

Relationships play a major role in our success, yet many of us do not realize how much they can either help or hold us back from achieving our goals. Getting to know the five relationship types is the first step to realizing where your current relationships “fit” with your life and your vision of the future. Let’s explore the five relationship types together.

Type One: Coach

Coaches can be a great accelerant, speeding up your knowledge and skills and helping you navigate tough situations.

Coaches:

- Have specific expertise (workout coach, financial planner etc.)
- Are dedicated to you - they don’t need anything from you
- Can “get you there” faster
- Have the experience to help you avoid big mistakes

Type Two: Comrade

Of all your relationships, the ones with your comrades tend to feel the safest and most symbiotic. These are people that really have your back. You’ll share your joys, fears, successes, and failures with each other in a genuine and supportive way. Comrades are invested in each other’s future success and support each other without judgement. Having comrades is important - close relationships at work can actually boost your happiness.

Comrades:

- Will express honest concern and gently call you out if you do something questionable. They do this out of genuine caring rather than a need to be critical.
- Are there in a pinch. If you’re facing a crisis, they are just a text or phone call away and will help you get through it.
- Love seeing you grow, because they want to grow as well. They are supportive of you challenging yourself in order to achieve your goals.

Type Three: Casual

Our casual personal and work relationships are often the easiest to manage and the most enjoyable to engage in. That said, we often find we don’t have enough time for all of the “casuals” in our lives and if we are trying to juggle too many, they can become a source of stress (particularly if some are “chronics” or “toxics” - see below).

Casuals:

- Fun to have dinner with or to share a hobby activity - the relationship tends not to be deep
- Are flexible; our casual relationships can come and go, grow and shrink over time
- Can be a good feeder system for potential Comrade relationships

Type Four: Chronic

We all have had at least one of these in our lives. Some of us tend to attract them. Chronics are “blamers” who complain nonstop about everything from their lagging career to their latest breakup. A hallmark of the Chronic is that he or she never takes responsibility for the situations they complain about. As leaders, we may see the Chronic as an opportunity to mentor, guide or otherwise help someone who is clearly struggling. However, a true leader also understands that this impulse is unhealthy and serves neither you nor the Chronic in the long run.

Examining the role of the Chronic in your life is an opportunity to test the idea of relationship “value.” Sometimes there is no escaping this relationship (it could be a manager or co-worker or relative) but for your own personal and professional growth, try to limit time with the Chronic whenever possible.

Type Five: Toxics or Contaminants

While Chronics may be annoying, Toxics and Contaminants are proactively detrimental to your well-being. These people drain your energy and bring up negative emotions within you regularly. An example of this kind of friendship could be someone who guilts you into spending time with them, are needy, or find it funny to belittle you on a regular basis. They are all take and no give. You can’t trust a Toxic or Contaminant; if you told them something in confidence, they would most likely betray you. Ultimately you can’t grow from a relationship with this type, yet many of us still have them. Why?

Perhaps because it feels risky to end any relationship. Particularly as we age, ending friendships or professional relationships can feel unnerving. While it can be hard to move on from this type, it’s best to cut this connection and focus your energies on your coaches, comrades, and casual relationships.

Categorize Your Relationships

Make a list of all the key people in your life and think about the qualities you see. This will provide insight into who you are spending time with and what you need to do to find the right people on your team.

If you cultivate only the relationships that serve you, you will maintain a better quality of life all around. You are much more likely to reach your goals, because the influence of the people you spend the most time with will shape your mindset. People who motivate you, support you, and see the best in you will consciously and subconsciously drive you toward what you want in life.