attack in my own home.

- **Goal:** to develop guidelines for looking after each other’s units when we were away. I wanted to depend on my neighbors for neighborly things like security and mutual aid. At this point, I would never think of asking Terry to look after my unit, gather mail or deliveries, or take care of visitors when we were away. However, since it was an expectation that I and most good neighbors have of each other, I included it anyway.

- **Goal:** to be courteous and respectful to each other, and treat each other as partners in an enterprise. I wanted Terry to drop the offensive tactics. Did this goal belong here? Was it procedural or behavioral? Didn’t matter, since this was just a plan.
Align both sets of goals. What were Terry’s goals? Clearly, Terry had a strong need to be treated legally and equitably. Surely, Terry would be willing to abide by the condo rules. However, I did not know how to confine the discussion of business issues to condo meetings. Terry certainly did not practice this, but as an attorney, the rules, the legal pact, and the hearings might be appealing. Of course, Terry often monopolized these meetings with complaints. Consequently, we had cut back on the length and number of meetings and had eliminated the social atmosphere. There were no refreshments or small talk anymore. I realized that our defensive measures probably made the problem worse. By giving in to Terry’s pressure, we had set up a situation where Terry’s behavior dominated and set the tone for the meeting. Some light began to dawn on Marblehead! Maybe we were part of the problem, too. Interesting!

Clarify roles. There were no real roles, although we did have registered officers. Because we were so small, we were very egalitarian and not very strict about observing the roles (except for the treasurer who kept the books). Anyway, the official roles were strictly administrative. I let out a big “Oooops!” on this one.

Assess the effectiveness of current procedures. The current procedures involved an “anyplace, anytime” form of self-government. I had another “aha!” here. Terry’s tendency to descend on us at any place or time was not his invention. Even before Terry, we had conducted condo business informally in the yard, over coffee, in the halls, and so on. We had a regular meeting only when the regulations required it, and then we pretty much had a few drinks and rubber-stamped the stuff we had been talking about informally. It worked—I think it worked—because we had good relationships. Terry came in and was simply following tradition. We just didn’t like Terry. This was a major insight for me—the procedures were not working because they had been designed for people with different personalities, experiences, and needs than Terry.

Review interpersonal issues. What were the issues? Well, I wanted Terry to be like the old owner, but this was impossible. I wanted Terry’s behavior to change, but I also knew that my own reactions may have escalated the problem. I knew we
could make progress if we could resolve the systemic problems and limit my expectations to our working relationship. Which behaviors were crucial to the task we had to do together and which ones were subordinate to it? I had to decide.

**Begin the Five-Step Planning Process:**

- **Step 1: Set Your Influence Objectives.** I based my Influence Objectives on the goals I had set. Which goal was the most important and attainable? I decided it was to get Terry’s agreement to limit business discussions to condo meetings. By achieving this, I could begin to set personal boundaries and feel less defensive when Terry was around. This would help me the most, so I made it my primary objective.

  I also wanted Terry to take an active role in the condo association—to transform Terry from an onlooker into a participant. Terry could hardly complain to us about personal projects. So, my secondary objective became to influence Terry to assume some responsibilities in the condo association.

- **Step 2: Choose the Best Style for the Objective (BSO).** Using the Diagnostic Checklist, I found that Asserting was the BSO for my primary objective. My needs were legitimate. I had an incentive—to address Terry’s concerns constructively. I had a pressure—not to support Terry personally at all. I needed a straightforward agreement from Terry to discuss condo business in meetings only. I did not need Terry’s long-term commitment (although I’d be surprised and happy if I could get it), just compliance!

  Persuading was the BSO for my secondary objective. The formal administration of the condo was a straightforward procedure. I could tell Terry some exclusive facts about our history—odd problems from the past. Terry could use his legal expertise for mutual good rather than for blaming and threatening us. We were having problems getting approval from a city board for exterior work—Terry could help us out with that. It was a beginning and it would flush out Terry’s expectations and thoughts.
• **Step 3: Construct an Influence Style Action Plan.** I sequenced my objectives and put together a plan. I decided to work on my secondary objective first: to influence Terry to assume responsibilities in the condo association. This would set the stage for working on my primary objective: to keep condo business discussions restricted to official meetings. I also had to figure out a way to start the meeting—where, when, and how. I certainly did not want to catch Terry on the run. So, I decided to set up a formal condo association meeting with the stated purpose of reorganization.

• **Steps 4 and 5: Consult with Others; Rehearse.** I decided to involve the other old-timer in my consultation and rehearsal. The whole exercise was very useful, since she had some different experiences with Terry than I had. Both of us became committed to the objectives, although my friend wanted me to take the initiative. I had a lot more support now than I would have had if I had not done the consultation and rehearsal steps. Not only did my friend give me moral support, she also supported my two objectives and the process I was using to solve the problem.

**THE OUTCOME**

I wish I could say that the meeting went smoothly. In fact, it was very difficult for all of us. Terry immediately went on the offensive, accusing us of conspiring against an innocent newcomer. It was hard to stay on track. In keeping with Persuading, I tried to stick to the facts, but Terry was simply not willing to deal with them. I had misdiagnosed the situation—what was logical for me and the others made no sense to Terry at all! The meeting turned into another opportunity for Godzilla to vent.

I decided to shift gears. I knew that Disengaging was an option under such circumstances, so I moved to postpone the meeting until the following week. Since facts were not working, I used Asserting. I said that I needed to back off for awhile to cool off. I liked Terry’s frank comments, but I didn’t like the aggressiveness and I would not put up with it.
anymore. I wanted Terry to think of some goals and be ready to state them clearly and constructively in the next meeting. If Terry was willing to do that, I was willing to listen. If not, I would line up votes to make our proposals into formal rules. If necessary, I would also call a weekly meeting until the matter was cleared up. That slowed Terry down. We broke up to reconvene the following week.

Only two days later, Terry descended on me in the hall. I braced myself. Before I knew it, Terry was telling me that the reorganization was a good idea and worth the effort. Terry admitted to being rough on us even though it was with “due cause”—always the lawyer. I was pleased by this progress, although a bit miffed by Terry’s tone.

The next week we actually accomplished something. Terry agreed to represent us with the city board. We laid out some guidelines and procedures to keep us in the process. We chatted informally for the first time. Using the positive side of Asserting, I was able to get Terry’s agreement to use the meetings for problem solving and to let up on the one-on-one sessions in the hallways and the yard.

It has been a while since we got the situation more or less under control. I cannot say that I like Terry a whole lot more, but I do like the way we work together now. Hallway hellos go a bit beyond frosty formality—we now talk about the weather. I do not ask Terry over to my unit and Terry does not invite me either. Terry agreed to retrieve my mail while I go away next week—our first experiment in neighborliness. I hope I can get it back when I come home!