



INNER CIRCLE

The *Power* of Surrounding
Yourself With The *Right* People

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Introduction

“Man is a social animal. Anyone who does not partake of society is either a beast or a god.” Aristotle

We’re social animals.

The vast majority of us need the company of others in order to function and feel fulfilled. That’s why nearly everything that we do is built on a social framework. We play in groups. Nearly all our games and sports require multiple people being involved. We work in groups. Nearly all of our jobs are performed as a member of a team or a group. We learn in groups. From grade school to graduate school we are educated together in class and in classes. We even live and die in groups. Today, over 350,000 people were born and over 150,000 people died.

Everything around us is a result of our sociability. “Society”, the very word we use to describe our common, ordered communities is social. It comes from the Latin word “socius” which means companion. Our family groups are based on our social nature. So is our government, from local to national. Even our economy derives from our need to interact. So, the question becomes, why are we social?

The answer, like many answers, lies back in prehistory, far before our species evolved. Our ancestors at that time were proto-simians, resembling today’s lemur. They were tree dwelling and nocturnal. Being active at night and sleeping during the day gave them an advantage over some of the predator species that they faced. In addition, gathering food in the dark is much more advantageous when done solo or with a minimum amount of companions. Thus, our distant ancestors had no specific reason to become any more social than they already were. A semi-solitary existence suited them just fine.

About 52 million years ago, apes – the evolutionary line that would lead to us – split off from proto-simians. Apes and monkeys, although still tree-dwelling, were

larger than the proto-simians. This larger body size required more caloric energy. Therefore, the practice of stealthily gathering food in the darkness was not a strategy that worked well for apes. That greater caloric need drove the apes to begin looking for food during the daylight hours. Eventually, the species stopped night time foraging altogether and became diurnal. All their food needs for the day were satisfied while the sun was up. After dark, they laid low and were inactive.

Now, gathering food during the day can be a risky business. You are more visible. There are more predators. Therefore, there is a greater chance of becoming dinner, as opposed to finding dinner. Because of this, daytime food foragers have a greater need for backup. They need someone to cover their back while they gather and eat and vice versa. While two is a nice number, six or eight individuals give that many more sets of eyes to scan the jungle for potential threats. In other words, if you gather food during the day, it's better to have as many companions around you as you can find.

The need for protection while foraging for food began to break down the natural reluctance that these ancient apes had towards companionship. Gradually, over time, these apes became more social. They came together in loose affiliations of about a dozen individuals of both sexes. These groups developed hierarchy as a means of controlling the individuals in the group and making the whole unit more efficient. They learned to interact peacefully among themselves, as opposed to fighting. They learned to share resources. They guarded each other and, if fighting became necessary, the group was far more powerful than any one individual who was a member.

The thing with increased sociability is that once you start it is very hard, if not impossible, to go back. Remember, an increased need for calories is what initiated the need for greater interaction among species members. Now, that a group has formed and each member of the group depends upon it for those calories, it is unthinkable for any individual to go off alone. The group is not only food, it is also protection and power. The individual's needs begat the group, but now it is the

group that defines the individuals within it. In other words, individuality drove sociability, but now sociability drives the individual.

The increased social nature of these groups of apes continued. Over time, many millions of years, in fact, the social behavior became an ingrained instinct in great ape species. It was who they were. It was how they operated.

Over five million years ago, volcanos and tectonic action had left the geography of what is now central and south Africa broken and jumbled. In the jungles of that time, trees were interspersed with rocky ledges and outcroppings. Our ancestors were, of course, quadrupeds at this time, using all four limbs to walk, as well as move through the trees. However, at times, they were forced to navigate over and around this broken ground as they traveled in search of food. This need to get up and over ledges and outcroppings of rock meant that they began to develop better balance as they scrambled over the terrain.

Then about 2.5 million years ago, the Earth's climate began to change. It got cooler and drier. As a result, the jungle that had been our ancestor's home began to die off and shrink. It was replaced by vast savannahs interspaced with smaller groups of trees. Our ancestors were forced to go out onto this savannah in search of food. The groups on the savannah become more vigilant. Predators were more of a threat here. This need and this threat reinforced the social nature of the group. However, the savannah also had another gift to bestow.

Out on that savannah, one group of proto-humans took the first steps that led to you and I. They began to stand upright in order to get a better view of potential threats. This, in turn, led to walking and binocular, stereoscopic vision. Both of these required a bigger brain, so their cranium capacity began to grow. Increased cranial capacity brought about more changes, things like tools and the use of fire. These new changes also increased cranial capacity which, once again brought about even more changes – things like speech and abstract thought. In the end, here we are. We are the beneficiaries of millions of years of socialization and we are still as social, if not more so.

We are still members of groups. We have our immediate family and around them are our closest friends. These are the human beings that we spend the most time with. These are the human beings that we depend upon the most and them on us. These are the human beings who probably have the greatest influence over us. You could call them our “inner circle”.

This book is about that inner circle and the effect they can have upon us, both positive and negative. The people who form our inner circle have a profound effect on our emotions, our outlook and our ability to achieve success in life. That’s why it’s so important to make sure that our inner circle is as strong and as positive as it can possibly be.

In this book, you’re going to learn how to develop an inner circle that will empower you to be your very best. In turn, you will then be better able to empower all the individuals in your circle to be their best. They will feed that positive energy back to you and so on. A strong and powerful inner circle of friends is the greatest positive feedback loop there is. It’s what advanced our species and it will advance you in the very same way.

We’re going to start you on the road to a strong inner circle by taking a look at some pitfalls that occur in life that can cause you to end up with an inner circle that is less than it should be. We’ll look at some of the negative personality traits that a weak inner circle usually exhibits and we’ll see how those negative traits can silently and secretly turn your own energy negative. Next, we’ll look at inner circle power. We’ll look at some of the positive traits that the people who make up your inner circle should exhibit. We’ll also show you how the positive energy of people who exhibit these traits can influence you, making you a better person. Finally, we’ll look at the steps that you can take to build your own inner circle of strength and power. We’ll examine some of the activities that a power circle should be involved in. You’ll learn how, when you participate in these activities, you will begin to connect with the very people who need to surround yourself with – people who can become a part of your new and improved inner circle.

There is no need to settle for less in life. There are positive steps that you can begin to take today to start getting what you want out of life. One of the most

effective of these steps is to begin building a circle of friends around you who will be able to empower you so that you can empower them. Like the roving groups that our ancestors formed long ago, that group will be stronger than any of the individuals that comprise it. It will allow you to strive, thrive and, ultimately, become the person that you always wanted to be. Now, without further delay, let's get started on building your inner circle.

Inner Circle Pitfalls

“Stay Away From Negative People. They Have a Problem for Every Solution” Unknown

We as human beings are not only social animals, we are also consensus builders. In order to be social, we have to want to avoid conflict and promote harmony. If you think about it from an evolutionary standpoint, conflict is ultimately non-productive. An organism that is in constant conflict with the environment around it is, by definition, ill-suited for that environment. Furthermore, if you don't find ways to fit into the environment that you find yourself in, you are going to lose out to another organism that has found ways to make the environment its home.

Some conflict is inevitable, but a constant conflict is a recipe for disaster. That's why when our ancestors developed sociability as a solution to a caloric deficit, they also had to begin to neutralize the tendency to create conflict. If they didn't, any groups that formed to make foraging during the daylight safer and more efficient would soon splinter apart and starvation would be the result. So, it can be said that both sociability and consensus building are both evolutionary solutions to problems of survival. One can't exist without the other.

There is a problem with consensus building, however. To a certain point, it is an extremely effective way to avoid conflict and get things accomplished. However, after that point has been reached, consensus building becomes a solution with diminishing returns. Instead of moving forward, nothing gets accomplished. Things remain static, frozen in place. Yes, there is no conflict. However, there is also no spark. There is only a routine that is accepted because it is the status quo. In other words, consensus building has the ability to induce a sort of spiritual and behavioral blindness.

Under certain circumstances, we can begin to behave in a certain way simply because everyone else who we observe is behaving that way. We stop questioning whether the behavior is good or bad or, at best, we acknowledge that the behavior is bad, yet continue to act in the same way out of a sense of resignation or to avoid perceived conflict. It's almost as if the urge to build consensus can be a trap, keeping us running on a negative wheel, even when we know that what we are doing is destructive.

Our social groups are no longer about calories. Instead, they are about being liked. We all want to be liked. We all want to fit in. We all want to feel that we are a part of something bigger than ourselves. These feelings are natural. They arose out of our ability to think rationally. You see, cognition did nothing to change our sociability or our desire to avoid conflict. If anything, it intensified it. The great undertakings of humanity – agriculture, settled villages, power politics, resource management, organized military might, trade, the arts, the sciences – none of it would have been possible if we first didn't want to be liked as individuals.

It's quite simple really. We all strive to be liked in the various social milieus we find ourselves in. We all work to achieve acceptance. We do this by building consensus with the other people in the group in question. This consensus, in turn, allows for the sociability that allows the group to exist in the first place.

This means that we are all influencing the other. We are all affecting the other. We are all reluctant to jeopardize our acceptance within a group of our peers by questioning the shared behaviors that the group exhibits. It can be a vicious circle. The need for acceptance can, in some instances, allow us to overlook behavior that would otherwise be unacceptable. The result is that a group can develop an energy that is not conducive to personal growth.

As human beings, we should be naturally changing over time. The opinions that we held twenty years ago are not necessarily the opinions that we have today. The same goes for taste. What we enjoy today in terms of music, books, food and even conversation should certainly change somewhat over time. If we are exposed to new influences, it is natural that we will find a portion of what we experience agreeable and adopt it as our own. You can go so far as to say that a

person is not truly whole unless they experience this type of growth as they move through life.

However, there are people for whom this is not true. Perhaps, you have had the opportunity to attend a class reunion. It might be 10, 15 or more years after graduation. When you meet the people who you went to school with after all this time, you probably came to a surprising realization. There were some who had flowered. They had grown from the person they were into the person they are now. It is likely that this growth had a positive effect on them. Perhaps they were more interesting than you remembered. It is certain that they were different than you remembered.

Then there were other people who seemed to have not changed one iota. They were, for all intents and purposes, the same person you knew long ago. They had the same opinions. They had the same outlooks. They had not significantly grown in any manner and, in some cases, they may have actually developed viewpoints that were narrower than previously. It is likely that encountering these people was not as pleasant as encountering classmates who had changed for the better. For lack of a better term, the people who had grown were somehow more positive individuals and the people who had stayed the same were somehow less positive.

There was probably no greater difference between the individuals in the two groups other than who they surrounded themselves with. You can be assured that the people who had experienced growth had a strong inner circle comprised of individuals from all walks of life. There was a diversity in their circle of friends that was reflected in how they experienced the world. They were more open to differing opinion. They accepted new ideas. They saw the world as a series of possibilities, not penalties. There was a risk of encountering conflict within that circle, but it was an accepted risk – one that was outweighed by the benefits of openness and change.

The second group likely had surrounded themselves with individuals who shared their worldview. There was very little diversity in this group, either in demographic or in outlook. Ideas and opinions were judged according to the

prevailing view. Things occurred in their lives according to expectation. There was no growth. There was only stasis. Into that stasis crept paralysis. Independent thought was difficult. An individual taste was nearly impossible. There was security in the group, but the price paid for that security was extortionate.

The lessons here are clear. The security found in some groups can be stifling because the stability of the group is paramount. Anything that even remotely threatens the consensus that allows the group to exist must be sacrificed. The group is stable, but the stability is a trap. Like a dog chasing its tail, the members of this type of circle go around and around to no good purpose. Change is not allowed. Growth is forbidden. Natural human curiosity or kindnesses are reined in. Each member influences the others to maintain the party line. Tropes are repeated as truth. Bad or destructive habits and behaviors continue because there is no incentive to change them. Tied together and blind to the real potential they all contain, the members of this group are like a climber who has fallen into a glacier's crevasse. Crushed under tons of ice, they are perfectly preserved, unchanged and unchanging, while the outside world continues in its ever variable path.

Your inner circle should be bringing out the best parts of the real you. They should not be inhibiting those parts or preventing them from developing as they should. When you are with the people who comprise your current inner circle, you should never have to agree to an action or an idea that you don't agree with. You should never have to suppress yourself. You should never be less than all that you can be. If you feel that the people around you are keeping you from growth, you have a duty to yourself to replace them with people who will empower you to be your true self.

Takeaways for This Section

- We are not only social animals, we are also consensus builders;
- Consensus building is a way to avoid conflict;
- We are programmed to try and avoid conflict while in social groups;
- This is why we strive to be liked and to be accepted;
- The danger in this behavior is that it can stifle growth;
- People can find themselves being unable to fully realize their potential due to the attitudes of the people in their social circle;
- A social circle can either be negative and exclusive or positive and inclusive;
- People whose social circle is positive and inclusive find themselves achieving their true potential;
- People whose social circle is negative and exclusive have problems experiencing personal growth;
- If you feel that the people around you are keeping you from growth, you have a duty to yourself to replace them with people who will empower you to be your true self.

Inner Circle Power

'You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with.'

Jim Rohn

As consensus builders, we tend to reflect the opinions and tastes, the likes and dislikes of the people around us. The more time that we spend with certain people, the more we begin to reflect who they are and what they stand for. There is really no way to stop this phenomenon. It is as real and instinctual as the flinch that occurs when something unexpected comes towards your face and just as hard to control.

So, you have to take a moment and think about whom the people are who you spend the majority of your time with. Once you've done this, you have to make an honest assessment of your own opinions and behaviors. How well do some of the things you do and say match up to the things the people around you do and say? If you find some correlations between your behavior and their behavior, then you have to decide whether what you're doing or saying is mostly positive or mostly negative. You have to honestly ask yourself if you feel those behaviors are holding you back. If they are, then you have a responsibility to yourself to take the steps to begin building an inner circle that has the power to support you and nourish your growth.

In this section, we're going to take a look at some of the traits that the people in your inner circle should share. These are also traits that you should be seeking to cultivate or improve within you. Remember, you are the sum total of the five people you spend the most time with. They comprise your inner circle. Do everything possible to make sure that they are the very best people they can be.

The Traits of True Friendship

We must assume that the people who you spend the most time with are, or should be, considered your friends. Some of these people may also be members of your immediate family. However, family members should also have a close relationship that resembles friendship and for the purposes of this section are included under the rubric of “friend”.

It's not hard to know when someone is a good friend. They exhibit patterns of behavior that are positive and make you feel good. Likewise, you're doing things for them that make them feel good as well. In general, these behaviors can be broadly classified into three general categories – integrity, caring, and congeniality. Each of these broad categories are themselves comprised of smaller individualized behaviors. In order for you to understand the qualities that you should be looking for in your inner circle, we're going to take a look at each category, as well as the behaviors that comprise it, in turn.

Integrity

Integrity is an important personality trait for friendship. After all, how can you call someone a friend if you can't trust them or count on them? However, when we say that someone has integrity, what do we really mean? Let's take a look at some of the traits that comprise integrity.

Trustworthiness

This is quite probably the number one quality that someone has to exhibit in order to be called a friend. Trust is an important human behavior. When you think about it, there is probably no one in your life that you truly care about who you don't also trust. This is natural. We are hardwired to only let people into our inner circle who have proven themselves trustworthy. The people who are closest to us also have the ability to hurt us the most. From a mere survival standpoint, it would make no sense to let someone get near that could potentially harm us before they proved they were safe.

Honesty

Honesty is the flip side of trust. In some ways, you can say that it precedes trust and allows the trust to grow. This is why we expect honesty from our friends. It is a sign that they haven't changed and that it is safe to continue to trust them. We should expect them not only to be honest about their actions and feelings but also to apply that honesty to our actions as well. An honest friend always acts as a moral compass. They are not afraid of hurting our feelings in order to let us know about behaviors that may cause harm.

Dependability

Dependability is another correlative of trust. One cannot exist without the other. Like honesty, dependability is a canary in the coalmine when it comes to trust. When dependability fails, trust can't be far behind. Also, we build trust by observing repetitive and predictable behaviors. When someone says that they will do something and then they do it, again and again, we develop trust in their words and actions. We begin to lose natural doubt and suspicion with ample evidence of dependable behavior. Real friendship is founded on kept promises, not excuses.

Loyalty

Loyalty is another aspect of trust, akin to honesty. Friendship depends upon loyalty. In fact, all group dynamics depend on loyalty. Think about it. There are few words as negatively charged as the word "traitor". A traitor is the epitome of disloyalty. To be a traitor is to betray someone, to violate the trust that they placed in you. The emotional weight that the word "traitor" carries is an indication of the importance that human beings place on loyalty. A disloyal person has the power to hurt you very deeply. They can strike at the heart of all you hold dear. Disloyalty is like a slap in the face. Is it any wonder the true friendship must be based on the ability to be loyal?

The Ability to Trust

Don't confuse this character trait with trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is all about exhibiting behaviors that allow other people to develop trust in you. However, a trusting relationship is a two-way street. Not only does someone else

have to demonstrate that they are capable of being trusted, once they do so, you must extend your trust. The ability to trust is an important part of integrity precisely because there can be no trust in a relationship unless both parties mutually agree that trust is warranted. A person who does not have the ability to trust can never truly become a functioning friend. They will never be authentic. They will always be holding something back and, because of this, you will never be able to fully trust them to be a solid member of your inner circle.

Caring

Caring is the second of the major personality traits that must be present in order for real friendship to occur. It is a necessity that the members of your inner circle care about you and, at the same time, it is essential that you care about them. As you've probably already realized, an inner circle is only as strong and powerful as its weakest member. That's why it's so important for you to exhibit the same traits that you are looking for in others. To be truly successful as a person, you can only expect to receive the things that you are already giving to others.

Empathy

The ability to empathize with those around you is a uniquely human ability. Unfortunately, empathy often gets confused with sympathy. Sympathy is the act of feeling compassion and sorrow for another person's situation. Their plight causes you to have feelings of your own about what they're going through, but you have no real understanding or insight about how they feel. Furthermore, sympathy isn't limited to one person. You can be sympathetic to whole groups of people and even to things that are non-tangible, like causes or movements.

Empathy, on the hand, is much more personal. When you experience empathy, you are stepping into the emotional shoes of the other person. You can feel what they are feeling and, because of this, are able to gain insight into how the situation is affecting them. Empathy is a much more powerful experience than sympathy. Because a person with empathy is able to experience the situation at hand from your viewpoint, they are much more likely to identify with you.

Acceptance

When you care about someone, you accept them for who they are. You understand that they are human and are subject to foibles and mistakes. You realize that they are not perfect, just as you are not perfect. You know that we are all flawed in one way or another and it is only when we accept those flaws that we can make a connection. Real and supportive friendships are not judgmental. They are not critical. They take a person as they found them. It only in this type of complimentary and non-disparaging environment that the type of friendships that make up a strong inner circle can form.

Attentiveness

A strong inner circle is comprised of individuals who are connected and invested in each other. The only way to develop this type of connection is by being attentive to each other. Being a good listener is a critical trait for any group of friends. All too often you will find that in any given group of friends there are people who are only interested in talking about themselves. This is a destructive tendency. All good inner circles are built upon balance. There has to be room for everyone at the table. Everyone has to have the ability to be what is known as an active listener. Active listeners don't just sit and absorb what someone else is saying. Instead, they listen and react to what's being said. They ask for clarification. They look for more details. If appropriate, they offer advice. They're invested and involved and that matters.

Support

Listening is one thing. So is empathizing. However, to be truly caring you also have to be supportive. Being supportive implies that you are active. You are not passive in the face of a friend's triumphs or their tragedies. Also, it is easier for some people to offer their support when something bad happens than it is when something positive happens. This type of behavior is not true support. A true supportive friend does not begrudge or envy the success of another friend. They are happy for them and they show support for that success as well as they do for a failure.

Congeniality

The last of the major personality traits exhibited by true friends is congeniality. It's no coincidence that one of the main synonyms for congeniality is friendliness. People want to be around others who are amiable, who are likable and who are just simply fun. After all, one of the main reasons we form friendships is to socialize and have fun. So, a certain level of likability is essential in all inner circles.

Confidence

One of the main traits that all likable people share is confidence. Self-confidence is attractive. It shows that a person is in control of their life. It also demonstrates that a person is enjoying their life. It is sort of a litmus test for general congeniality. People who are lacking in self-confidence are generally people with problems. Now, this is not to say that we don't all have problems. We do. A lack of self-confidence, however, indicates that a person is letting those problems get the better of them and, as a result, they are not enjoying life as much as they should.

Humor

Being able to laugh at yourself and at life is perhaps the healthiest of all the traits that make a good friendship. Nothing is worse than someone who takes themselves too seriously. Such a person can act as a lead weight on a group, defeating all attempts at levity and bringing everyone involved down. So, when you're looking for people who might be great additions to your inner circle, don't forget to look for someone with a great sense of humor. You'll be glad you did.

Takeaways for This Section

- As consensus builders, we tend to reflect the opinions and tastes, the likes and dislikes of the people around us;
- This is why on average we tend to act and think like the five people we spend the most time with;
- If you are not happy with some of the behaviors exhibited by the people you spend the most time with, then you have to look and see if those behaviors are having a negative effect on you;
- If they are, then you have a duty to yourself to take the steps to begin building an inner circle that has the power to support you and nourish your growth;
- One way to do this is by understanding the three traits that make up true friendship;
- The first of these traits is integrity and it consists of;
 - Trustworthiness;
 - Honesty;
 - Dependability; and
 - Loyalty;
- The second trait is caring and it consists of;
 - Empathy;
 - Acceptance;
 - Attentiveness;
 - Support;
- The last trait is congeniality and it consists of;
 - Confidence; and
 - Humor.

Building Your Circle

You've gotten an understanding of the importance and the power of a strong inner circle. You've also become aware of some of the pitfalls that can occur when you surround yourself with the wrong people. Now it's time to take a look at some of the areas that you can work in to begin to attract and find the people who you want to befriend and develop relationships with. Over time, these people will naturally become a part of your inner circle and provide you with the support that's necessary to become truly successful.

Health and Wellness

It goes without saying that if you start to take care of yourself you will begin to attract people into your life who also take care of themselves. One of the best ways to start treating yourself better is in the area of health and wellness. When you look and feel better, you are naturally more attractive, inside and out, to the rest of the world.

One of the most important things that you can do to take better care of yourself is to get more exercise. Another is to get better nutrition by eliminating junk foods and eating a more natural diet. This means that you'll be spending more time in places like the gym, whole foods markets or in parks and other recreation areas. It goes without saying, that you're bound to run into like-minded individuals in these places. This is the perfect opportunity to get to know them and, with luck, get started on a great friendship.

Personal Development

It's smart to want the best inner circle that you can possibly attract. You want to surround yourself with people who are interested in life and are engaged with all of the possibilities that it offers. That's why getting involved in the personal development sphere is a great way to begin meeting enlightened people who may become good friends.

Yoga classes are a great way to get in touch with your inner self. They are also a great way to get in touch with people who are interested in personal development. Book clubs are another excellent way to meet people that you'd want to be involved with. As they say, readers are leaders. Any type of creative class, like writing or painting workshops, will also be a veritable font of great candidates for your inner circle. The key is to get out there and explore the possibilities.

Volunteer Work

Everyone should be doing all they can to pay it forward, right? That's why volunteering in your local community makes perfect sense. You get to do what you can to help those who may need help. You also get to meet people who share this philosophy. You want to surround yourself with caring people, people with integrity. You want your friends to be people who understand that we all need to do what we can to leave this world in a little better shape than how we found it. Every community has areas that are perfect for volunteering. Senior centers, libraries, and schools all present perfect opportunities to perform service for your community. And, who knows? You might find people who live close by who would be excellent friends.

Takeaways for This Section

- There are things that you can do to proactively begin to build your inner circle;
- One great way to accomplish this is to begin working on improving yourself;
- In the process of working on yourself, you are bound to meet like-minded people who you will already have something in common with;
- Some excellent areas to look at include;
 - Health and wellness;
 - Personal development; and
 - Volunteer work.

Conclusion

This may be the end of the book, but it's just the beginning for you.

You now have all the information that you need to make the necessary adjustments in your inner circle that will reduce the amount of negative energy that surrounds you while at the same time, increasing the positive energy that you need. You've seen why we as human beings are social collaborators. You've also seen the ways that being social and collaborative can cause damage if you're not careful. You learned that you are the sum total of the five people you spend the most time with. Because of that, you saw how powerful an inner circle can become when the right people are involved. Finally, you learned some of the best ways to go about building your own inner circle of strength and power. Now, it's time to take what you've learned and put it to good use. It's time to start building an inner circle that will support you and help you achieve the goals that will allow you to live your life fully and completely.