

## “RESPECT -- THE WILL TO UNDERSTAND”

Part Two Heading in Decent People, Decent Company:  
How to Lead with Character at Work and in Life  
by Robert Turknnett and Carolyn Turknnett (2005)

### A SUMMARY

*“Respect describes the sense of partnership, participation, and equality you want to feel in any organization or company you are involved in. It is the sense that although everyone may not be equal...each role is viewed as vital”* (Turknnett & Turknnett, 2005, p 29).

**RESPECT** *always begins with you* and how you communicate and connect with others. To show respect, it is necessary to put aside what is important to you and what you believe, so you can listen. It is the *willingness to take the time* to understand rather than react that says... *You are worth the time it takes to make sure we understand each other.* For someone to know you have listened, you need to let them know you have heard them by summarizing the essence of what they have said. When you take the time to summarize and clarify what you heard before you respond, others experience your “willingness to understand” and they feel respected. With respect, differences are discussed with the “sense of partnership, participation, and equality” (Turknnett and Turknnett, 2005, p. 29). The focus is on jointly finding ways of resolving differences where everyone’s point of view is respected and everyone is included in the resolution.

You cannot demand respect. *You receive respect when you respond to others with respect regardless of how they treat you.* The hardest and most important time to *show others respect* is when you do not feel you are being respected. It is the ability to put yourself in their situation which is **empathy** that allows you to show others respect when you do not feel respected. Robert and Carolyn Turknnett have identified four behavior characteristics necessary for **respect: empathy, emotional mastery, lack of blame and humility.** Anyone can learn these character behaviors and skills as they are inter-related and build on each other.

For more information on the skills necessary for developing these four behavior characteristics, read:

Part I, pages 53-146 in Raising Your Emotional Intelligence: A Hands-on Program for Harnessing the Power of Your Instincts and Emotions (1997) by Jeanne Segal.

**EMPATHY** is being able to walk *in* someone’s shoes; and therefore, *understand, accept, and connect to their feelings.* When you connect to someone’s feeling, you feel *with* someone. You are walking as *partners* on the same path. Sympathy is feeling sorry for someone and is a detached response. It triggers a desire to fix and help, not connect with someone’s feelings. Gus Pagonis, a former Lieutenant General in the U.S. Army, who was in charge of logistics during the first Gulf War, wrote “No one is a leader who can’t put himself or herself in the other

person's shoes" (Turknett and Turknett, 2005, p. 53). When you put yourself in someone's shoes, you are able to understand the impact of your communication, behavior and decisions. "Empathy allows you to connect with people, understand them, and ultimately influence them. It makes conflict a creative process and is the key to successful negotiation" (Turknett and Turknett, 2005, p. 65).

**Empathy** is a combination of communication and self-awareness skills that are necessary to understand, accept, and connect to someone's feelings. Self-awareness is being aware of your verbal and nonverbal communication. Your nonverbal communication, voice tone, body posture, facial expressions, and the pace and loudness of your speech, influences the meaning of the words you use. Being aware of how your language impacts others allows you to choose language that is descriptive and neutral with NO judgments, labels or your personal evaluations and interpretations. Descriptive and neutral language is what communicates understanding and acceptance. Acceptance does not mean you agree, only that you understand and can put yourself in their shoes. Summarizing using descriptive and neutral language is how you let others know that you have heard them. Even if your summary is not exactly accurate, your *willingness to work at understanding* by clarifying and summarizing until there is an understanding, lets others know that they are worth the time and your **respect**. As **empathy** becomes part of your pattern of communication, you become more aware of how others are responding to you and your impact on them. Being aware of your impact on others allows you to immediately *modify your nonverbal and verbal communication* increasing your ability to understand and communicate your understanding and acceptance. Your descriptive language, your awareness of your impact, your ability to adapt your verbal and nonverbal language increases your ability to understand, accept and connect with the feelings of others or be **empathic**.

Communicating with **empathy** takes great *self-control* and **emotional mastery**, particularly when you have a strong reaction to what someone is saying or when you feel attacked.

**Empathy** is being able to connect with someone's feelings, no matter how they are communicating with you. **Respect** is the "The Will To Understand" and communicate with **empathy** regardless of your personal reaction to a situation.

### **Resources related to empathy**

1. To further understand empathy and how it communicates respect, read:  
Chapter 3: Empathy pages 49-66 in *Decent People, Decent Company: How to Lead with Character at Work and in Life* (2005) by Turknett and Turknett.
2. To understand the skills necessary for emotional intelligence and empathy and how it applies to effective managers read:  
*The Managers Guide to Emotional Intelligence* (2000) by Emily Sterret
3. To develop empathy skills, read:  
*Raising Your Emotional Intelligence: A Hands-on Program for Harnessing the Power of your Instincts and Emotions* (1997) by Jeanne Segal

**EMOTIONAL MASTERY** is being able to accept and tolerate the intensity of your uncomfortable feelings so you can make *choices* about how you *respond*, no matter how intense your reaction is. When you have **emotional mastery** you can “hear and honor what other people are experiencing while modulating the way you experience it yourself...giv[ing] you the resilience to handle anything that comes your way” (Turknett and Turknett, 2005 p. 70). Modulating the way you experience a situation, requires you to be able to tolerate the intensity of your physical and emotional response without releasing your feelings by blaming someone else or yourself. Jeanne Segal in Raising Your Emotional Intelligence (1997) on pages 53-111 has information and suggested activities about how to tolerate the intensity of your feelings and build your “emotional muscle.”

Before you can “hear and honor” someone else, you need to “hear and honor” yourself. Honoring yourself is accepting all of your feelings and their physical responses, particularly when they are uncomfortable and very intense. When you are able to do this, your feelings do not take over your ability to think clearly. Your attention is no longer focused on controlling your feelings; your attention is focused on how to respond to this difficult situation. Once you allow yourself to accept the uncomfortable feelings you have in your body rather than trying to keep yourself from feeling them, you can learn how to let go of the tension in your body. Letting go of the physical tension is an important part of letting go of your feelings and being able to think clearly about how you respond. Now you are able to focus on the other person or situation and begin to listen so you can understand and choose how to respond with respect.

Being able to let go of an intense physical response and relax your body requires relaxation skills which are learned by practicing progressive relaxation. In progressive relaxation you lay in a comfortable position and tense and release each muscle group from your head to your toes. As you tense each muscle group, you very slowly breathe in and as you release the tension, you very slowly exhale. Breathing slowly and evenly calms your intense physical response and quiets your mind. When your mind is quiet, you experience only the present moment; there are no negative thoughts related to your fear; there is only quiet. It is the quiet in your mind that allows you to think clearly. When you practice even breathing with tightening and releasing the tension in each muscle group, you become aware of the tension in your body, and your body associates tense muscles with slow even breathing. For your mind and body to make the association between breathing and tense muscle groups, you need to practice progressive relaxation for at least 30 days. Information on learning progressive relaxation is on the NIU Employee Assistance Program, [www.hr.niu.edu/serviceareas/employeeassistance/](http://www.hr.niu.edu/serviceareas/employeeassistance/).

An intense uncomfortable physical response triggers automatic negative thoughts that you experience as feelings. It is the automatic negative thoughts that fill your mind and increase your uncomfortable physical response so you cannot think clearly. Automatic thoughts are usually judgments and beliefs about people, situations, and yourself. These thoughts are so automatic that most people are not aware that they have them and generally use them as they describe a feeling or uncomfortable situation. Dr. Daniel Amen (1998) in Change Your Brain, Change Your Life describes automatic negative thoughts as “ANTs” (p. 56). Just as ants invade and disturb your picnic, they invade and disturb your thinking; making it impossible to think clearly (Amen, pp. 59-60. Not only do the “ANTs” disturb your thinking, they interfere with your ability to accept your feeling and your physical response.

Being aware of your “ANTs” is the first step to changing these negative, judgmental thoughts into descriptive, neutral thoughts. Changing your “ANTs,” changes your thinking about yourself and others, and changes the language you use as you think about an interaction and communicate with others. As your language becomes more descriptive and neutral, your perceptions of situations change. When you are in the midst of a difficult intense situation, you can use your slow deep breathing and ability to tense and relax your muscles to tolerate and calm you uncomfortable physical response. With fewer “ANTs,” and your progressive relaxation skills, it is easier to calm your physical response and quiet your mind so you can think clearly about how to respond. Once you have **emotional mastery**, you can “hear and honor” others which is the basis for being able to be **empathic and respectful**.

“Emotional mastery is essential for clear thinking, empathy, humility, and creating a culture of respect, effective leaders are masters of their emotions” (Turknett and Turknett, 2005 p. 5). When you have emotional mastery, you accept your feelings and recognize that your feelings are yours and no one else is responsible for them. Now there is no need to get defensive and blame others. A **Lack of blame** is an essential character behavior and demonstrates **emotional mastery**. Only when you can communicate with **emotional mastery** and a **lack of blame** can you be **empathic** with others.

For more information on emotional mastery or self-control, a personal competency for effective leaders, read:

[Working with Emotional Intelligence](#) by Daniel Goleman, pages 73-89.

For more information about how to change your negative thoughts, read:

1. [Decent People, Decent Company: How to Lead with Character at Work and Life](#) (2005) by Robert Turknett and Carolyn Turknett, pages 69-85.
2. [Change Your Brain, Change Your Life](#) (1998) by Daniel Amen, pages 55-67.
3. [Raising Your Emotional Intelligence: A Hands-On Program for Harnessing the Power of your Instincts and Emotions](#) (1997) by Jeanne Segal pages 53-111.

**LACK OF BLAME** creates a “culture of mutual respect” and “personal responsibility” (Turknett and Turknett, 2005 p. 90). When there is a culture of blame, people are afraid to take personal responsibility and acknowledge their mistakes. The focus becomes “who” is to blame rather than solving the problem. People become self-protective and disconnect from each other as a way of protecting themselves from being blamed. Now, no one takes personal responsibility. Everyone is looking for “who to blame”... co-workers, parents, supervisors, children, employees, “the administration” and so on. Employees feel helpless to do anything to change their situation so they blame management...for not understanding their job...expecting too much...not doing anything to deal with the problems. Managers blame employees...for making too many mistakes...not doing their job...not being accountable...taking much time away from the demands of their job and what is important. Children blame their parents for what went wrong in their life, and parents blame children for their problems. When others are blamed

for a problem, the problem becomes a personality problem. Finding solutions to solve the problem is no longer the focus. Now, solving the problem is finding solutions for the person's personality and behavior problems. Blaming creates a toxic, fearful culture where people are afraid to admit they made a mistake or offer any suggestions, creating a defensive, self-protective culture without mutual respect.

Blaming and defensiveness are self-protect behaviors. When you defend yourself, you shift the focus from what happened to others or the situations. By blaming others for your mistakes, imperfections and uncomfortable feelings, you protect yourself from acknowledging your vulnerabilities, imperfections and mistakes. *You don't have a problem, it is everyone else...It's not my fault, I am not to blame, If they would just...everything would be fine.*

As long as you are blaming others and not accepting your weaknesses, you will continue to avoid taking any personal responsibility. When you accept that everyone, including you, are not perfect and make mistakes, the mistakes become opportunities for learning and NOT failures, character flaws, or incompetence.

When there is a "culture of mutual respect," the discussion about mistakes or problems is descriptive so that everyone focuses on understanding the situation. The descriptive language and focusing on the problem communicates that everyone's perception and understanding of the situation is valued. Now, people are willing to take personal responsibility for how they may have contributed to the problem and for finding solutions... What happened? What can be done differently? The attention is on learning and solutions so the problem can be prevented in the future. This culture of mutual respect and focusing on the problem creates better solutions to problems and people are rewarded for speaking up rather than being dismissed or attacked.

A **lack of blame** eliminates the need to be *defensive* and creates a culture where people *accept* their *personal responsibility* in any situation (Turknett and Turknett, 2005 p. 92).

Being **respectful** *requires* **emotional mastery** and **personal responsibility** for mistakes (**lack blame**).

For more information on the effects of blame and the **lack of blame**, read:  
Chapter 5: Lack of Blame pages 87-100 in Decent People, Decent Company: How to Lead with Character at Work and in Life (2005) by Turknett and Turknett.

**HUMILITY** is the foundation for being **respectful**. It is the sense of *equality* in relationships that creates the desire to understand others and be able to put yourself in their shoes and be **empathic**. "Leaders who are humble tend to be more concerned with getting results than with thanks or recognition. Their openness to others' ideas and their generosity with praise, making the people around them feel valued and respected, can liberate enormous amount of energy, yielding real riches" (Turnknett and Turknett, 2005 p. 108).

The focus of communication is on understanding and connecting with others, so you listen and empathize with others rather than talking and telling. You believe that you are *not* the only one

who has all the right answers and know that the best decisions include the ideas of others. Since you relate to others as equals, you do not have to hide your imperfections and mistakes. It is accepted that everyone makes mistakes and the focus is on correcting the mistake or resolving the problem rather than looking for who is to blame. When there is a mistake, there is no need to get upset, lose your emotional control and protect yourself; therefore, there is no need to become defensive. Everyone can admit their mistakes, weaknesses, and vulnerabilities without fear of judgment. “Showing humility and vulnerability is like a magnet that draws other people to you and makes them open up in return” (Turknett and Turknett, 2005 p. 105). Relating to others with humility creates a *collaborative* climate where giving and receiving feedback is common. Everyone knows that good relationships mean everyone can focus on the quality and success of the project.

The opposite of humility is *arrogance*. “Arrogance is an obstacle to clear perception, and a major cause of leadership failure” (Turknett and Turknett, 2005 p. 113). When you are arrogant, you believe...*No one can do anything right...Doing it yourself is the only way to get things done right...Even though the team thinks this is the best option, my idea will have the best result...I know what is best.* What is most important is controlling every situation so that your weaknesses or vulnerabilities will not be exposed. When you know everything and do not value the opinions of others, the people you relate to will not initiate or share their ideas; they will keep quiet and only say what they think you want to hear. An arrogant leader creates an environment where people are fearful of being blamed for mistakes or the lack of success of a project or event so they keep their heads down and focus only on their specific job or responsibility. They feel they have no control or autonomy to do their job, so, they stop thinking, stop initiating, and only do what they are told. There is no commitment to the relationship or organization or any sense of responsibility for successful results.

In our culture, recognizing and acknowledging mistakes is viewed as being weak. The belief is that strong competent leaders do not let anyone see any weakness or vulnerability. Listening and being empathic with people who have different beliefs or values is also considered weak and makes you or your organization vulnerable. Competent, capable, leaders have the answers and control the situation as well as get the results they think are best. There is no need to get anyone’s ideas, particularly not anyone who is not at their level; after all, they have all the answers. Arrogant leaders do not understand why *others do not cooperate* with them and realize that their decision is best. With this type of leadership, people around them shut down, feel helpless and since their ideas are not valued; they blame everything that doesn’t work on those people in charge who make “*those stupid decisions.*” Frequently you hear...*If you asked me I could have told them why this would be a problem and not work.*” This is a cultural definition of a strong leader, and it is an arrogant leader. An arrogant leader does not build “the sense of partnership, participation, and equality” (Turknett & Turknett, 2005 p. 29) that is necessary for a **successful leader**. An arrogant leader does not relate to others with **empathy, emotional mastery, a lack of blame or humility**; therefore they do not communicate with **respect**.

“It takes humility to get others to follow in ways that draw out the best they have to give, that get your own ideas heard, and that allow you to be the leader that you want to be” (Turknett and Turknett, 2005 p. 105).

For more detailed information and examples about **humility** and arrogance read:  
Chapter: Humility pages 101-113 in Decent People, Decent Company: How to Lead with Character at Work and in Life by Turknett and Turknett (2005).

## **SUMMARY of RESPECT** **“Leading with Character in Life and Work”**

When you are **humble**, you accept your imperfections and mistakes so you do not have to protect your image by controlling others and looking for who is to blame. Your self-acceptance means you do not need to blame yourself and others when mistakes occur. There is a **lack of blame** in your communication with others and your feelings about yourself. When things do not happen as you expected or you feel attacked or scared, you maintain your **emotional mastery** and choose how to respond without blame. With **humility, emotional mastery, and a lack of blame**, you are able to put yourself in the other person’s shoes and practice the skill of **empathy**. These four skills and character components that Robert and Carolyn Turknett describe are the foundation of being respectful in all of your relationships at work or at home. They are the core characteristics of successful leaders.

### **Primary Resource**

Turknett Robert L and Turknett, Carolyn N. 2005. Decent People, Decent Company, How to Lead with Character at Work and in Life. Mountain View, California: Davies-Black.

*Describes eight learnable character traits for effective leaders.*

*These traits are divided into two areas:*

***Respect--Empathy, Emotional Mastery, Lack of Blame and Humility** (described in the handout)  
**and Responsibility--Accountability, Courage, Self-Confidence and Focus on the Whole***

### **Secondary Resources**

Amen, Daniel G. M.D. 1998. Change Your Brain, Change Your Life. New York: Three Rivers Press.

*Discusses how your brain influences your thoughts and feelings.*

Goleman, Daniel. 1998. Working with Emotional Intelligence. New York: Bantam Books.

*Describes emotional intelligence and the related leadership competencies of effective leaders with supporting research and examples.*

Goleman, Daniel; Boyatzis, Richard; McKee, Annie. 2002. Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence. Boston: Harvard University Press.

*Applies the leadership competencies identified in Working with Emotional Intelligence and how they impact a leader’s success or failure, with many applications for effective leaders and managers.*

Ruiz, Don Miguel. 1997. Four Agreements. San Rafael, California: Amber-Allen Publishing Inc.

*Presents Four Agreements for Life: Being Impeccable with your Word, Not Personalizing, Not Assuming, and Doing Your Best*

Segal, Jeanne. 1997. Raising Your Emotional Intelligence: A hands-on Program for Harnessing the Power of Your Instincts and Your Emotions. New York, New York: Henry Holt and Company.

*Provides information and activities to develop the skills necessary to be empathic, have emotional mastery, and communicate without blame.*

Sterrett, Emily Ph.D. 2000. The Manager's Pocket Guide to Emotional Intelligence. Amherst, Massachusetts: HRD Press.

*Is a guide to assist leaders in assessing their EQ weaknesses and give concrete suggestions to strengthen their Emotional Intelligence (EQ)*

Also see Coaching...Respect: Talking Points at [www.hr.niu.edu/serviceareas/employeeassistance/](http://www.hr.niu.edu/serviceareas/employeeassistance/)

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