

# Relationships for Keeps

How to Build Powerful  
Relationships in Business  
and in Life

Mike Mack

Foreword by Melonie Dodaro



Relationships for Keeps

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This book is written as a story for entertainment and relationship lessons for all readers. Some concepts and stories may depict some of my own personal experiences throughout my professional career and life. They are loosely based and modified to emphasize key relationship insight. Out of respect, and in order to maintain their anonymity, in most cases, the author has created fictional characters and details. The information contained in this book should, by no means, be considered as factual or portraying any particular individuals.



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*“Some of the biggest challenges in relationships come from the fact that many people enter into a relationship in order to get something: they’re trying to find someone who’s going to make them feel good.*

*In reality, the only way a relationship will last is if you see your relationship as a place that you go to give, and not a place that you go to take.”*

**—Anthony Robbins**





# Dedication

*To my dear friend and mentor,  
Arnold McLaughlin.*



Words can't express the gratitude and appreciation of your friendship and mentorship over all these years. There are many personal traits of you in the book's key character, Vic Lawrence. You have inspired me to want more, to grow and to appreciate being challenged. My life's path would not have been the same without your input and caring support.

It is mind-boggling to me that we have been such close friends for over 17 years, I am constantly amazed at the impact you have had on my life, both personally and professionally. After having met on vacation all those years ago I have so enjoyed and treasured your stories, patience, trust and delightful friendship that has evolved.

Arnold, you have become one of my most trusted advisors and mentors, whom I have relied on for your hard-earned wisdom and support throughout the years. We may be 30 years apart in age, but we couldn't be any closer in alignment in our beliefs and values.

Here's to many more years of friendship, I can't thank you enough.

Sincerely,

*Mike*

# Foreword

Not that long ago, I learned firsthand that when you start *building* relationships instead of collecting them, you become more successful in both life and business. This powerful eye-opening lesson transformed my entire life. Literally!

That's why when Mike asked me to write the foreword for this book, demonstrating the power of personal connections in achieving life and business success, I immediately accepted.

Over the years, I have become an avid student of relationship building. I studied the required elements of forming strong, mutually-beneficially relationships, particularly online. Whether you interact with your connections face-to-face or through a digital tool such as LinkedIn, time and consistency are vital to building lasting relationships. I have also found reciprocity to be a necessary component, especially online.

This is NOT the gimmicky marketing type of reciprocity, and it's not a fad. I am referring to real reciprocity in relationships, mostly symbolic in nature, that signals our desire to engage in social relations with others. Reciprocity is about our need to be seen and recognized by others. It is through this action of reciprocity, recognizing others and being recognized by them in return, that we build relationships.

In this book, Mike examines in detail three key components of relationship building: like, respect, and trust. These elements will help you engage in reciprocity in meaningful ways and build long-lasting personal and professional relationships. Through his heartwarming story of Joe and the many mentors he meets and friendships he makes along the way, Mike lays out the blueprint you can follow to begin building your own relationships that will ensure your future success and enrich your life.

—**Melonie Dodaro**, Author of *LinkedIn Unlocked*; *LinkedIn for Students, Graduates, and Educators*; *LinkedIn for Sales*; and *The LinkedIn Code*

# Compliments About the Book

*“My relationship with Mike started similar to most, but it’s been Mike’s ambitious values that have driven our working relationship into a friendship for keeps. Mike’s deep-seated attention to collaboration, win-win thinking, and strong relationship building are evident in all aspects of the work we’ve done together. I can’t wait to order this must-read book.”*

~**Brent Lawrence**, Parts Operations Manager,  
Stahl Peterbilt, Edmonton, Canada

*“Mike Mack’s book, Relationships for Keeps is a guru’s guide on creating, sustaining and enriching relationships that pay off for a lifetime.”*

~**Sawan Kapoor**, CEO Kapoor Lamp Shade Co.,  
Chennai, India

*“In Relationships For Keeps, Mike Mack shares the secrets of building long-term, meaningful relationships that are so essential to our success, both personally and professionally. I was completely engrossed in this compelling and touching story that I know draws from Mike's own experiences and relationship mastery. If you're someone who is looking to learn how to develop more meaningful and productive relationships or are already accomplished and want to up your 'relationship game,' you'll thoroughly appreciate and benefit from this book. Enjoy!”*

**~Shannon Waller**, Entrepreneurial Teamwork Specialist, Author, and Coach Strategic Coach Inc. Toronto, Canada

*“Many people talk about the importance of relationships, yet so many don't put in the effort required to create and maintain them. I've met over 10,000 people in my life, from all around the world, and I can unequivocally say Mike Mack is the quintessential relationship guy. From the first day we met, he genuinely built and authentically fostered the deep friendship I'm appreciative to have with him.”*

**~Rishi Patel**, Partner, Client Relations, Keeran Networks, Alberta, Canada

*"LRT is a great foundation for relationships in life. Being open and vulnerable and ready to truly engage and learn throughout life is truly a remarkable skill. Thank you for sharing Joe's journey."*

~**Curtis Stange**, President and CEO, ATB Financial, Alberta, Canada

*"Mike Mack really captures the essence of the importance of personal and professional relationships in this easy to read and entertaining story that will positively impact everyone who reads it."*

~**Sheri Fink**, Inspirational Speaker, #1 Best-selling Author, and Award-winning Entrepreneur, California, USA

*"I first met Mike at a Toastmasters group in 2005, and we have built a great friendship ever since. I have always admired how Mike makes every person he meets feel like the most important person in the world. When it comes to nurturing and developing relationships, nobody is more passionate about it than Mike."*

~**Chad Griffiths**, SIOR, CCIM Partner NAI Commercial Real Estate Inc., Edmonton, Canada

*“Upon reflection, this book reminds me that strong relationships contribute to a long, healthy, and happy life whether in business or in your personal life.”*

~**Richard A. Wong** President, Nova Hotels,  
Alberta, Canada

*“As you reflect back on your life it doesn't matter how much money you have made....it's all about how many friends you have gathered along the way.”*

~**Jim Casey**, Retired Executive, Nova Scotia,  
Canada and Nerja, Spain

*“I have always admired how Mike Mack builds relationships. There is just a way about him that makes it easy to build meaningful relationships. He really knows how to make you feel heard. Building relationships has always being a priority for me and my relationships have transformed my own business. This is a great book if you want to sharpen your relationship building skills as it is very relatable and easy to follow. I love Mike's analogy of dropping pebbles and chasing the ripple effects.”*

~ **Catherine Vu**, Chief Uptime Officer, Pro-Active  
IT Management Inc. Alberta, Canada



# Preface

As this is my second published book, I am hopeful that, in some small way, I can provide more writing wisdom and influence, on a subject that I am very passionate about. My wish is that you apply the lessons learned from this book, so you may benefit from building long-term Relationships for Keeps.

I have always been someone who values relationships. For me, the foundation is LRT = Like + Respect + Trust.

If you truly have the desire and interest to really establish stronger and more meaningful relationships, this story is for you! *Relationships for Keeps* provides simple, yet thought-provoking lessons and advice.

Over the years, people have told me I am a master networker or think I know everyone. In reality, that's not entirely true. I just really value building lasting and meaningful relationships.

This book is about creating and maintaining relationships for keeps and the work required to make them last.

Some concepts and stories may depict some of my own personal experiences throughout my professional career and life. They are loosely based and modified to emphasize key relationship insight.

It's the story of a fictional character named Joe Lanz, who is a likeable and coachable guy who dreams of owning his own business. He desperately wants to break free from the world of corporate bureaucracy. Along the way, he faces many personal and professional struggles. During his journey, Joe meets a man, Vic Lawrence, who is 30 years older than Joe, and over the years, they develop a relationship for keeps.

Unbeknownst to Joe, Vic will become a dear friend and mentor. Vic will teach Joe many lessons in life, particularly about building strong, lifelong relationships.

Anyone can put themselves in Joe's shoes at some point in their life; a business professional; a sales representative trying to grow their client base; a university student trying to build a network of people for future career opportunities; a partner who wrestles with an important personal relationship; or a struggling business owner who lacks the trusted network they hoped for, when times are tough. Through

all of our ups and downs in life, the people we have meaningful relationships with are key to helping us move forward and grow.

If you are in business, think of the clients you have a very solid relationship with. Ask yourself “Why is that relationship so strong?” Do you have more one-on-one time with some than with others? Maybe you don’t have quite the same solid relationship with other clients. What can you do to change that?

What about your closest friends and connections? Ask yourself “Why are we so close?” Do you really listen, share personal feelings, and build vulnerability trust with them? Who else can be drawn in closer to your circle that you can help, or who, in turn, may be able to support you?

Relationships can make all the difference!

Enjoy the story! With gratitude,

*Mike*

# A Vacation Like No Other

Joe was looking forward to his two-week family vacation. It had been a long and stressful year. There were not a lot of good things happening in his career to make the year any better. The career Joe had was very frustrating, full of bureaucracy, and the president of the company was not a very supportive leader. His arrogance and everything about his attitude made most encounters Joe had with him, unbearable.

To make matters worse, the picture of a great and rewarding career that the recruiter had painted was shattered when Joe's first boss left the company within months of Joe starting the role. She was offered a great CEO position for a wonderful national organization which she decided to take. How could he blame her?

It was hard after she left. She was such a kind and supportive leader, someone Joe aspired to be like. Now, he was stuck with a president *jerk* that

didn't care about building a strong working relationship. Rather, it was all about him. Thank goodness he was based across the country in Toronto and Joe didn't have to see him very often and he found out that a new executive was being hired and Joe would be reporting to her. A silver lining, perhaps, Joe thought!

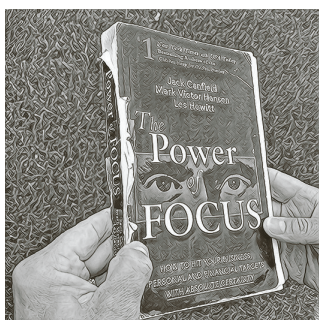
### **Vacation time!**

Joe was always responsible for organizing and loading the vehicle. He had the storage unit mounted on top of the SUV and the supplies in the garage were ready to load; everything from tennis racquets and golf clubs to lounge chairs and games. Joe thought of everything the family would need to make the most enjoyable vacation.

There was always lots of planning and anticipation for this annual family vacation. Two weeks relaxing in the sun and enjoying time with the family would be great and just what Joe needed to recharge his "energy tank", which had been running on fumes the past few months. He was looking forward to lots of pool time, grilling delicious dinners, playing tennis with the family, and reading a book or two. Joe wasn't much of a reader, but, while on vacation, he always took at least two self-development books with him.

One old faithful was *The Power of Focus*, by Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, and Les Hewitt.

It was a special book for many reasons, including the fact that Joe had met Mark Victor Hansen and



had the book signed on a bonus incentive trip to a sales conference in the Caribbean a few years earlier. Joe brought that book on several vacations, and the pages were starting to fall out, but he didn't care. The

book somehow gave him comfort after a grueling year working in a job that he didn't enjoy.

This time, maybe he would discover something profound and life would be different when he returned from vacation.

## **Then Came Vic**

After settling into their vacation resort in the mountains, Joe and the kids started the BBQ grill and enjoyed the view from the deck. So nice! Joe took a long, deep breath and already felt more relaxed, and it was only day one.

The next few days flew by as Joe and the kids spent lots of time in the pool playing games, swimming, and laughing. Joe's wife preferred to sit quietly on the lounge chair furthest from the pool and read. She didn't like being in the pool, swimming, or getting wet. The kids were good swimmers, having taken swimming lessons.

They were like fish in water. They loved being in the pool, playing and swimming all day if they could.

One morning, Joe was on the lounge chair just settling into his newspaper. On vacation, this was a treat and a morning routine for Joe. At home, he rarely found the time.

A distinguished gentleman on a lounge chair just across from him called out, "Anything good to report in the news today?"

Joe looked over at him, smiled and said, "No, unfortunately not. Mainly bad news."

"If you don't mind, when you are done, I would like to read a section or two of your paper, and oh, let me introduce myself. My name is Vic Lawrence," the smooth-talking and confident man said as he walked over.

Shaking hands, Joe introduced himself and returned pleasantries with his new vacation neighbour. They asked each other the usual questions. Where are you from and how long are you visiting this resort? Ironically, they were staying the same dates.

The first day went by quickly. As Joe and his family were leaving the pool that afternoon, they walked past Vic. "Have a great evening and see you tomorrow."

"You folks enjoy your evening as well."

\*\*\*\*

Early the next morning, Joe was outside, eager to get a spot on the grass near the pool. He wanted the family to have the best view of the mountains and be close to the pool. On holidays, the daily ritual to get the ideal spot was Joe's responsibility. He liked to keep everyone happy, particularly his wife. Hopefully today, the location would be perfect.

It was going to be a hot one today; lots of pool time would be on the agenda to keep cool. Joe's kids loved to jump off the high diving board, and Joe was always ready to join in the fun. When it was time for a break after the steady activity, Joe relaxed on his chair and soaked in the heat from the sun. With his eyes closed, feeling very relaxed, a voice came from behind him.

"How is your day going, Joe?"

He looked in the direction the voice was coming from and saw that it was Vic.

"It is great so far; the kids tired me out already with the pool and high diving board routine. How is yours?"



"It's excellent. My wife and I enjoyed a nice breakfast together, and we went for a long walk and admired the mountains and all the



beautiful flowers around the property.”

“Sounds nice,” Joe replied, thinking how happy the two of them seemed together.

### **The Beginning of a Dream**

After a light lunch that Joe had prepared and packed in the cooler that morning, the kids ran back to the pool to play. Joe walked over to Vic and asked,

“Are you interested in going in the pool and cooling off?”

Vic quickly jumped up and replied, “Absolutely.”

The two men walked to a quieter area of the pool so that they could talk and visit. Slipping into the pool, Joe asked what Vic did professionally. He shared that he had a 30-plus year career in commercial Real Estate. It was evident that his confident, smooth talk and likable personality would have served Vic well over his career.

Vic turned the conversation from himself to Joe and started with a few open questions about Joe’s career and activity back home. Vic could sense that he didn’t love what he was doing in his career. Joe confided in him that he had hoped his job could be more rewarding, but after 12 months, there was no sign that it was going to get better.

Vic asked quietly, “Joe, if you weren’t working where you are now, what would you be doing?”

Joe closed his eyes to think of a good reply and tilted his head toward the sun. "I've been thinking about that question for a long-time, Vic," Joe replied. "I have lots of close friends back home who suggest I should start my own business."

"What do you want, Joe?"

"I want to *be remarkable* and truly help people become better, more successful, and happier in their jobs. A bigger income would be awesome for me, with some independence, and most importantly," Joe exclaimed, "zero bureaucracy!"

He continued, "I want to do what's right and feel good about doing it every day. I never thought about being an entrepreneur, and frankly, it scares the crap out of me."

Vic listened carefully and tried to ask his question from a different angle. "Let's say we were standing here in this pool next summer, and I asked you how things were going with your new business. What would you say to me? Don't overthink it, just imagine it." Vic was being quite direct and really pushed Joe with this question, but it was precisely what he needed to hear.

"Well, there would be lots of variety. I don't necessarily want to work in just one industry. I would be excited about getting up and going to work every day," Joe said in a confident tone.

“That sounds exciting,” Vic answered. Probing a bit more, he continued, “What *exactly* would you be doing?”

“I have always been quite gifted and comfortable talking and speaking to others. After several years in Toastmasters, I gained more confidence in speaking in front of an audience. I know that I can always improve in this area, but in my last position, before this terrible job, I did a lot of coaching and supported my team with training.” Joe paused and thought for a moment before continuing. “I got a lot of joy and gratification from helping people, especially those who wanted to grow and push themselves. It gives me a real sense of purpose and satisfaction.”

Vic could sense the change in Joe’s voice. He was more animated, talked with his hands, and kept going on and on about how that type of work made him feel like he could make a difference for others.

Vic smiled at Joe and said, “I think that you may want to pursue that dream further.”

*Dream*, Joe thought. *That’s crazy*. Vic was so intuitive. *How does he know this is my dream?* Joe could tell that Vic loved this conversation and thrived on asking tough questions, and then just listening to every word and watching every gesture.

## **Right Doesn't Equal Happy**

"What prevents you from living your dream Joe?"

"Well, there are many reasons" Joe retorted, "Fear, number one! Uncertainty, money, and my wife would never go for it." He didn't look and sound as excited as he had two minutes earlier.

"Those are all good points, Joe, and we never know if decisions we make will work out right, but you need to ask yourself, 'Do *you* want to be right, or do you want to be happy?'"

*Wow, what a question!* Joe was speechless and just nodded in response.

He thought for a few moments and realized that he'd always tried to do the right things and make things right for everyone else, but that didn't always make him happy.

"As I have learned over the years," Vic chimed in, breaking the silence, "most people will regret the things they didn't do versus the things they tried to do."

As the newly found friends continued talking, Joe's kids swam up beside them and stated,

"Mom wants some ice cream."

"I better go," Joe said, looking at Vic, "and treat the family to some ice cream. Why don't you join us?"

"That sounds like fun. I want some ice cream, too."

## **Never Leave a Stranger**

During the rest of the vacation, Joe watched as Vic would chat or say hi to strangers with ease. Joe could tell that he enjoyed talking and making a connection with everyone. It was common to see Vic greeting the staff at the resort by their first names. Whether they were serving ice cream, cleaning the grounds, or the lifeguard, Vic seemed to know everyone already. While they had only met ten days ago, Joe admired Vic's confidence, his natural ability to talk with anyone, and he seemed so happy when meeting new people. Vic never left any conversation, as a stranger.

As the final full day of the vacation arrived, Joe and Vic had talked about so many different things: life, business, health, family, their mediocre golf game, even the benefits of meditation. It seemed crazy to think that these two men were strangers less than two weeks ago.

Earlier in the week, Vic suggested that he and his wife host Joe's family for a BBQ on the last night of the vacation. Both families coordinated what each could bring to use up their remaining food and shared in the planning of the dinner.

Joe and Vic exchanged phone numbers and email addresses and agreed it would be nice to keep in touch. Joe was most excited about the things he could learn from his new friend who seemed to know something about absolutely everything.

As the two men said their goodbyes, Vic reached in his pocket, pulled out a small object.

“Here, Joe. Catch!”

Joe grabbed it. He opened his hand and saw a small pebble.

“What’s this? Are you throwing rocks at me before I leave?”

“It’s a pebble” Vic smiled “I want you to keep it in your pocket. I’ll explain more the next time we talk.”

“Sure thing, Vic!”

Joe felt somewhat confused, but he went along with it, knowing that Vic probably had something profound to say, even about a small pebble.

Once home with his family, Joe couldn’t stop thinking about his new friend. Vic was everything Joe wanted to be. He was confident, experienced, successful, and wise, and was just the coolest guy. To top it off, he was in a loving relationship with his wife.

“How is it possible to have all of that?” Joe thought in awe.

Joe reached in his pocket and pulled out the pebble that Vic had given him on their last day of vacation. *Such a strange gift*, Joe thought. *Why would Vic give this pebble to me? I guess I will have to wait and find out.*

# Drop a Pebble and Chase the Ripples

Joe was filled with anticipation for his first call with Vic. If this call were half as good as a day talking at the pool, it would be a great conversation. Joe reflected on the many qualities Vic possessed, from his confidence and listening skills to his overall desire to help Joe.

*We were strangers less than a month ago and now we are preparing to have a phone conversation. I sure hope that there are more calls after this one, Joe wished silently.*

He contemplated the call. What would they talk about? More importantly, where would the friendship go? After all, they only met during a short summer vacation.

Joe paused to think about his father, who had passed away just a few years earlier. Joe and his father didn't have regular phone calls, and he

would speak with his mother more than him. He would visit with his father when he traveled to see his parents, but that was not very often. It was a full day's drive and flying was very expensive, especially when the entire family came along. His relationship with his mother was very special. While his connection with his father was good, Joe accepted he just wasn't the type of man to show his feelings or emotions.

Joe's father taught him to work hard, be disciplined, and respect people, particularly hard-working people. While Joe's father was somewhat strict, he was always supportive and proud of what Joe had become in life and his career. His father's sense of humour was something that Joe really loved and looked forward to when he would visit. He could tell a funny story better than anyone and adored the attention he would get when the whole family was roaring with laughter. Joe reflected on those memories and a big smile came to his face.

### **Early Lessons Last a Lifetime**

Joe's mother, on the other hand, helped Joe appreciate people; every type of person, rich or poor, young or old. She was a wonderful human being, and Joe admired the kind, loving nature of her character. In many ways, Joe was like her.

Joe recalled a time when he was about nine or ten and his mother was upset with him. Joe was a



good kid growing up, but he hung out was some local boys who liked to be a bit more mischievous. One night, the boys planned to raid an elderly lady's vegetable garden. Joe was not thrilled about the idea, but he wanted to be part of the group. During the raid, they stopped to enjoy some tasty carrots in the garden, and the elderly lady came out on her front porch.

"Get out of my garden," she yelled at them.

As luck would have it, Joe was the only boy the lady recognized, and as she called out his name, Joe immediately knew he was in trouble. Joe went home and had trouble sleeping that night. He felt terrible about what he had done and worse yet, that he'd been caught. In the morning, Joe couldn't bear the guilt, so he told his mother what happened. While she was very upset, she didn't yell. Her type of punishment had much more meaning and wisdom. He didn't know it at the time, but this lesson would help shape Joe's character.

Joe's mother made him walk beside her to the elderly lady's house and knock on the front door. Along the way, his mother told him he had to do all the talking and apologize for damaging her garden. The elderly lady was very kind and accepted his apology.



Joe thought he was off the hook, lesson learned, and started to walk off the porch.

“Not so fast,” his mother announced. Turning to the old lady, she said “It would be only fair if Joe helped clean up the garden. And, for the next two weeks, he will also help out with any other yard work or chores you may have.”

Joe accepted his sentence and went to work. As it turned out, Joe quickly realized that his newfound chores and workload didn’t even feel like a punishment. The elderly lady was always very kind to Joe, and after he finished his chores, she called him into the kitchen for a snack and homemade iced tea.

She talked about life on the farm when she was growing up, the school she attended as a little girl that only went up to grade six. She also talked about losing her husband a few years back, which made Joe sad.

Weeks passed, and while the formal punishment for Joe’s crime had been served, he still went back every week and continued to help and enjoy her company. It was funny to think that a nine-year-old boy could have such a sweet, warm relationship with this older adult, who was close to 80 years old at the time. Who knows? Maybe Joe would get good at building relationships in the future.

## **Dropping Pebbles**

As the first phone call began, Vic asked what's been happening in Joe's world over the past few weeks since their last day together. After some back-and-forth conversation, Vic got right into some great advice.

"As you plan to take the leap with your new business venture from your current career, the advice that I'm about to share will be very important now and in the future."

Vic went on to explain.

"This is a game-changing lesson, and this is what helped me transform how I operate. Are you ready to hear it?"

"You bet," Joe said with the excitement of a young boy on Christmas morning waiting for a special present.

"Joe, do you still have that pebble I gave you on the last day of our vacation?"

"Yes, I do, Vic. I never leave home without it," Joe said with a chuckle.

Vic laughed, "Great to hear!!"

"Joe, I want you to start dropping pebbles and chasing the ripples. To be clear, I am not suggesting that you throw rocks," Vic snickered. "This simple, yet compelling concept can have a significant impact on your business and your

life's future, Joe, but I must warn you that you have to be patient."

Joe was keen to hear the advice, and eagerly replied, "Okay, I am listening."

### **Slowly but Surely**

Vic went on to explain that the simple concept behind this advice is that, in life or business, we have the opportunity to slowly but steadily drop a pebble. At first, the impact of the pebble may seem insignificant. You can't see much of a difference or effect of the small, subtle ripples.

For example, maybe you are working on a prospective client, and it takes two years to obtain their business. You were always professional with them and consistently validating that you are the right person to help them with their business needs.

Maybe you're trying to earn the trust and respect of someone who, for whatever reason, doesn't like or trust you yet. You keep being helpful, offering support without expecting anything in return, no immediate payback.

You may have teenage kids and they always challenge you. Rarely do they agree with what you say, but you keep saying it and doing the right



things to provide a good example and lead by example, knowing that perhaps someday they will get it.

You've likely heard of the ripple effect; it's the continuing and spreading results of an event or action. The keyword is *continuing*, as you can't stop dropping pebbles if you want to maximize the outcome. If we toss or drop a pebble in the lake of business or life and let the ripples take hold, we can accomplish so much in the long run.

*Patience and persistence  
will be required!*

We all have a choice to drop a pebble and chase the ripples, but the key is that we must learn to be patient but persistent. We could make a big splash and risk upsetting everyone and turning them off with bold actions.

"Admittedly," Vic explained, "it seems simple, but it took me a year or two to figure this out, but the good news is that I have."

### **Drop More Than One Pebble**

Vic continued. "As you plan your career exit strategy in the months ahead, you must also drop many pebbles and continue to chase the ripples. Think about who your target clients might be and what you will do to help them. Also, when you are talking with people you can trust,

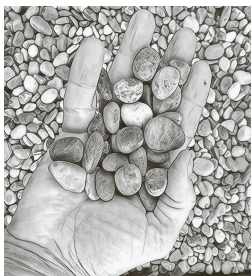
share your plans with them. That will be creating awareness of your ideal future and you are planting the seeds, or like we have been talking, dropping a pebble, with your trusted and close contacts. It's subtle but extremely effective."

Vic and Joe wound down the conversation and slowly ended their first call. They hung up, agreeing on the time and date for the next one. Joe was so excited about this new information which seemed to fit right into his dreams that suddenly had begun to take shape as plans.

In the next few weeks, Joe kept the pebble and ripple image in his head, thinking about how and what to do next. Joe started to research and make plans for the future, always hearing Vic's confident voice and advice echoing in his head.

## **Many Pebbles Equals Many Ripples**

On the next call, Vic got right into it by asking Joe to explain how he might go about dropping pebbles and chasing the ripples.



Joe paused for a moment. He was ready for this question and went on to explain some of his plans. "I haven't fully figured it out yet, but here are some of my thoughts. I'm thinking about taking a university course called Becoming a Master Instructor. It's

coming up in late fall. The course teaches you how to deliver training, learn adult education techniques, and ensure that you connect with all participants.”

“That sounds good, Joe, but how is that dropping a pebble?”

“Well, as I see it, I’ll meet with the corporate program’s director at the university in advance, and find out how they help corporate businesses, as they will be my target clients. That way, it gives me a chance to meet with them one on one. They will learn about me and my proven career history. I will let them know that I am a speaker, 12 years as a Toastmaster and my MBA for added credibility. Letting them get to know me will start a relationship with the program chair before I even begin the course. Those would be valuable connections Vic and it can't hurt, dropping more pebbles and creating added ripples to chase.”

Joe felt more and more confident as he was finally verbalizing and sharing his plans for the first time. He didn’t feel intimidated or insecure, knowing that Vic would only be supportive and helpful during this journey. Joe had only a few people in his life with whom he would even dream of sharing such ambitious plans.

Joe continued excitedly, “I also talked with a guy I know through my daughter’s basketball team. He is a business consultant and seems very sharp and successful. He agreed to meet me for coffee

last week and recommended a book called *The Consultant's Calling*."

Finally stopping, Joe caught his breath and asked. "What do you think, Vic?"

"I like it. I really like it! I believe you are on the right track. Who knows what ripples will come from all those pebbles? I know you'll chase every one of them."

Joe always appreciated positive feedback from his friend who now seemed to have become a mentor, but Vic hadn't finished yet.

"Joe, do you have a little more time for this call?"

"Sure, of course."

"Joe, I want you to think 12 months from now. You're running your new business as a keen and focused entrepreneur. What have you done for your new clients to get paid for your services?"

Joe was ready for this question. "I would be helping them with improving employee communication and sales performance. It may be training or coaching services, not quite sure yet. I see myself working onsite with them so it's more convenient, and I would spend a whole day with their employees and sales team. I would promote the discipline of sales, habits and structure. Who knows? I may even teach them how to drop a pebble and chase the ripples," Joe laughed, "and of course, I would give you full credit."



“Thanks, Joe, I would like that,” Vic smiled with pride.

While Vic was 30 years older than Joe, their connection was growing very strong. Almost like a father-and-son bond. Joe truly treasured and was very grateful that this wise and caring man had come into his life.

“Joe,” Vic said in closing “you’ve made some great progress, and I think we’ve had a very productive call. Let’s re-connect in a couple of weeks. I’m off on a big family road trip through the Rockies for a family wedding.”

“Okay, sounds great, Vic. Thanks again for your support and advice. Have a great trip and travel safely. Summertime traffic in the mountains can be dangerous.” Joe stated as they ended the call.

### **Vic’s advice:**

*We all have the chance to slowly but steadily drop a pebble to create ripples. There are endless opportunities all around us, but we must be present to be aware of them and be ready to take action.*

*With practice, these opportunities will become more apparent and easier to spot. This is extremely valuable when it comes to building any relationship, but you must learn to be patient for the best outcome.*

# The Unexpected Call

Vic called one afternoon in the middle of the week and talked to Joe's wife. Joe was still at work. Vic always called when Joe was home, and it was usually a scheduled call, but today was alarmingly different. It was not a social call. Vic's daughter and son-in-law had been killed in a terrible car accident on a winding mountain highway on their return trip from their cousin's wedding. Vic's teenage grandchildren were in critical condition, and they were flown by helicopter to the nearest hospital.

When Joe arrived home that day and heard the horrific news from his wife, he thought, how *devastating!*

Joe immediately called Vic to offer his condolences and support but was at a loss as to what he could say to comfort his new friend.

When Vic answered the phone, Joe's kindness and offer of support and sympathy flowed so sincerely, Vic felt a deep sense of comfort, even in the midst of a devastating situation. Vic went on to explain every heartbreaking detail. It seemed to Joe as though he just needed to talk about it, so he let him take the lead in the conversation. The news got worse when he explained that a stolen vehicle was involved in the accident, passing a semi as they were coming around a curve. It was a head-on collision, with no possible chance for anyone to react.

### **Life's Tragic Curves**

Vic and his wife had stayed a few days after the wedding, but his daughter's family left the day after, and that's when the accident happened. Nobody had Vic's cell number, so it was a couple of days before they found out the tragic news. Vic was controlled, calm, and methodical through the entire phone conversation,

"We have to stay strong," Vic calmly explained to Joe, "There are so many things to focus on, and we are now responsible for the well-being of our two grandchildren."

Joe was heartbroken for his new friend. He couldn't imagine what it would be like to lose a child, let alone dealing with such a devastating accident for the entire family. After much deliberation, Joe decided not to attend the

funeral for Vic's daughter and son-in-law. There was no reason, other than he felt he didn't know Vic or his family well enough.

"How well do you need to know someone," Joe thought, "to offer support in a time of need and grief?" Joe struggled with his decision not to attend the funeral as he had never encountered such a situation.

Joe and Vic talked a few times briefly and Joe offered support as best he could. Vic understood his decision not to come to the funeral. He was grateful that Joe called to ask how the grandkids were doing, how Vic's wife was holding up, and how he was doing, too. Joe didn't spend any time asking Vic for career or business advice. Now, it was all about Vic's family and how Joe could best support his dear friend.

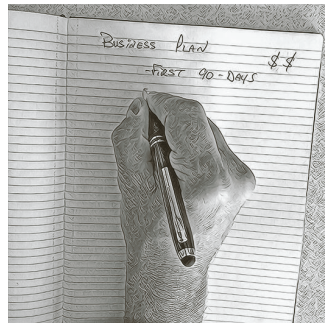
Eventually, Vic and Joe kept in touch with regular, but shorter calls. Vic seemed to appreciate being able to talk about things in Joe's world as it would take his mind off the significant and ever-changing challenges in his life. For a short while, Vic could be removed from his current situation and feel that he was making a difference for someone else.

Months had passed since the accident and they eventually had more regular calls. Vic continued to encourage Joe to keep rolling on getting his new business off the ground. Joe was keen to do it, but extremely nervous. He still had to sell it to his wife, but how?

# The Decision

Over the next several months Joe continued the conversations with Vic to get valuable advice and insight, but he also talked with some close friends and key influencers in the business community. The time now felt right to begin to sell his plan to his wife. Joe realized that quitting a job with a family of four was not something he could do without the support of his wife, even if his plan was solid.

Planning was always front and centre. Joe had written many pages in a journal and had details with crucial steps what he believed would help reduce the risk of transitioning into his new business venture. With all the pebble dropping and ripple chasing, some great opportunities had begun to develop.



Having finished the university course and making some great connections, doors were starting to open already. Also, while traveling on business, Joe arranged to have dinner with a favourite aunt and uncle. Joe admired them. Not only were they terrific people, they were also a loving and supportive couple. Joe was grateful for the visit. His uncle was a retired sales professional. He'd made an excellent living and knew what it was like to be an entrepreneur as he earned straight commission income.

### **Fear Comes Before a Change**

As his aunt served dessert, Joe pitched his business idea to his uncle. He explained what he would do and that he already had work lined up with two corporate clients for the next 90 days. After a lengthy and thoughtful conversation, they offered their full support and agreed that some calculated risk is to be expected if you want to have forward progress in life. He was ready for the discussion with his wife but felt stressed because she was someone who didn't like change or risk. She hadn't changed or challenged herself in years. Joe talked about the idea of starting his own business, but she was never willing to even have the conversation and he was always shot down, so each time he would retreat, left to reflect and ponder on his own.

However, the time had come to tell her. That evening, as she was watching TV, Joe entered the room just as a commercial started.

“Do you have a few minutes? I want to bounce an idea by you?”

“Yeah,” she mumbled, not taking her eyes from the screen. “What is it?”

Nervously, Joe began. “I’ve been doing a lot of thinking about our future and I want to start my own business. I have a solid business plan with customers already lined up. It will be a great opportunity for flexibility, financial advancement, and I can start doing what I love to do! I want to quit my job in the next two months.”

There was dead silence.

### **Persistence Scares Fear Off**

Joe repeated, “I want to start my own business.”

“NOPE, that won’t happen!” She suddenly burst out, “I don’t even want to talk about this. What a dumb idea!” She quickly turned back to the TV.

Joe persisted. “Please listen. I’ve thought a lot about this, and I know it can take our life to a new and exciting level. I ran my ideas by Vic, and he liked them.”

“Oh great, Vic liked them, but he doesn’t have to live with the risk or this dumb idea,” she said in her usual condescending tone.

Joe was usually very passive with his wife, but this time, it was different. He was more confident and unyielding.

“Listen, I’ve thought about this for a long time, and I honestly believe I can do this, but I do need your support. It’s the only way,” Joe explained hopefully.

“My support for what? To agree with a bad idea?”

“No,” Joe implored. “I need your support to help me, to help *us* through the transition. I get it. We don’t like risk, but if we want something more than what we have right now, we have to make hard decisions and take risks. Right?”

“Yeah, I suppose,” she replied, unconvinced.

“I can do this,” Joe pressed on. “I’m doing this, but will you support me?”

“Ok, fine. I will support you,” she scoffed.

“Thank you,” Joe gratefully expressed, “but I do want you to believe in me and more importantly, our bigger future.”

“Fine,” she mumbled. “I believe in you and support you. Is that good enough now? Just let me get back to my show.”

Not convinced that she meant it, Joe went ahead with his plan anyway.



In his marriage, he'd tried to seek his wife's approval and validation for most things that he did, but this one was different. He wasn't going to push this conversation any further. She was never much of a conversationalist, especially when the subject was even remotely stressful.

As Joe went to sit in his home office and reflect on what just happened, he had mixed emotions. He was excited and nervous about the future. He also knew that while his wife didn't sound too supportive, he had the green light to move on with his plans. Rereading his journal and notes, remembering the conversation he'd had with his aunt and uncle on the business trip just a few weeks earlier, he grabbed his phone to look at the pictures he'd taken the night he visited. They were so supportive and caring, but, sadly, his uncle had passed away soon after their visit from a short battle with cancer. Neither Joe nor his family had known he was ill.

As Joe reflected on the supportive conversation, a feeling of warmth came over him which validated his decision to start his own business. He remembered his uncle saying to him, "Joe, life is short. We will regret the things that we didn't do or try more than what we did do." Wise advice from his uncle.

Convinced, Joe knew that he was making the right decision, regardless of how supportive or receptive his wife was.

## **The Cream Always Rises to the Top**

Joe was always an early riser and one morning, as he sipped his coffee, he stopped to remember a former manager and mentor. He'd seen potential in Joe, always pushed him to be better, and gave him projects that stretched him to learn and grow. Joe loved working with him and would do anything he asked because there was a deep trust between them. The day his favourite boss told Joe that he was transferring to another city, Joe was devastated and asked, "How will I continue to grow and develop without your guidance?"

He simply replied, "Joe, the cream always rises to the top. You'll be just fine. Apply what I've taught you and don't stop learning from others. I have enjoyed mentoring you, Joe, but the reality is that you will have many mentors in your lifetime, each with a different lesson. It's all part of your amazing life journey. Enjoy the ride."

Joe was now ready to make the big announcement and resign. It was in October and Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>. What timing! Was it going to be a scary day or a terrific day? Joe decided to make it a terrific one. He knew that he was in control of his destiny.

## Step One

Joe arrived to work early, went to his office, and closed the door. He had a scheduled call with his manager who lived in Toronto, and he took advantage of the time zone difference. He dialed and the ringing on the receiver seemed to stop time. Joe's heart was pounding with nerves and apprehension.

"Good morning, Joe. Right on time as always. How are you this fine day?"

"I'm good, thanks."

While Joe didn't like his job and the bureaucracy that existed at the corporate level, one big bright spot was that his manager was a fantastic leader. She was a big fan of Joe and his work and they connected well soon after she started with the company. Joe was grateful that he reported to her and not the original jerk he had to deal with. Their great relationship didn't make what Joe had to tell her any easier, but he hoped she would understand and be supportive.

Joe got right to it and told her.

"I've made a significant decision in my life, both personally and professionally. I will be resigning from my role and wish to provide you with two weeks' notice."

Joe paused and took a breath, but before he could start up again, she interrupted him. "Joe, I'm very happy for you. What's your new opportunity?"

Joe was quietly relieved with her kindness and supportive reply, so he started to relax a bit.

“I’m starting my own business and will be doing some consulting, coaching, and training. As you know, I have a background in that area and my network has opened some doors that I have decided to explore.”

“Joe, that’s wonderful news, and I’m very excited for you! It takes a lot of courage to make decisions like this, and I commend you for taking the leap into entrepreneurship. It’s not for everyone, but I believe that you will rock it, Joe. You have so many business relationships that can help you. I will miss working with you, and I’ve truly valued your contribution and support. You are such a polished professional, and if I can be of any assistance down the road, please don’t hesitate to contact me,” she said in a very caring tone.

Her encouraging words were great to hear, as Joe sincerely respected and admired her. The call was brief, and Joe already felt like he had a new lease on life.

Step one done!

Now it was time to call his dear friend and colleague who had the same position with the company as Joe. His colleague was quick to answer the phone.

“Good morning, Joe. How are things in your world, today? Good, I hope.”

His colleague was always upbeat and optimistic. He was such a great friend and a positive influence for Joe.

“My world is good and about to change,” Joe replied. “I’ve resigned as of today. I gave my two weeks’ notice ten minutes ago.”

There was silence on the other end.

“That’s a shocker, Joe. Why didn’t you tell me you were planning this?”

“Honestly,” Joe replied, “I didn’t want things between us to change. I’ve enjoyed our business relationship, our friendship, and didn’t want to detract from our good conversations.”

“I understand, Joe, but you know I would have kept it confidential. It’s crazy to think that just two weeks ago, you and I were in Toronto sipping a glass of merlot, and you didn’t mention anything.”

Joe felt his heart sink as he, too, treasured this very special relationship.

“If it makes you feel any better, you were the second person I called,” Joe stated in a somewhat reluctant, yet cheery voice.

Joe explained the next chapter of his career. His colleague was 15 years older and somewhat of a mentor. On second thought, no. He was totally a mentor! As they talked, Joe remembered what

he'd said to him a year earlier over dinner and a few glasses of red wine.

"Joe, you are a smart young man, and someday, you will be wise."

Joe thought about that statement often and realized that wisdom comes from experience, not a textbook. Joe knew he was going to gain new knowledge in the next chapter as an entrepreneur, and he was ready to learn this wisdom. Some of it would surely be painful, but an experience towards wisdom none the less.

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Joe called Vic next. "Well, I did it," he announced. "I resigned today."

"Terrific news, Joe. How does it feel?"

"It feels amazing, and I'm ready for what's next."

"Good for you Joe! Let the entrepreneurial fun begin!" remarked Vic.

The two friends talked about the exciting future Joe had in store.

# LRT = Like + Respect + Trust

It was 7:45 pm on the nose and Vic called.

“Right on time, like always,” Joe answered as he picked up the phone. “How was your week Joe?” he asked

“The week was great and I’m terrific. If I were any better, I would be twins,” Vic laughed. “But more importantly, how was *your* week? How’s everything going with your announcement at work and planning your new business?”

Vic was so good at asking open-ended questions and then sitting back and patiently listening. Joe rattled off his long reply, and he was so grateful that his friend and mentor was such an incredible listener.

Today’s call was going to be a little different, as Joe wanted to reveal an interesting concept and

idea. The idea was simple but profound. At least, Joe thought so.

“Vic, you know that I really believe relationships are key to personal and professional success, and I know you agree with me. What do you know about LRT?” Joe asked Vic.

“I’ve never heard of it.”

“Well, let me tell you more,” Joe said in an energized voice.

“LRT is an acronym that I use for Like, Respect, and Trust. I think that you must give it before you can get it. In fact, that’s how we became such good friends, Vic. Even though we don’t see each other often and rely on phone calls to stay connected, we have a solid friendship built on LRT. We all have some relationships that last the test of time like ours,”

“Why do some relationships last longer than others?” Joe asked, pointedly.

Vic replied quickly, “Lots of reasons.”

Joe excitedly continued, “Yes! There are many factors, but the three simple steps always bring me back to LRT.

“How can you be liked? You simply need to be likable, but it’s not as simple as it sounds. *“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”* applies very well in this case. I have had the good fortune of knowing many people from all walks of life, nationalities, gender, religion, and



professions,” Joe said. “I always seem to gravitate to people I like. It may seem obvious, but I know of many people who seem to be drawn to people who are controlling, grumpy, or rude. I am not exactly sure why, but they are. The more people I spend time with that are likable, the more I want to hang with them, and I hope they may feel the same way.

### **Things Aren’t Always as They Seem**

Joe has a friend named Keeran, whom he met a few years back. They were both involved in the same business association group. Joe had talked with Keeran a few times and decided that he wanted to get to know him better. He called Keeran for a coffee. They met and casually chatted about what they did professionally. It was an awkward conversation on both sides, and when the coffee meeting was over, Keeran said, “Thanks for the coffee, Lanz.”

Lanz? *Wow*, that annoyed Joe, but he didn’t say anything. *Calling me by my last name? How hard is it to remember “Joe”?* Keeran obviously didn’t care enough to think before he spoke. No LRT at all, this would be the R for respect that was missing.

## Likeable Equals Liked

On their next call, Joe told Vic the Keeran story, but with the latest update. A few months after the awkward coffee meeting with Keeran, there still wasn't much LRT coming from this business relationship until Keeran called Joe for a coffee.

*Joe thought, why would he want to meet me? I'm not sure that we even like each other! He must want something, but what exactly?*

The two men met at Starbucks, but this time, the vibe of the meeting seemed different. It was comfortable and relaxed, but why? Keeran got right into the dialogue.

"You know, Joe," Off to a good start already as he called Joe by his first name, "I have a lot of respect for you.

"Wow. Thank you," Joe replied in surprise."

"Everyone I talk to who knows you says you are a great guy, and everyone likes you."

Joe was enjoying this conversation and was shocked by how different it was from that first coffee meeting.

Keeran went on to say, "You seem to have your life together. You're successful and seem wise. I need to grow up and be more like that."

Joe was surprised by the comment as Keeran was also a successful businessman, a good-looking guy, and well-connected in the

community, even though he was 10–15 years younger than Joe.

“Thanks for the kind words, but you seem to have life in control, running your own business, and you seem to be living the dream.” Joe had heard of his business and that he was about to open another office on the east coast. Keeran was also known to be a bit of a jetsetter.

As the conversation evolved, it was clear that Keeran didn’t want anything from Joe other than his friendship and an ear to listen. Joe felt like the time was right to ask Keeran about the first time they met for coffee.

“Hey, Keeran,” Joe said in a somewhat sheepish manner, “Do you remember the first time we met for our coffee meeting? It was kind of awkward.”

“Yeah,” Keeran nodded, “you bet I do!”

“What exactly happened there?”

Keeran explained, “Well, it wasn’t clear what the purpose of the meeting was. It was more like a job interview than two business guys getting together to get to know each other better.”

“What do you mean by interview?”

“Well, it seemed like you were very calculated in your questions like you were checking off a list.”

“I just don’t roll that way,” Keeran continued.

“It’s a conversation for me and if it is awkward, what’s the point of continuing?”

Joe chimed in and said, “I do agree that it was awkward, but it wasn’t my intent to make it feel like an interview. Today feels different.”

Joe was learning from this and noted that sometimes, conversations could be just that. Conversations. There doesn’t always need to be a goal or a specific outcome.

“It sure does,” Keeran responded. “It’s just two guys having a chat, and I must admit that I can now see what everyone has been saying about you is correct. This is a natural conversation and you are a great listener. I like what you are about Joe, and you’re a good dude!”

Joe wanted to validate his point with Vic that the meeting with Keeran ended well and the like and respect factor was now confirmed.

Joe went on to tell Vic, “If you want to be liked, you have to be likeable first.” It’s really simple, but not always easy, especially when life gets gloomy and stressful. People tend to turtle, become self-centered. It’s almost like going into survival mode. This happens quickly, but an authentic and self-aware person learns to recognize the pattern and stop the behavior.

## **Respectful Equals Respected**

Joe shared the next critical component of his newfound wisdom.

“How can you be respected, Vic?”

Vic responded without skipping a beat, “You need to be respectful.”

“Bingo, that is exactly it. When we’re building relationships, do we talk about or complain about other people? Are we late for appointments and meetings? No.”

Joe wasn’t much of a singer, but he started to sing the famous Aretha Franklin song, “*R-E-S-P-E-C-T find out what it means to me. R-E-S-P-E-C-T.*”

Vic chuckled over the phone, and of course, he remembered the song well.

“I respect your point, Joe, but not your singing. Don’t quit your day job,” he said with a sarcastic yet caring tone!

*Respect is earned over a period of time, but it can also be given immediately. Show respect before expecting it in return.*

Be patient and allow it to happen over time. No time clock or deadline required!

## **Trusting Equals Trusted**

“Now, the final point here, Vic, is trust. How can you be trusted? What does trust look like to you? Do you keep your word? I know you do, Vic, but I am simply illustrating a point. Are you someone that others can count on when needed? Do you do what you said you would? Trust is the backbone of any personal or professional

relationship that is for keeps. Without it, you don't have a meaningful relationship."

*"Learning to trust is one of life's most difficult tasks."* —**Isaac Watts**

"As I see it, Vic, if we are looking to build, to foster, or to improve a personal or professional relationship, try a little LRT. It can go a long way if you want to build relationships for keeps!"

Joe continued, "I cherish most of my relationships and want them for keeps. Ideally forever, but no guarantees, of course, kind of like a marriage," Joe quipped. "I will continue to keep LRT at the forefront of every relationship."

Vic was impressed, and the only comment that came from him was, "I love it, and I get it."

"I feel so strongly about this concept that I would give up my MBA to protect my LRT any day. It's that important to me," Joe said passionately.

### **LRT = Like + Respect + Trust**

"Wow, that says a lot, Joe. I admire your passion for LRT."

Joe had a big smile over the phone and was beaming as he always liked to impress Vic and when he admired something Joe said, it was a sign Joe was on the right track.

Joe had a few stories of when LRT didn't keep the relationship. Some relationships would simply fade away. Since Joe was a very reflective person, he always wanted to know why certain relationships were not destined for keeps.

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"Are we good for a little more time on our call Vic?"

"Of course, we have time, but if my wife gets a call she's been expecting, I may have to break-away sooner," Vic quickly replied.

Joe enthusiastically responded, "Sounds good!"

Joe went on to share a few stories of failed relationships.

"As we chatted about LRT, I couldn't help but remember a guy that I met many years ago. He was fun, energetic and very smart. We connected on several occasions and met while volunteering for a community project. I really liked the guy and was impressed with his success and he also had a beautiful family, which suggested to me that he had "life all figured out." Now, I am not suggesting that he didn't, but over a while, maybe two or three years into the relationship Joe was sensing more lip service than building a stronger relationship. Whenever the two guys met it was super pleasant and included hugs and cheery banter. What seemed to be lacking was follow through and

commitment. He would offer to call Joe and plan some cool outing together and never did do what he told Joe that he was going to do. Joe of course, being a trusting guy, let it go a few times, but when it continued to happen, Joe was questioning whether this relationship was worth keeping.

Their relationship eventually fizzled!

“People may not care about your education or IQ, but they do care about how likable you are, how respectful you are, and of course, if you can be trusted.” Joe continued, “It will become my guiding principle to apply in my life from this day forward. I may have already been doing this before, but it’s so much clearer now, really breaking LRT down and defining it. I will make it part of my daily relationship building.”

## **The Highs and Lows**

Joe had his second anniversary as an entrepreneur. There were many things to celebrate but also some sad events. Last year, Joe’s mother was diagnosed with cancer. Joe was devastated, as he had a very close and loving relationship with his mother. She was a very caring and supportive person who put the needs of others first and who loved and respected her family. There was a lot of her caring personality in Joe. That caring nature has stuck with Joe and defined him as a man.



Her battle was quite brief, and she passed away less than six months after receiving the news. Joe had to dig deep to stay focused on his business, which was very difficult at that time of grief, but with the loving support of his family, he pulled through the pain and sorrow. Joe came up with a small but powerful phrase that kept the already close connection with his five other siblings even tighter. Every time they were together, Joe would hold up his right index finger and say.

### **Family is #1**

This tradition caught on, and it continues today, every time Joe meets with his family.

If you think about it, your family is the very first relationship you develop. Some people do a great job of maintaining and growing that over time, regardless of where they live, yet others don't invest the time or effort. Other priorities take over, and family is no longer #1.

### **Finding Your Purpose**

The anniversary of Joe's mother's passing was still fresh, but he realized that he was gaining strength and momentum and his business was going well. More family vacations and business success proved that he was on track. The road ahead was looking bright and positive. Little did he know how dark and bumpy that road would get in the weeks and months ahead!

After a busy week, Joe and his wife were finishing up the dinner dishes and sitting down to enjoy a glass of wine. Joe was feeling good about the week and was quite relaxed. They were not talking about anything specific, just talking. Out of nowhere, Joe's wife shocked him with her next statement.

"I don't want to be married anymore."

Joe's mouth dropped. He was utterly speechless.

"What are you saying?" Joe replied in shock, "I don't understand. Why?"

"It's just one of those things," she responded wanly.

Those words echoed in Joe's mind. It's just one of those things. Wow, divorce is just one of those things! "Perhaps marriage is just one of those things, too," Joe thought sadly.

His wife continued and told Joe that it had been something she had been thinking about for a long time.

"How could I have not seen this coming?" Joe thought in complete disbelief, thinking quickly back through the past few months.

Joe responded to his wife and told her with deeply saddened eyes. "You are my whole purpose."

She looked up at Joe with a cold, and calculated response. "I guess you need to find another purpose."

The conversation ended there. Joe's wife didn't want to talk more about it. Again, she wasn't much of a talker, especially when the discussions were stressful.

"So much for relationships for keeps when it comes to my marriage," Joe thought sadly.

The next day was like waking up from a bad dream. Joe needed to validate that the nightmare was real. That morning, Joe waited patiently for his wife to get up and made her a coffee as she walked into the kitchen.

"Are you serious about getting a divorce? We never had a conversation even close to this topic before."

She simply replied, "Yes, we are getting a divorce, and I've been thinking about it for a long time."

Joe's mind was still reeling and to hear that she had been thinking about it for a long time was unfathomable to Joe. She hadn't even talked about it with him or shared how she was feeling. She offered no opportunity even to fix what seemed, in her opinion, to be broken.

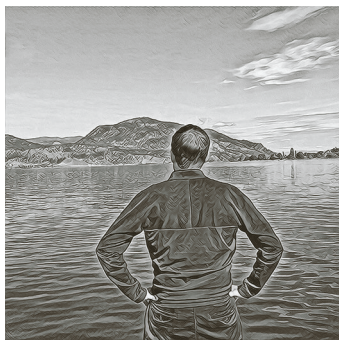
As the conversation unfolded, they decided not to tell their kids yet, especially their son. He was in Grade 12, and it would be best if he didn't know about this until after exams in June. It was an important year for him, and they didn't want to impact his grades with such terrible news.

How could Joe handle that dark secret for the next eight months? It would be brutal, and it proved to be one of the most challenging things that Joe had ever done in his life, but he got through it. Looking back now, he's not sure how, but he dug deep and made it through the difficult months.

### **Change is Painful**

If Joe truly needed to find a new purpose, what would that be and how would he find it? Would he know his true purpose if he saw it?

He went for a very long, brisk walk. As he reached one of his favorite and most peaceful spots near the water, he stopped and looked out, as if searching for advice and wisdom. He thought



to himself, "Where will I go? What will I do? Will I be okay? Will I find my new purpose?"

Joe was so confused as he thought he was living on purpose, but maybe it was for everyone else and not for himself.

Joe decided that he had to tell someone, to share the sadness and what was happening in his messed-up world. Of course, he knew the only

person he could talk to was Vic. During their next call, Joe broke the news. As predicted, Vic was an incredible listener and very supportive, even encouraging.

Joe was very upset and somewhat emotional talking about his marriage. He went on and on wondering how this could have happened, that it must be his fault and what he was willing to do to save his marriage.

Vic patiently listened, and when Joe started to slow down, Vic spoke up.

“Listen, Joe,” Vic said in a soft, caring tone. “I know it is hard for you now and please understand that I am here to be a support and an ear when you need it.” Vic paused before he started the next part, knowing that Joe was still very sensitive and his heart was hurting, feeling that he was the sole person responsible for the divorce.

“Joe, sometimes relationships don’t always grow at the same pace, and that could be the case with you and your wife. While you were at the same level of thinking 20-plus years ago, that may not be the case now. Things change.

People change. They have different goals and dreams. You did, and that was also why you decided to start your own business, right?”

“Yes, I know, and things were going great for us. We enjoyed four weeks of vacation this past year, and my business is doing well. Why leave

the marriage now?" Joe responded in a confused voice.

"It's hard to say. Most of the time, there's not a date in someone's calendar when making big decisions. People make them. While she was ready to say it, that doesn't mean you were ready to hear it."

# The Favour

It was a very tough five months. Joe was still struggling with his wife's decision. His business was not doing as well as it was last year, primarily due to Joe being distracted and stressed about his personal life, and he wasn't focussing on his business; a risky thing to do when you are an entrepreneur. Plus, the economy was sputtering, and that added to the challenges in Joe's business.

The two friends had many calls, and Joe found comfort in his friend and mentor's support, but the sorrow and hurt was tough to bear at times. They decided that Joe was going to fly out to meet with Vic. The two were going to have a weekend away, try to have some fun and maybe even relax.

On the last call before they were to meet, Vic said to Joe that he would share something that might make him feel better. Joe asked to have him share it now.

Vic said, "No, it will be best if I say it to you in person."

"How odd," Joe thought after the call. "We talked about so many things and he couldn't share this information, whatever this was!"

When Joe and Vic met at the airport, it felt terrific for both men to connect. Vic knew just what to do; a firm and manly handshake and a pat on the back, which almost felt like a hug.

"Let's get you checked into the hotel and have a toast with a tall rum and coke."

"A toast?" Joe thought, "What are we celebrating? Doesn't he know I am hurting and struggling with the divorce and my unravelling world?"

As the two men sat down and sipped their rum and cokes, Joe started again, rehashing old conversations they had on the phone months before.

Joe brought up the pain he felt after his wife threw the shocking divorce news at him. He was retelling the part that hurt the most when he told her, "You are my whole purpose."

Joe recalled how she looked at him with cold and uncaring eyes and her direct response, "I guess you need to find another purpose."



Vic listened again to all the stories in a supportive way just like so many times before, but then he stopped him.

He looked intently at Joe and asked, "Are you ready to hear what I told you I would share with you in person; it might make you feel better?"

Stunned by the abrupt question, but trusting his friend and mentor, Joe said "yes."

*"Sometimes things are done  
for you not to you."*

"Joe, I know the last few months have been tough, but I believe that she has done you the biggest favour in your life. Some relationships are destined to end and not meant to be forever, and you need to let them go. It may not feel that way now but trust me when I say this: your life is going to be way better than you ever imagined."

With that, the two friends raised their glasses and toasted. "To way better", they both said simultaneously. Clink went the glasses, and both took a long drink.

After the shock of what Vic just said sunk in, Vic went on to chat about relationships that aren't always for keeps.

"Listen, Joe, I know it's tough on you right now, but you will get through this. You were married a long time but facing the reality that your life is

changing and knowing and believing it will change for the better is my best advice. You are a young man with tons of potential, and you aren't too bad looking either." Vic smiled as he threw in that last line. "You will be fine and won't be alone for long. I am sure of that!"

While Joe had always taken pride and carefully dressed and maintained good grooming habits, meeting someone was far from his mind. Right now, he couldn't even imagine being with someone else.

Vic told Joe a story about a former business partner of his and how their seven-year business relationship ended. In this case, Vic mentioned that there was a lack of trust, referring to LRT. "While we liked and respected each other, some things happened that made me decide to end the business relationship." It was tough and a big challenge financially, as Vic had to pay him outright when the business was starting to grow. Lawyers were involved, and it was expensive, just like divorce. Vic offered some advice that was new for Joe.

"My philosophy in life and business is simple, and I know that I have told you this before. Do you want to be right, or do you want to be happy? Ending that business partnership didn't make me happy for a while, but it was the right thing to do! I knew it then, and I still know it now."

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Vic told Joe to think of all the people he had met in his lifetime. “There are likely hundreds and hundreds of people from elementary school to adult life. How many of those people do you still have a close relationship? Twenty percent of them or maybe five percent? That’s not necessarily a bad thing. It may be the way it was supposed to be. If they were standing in front of you, who would you talk to first and who would you not even bother to speak with again?”

This is a very intriguing question. Joe thought about it and realized he wouldn’t talk to many of them.

Vic shared another relationship story.

“Recently, I was talking with someone, and they shared with me that one of their closest friends is no longer speaking to her.” Vic’s friend commented that things had changed in her life and she didn’t have the same schedule or priorities as her friend did anymore. They’d just drifted apart, and it’s been over a year since they spoke.

Vic explained, “It’s kind of like ADD but for relationships. Attention Deficit Disorder is a condition with symptoms such as inattentiveness, impulsiveness, and hyperactivity. In a relationship, we mostly mean inattentiveness or paying less attention to the other person. Someone in the relationship receives less attention from the other person than they used to or would like to. Someone

spends more time doing something different from what they used to do.”

He continued, “That was the case with my friend’s situation that I shared earlier. I believe that some relationships change and even break apart because one person feels they are getting less attention, affection, respect, or time from the other. They eventually drift apart.”

Vic went on, “Sometimes it is because we do the same thing, day in and day out, that we disconnect and forget to stop and smell the roses, so to speak. We forget to appreciate others, and instead we spend more time staring at the screen on our phone; we forget to enjoy the sunrise and sunset, the smell of fresh rain, and the sound of laughter on the playground. We need to stay present and attentive.

“I don’t necessarily feel it is the amount of time the people within the relationship spend together that is the most important. Instead, it’s the quality of time and attention, merely being present when they spend time together. Along with a lack of understanding of the expectations of the other person, I also see that, in most cases, the communication drops off. It’s not at the same level it once was, and the relationship eventually fades.”

Vic concluded, “Remember this, Joe: *“Whoever cares the least in a relationship, controls the relationship.”*

“On a positive note,” Joe said, “There are examples in my life where I may not see a long-time friend for months or even years. When we get together or talk, it’s like we’d just seen each other last week. For example, a dear friend and former colleague and I have a relationship like that. He’s from a small town out east, and we’ve only seen each other about five times and talked on the phone a handful more in the past 15 years. We connect when he travels on business and stops in town. We usually meet for dinner or enjoy a glass of wine. My relationship with him started years ago, and I don’t anticipate it fizzling out anytime soon. I think he would agree!”

Vic talked about his relationship with his wife, and it was evident that they were still in love after 45-plus years of marriage. As the two men were talking, he told Joe one of his favourite lines that he shares with his wife regularly. He would say to her, “I love you more than yesterday, but not as much as tomorrow.”

Those are such beautiful words coming from a husband who has been married for so many years. Joe thought to himself, “I want that, too.”

## **The More the Merrier**

How can you prevent your relationships from failing?

One way is to maintain some level of communication. Daily, weekly, monthly, or annually, provided that both people in the

relationship are okay with the frequency. Create some guiding principles. For example: if you're busy with work, travel, or taking a course, you need to share your plans with the other person.

If you are the person feeling you are getting less attention or time with the other person, you need to understand and respect that your friend might have other things in their life besides you. Talk to them about how you're feeling, but remember, we can't be too needy or unreasonable with our requests or we may push our friends away.

*Don't keep score.* If you called last time, it doesn't mean you have to wait for your friend to call. Pick up the phone if you want to talk. Like anything that lasts the test of time, it takes effort, but that time and energy can be worth it if you wish to build relationships for keeps.

### **It's Hard Going It Alone**

Finally, June rolled around, and it was time to tell the kids about the divorce. They were shocked and confused, but Joe and his wife tried to reassure them that everything would work out, that they still loved them, and they would continue to live with their mom.

Joe had to tell his family next. Being the youngest of six brothers and sisters, that was going to be hard. Joe planned a trip to visit his brothers and

sisters. He didn't tell them why he was flying out, but they were always excited to see him.

While it had been very hard on Joe, he wished that he'd told his family about his divorce sooner, as their love and support would have made it a little easier for him, but the couple had decided to tell no one until school was over, for the kids' sake. (In hindsight, Joe would never have done it that way, but you can't change the past.)

Joe decided to tell his sisters first because they were all amazing women and very supportive of Joe. When he told them the news, they were shocked and teary-eyed as they'd all thought Joe's marriage was excellent.

"I thought our marriage was great, too, but I guess I just didn't see the signs," Joe moaned as he explained the situation.

As difficult as it was to tell his family about the news of his failed marriage, it was a relief. The support they showed Joe was what he had been missing for the past several months keeping this deep, dark secret. Joe was uncomfortable keeping secrets. It wasn't in his nature, but in times of stress and circumstance, one does what they think is best for the family, the kids in this example.

One reply that his sisters gave him during the visit, as many people did, "Joe, we are sad for you. You are such a nice guy."

While Joe believed he was a nice guy and heard this more than once, the more he listened to that line, especially now, the more it bothered him. He thought, “How can a nice guy be getting a divorce? I can’t be that nice if my wife doesn’t want to be with me anymore.”

Over time, this became a critical life lesson for Joe as he realized being a nice guy was okay, good, in fact. It was a positive quality that he possessed. It was the reason he attracted so many people into his life. He realized that being a nice guy, regardless of life’s circumstances, was the way to go. It seemed way better than being a jerk or pouting when the world dealt a harsh blow.



# Let it Go

Joe and Vic had done some golfing over the years, and of course Vic was the better golfer. Vic always reminded Joe to keep his head down and his eye on the ball. That was easier said than done in Joe's case. Vic referenced life lessons all the time, and the golf course was no exception.

He would tell Joe, "the execution of goals requires failure and lots of practice. Ideally it becomes perfect practice, particularly with big goals that you want to achieve. Whether it's sales and income goals, business goals, or life and family goals, they require focus and commitment."

*Practising bad habits won't win the day*

“Golf professionals, like us, Joe,” Vic said with a snicker, “require laser focus on the goal or objective.”

Vic liked to add a favourite quote from golf legend, Arnold Palmer: *“What do I mean by concentration? I mean focusing totally on the business at hand and commanding your body to precisely do what you want it to do.”*

During this difficult time of separation and pending divorce, Joe knew that he had to keep his eye on the ball with his business, keep laser focussed on his goals and objectives. He would have to dig deep and would need Vic’s wisdom and support to get him through this tough journey.

### **Whining is No Good... After a While.**

It was a stressful few months for Joe. Business was slow due to a struggling Canadian economy, and the fallout of his divorce was taking its toll on Joe.

Vic, as always, was the supportive listener and let Joe ramble on about his challenges. On this call, though, after five minutes or so, Vic, jumped in and said, “Let it go,” in a loud, stern tone.

Joe stopped himself mid-sentence. “What?”

“Joe, just let it go! Listen, Joe, and I know you have crap going on in your life but whining and

talking about it over and over won't make it better."

"Wow, I was whining." Joe winced at the word. It was tough to hear, but sadly, it was true.

"Joe, I have a story for you. Several years ago, I met a guy through my family. Gerry is his name. I've mentioned him to you before. He is a great guy and close to your age. You should meet him someday; the two of you would connect well."

Vic continued, "Like all of us, Gerry had crappy stuff happening in his life from time to time, but he seemed always to handle it so well. He explained to me that he'd learned to compartmentalize the challenge, and then be able to let it go. After learning this from him, I started to coin the word, Gerrify, or to let it go when I needed to let something crappy go. It means to park it or put it aside or behind you if you can."

Joe was intrigued by the concept and went on to ask what he meant by compartmentalizing precisely.

"Joe, when bad things or issues are coming at you, you need to compartmentalize them to be able to deal with them properly. You might even park them because they are out of your control and then you can focus on matters that you can control. You can't control what CNN says or shows you, but you can turn off the channel and block it out."

*Let It Go!*  
*Focus, Focus, Focus*

“This is huge advice, Joe, trust me, and it really can help you avoid being distracted when your focus is required.

Let’s say you have a big proposal you need to work on and present to a new client, and you have all this noise and negativity in your head. You **MUST** compartmentalize the noise. You can come back to it later, but you have to remove it from your mind.

It is hard to do at first, but it can help you reduce stress, and it puts you in control. Ultimately, you have to believe that by compartmentalizing and eventually letting it go, you will be better off.”

Joe hung up the phone and paused to think. Looking at the ceiling, he realized that something had to change, and it was him. He was the only thing that he could control, not the situation, his soon-to-be ex-wife, the divorce, or even his kids. However, he could control his actions, his thoughts, his focus, heck even his business. It was time to get down to work!

# COIs Are Key

Five minutes into one of their calls, Vic asked Joe if he knew what a COI was. Joe quickly replied, “Yes, centres of influence.”

“Good. As you know, COIs are critical in your business life and your overall life, in general. How I see it, Joe, your COIs must have LRT with you. Like, respect, and trust. It isn’t always about what position they hold or if they are high profile connections. A COI could be the janitor or the CEO. As long as you have LRT with them, they can be a COI.”

Joe thoughtfully agreed, “That makes total sense.”

“Joe, how many COIs do you have right now, best guess?”

“Approximately 100,” Joe declared.

“Whoa, Joe, that’s a big number, but I am going to challenge you on that number. Realistically, I

believe that number should be a maximum of 25,” Vic stated in a confident tone.

“Why only 25?” Joe asked in a surprised voice.

“Well, COIs are tighter and closer connections in your business world. While I know you have lots of connections in your city and on LinkedIn, the reality is that a smaller number are closer and more connected with you than others.

Here’s what I want to suggest. I want you to think about that list and come up with 20–25 names of people in your world you would never want to lose touch with; at least, not at this time. Then, ask yourself, when was the last time you talked or met with them? Was it in the last three months, 12 months? COIs require your attention, too, and supportive relationship time. You don’t need to connect every day, but you do need to stay connected on a somewhat regular basis. They need to know you care, too, and aren’t just asking them for something. Maybe you help them with something or make an introduction to them without them even asking for it. You also become their COI. Like you said, Joe, give LRT before it’s received. Always give it, without expecting immediate gratification or validation. It’s like dropping a pebble and chasing the ripples.”

Joe was quiet on the phone, thinking about that last comment. “I can see how that makes perfect sense.”

*“When developing COIs, learn all about their world and they will learn about what is key in your life and business as well,”* Vic offered. “COIs help each other, and they don’t keep score or track who helped more. They are willing to help each other. It’s because of the LRT that you built over time.”

### **Everyone Matters**

It’s not rocket science to understand and appreciate the strengths and value of every individual, from the executives in the corner office to the front-of-house staff. It seems simple enough, but too often, we may skip by someone because they aren’t on the list. Slow down the process when allowed to meet new people, and ultimately, you will build meaningful and lasting relationships.

*Ask yourself,  
do you focus on  
position and title only?*

Is it most important to impress the CEO or build a relationship with everyone you meet? Most people work in an organization that has more than one person.

You may be self-employed, a farmer, or a retired vice-president, but most likely, you can still relate to this message. We need some insights into how we can all do a better job of building meaningful relationships with people at all levels and titles. There are only a few fundamentals that, if you are patient and consistent, and you do them every time, the opportunity to build meaningful relationships will exist.

Don't limit yourself to the person you think you need to meet when building business relationships. You can't assume that, just because someone isn't the "head honcho", they can't help you. Be kind to everyone, regardless of their title, where they are on the corporate ladder, or the car they drive.

***Act with intention:*** Remember that in every interaction you have with people, you should ideally act with the intent to build a more meaningful relationship.

How do you interact with people at your place of work, the dry cleaner, grocery store, and home? Being aware of your intentions helps you in all situations.

*Think about your intentions the next time you interact with someone.*



***Be genuine:*** The more authentic and natural you are in connecting and speaking with others, the easier it will be to build meaningful relationships with people of all backgrounds, professions, and titles.

If you are like me and you truly value people, and you want to build relationships for keeps, it takes effort, practice, and focus. The above tips can work for you in all situations and all locations that you interact with people. Give them a try!

# A Weekend in Whistler

Joe's business was starting to pick up with his new focus and the Gerrifying he has been practising. Learning to compartmentalize has been a handy tool. In the past few months, Joe had hired a team of young professionals to work with his business, and it felt great for Joe to see some forward momentum. He also loved being a leader and mentor to these bright and keen young minds. Planning their next call, Joe had a brilliant idea.

"Vic, I have been thinking. Why don't the two of us head to Whistler for a few days? I will fly to Vancouver, and we can drive up to the resort. I've never been there, and it would be amazing to spend a few days together. Oh, by the way, the trip is my treat. It's my way of saying thank you for all the words of advice and support you have given me over the past number of years."

Vic was quick to reply with a resounding, “Yes! I’m in. Let’s make it happen.”

Vic picked up Joe at the airport in his beautiful Lexus and Vic had a grin that suggested he was ready to have a fun weekend.

The day was brilliant with the bright sun shining, beautiful ocean waves, the backdrop of the towering mountains, and of course, some good old road tunes. It doesn’t get any better. Even though Vic was in his mid-70s, he could still drive like Mario Andretti, controlled and confident. Slightly pushing the speed limit along the winding roads, the vehicle clung to the road like cheese to an omelette.

The two friends talked non-stop all the way, but at the halfway point, they came upon a bad accident and traffic was being stopped and diverted around the rescue vehicles. The crash looked very serious with some possible fatalities. Vic’s mood quickly changed as he recalled getting the news when his daughter and son-in-law were tragically killed in the terrible car accident a few years earlier.

Vic seemed to drive a little slower and more cautiously until they arrived at their destination in Whistler, the Fairmont Chateau Whistler. Vic’s mood softened as they drove up to the breathtaking property.

The Fairmont Chateau Whistler was a beautiful, luxurious property. The line-up of guest vehicles



out front, BMWs, Audis, Mercedes Benz, and of course, Lexus suggested opulence and wealth. Joe admired the cars as they parked. Even though he was picking up the tab this weekend and this place was

a little out of his league, he was happy to treat Vic and enjoy some downtime from work and life.

After checking in, they headed straight to the pub that had the largest patio. The sun was warm, but a slight cool mountain breeze whisked over their cheeks. The men ordered a sandwich and a cold beer on tap. Vic was quick on the draw and raised his glass towards Joe.

“Cheers to two of the finest guys we know.”

After lunch and another beer, Vic and Joe decided to walk to the lower village. Whistler was incredibly scenic and with the smell of the pine trees floating in the mountain air, it was a near-perfect day so far. The trail was busy with visitors, and they all seemed to be enjoying the day. Trying to keep up with his friend, Joe admired how fast Vic could walk, considering his age. His past fitness regimen and many marathons had kept his well-aged body in fine form.

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That night, Joe and Vic decided to go to a sushi restaurant that had been recommended by the concierge for dinner. Along the walk to the village, they passed a young man who appeared to be on his way to party. He was dressed in a pink wig, a rock band t-shirt, and had white nylons over his shorts. Vic, of course, started a conversation with him, finding out he was indeed off to a dress-up party celebrating a friends' 30th birthday.

Joe had a quick brainstorm and asked to get a picture of the two men. The young fellow picked up Vic like he was a sack of potatoes. Joe managed to grab a few quick photos with his phone. What a crazy picture. Vic loved it, and he always enjoyed making awesome memories out of nothing. It was one of the many things Joe admired about his friend Vic. It's not always about dropping a pebble and chasing the ripples. Sometimes it's just about connecting and having fun! We have to remember that.

*"Friend, there's no greater investment in life than in being a people builder. Relationships are more important than our accomplishments."*

**—Joel Osteen**

The next morning Joe decided to be spontaneous and have some fun on his own. He rented a fully equipped mountain bike, including all riding gear and of course “bear spray.” A must in the mountains! Joe had invited Vic to join him, but he declined the rare opportunity to break some



bones. A good call for a man in his seventies. Besides, Vic was at peace just sitting on the patio and enjoying some tea and reading the morning paper. Even though Joe rode a mountain bike for years, the mountain terrain of Whistler

was not for the faint of heart. He was apprehensive but embraced the challenge and still planned to be very cautious. It was an amazing experience for Joe. The scenario, fresh air, coupled with a weekend with his best friend was a huge reset for Joe.

Joe and Vic had a great weekend in Whistler, hiking in the mountains, zip lining on the longest zip line in Canada, and just plain old relaxing as best friends do. He was so relaxed and truly wished that he could stop the clock and freeze this time with his good friend Vic, but the time came for them to head back home. For Joe, “back home” was now a new two-bedroom condo.

## **Suggesting Versus Telling**

Over the years and dozens of phone calls, Vic was always so great at offering wisdom and advice to Joe. He had a great way of suggesting.

On one particular call, Joe asked Vic about approaching a prospect his team was working on. Joe's approach didn't work the first time, and he explained how he went about it and that it didn't go as planned. Vic was quiet and just listened to Joe.

Vic replied, "Joe, if I were doing it, I would be more direct with the prospect. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain."

Joe really admired this quality in Vic. While he was always offering advice and wisdom, he rarely told Joe what to do. The famous line of, "If I were doing it," suggested to Joe that Vic was trying to influence Joe's approach, but didn't say, "do this", or, "do that". It was a very subtle but effective coaching technique of his dear friend and mentor.

Joe's separation and impending divorce had led him to a move into his condo on the other end of the city. There was plenty of room for his kids to stay or visit and for Joe to start anew. Joe was beginning to feel like a single guy, but not without some support.

Joe struggled early on, feeling responsible and still not fully understanding how things got bad enough to lead to a divorce. He reached out to

professionals for support with his overall mental health, which was vital for his well-being at the time. Meeting with a psychologist, having regular massage therapy, Joe even began to practice yoga.

Wonderfully, all of these therapies, especially yoga, were beneficial. Joe also attended weekend events on meditation and mindfulness. Life was looking a little brighter day by day. It was amazing to Joe that he could feel so much different than he had less than 12 months ago.

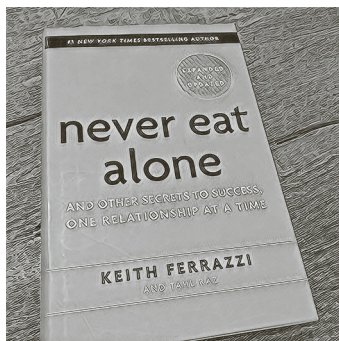
“I guess it is true that time heals all wounds,” Joe thought. Maybe he was getting closer to finding his new purpose in life.

*“Once you have mastered time, you will understand how true it is that most people overestimate what they can accomplish in a year—and underestimate what they can achieve in a decade!”* —**Tony Robbins**



# Eating Alone is Foolish

Joe was starting to be more social as a single person and opening his mind to new and exciting ideas. He was spending more time reading, along with watching TED Talks. He really cranked up his audiobook library. Joe listened to something of value every time he was in his car. It was common for him to have two or three hours of audio learning each week. One of Joe's new favourite books was *Never Eat Alone and Other Secrets to Success, One Relationship at a Time*, by Keith Ferrazzi and Tahl Raz.



While Joe was very outgoing, he did realize that he seemed to eat alone quite often. The book was

tailored to a businessperson but applied to many people in their personal life, too.

The central theme behind the book was that each of us needs to build several relationships for keeps, not just one or two. It seemed to Joe that was a lot like the advice that Vic gave him about COIs, Centres of Influence.

### **Build your Centres**

Get social and build a community of like-minded friends and business associates, was much of the advice in the book.

Joe really started to look at his life with a new lens. Maybe he could improve his social activity now that he was getting his life more organized. His psychologist had been talking with him about getting more social and not just with business connections. It was time for him to think about getting out and meeting someone new; even start dating. This would be interesting for Joe, having been married so young, and now he was in his mid-forties.

Joe felt his condo was pretty hip and it even felt a little like home now. His divorce was a painfully slow process and his soon-to-be ex-wife and kids were still in the family home. While Joe had a lot of financial responsibilities, he had strong forward momentum in his life and business. He decided to celebrate and invite some friends over for drinks and appetizers.

It was a stretch for Joe. Having moved from a large, beautiful family home to a condo, it was quite an adjustment. Some of the people he invited were very successful business owners and had done exceptionally well for themselves. They had fancy cars and lavish homes, but they had one thing in common: they all had a friendly relationship with Joe!

He was relying on only that and not their net worth. Being a host came naturally for Joe, and he was very comfortable in the kitchen. He loved to make unique, tasty recipes and even took a cooking class with his son to enhance his culinary prowess.

“Maybe his future wife would appreciate this?” Joe thought as he prepared for the evening.

### **Expand your Centres**

The evening was great! All of his friends were very kind and supportive, offered advice and even suggested some introductions to business connections for Joe in the week ahead. Joe was most grateful and the concept of *Never Eating Alone* really stuck with him.

On the next phone conversation between Joe and Vic, he told Vic about the party that he'd hosted at his condo and his desire to be more social. It felt good to be around people, and it made him feel better.

Joe was really getting into his own self-development, and while he was reading more, he really enjoyed watching TED Talk videos on his laptop. They were usually 15–20 minutes in length and offered a wide range of topics.

One that really caught Joe’s attention was a TED Talk called: “The Secret to Living Longer May be Your Social Life”. This was presented by a famous psychologist, Susan Pinker. The talk was about the island of Sardinia, off the coast of Italy in the middle of the Mediterranean. What was impressive about Sardinia was that it had 10 times as many centenarians, people who lived to be 100 years old. The emphasis of the story was that Sardinians built close relationships and had face-to-face interaction.

In this scientific study, the question asked was:

*What reduces your chances of dying the most?*

The obvious answers were actually near the bottom of the list. Things like clean air, hypertension, being lean versus overweight.

The shocker was the top two strongest predictors. Number two was *close relationships*, and the top one was *social integration*.

Vic was impressed on the next call with Joe when he shared this TED Talk. While Vic wasn’t aware of this information or data, he’d tried hard to follow that advice during his entire life.

Joe chuckled and said, “I knew you have been on the right track for years. You’ll be like the Sardinians, living to 107, still being social and meeting people every day.”

### **Don’t Be a Bump**

Vic recently attended a business networking event and met a few *duds* as he put it.

“Joe, I can’t believe how many people attend networking events, and stand there like a bump on a log. They can’t say anything remotely interesting, let alone say anything at all. They definitely aren’t attracting relationships or trying to create any form of social integration.”

Vic continued to vent. “Joe, it blows my mind how some people function in life and business when they can’t even carry on a three-minute conversation.”

“I know what you mean, Vic. Definitely not a problem for us. We work hard to keep our calls under 33 minutes,” Joe chuckled, proud of their regular connection and relationship.

“Remember, Vic, not everyone is like us bumblebees. While we thrive in that buzzing environment, moving around the room and connecting with many people, in fact, most people are more like flowers. They are more comfortable standing in one spot and waiting for others to stop and buzz around them.”

Joe had learned this concept from an old business associate several years before. When attending a networking event, someone is the bee, and someone is the flower. The bee is likely more excited and engaging as opposed to the flower, which would rather sit back and wait for others to come to them.

Vic wanted to share his views on this topic. “Joe, by definition, engaging means charming or attractive, but I believe that it should also mean to care about or connect with others. I have always tried to be engaging, and for the record, that doesn’t mean I have to talk, text, or email someone all the time.”

Vic continued as he was passionate about this topic. “Some people are really great at this, as they are engaging, and you are attracted to them by what they say and how they say it. When you include others in a conversation, ask questions to get everyone involved, to be engaging and engage with others. That’s where the magic happens, in my opinion.”

Joe chimed in, “I wholeheartedly agree. Vic. I was out for dinner a while ago with a group of friends, enjoying a great discussion and learned many things from everyone at the table. Near the end of the night, one of the couples had a disagreement right at the table. Unfortunately, it’s one that I have heard many times before. The man was trying to add an opinion about something that was being discussed.

“He excitedly asked the table, ‘Can I share my opinion?’

“His wife replied instantly, ‘No, you can’t. You’ve been talking all night.’

### **Encourage Engagement**

“This wasn’t true. Everyone at the table was being talkative and lively. The table got quiet, and trying to break the awkwardness, I quickly replied, ‘I would enjoy hearing your thoughts.’



“It seemed to lighten the mood, and he proceeded to tell us his opinion on the topic, which

happened to be very educational. As I look back, I realized that I was trying to be engaged and engaging. I also genuinely wanted to hear what he had to say. In hindsight, I believe that if I had not encouraged him to share his comments, he might have felt that he was really talking too much, and perhaps, in future conversations, he might feel less inclined to share and be less talkative.”

Joe commented that he related this to the relationship with his kids. “It may sound simple or obvious for some people, but I realized that I

used to talk *to* my kids, not talk *with* my kids. As I see it, engaging others is simply about caring what they have to say by including them and also getting their input. We all like to be engaged in a conversation at some point, but at the same time, it is important to balance a conversation to include others.”

Joe continued, “From my own observation, I believe that I’m less talkative than I was ten years ago yet feel more engaged with others. I appreciate a balanced discussion more than I used to. We must allow people the opportunity to be both engaged and engaging. Body language is also a great way to show engagement.”

“A smile goes a long way,” Vic chimed in.

“Vic, all of us need to be good listeners, active listeners, by asking questions and even repeating comments to seek clarity on what is being said.”

“Even with us, Joe!” Vic laughed

“Yes, even us, Vic.”

### ***Everyone Communicates but, is There a Connection?***

Joe’s journey included reading about leadership and best-selling author John C. Maxwell reinforced his belief that connecting is all about others.



*“When you are trying to connect with people,  
it’s not about you—it’s about them.  
If you want to connect with others,  
you have to stop thinking of yourself.”*

How can you apply this in business? Whether it’s trying to sell something to a prospective client, servicing an existing client, speaking to your team or audience, there is a need for connection. Ask great questions, make your message about them and listen more!

This topic gains lots of focus for Joe, whether he is working with business leaders, a sales team, or talking with his kids the opportunity to improve communication is ongoing. “Being able to communicate and connect in business can turn soft skills into hard assets, one of Joe’s favourite lines when coaching and working with sales teams.”

*“Connecting is the ability to identify with people and relate to them in a way that increases your influence with them.” —John C. Maxwell*

According to Maxwell, there are three questions people ask about you:

1. Do you care for me?
2. Can you help me?
3. Can I trust you?

*“It’s interesting to feel the pressure of having to be outgoing because I think in general, as a human being, I’m pessimistic and introverted. But, it’s cool, because it’s a whole different side of me, and I impress myself. Even at times when I think that there’s no possible way that I can be engaging, I’ll suddenly pull it out and impress myself.”*

**—Nate Ruess**

# Dog Day Afternoon

Joe had been working with his new team for a while and thought it was time for a retreat. Joe planned a weekend to the mountains, and with a brainstorm, thought he would invite Vic! He could bring so much value to the weekend, and the trip would serve a few purposes. Joe's new team could continue to bond, feel excited, and of course, spend quality time with Vic. They could all gain insight from his many years of experience and wisdom, as Joe had for many years.

The details were set, and the time for weekend getaway had arrived. Vic flew into the airport where Joe and his team were waiting to pick him up in the large SUV they'd rented specifically for the adventure.

They arrived Friday evening and checked into the beautiful villa in the mountains. Joe had the coolers ready and stocked with groceries for

healthy meals, fun treats, red and white wine, and Vic's favourite single malt scotch.

They all settled into their separate accommodations and joined Vic and Joe in their main villa where they all enjoyed a nightcap. Everyone was excited and talked about so many things that the evening conversation rolled late into the night.

### **Sharing Wisdom**

Early Saturday morning, they enjoyed a big hearty breakfast and focused on a business planning session that Joe led. Vic and Joe had pre-planned a few important agenda items that Vic would take the lead on. Joe trusted Vic and let him just roll when he offered advice for the team. It was evident that the team enjoyed what Vic had to say. They were captivated by the wise veteran of business and sales. As usual, Vic was a great storyteller and regaled many tremendous and memorable tales.

An area of focus was helping the team become better at making phone calls to prospective clients. This is not always a favourite task of sales professionals or anyone, for that matter.

Vic explained, "You must avoid making the phone feel like a 100-pound weight. It shouldn't be hard to pick it up and dial."

Vic went on to explain that he became very comfortable at this essential sales task and attributed his success to his willingness and persistence to keep dialling.

He even confessed to the group that early in his career in sales, he would point his right index finger to a page in the phone book and pick any business number.

“Who does that?” the team mused as Vic continued with his story.

Vic explained that he called those types of calls throwaways. “There’s no risk and no pressure. It is intended to be practice, and ideally, perfect practice.”

### **The Finger of Fate**

Vic shared that one time he pointed to a number that was a church. The person who answered was the head pastor, and of course, by profession, he was a kind person. No slamming down the phone and yelling, “Don’t ever call us again.”

Vic had experienced that a time or two in the early days of his career. As the conversation went on between Vic and the pastor, Vic shared that he must have dialled the wrong number. The pastor asked Vic what he did professionally and why the call. Vic explained that he was in commercial real estate, and he helped people and organizations buy and sell property.

As fate, or perhaps divine intervention, would have it, the pastor replied. “What great timing! Our church is looking at expanding, and we want to purchase more land for a rapidly-growing congregation.”

Vic went on to explain when the pastor revealed that he, of course, asked more detailed questions and set up an in-person meeting with the pastor and his leadership team. Within six months, Vic helped the church acquire a beautiful parcel of land nearby. Wow, what a story.

Joe chimed in and suggested that Vic tell the young team about the time the dealer principal of a huge car dealership network called about buying several parcels of land to expand their ever-growing dealership network.

Vic smiled at Joe and said, no, you know this story very well, go ahead and tell them about it.

Joe went on to say that one-time Vic called him and sounded overly excited about a business opportunity. He was surprised as the seasoned veteran didn't get too excited when big deals came across his desk.

Vic told Joe that this huge national auto dealership group called him a year or so ago and wanted to purchase 5 parcels of land that were approximately 10 acres each. In Vic's world, all he heard was “ching-ching” as a deal like that was worth hundreds of thousands of dollars in commission.

Vic of course followed-up for a call with the objective of booking a face-to-face meeting, but that didn't happen as he had hoped.

Joe looked at his team sitting in front of him in the villa and of course they were anticipating an epic story and ending to the legendary Vic Lawrence's sales magic.

Joe turned to Vic with a BIG grin and said, why don't you "close" this story Vic, after all you are the "true closer".

Vic glared at Joe with a devilish look, infused with a touch of humility. He told the young audience that the deal with all of that potential land sale didn't transpire.

They were in shock, as they truly felt it was another slam dunk for Vic.

What happened Vic? Why, didn't you close?

Vic looked at each of them and then at Joe as he started to explain. You see, the prospect, the dealership principal, wasn't exactly telling the truth."

"About what?", they quickly asked, as they were so curious to find out why.

"Well, the prospect wasn't telling the truth because the prospect wasn't real."

Vic paused, and before he could finish his sentence, one of the young keen team members, asked, what do you mean, he wasn't real?"

Vic looked down and then up and said, “because the prospect was Joe”

Silence filled the room!

“The prospect was Joe, what do you mean?”

Well, your dear leader and super kind and caring man, Joe, was full of “BS” and pretended to be a big prospect of mine and fabricated the entire story, and well.....it worked which really ticked me off, Vic said as he burst into laughter.”

“There is a reason Joe is a smooth talker. His Toastmaster skills, quick wit and charm are a triple threat.

Yup, he played me like a fiddle. I was strung along until he started to laugh and “fessed-up”, Vic asserted.

The whole team roared with laughter as they loved the story and were somewhat in shock that Joe would pull a prank like that.

Joe jumped in during the laughter and kept the laughs going and asked, why do you think that Vic doesn’t drink coffee, and only tea?”

The team thought and realized they actually didn’t know why Vic didn’t drink coffee, and simply assumed it was a health thing.

Joe smiled and said, “because coffee is for closers” which was a famous line in an old Alec Baldwin movie. Everyone continued to howl with laughter and even Vic couldn’t resist his own chuckling.



They learned that Joe was a funny practical joker and he was always up to liven the party, even though he came across as this straight-laced dude.

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The team got refocused and the planning meeting went on until late afternoon, and by then, they were all ready to chill and recharge. They decided to bundle up and go outside, get some exercise, and walk over to a local brewery for a cold beer and appetizers. Afterward, they came back to the villa and collaborated to cook dinner.

Vic was in charge of stoking the fireplace and warming up the room. Sizzling steaks on the patio grill, baked potatoes, and a large mixed green salad. Joe opened a few bottles of the bold cabernet sauvignon from Napa Valley that he'd brought just for this special group dinner.

The evening continued with lots of fun and laughter. One of Joe's team members was a great singer and guitar player. He had brought his guitar along, and everyone encouraged him to sing and play a few tunes.

Temperatures outside dropped but the roaring fire crackling in the living room now energized with music were a great ending to the day.

On Sunday morning, the team enjoyed a big and very hardy breakfast. The old faithful's - bacon, scrambled eggs, pancakes, fruit and strong coffee and of course tea for Vic, were on the table. With dog sledding on the agenda, everyone was excited and eager to be on their way. It was the first time for all of them and everyone had planned for mountain weather with warm clothes, boots, gloves and hats.

That morning it was -18°C with a slight breeze. The good news was that the sun was shining brilliantly, and it was stunning to see the sun bounce off the crisp, white snow-capped mountains and frozen lakes.

## **On By**

They arrived at the meeting point where a van loaded everyone along with other guests and travelled up the mountain to drop them off at the starting point of the expedition. When they arrived and stepped out of the van, they suddenly felt the colder breeze due to the higher elevation. They could also hear dogs barking, which fuelled everyone's excitement.

Together, they walked down a winding mountain trail, and soon, they could see a group of dogs waiting on the side of the trail. Joe and Vic could tell they were all excited about the afternoon tour, almost as much as they themselves were.

The guides were very professional with their detailed instructions. They didn't miss any important information, and at one point, the leading guide said in a humorous tone, "You think that I'm telling you the importance of safety and following these strict rules for your safety, but we are doing it to protect our dogs. They are everything to us, and we must all respect them. They know what to do, and most of you don't."

One of the most valuable tips that was shared was the command: "On by", which means to stay focused, not to get distracted and head off course. Using this phrase helps the dogs if they happen to get out of focus by the sight of a squirrel. Joe and his team thought that this was a brilliant line, and it would later be adopted as a theme for the business that year. For them, "on by" would mean that they would all stay focused and avoid shiny objects that might come to them and would not necessarily be valuable to the growth and direction of the business.



This dog sledding experience was truly amazing and very memorable for everyone. Except for Vic, they all were standing and leading the dog sleds at one point. Vic was sitting on the sled all

bundled up, enjoying the experience. With bright red cheeks and a big smile across his face, Vic was encouraging the dogs to run fast. They finished the trek with hot chocolate around a big fire pit, discussing the experience and the mountains that surrounded the frozen lakes they trekked across.

### **Sharing Ripples**

When they returned to the villa for their last evening, the conversation became more reflective, and Vic's wisdom came to life. Knowing that he had Joe's full blessing, he felt it was essential to share insight. He explained to them about dropping a pebble and chasing the ripples and the need to be patient. Vic emphasised the importance of LRT = Like + Respect + Trust.

Even though Joe shared with his team all of the valuable tips that his mentor and dear friend had told him over the years, he was smiling as he listened to Vic explain in great detail the importance of these essential relationship-building tips. It was like Vic was sharing the wisdom for the very first time; he was still so passionate and animated.

The younger colleagues headed back to their rooms while Joe and Vic stayed up to visit a little more and enjoy a final nightcap of scotch. Joe told Vic about a book he was almost finished

reading. It was called *The Alchemist*, by Paulo Coelho. The book impacted Joe's thinking, and one of his favourite quotes within the book was:

*"You have to take risks. We will only understand the miracle of life fully when we allow the unexpected to happen. Every day, God gives us the sun—and also one moment in which we have the ability to change everything that makes us unhappy."* —**Paulo Coelho**

It gave Joe strength and confidence that he was on the right track and made him more willing to take risks and challenge himself more.

"Joe, I am so proud of what you are doing and heading in the right direction. It is hard to believe where things were for you just a few short years ago. In front of me, I see this focused, determined, and purposeful man who knows what he wants and is working hard to achieve it. You should feel terrific about what you have accomplished and what you will achieve in the months and years ahead. Momentum is everything. Success leaves clues. If you want more success, you need to keep doing the things that bring you success. It takes focus, persistence and discipline. Don't let your foot slip off the pedal, Joe."

Joe was beaming and smiling from ear to ear. He always was grateful for Vic's advice and wisdom. He had become more like a father to Joe. It felt wonderful to hear that Vic was proud of him. That night, as Joe drifted off to sleep, he felt more peaceful and content than he had in a very long time.

# LinkedIn Connections Still Need LRT

The weeks following the amazing team trip, Joe was on a roll. He was building continued momentum and had landed a couple of new corporate clients. Joe was trying to do all the right things he had learned from Vic, and the advice he gained along the way from his own COIs, the Centres of Influence which were key.

Continuing to work on his skills, Joe came across a well-known business coach, Dan Sullivan, founder of Strategic Coach®. He offered many great business insights that were of tremendous value to Joe. One concept that was very intriguing for Joe was about discovering your *Unique Ability*®. This concept is all about finding out what you love to do and what you do best. Everyone has a set of natural talents and passions that motivates them. Basically, it's what makes you who you are.

The book, *Unique Ability*®, explains that by strengthening the areas where our Unique Ability® lies, it allows for the most significant opportunity for success and determines the most satisfying path in life and your career.

## **Unique is Unique**

That made perfect sense to Joe, and he was determined to figure out his Unique Ability®. But this was easier said than done. It took Joe over six months to figure out his. Joe realized that his Unique Ability® was something he was very good at and very passionate about and was surprisingly obvious once he figured it out. It was simply that Joe had the Unique Ability® to build trusting relationships quickly and create potential future opportunities to continue to build relationships.

Joe was all about creating mutually beneficial relationships.

Joe reflected on many examples where people would open up to him and be vulnerable within minutes of them talking, even if it was the first time they met. Months and even years later, people would call Joe for advice or make business introductions. In some cases, Joe would help them as well, by offering support, making an introduction or inviting them to a networking event with him, all because a trusting relationship was built right from the first hello. This always brought Joe back to his guiding



principles of LRT. While all three components were key, trust is the foundation to building powerful relationships..

While building trusting relationships was quite easy for Joe to do in person, he found that he could transfer this to online business relationships as well.

People would ask Joe, “How can you build a relationship with someone who lives across the country or around the world for that matter without ever meeting them in person?”

Joe would offer that it is the same philosophy as in person. If you want to be liked, be likeable. If you want to be respected, be respectable to people first, and if you want to be trusted, trust people first and be trustworthy yourself. Like any meaningful relationship, you can’t rush the process, even online.

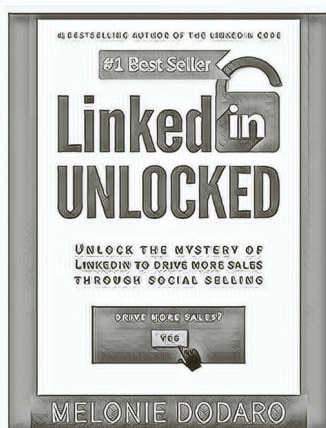
*“To have a friend, be a friend”* —**Carl Linebaugh**

Joe had lots of examples of this online relationship working for him. One professional relationship was with a very well-known author and consultant, Melonie Dodaro. Joe had registered for one of her online course years earlier, and while she lived on the opposite side of Canada, they connected on the social media business platform, LinkedIn.

A few times, Joe reached out to her on LinkedIn and asked some questions. She willingly answered them, offering her expertise and wisdom. They even had a few phone calls, and Joe discovered that Melonie sounded just as kind and supportive as she portrayed herself online. Melonie moved to Spain a few years ago and now lives in Amsterdam, yet Joe knows she is just an email away if needed.

Something that validates the power of relationships is when Joe recommends Melonie's bestselling book, *LinkedIn Unlocked*, to clients and friends, they order it; when Joe speaks highly of its value, and most clients are excited to read it.

One time, a client ordered the book, and Joe reached out to Melonie and asked her for a favour. He asked if she could send the client an email to thank them for buying her book. She did this and also went on to comment on how impressed she was with their website. This gesture is an excellent demonstration that Melonie is indeed a wonderful person who goes the extra mile. The email and the gesture wowed them!



Surprisingly, it's been seven years since Joe discovered Melonie's online course. They connected on LinkedIn, developed a great relationship, yet they have never met in person.

It's a true validation, that even online relationships can thrive using the principles of LRT.

Joe never really understood why someone extremely busy, very well-known around the world and successful would want to help a guy like Joe. While he was most willing to do what he could for Melonie, she never asked for much. She did share some thoughts on this with Joe one time a few years earlier and overtime it started to resonate with Joe.

Melonie told Joe that, "whether you interact with your connections face-to-face or through a digital tool such as LinkedIn, time and consistency are vital to building lasting relationships. I have also found reciprocity to be a necessary component, especially online."

Joe learned that reciprocity was really the practice of exchanging things with others for mutual benefit. He never forgot this most powerful piece of wisdom and committed himself to applying the same philosophy in his life.

## **Old School + LinkedIn**

While Vic was 30 years older than Joe and keen on learning new things, the notion of a social media platform like LinkedIn didn't interest him. Vic still enjoyed gaining contacts and building relationships the old-fashioned way. He liked to meet people face-to-face and give a firm handshake and have something tangible in his hand, like a business card.

Joe had become somewhat of an expert over the past ten-plus years using this networking and relationship-building tool. Joe gave a lot of credit to Melonie Dodaro for helping him ramp up his knowledge and LinkedIn savvy, and it was extremely valuable from a business perspective.

Joe was the first to admit that this proven method still works today.

## **Smarter than a Flip phone**

“Vic, a tool like LinkedIn can take professional relationships to another level in any city, in any industry all around the world. Joe was an early adopter of LinkedIn and had been using it longer than almost anyone he knew. Vic needed a bit more encouragement from Joe about LinkedIn. After all, his flip phone was the most technologically advanced piece of equipment he owned.

As Vic would say, “Who needs a smartphone? I always want to be smarter than my phone, and this flip phone beauty does the trick just fine.”

**A critical lesson:** Joe learned from the book, *LinkedIn Unlocked* that the ideal situation is to take LinkedIn relationships into the offline world and make them face-to-face interactions.

Explaining this to Vic made him a little more receptive, while it’s not always practical, especially when someone is living across the globe, such as Melonie Dodaro.

### **Cute Ripples**

On the next call with Vic, Joe was excited to talk about another online program.

“By the way, Vic, I have decided to use another popular online tool, but for a very different reason.”

“What’s that one called,” Vic asked with curiosity.

“It is called eHarmony!”

“You mean the dating site?”

“Yes, you connect virtually but with a different outcome. Vic, it is like dropping a pebble and chasing the ripples. Some of the ripples are pretty cute, too. On that note Vic, I started dating someone on eHarmony. It’s in the early stages. Her name is Susan, and she is fantastic!

“I am very happy for you, Joe. What’s she like?”

“Well, she is, of course, beautiful and has a killer smile. She has two daughters, both in their late teens. I like her *calm confidence*. She loves mountain biking as I do, loves good food. She can cook amazing dishes and enjoys a great glass of red wine. Our conversations, so far, have been effortless, and we have a pretty amazing connection.”

“She sounds perfect. I’m so happy for you. Have fun. You deserve it!”

“Hey, Vic, if you’re fortunate, when you drop a pebble, you might even find your soulmate. Maybe, I might have.” Joe ended the call smiling and happy to talk about such a positive change in his personal life.

# Getting Personal with Relationships

The eHarmony relationship with Susan started to grow into a serious relationship. Joe and Susan were getting together as often as possible, enjoying the outdoors and sharing their love for mountain biking. Travelling to the mountains



when they could, and locally, they would ride in the beautiful river valley exploring some single-track trails together.

Wellness and being active was part of their great connection.

They could wrap up a hectic workday and, in ten minutes, be on their bikes escaping to a world of fresh air and nature. After the ride, they would cook a healthy dinner

and enjoy the rest of the evening. Doing activities together with his new partner was important for Joe. He hadn't experienced this very often in his first marriage. He knew it was vital to building a lasting relationship, and Joe knew that Susan felt the same way.

She mentioned her ex-husband was an active golfer and it was common for him to golf five or six times a week. With that, came dinners alone with her girls or by herself. A partnership was what Susan wanted in her new relationship, and she was very clear about that in the early stages with Joe.

Joe admired her frankness, yet she had a purpose in everything she said. Simply put, she knew what she wanted. Joe was hopeful that he could align with her life desires, goals, and dreams. "Dream big" was a favourite line she would tell Joe when they were saying goodnight to each other. Joe loved the phrase and was starting to love Susan, too!

## **Cooking up a Relationship**

Taking the teachings from the *Never Eat Alone* book seriously, Joe would often plan romantic dinners with Susan. The cooking lessons were paying off, and a dish he had perfected was baked salmon with fresh lemon and dill. Joe's cooking prowess impressed Susan, and she



commented on it often. Joe loved to do it, and it was a handy skill to have at any time.

Joe thought, “Maybe my future wife would appreciate this?” Joe hadn’t said the word *wife* for months, and it only related to his ex-wife, which was painful to think about. Now, starting to think about what could be possible with Susan was way more fun and enjoyable.

As the relationship grew stronger and they had LRT, this time, it was more about LOVE + RESPECT + TRUST. The probability of a future together was increasing.

Joe continued to focus on his career and growing his business. He came across an exciting opportunity that seemed to be perfect for him. Joe thought more about it and realized that this opportunity would be a fantastic experience for both him and Susan.

## **Recognizing Opportunity**

Joe was always into self-development, and he admired many great authors and famous thought leaders. People like Tony Robbins, John C. Maxwell, Robin Sharma, Deepak Chopra, Darren Hardy, and Jack Canfield. A year before Joe started dating Susan, he met Jack Canfield, co-author of *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, at a local event. He had a two-minute one-on-one with Jack, and it was quite an experience. Jack had a real aura about him that Joe never forgot.

The opportunity that caught Joe's attention came in an email from Jack Canfield. Joe subscribed to his newsletter. It was called "Break Through to Success", and it was in August, just three months away, in Scottsdale, Arizona. It was a five-day program with intense training, personal growth and relationship building with 300-plus people from all over the world. Joe was excited about the idea and decided it would be even more special if Susan joined him.

Joe and Susan met for an evening dinner and glass of wine at Joe's place. He pitched this idea to her and thought she would be just as excited. He was surprised when Susan didn't feel the same way. Susan wasn't used to self-development like Joe was. While Susan did work through her divorce, seeking help and advice from professionals, she wasn't reading the kind of books Joe was.

Susan was shocked that Joe asked her to go to an event like that. She didn't feel worthy of going, and she even had tears in her eyes.

"I'm not smart enough to go to something like that. You should go on your own, so you get full value and can focus on you and your business. I would be a distraction for you."

Joe kindly put his hands on her shoulders.

"You *are* smart enough, and besides, intelligence has nothing to do with this experience. As I see it, we can both break through to our own success,

whatever that may be. It would be wonderful to do this with you, and I want you to join me," Joe replied in a warm and encouraging tone.

Susan thought about it, and a few days later, she agreed. Joe could tell she was excited and nervous all at the same time.

Joe and Susan went to the Jack Canfield conference in Arizona. Ironically, years earlier, he had met Mark Victor Hansen, who, with Jack, had co-authored Joe's favourite vacation book from a few years ago, *The Power of Focus*.

The trip and conference offered many memorable moments, and a few still remained etched in his mind. There were lots of thought-provoking discussions, presentations, workbook assignments, and interactive activities.

### **Enter Your Darkroom**

They learned that, in any relationship, whether personal or professional, you have to give 100% of your commitment. When Canfield asked the audience, many people thought it was only 50/50, but in reality, Canfield explained, you must always give 100%, regardless of the circumstance. This advice proved to be an essential lesson for both Joe and Susan at this early stage of their relationship.

There were many moments and events during the workshop which impacted both Susan and Joe, for instance, the darkroom exercise. In this

exercise, Canfield had his team of assistants stand side by side in a large circle. He told everyone else to stand inside the circle and to close their eyes. No talking was allowed, and the participants were told to walk in the circle and to greet others by shaking hands, hugging, or whatever felt comfortable to do. Of course, ground rules for no inappropriate touching or activity were set. It seemed like a strange activity, but the fact that this was an expensive workshop to attend, everyone wanted to enrich their learning experiences, and everyone trusted Canfield. The circle of Canfield team members ensured that everyone stayed safe.

The dark room exercise was in two parts. The first part was about 15 minutes in length and everyone was just feeling out their new environment and trying to not bump into someone or trip over something. Canfield's voice came across the speakers and they could open their eyes. He asked everyone to think about that experience for a moment. "Shortly, we will do it again, but this time ask yourself if you would do anything different." Still with a dark room, no talking and eyes closed. No further instructions were given.



## **Greet the Darkness**

As Joe prepared for the second half of the experience, he decided to be more confident and assertive. He moved around the room more smoothly, trying to stretch himself and be less cautious. Joe was being more adventurous, shaking hands, and patting people on the back. With 300 participants, there were many being social, even though they weren't allowed to speak. Some were active, and there were some who stood in one place or stayed close to the edge not interacting at all.

Ten minutes or so into the final exercise, Joe's hand touched the hand of a woman. She quickly grabbed both of his hands and felt the watch on his wrist. At that moment, Joe could hear the woman start to cry and wouldn't let go of his hand. Joe sensed something special. He reached to her wrist and recognized her beautiful, pearl bracelet set, which had been a gift from Joe. It was a truly magical moment for both of them as they realized they found each other out of 300

people, in a dark room with their eyes closed. What were the odds that this could happen and, more importantly, that Joe could find his soulmate for the second time in less than a year?

As the lights came back on, both Joe and Susan were very moved by the experience. While Joe was confident, he wasn't sure that he was prepared to tell anyone about the experience. As Canfield walked around the room with his microphone he would stop and ask anyone who wanted to share about their experience. Canfield was asking what they learned about the entire experience and if the second part of the dark room session any different for them.

Joe was building up the courage to speak, but Canfield was across the big conference room and the likelihood he would stop near Joe was not that high. Suddenly, Canfield started to walk straight across the room directly towards Joe. Now Joe knew that he had to say something. The two men made eye contact, and Joe reached for the microphone.

Joe was comfortable speaking and had a strong and booming voice. Within a few seconds, his nerves and fear to speak in front of this large crowd and newfound friends subsided.

Joe shared that the first part of the dark room experience felt like how he'd lived his life up until the time he met Susan. He stayed on the perimeter, cautious and not very adventurous. The second part, though, Joe decided he would

be more confident and assertive and moved with ease around the room. However, what became Joe's real lesson in the exercise was that he found Susan, his soulmate, for the second time in his life and declared to everyone in the room and to Susan.

*"I will never let her go."*

Everyone in the room smiled, many cheered, and a few people were in tears, including Susan. People came up to Joe later and told him how beautiful his words were. Joe didn't say it for the praise, but because it was true. Theirs was a relationship for keeps, and if you are ever lucky enough to find it, you would be a fool to ever let it go!

As the conference concluded, Joe had built some meaningful relationships with many people from all around the world. There was an opportunity to create a Mastermind group with some of these people. Joe helped assemble a small group of brilliant people, and the exciting part was that they were from all across the globe. Canadians, Americans, and people from Sweden and India made up this Mastermind group. They decided to have regular Skype calls once a month to keep their relationship growing and, more importantly, gain valuable business insights from everyone in the group. It was an excellent opportunity to help others, share wisdom, and learn in a non-threatening space.

## May the Best Man Win

By now, Joe had gained enough life wisdom and experience to know that what he and Susan had was a beautiful and rare relationship. They agreed that they wanted to spend the rest of their lives together. In many ways, what made the relationship so great was that they were able to be genuine and real. Susan shared that they were *imperfectly perfect* together, and Joe agreed.

Joe and Susan started to make plans for their wedding day. After an amazing and life-lesson filled 14 years as close friends, Joe couldn't think of a better man to stand by his side on his wedding day. Joe decided to fly out to tell Vic and celebrate in person.

Vic was stunned and delighted at the same time.

"I wasn't sure that we would even get an invitation, let alone me being asked to be your best man," Vic commented.



Joe smiled and replied, “There is no one else I would rather have by my side on my wedding day. You have been my best man for many years.”

Vic gave him a big hug, and patted him on the back, saying, “I couldn’t agree more.



Joe popped the cork on a bottle of Prosecco toasting to the fabulous news. It was hard to believe all the conversations, challenges and victories over the past 14 years they had been through

together. The comforting news was that they didn’t have to do it alone.

Joe went on to say, “When you build relationships for keeps, you don’t have to do everything on your own. You have someone in your corner to support you, to guide you, to pick you up when you fall. Think how amazing that feels, particularly when you have people like that in your professional and personal life. You can accomplish great things along the way and learn so much from each other.”

Joe couldn’t imagine a life without Vic and their unique relationship. It was that relationship which had allowed him to grow and develop as a person and an entrepreneur.

Vic celebrated with Joe and shared with him that this amazing journey has been mutually beneficial for both men, and then Vic shocked Joe somewhat with his next line.

“Joe, while I can sincerely say that I like you, I realize that I also love you.” This was the first time Vic ever shared those words.

LRT=LIKE+RESPECT+TRUST had become  
LRT=LOVE+RESPECT+TRUST

The love was much like that of a father and son. In fact, both men also felt it was unconditional love and supported each other, no matter the circumstances. Some relationships are for keeps, lasting the test of time, just like Joe and Vic’s special bond.

## Healthy Relationships

The small, intimate wedding was perfect. Joe and Susan exchanged personally written vows and celebrated with family and close friends.

Life was rolling along for Joe and Susan, with lots of travel and their regular mountain biking rides, and they soon added kayaking to their outdoor activities.

Joe and Vic continued the steady routine of their weekly calls. The standing arrangement was every Saturday at 8:00 AM. Joe had his morning coffee ready and sat comfortably at 7:55 AM. He knew Vic would be punctual.

As his iPhone moved to 8:00 AM, it would ring. Sometimes, Vic would call at 7:59, and laughingly he would say, "Sorry, I called a minute early."

Vic looked forward to the calls as much as Joe and as they both were getting older; one thing remained the same. They were still 30 years apart in age, but the bond between them felt like it was much closer.

The calls were routine with opening conversations such as, “How was your week? What’s new in business?” Joe would ask his older buddy how he was feeling, to which, Vic usually responded with, “I’m feeling good and am in reasonably good health.” Not much else was ever said about health as the two men dove into other topics.

### **The Heart of the Matter**

One particular call, after all the traditional pleasantries were complete, Joe asked Vic how he was feeling health-wise.

Vic’s reply was different this time.

“Well, as you know, I enjoy my regular brisk walk around the lake in our subdivision, four times a week. I have been doing it for so many years that I have it timed to the minute. I know where I will be at each landmark, and it keeps me focused on my pace. I like to move faster than the average 84-year-old. All of those years as a marathon runner have helped me with that, and I never wanted to lose the momentum of being active. As you know, Joe, a body in motion, stays in motion!”

Vic went on to explain that he'd had some challenges lately. "Well, in the past few weeks, I have noticed that my pace isn't the same as it was just a month earlier. In fact, I have felt a slight pressure in my chest and some shortness in my breath. I didn't panic about it, but last Sunday on my walk, I really noticed it more and slowed down to an old man's pace."

Vic continued, "While I have been doing this walk for years, I always believe that you must listen to your body. I decided to make an appointment with my doctor. Fortunately, with my longstanding relationship with his office, and my positive approach with his receptionist, I managed to get in yesterday morning.

"My doctor appreciated that I came in. He admired my fitness routine, which allowed me to pick up on something that may become a future concern. The doctor wasn't in panic mode, but he said in light of the symptoms and my age, it would be a good idea to schedule a stress test which he was able to get me scheduled in for next Thursday. We will see how that unfolds, and I will let you know when we chat next Saturday morning."

The two friends wrapped up the call, said their goodbyes, and told each other to make it a great day, a routine signoff for them.

As Joe hung up, he sat and reflected. It made him realize that his dear friend and mentor with whom he had built this fantastic relationship for the past 17 years was 84 years of age and going in for a stress test after having chest pains. Way too many thoughts tossed in Joe's mind, but he relied on Vic's advice. "Things will unfold as they are intended."

Joe just really wanted things to unfold where Vic was fine and back to his energized and fun-loving self.

The next Saturday morning call couldn't come fast enough for Joe as he wanted to know how the stress test went for Vic.

Right on time, 8:00 AM, the phone rang, and the two friends connected once again. Joe accelerated the hellos, and when Vic asked him how his week was, Joe quickly interrupted, "It was fine, but all I want to know is how you are doing and how the stress test went."

Vic explained that the stress test suggested he may have some artery blockage as his heart rate elevated quickly, and he experienced a shortness of breath quite early into the analysis.

The medical professional who supervised the test told Vic to stop and relax and take slow, deep breaths.

A clinic specialist entered the room and reviewed the test and looked at the data they recorded. Vic needed to have a coronary angiogram.

While Joe was quite well-read, he asked Vic to explain what that procedure was all about. There would be a catheter inserted in an artery in the groin area and threaded through to his heart, along the way, the doctor checks for blocked or narrowed blood vessels.

Wow, that seemed concerning for Joe, but he knew it was crucial for ensuring that his dear old friend was going to be okay.

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Weeks passed, and the two men enjoyed their weekly calls, but Vic's health was always on Joe's mind.

Finally, Vic updated Joe that the angiogram revealed a substantial blockage in a few arteries near Vic's heart. Joe swallowed hard as he heard that.

"So, now what?", Joe asked with real concern in his voice.

"Well, the doctor gave me two options. One option is to insert stents in the arteries, which are over 70% blocked. The other and most preferred option is open-heart surgery."

"Oh, my goodness!", Joe exclaimed. "Are you serious? Open-heart surgery at 84 years of age."

Don't get me wrong, but that is a serious situation at any age."

Vic replied with confidence and clarity in his voice. "I know, but I told the doctor that I want to proceed with open-heart surgery, and he agreed that it was a good decision."

Vic went on to explain the benefits of bypass surgery. "They will take a vein or artery from elsewhere in the body, most likely my leg, and graft it onto a narrowed coronary artery to allow blood to flow to the heart more freely. The long-term benefits and success rate are much better than inserting some stents."

"Okay, good to know," Joe stated in a less-than-confident tone. After all, he was worried about his friend and mentor. "So, what's next?"

"Well, I'm on the list, and hopefully in the next month or two, I can get the surgery done."

"That seems like a long wait," Joe replied with concern.

"Well, my friend, you can't rush the system and besides, my wife and I are off soon for a two-week vacation. That will give us a chance to relax in our favourite vacation spot. The catch is the doctor recommended we cut it down to a one-week vacation, to be safe. Also, since we are driving, the recommendation was not to push the length of time behind the wheel. That was okay for us." Vic explained.



## **Gerrifying in Action**

A week went by as Vic was away on vacation. Joe sent him a text to see how things were going. Joe usually didn't like to bother him while he enjoyed some downtime but wanted to know how he was doing and feeling. To Joe's surprise, Vic sent him a text back within two-minutes and the text read:

"Time for a call now?"

"Yes, of course."

His mind was racing as it was rare that they would talk when either of them was on vacation. It was usually a quick text check-in only.

The phone rang.

"Hi, is everything okay?"

"Yes, things are okay, but my doctor called. He wants us to drive back home tomorrow. They had a cancellation, and they can get me in right away for my open-heart surgery."

"Really?" Joe was shocked. He'd thought it might not happen for another month or so.

"Yes, it is all good, and I'm happy to get this over with sooner."

Vic was always very focused, and he said, "Joe, I need to ask you a favour."

"Of course, anything. What do you need?"

"Well, actually I don't need anything other than time to focus, and I would appreciate it if this would be our last call until after my surgery."

Joe gulped; he explained that he wanted to call Vic the night before his surgery because he cared so much about his dear friend.

“I know you do, Joe, but that is why I asked you for a favour. This request is for me. It allows me to compartmentalize on the road ahead. We will talk before you know it.”

Joe was respectful and wanted to honour Vic’s request.

“Okay, I will talk to you after your very successful open-heart surgery, but I have a favour to ask. I want your grandson’s cell number, and I need him to text me his contact information before your surgery. He will be my main contact to keep in the loop as to how your surgery went. Is that a deal?”

“It’s a deal and a good idea,” Vic replied.

As the call concluded and the two men said their goodbyes, Joe sat alone, and many things entered his mind. He immediately thought about when they were last together during a visit. It was a great day of talking and laughter and a wonderful lunch. The two men went for a long walk in the park and Joe vividly recalled them standing in a particular spot with an incredible view and simply appreciating that they could experience the view and the moment of silence together.

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Joe went back to the present moment and realized that his dear friend and mentor was going in for major surgery. Joe had to hope and pray that everything would be fine. He also thought

about his father. Joe remembered when his father was in the hospital years ago, and he talked briefly on the phone with him. Sadly, that was the last time he spoke to his father. He passed away the next day, and Joe always regretted not saying more on the call, and while he did say he loved him, it was more of a quiet afterthought that his father likely didn't hear, but hopefully, he knew that his son did love him.

### **As Intended**

Fortunately, things unfolded as they were intended, and Vic's open-heart surgery was a success. He continued to get stronger every day with only a few minor setbacks.

The hardest thing for Joe was the infrequency of the calls for the first few months. It was the longest time that Joe and Vic had gone without talking to each other since they met. In the six weeks that followed, they only had two quick calls. Joe made sure it was all about Vic, and he never referenced anything other than all is fine.

Vic needed to rest and recover. Joe understood that, yet it was tough to not connect and chat with his long-time friend. He reflected on so many things during that time. Joe couldn't imagine Vic not being in his life. He wanted this relationship to last as long as possible, even though he knew that it wouldn't be forever.

Joe thought, "I guess things will unfold as they are intended to."

Somehow, this phrase was comforting. Vic said it many times over the years. It means you can't control the uncontrollable or inevitable. Enjoy life's journey, bumps and all.

# The Serendipitous Thread

Over the years, Joe and Vic discovered that they shared many common beliefs: The benefits of compartmentalizing to reduce stress. The wisdom from gurus like Deepak Chopra, *SynchroDestiny: Discover the Power of Meaningful Coincidence to Manifest Abundance in Your Life*.

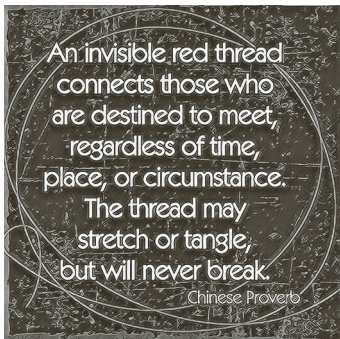
This was a memorable book for both Joe and Vic, and they gained many valuable insights from the book and discussed them often.

Joe thought, out of the hundreds of people going on a vacation to the same resort, over 17 years ago, why did they meet?

While there is no logical answer, it may have something to do with Deepak Chopra's wisdom that suggests it was a *meaningful coincidence*. It was hard to argue that it was indeed a coincidence that Joe and Vic were on vacation at the same place at the same time. It was undoubtedly amazing that they kept in touch all

these years. Even though they lived in different provinces and only saw one another, face-to-face once or twice a year. The fact that they met on vacation proved to be *a meaningful coincidence*.

Vic also kept encouraging Joe to work on meditation skills. He still struggled with creating



a quiet mind when things were hectic. It wasn't easy for Joe.

Years earlier, Vic shared a well-known Chinese Proverb which described their relationship to a tee. It was impactful for Joe

to learn this, and he treasured the message and connected with single every word.

There was no doubt in Joe's mind that the two men were destined to meet.

*Things unfolded as they were intended.*

Without question, the thread that connected them did indeed stretch from time to time, through the highs and lows of life. Deciding to have a phone call after their first vacation and to continue to have those calls and develop the relationship was a choice, they both made.

It validates that we all have choices in life. We can choose to call an old friend just because, and be grateful for the experience.

Sometimes other influences get in the way. Other people may tell you what you should or shouldn't do with a particular relationship. Only you can decide if it is the right thing to do *for you*.

Joe recalled a close friend who wanted to visit her dying grandmother in the hospital. The grandmother was mostly sleeping, it would be virtually impossible to speak with her, yet the young lady was compelled to visit her. Family members discouraged it and said, "Grandma won't know anyway."

Joe offered his advice merely stating, "Yes, but you will know that you were there and why you visited her."

People can advise you, but no one can tell you how you feel and what you should or shouldn't do in a situation like this. Only you can decide!

# The Relationship Journey Continues

A lot has changed in Joe's life over the years. Joe continues to grow and evolve as an entrepreneur, thinking about innovation and how he can disrupt his business and industry. He is happily married to his soulmate and perfect partner, Susan. He feels truly blessed every day to have someone like her in his life.

They push each other to achieve their true potential and do so in a supportive and respectful way. It's easy to give advice when someone gives you LRT.

Joe and Susan have been able to enjoy many great things in life, including lots of travel. Joe has travelled more with Susan than his entire previous marriage. Impressive, considering they have been together for only eight years. They have experienced the fullness of life so much more.



Together, they have learned that it's not just living each day, but the experience you take from living life to the fullest. It has shaped how they will live their years ahead.

Europe has been a favourite location for them, and they appreciate that many Europeans like to slow down. They spend time with family and friends and value the relationships they have.



Life is slower and much more meaningful, and Joe and Susan admire that unique way of life.

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Joe has become a lot like Vic and has helped many people with introductions and relationship tips and advice. He thrives on offering his wisdom and experience to others who may need some guidance.

One thing has not changed, and that is the strong relationship that Joe and Vic still have. There were still lively early-Saturday-morning calls to keep current on each other's lives; now and then, a mid-week text, just to let each other know that they are thinking of them.

They still cover many topics on their weekly calls—literally soup to nuts. One of their calls was all about the news that Canada had legalized Cannabis.

Vic asked Joe, “So do you plan on trying it?”

“Trying what?”

“Pot, cannabis, marijuana, you know.”

“Oh,” Joe grinned and replied, “No, thanks. I’m good. I’ve never touched the stuff and don’t plan on starting now.”

Vic responded, “Well, it might help your creativity, if you ever decide to write a book!”

Both men laughed at the book idea. It had never even crossed Joe’s mind that he would ever write a book on any subject. It seemed like a lot of work and effort. “Who would read my book anyway?” Joe mused.

“Make it a great week, Vic!”

“You too, Joe.”

*“Truth is, I’ll never know all there is to know about you just as you will never know all there is to know about me. Humans are, by nature, too complicated to be understood fully. So, we can choose either to approach our fellow human beings with suspicion or to approach them with an open mind, a dash of optimism and a great deal of candor.” —Tom Hanks*

# What's Next?

First, sincere thanks for taking the time to read my book or at least look at the pictures. 😊 It's been a labour of love, more than five years in the making. The story needed time to marinate and flow to paper.

I hope that you will look at relationships differently, and perhaps take some action to build new relationships or even repair a broken one. As we know, life is short. Surround yourself with as many great and caring people as possible, you won't regret it.

I believe that action is critical to produce a positive outcome and ultimately build more effective relationships. I hope that you take some advice from the story and apply it to your own life. It takes two, but someone always has to make the first move.

Will that be you?

If you liked my book, I would be grateful for your feedback. You can visit [amazon.com](http://amazon.com), [amazon.ca](http://amazon.ca), or [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk), search “Mike Mack, *Relationships for Keeps*”, and post a review there.

Please refer this book to a friend or colleague who you feel would benefit from the life lessons shared in the story.

Here’s to building Relationships for Keeps!

*“Alone, we can do so little; together, we can do so much.”* —**Helen Keller**

# Acknowledgements

I am blessed to have many close and supportive relationships in my life. As I made the decision to start writing this book in 2014 and started to accumulate the ideas and thought process to actually write a story, there were many great people who offered support.

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# Recommended Reading

**Melonie Dodaro**— “LinkedIn Unlocked: Unlock the Mystery of LinkedIn to Drive More Sales Through Social Selling.”

**Keith Ferrazzi and Tahl Raz**— “Never Eat Alone: And Other Secrets to Success, One Relationship at a Time.”

**Deepak Chopra, M.D.**— “SynchroDestiny: Discover the Power of Meaningful Coincidence to Manifest Abundance in Your Life.”

**Paulo Coelho**— “The Alchemist (Graphic Novel).”



**Catherine Nomura, Julia Waller and Shannon Waller**— *“Unique Ability® 2.0: Discovery— Define Your Best Self.”*

**Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, and Les Hewitt**— *“The Power of Focus: What the World's Greatest Achievers Know about The Secret to Financial Freedom & Success.”*

# About the Author

MIKE MACK  
*AS REMARKABLE*



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Mike Mack is an Amazon bestselling author of Remarkable Service – “How to Keep Your Doors Open”

He is the President and Managing Partner of X5 Management, a Canadian-based company that provides Training, Coaching and Consulting services. Since 2006, X5 has specialized in Customer Service, Sales, Team Building, and Leadership Development, and aligning teams to achieve.

It's Mike's belief that “relationships are key to life and business success and they make your world feel a whole lot better.

Mike holds an MBA from Athabasca University and is a proud member of Synergy Network (Edmonton), serving as Chair in 2016; Member of ACG (Association for Corporate Growth), serving as Edmonton-Chapter President in 2018-19; Member of the Institute of Corporate Directors; Member of CAPS (Canadian Association of Professional Speakers); National TEC Canada Speaker; Mike is a Certified Trainer for Everything DiSC®; Past-President, Rotary Club of Edmonton Mayfield (2005-06). Former member of Toastmasters International, obtaining his Distinguished Toastmasters Designation – DTM.

Mike and his wife Bonita live in Edmonton and enjoy travelling and mountain biking in Edmonton's River Valley or in the majestic mountains of Alberta.

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