

# Authentic Relating: A Magic Bullet?

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Published by *Practice Business* 2015

The doctors found it inexplicable; my silence that is. I could not speak as a child, although I produced my lessons perfectly on the page. Then suddenly, age six, I made my debut into the world of sound by being Mary in the nativity play. My first stuttered words were... "I have travelled a long and weary road".

Fascinated in how relating and communication works, I watched people as I grew up and was disappointed by much of what I saw. It was the mismatch between what people said and what I sensed they were feeling that upset me. I longed to create good relationships where I felt real, honest and matched inside and out. A tall order in this society where, for all kinds of reasons, hidden agendas and personal strategies abound.

Finally, in my fifties, after a rich and, at times, traumatic life (including the death of my five-year-old son) I finally wrote the lively, accessible handbook about relating that I could never find but always needed - *Heart of Relating: Communication Beyond Ego*. I wonder what out of the 52 sections would be most useful to you? *Awakening the Body* (Listening to our bodily senses)? *Ego Watch* (Identifying ego antics)? *Bows and Arrows* (Balancing the masculine and feminine)? *Fire Prevention* (Minimising conflict)? *Clear as a Bell* (Speaking with crystal clarity)? *The Real Deal* (The Power of Authenticity)? These all apply, I'm sure, but I am adapting extracts from two other chapters which hopefully will hit a useful spot.

## Weaving Heart and Head

Would you say you are heart or head dominant in your way of relating at work? Or perhaps balanced? Trainings in both medicine and business offer excellent opportunities for enhancing capacities of the left brain and for gaining knowledge to be applied to challenges that require solutions, but the field of feelings may not have had the chance to be as fully honed.

Becoming fluent in the language of both the head and heart is key to successful business and personal relationships. Whatever task needs accomplishing, we all have feelings that need to be considered, and putting them on the shelf too often is likely to backfire and lead to us to being judged as inauthentic.

**The head realm includes:** thoughts; facts; analysis; reason; logic; sequence; structure; practicalities; solutions.

**The heart realm includes:** feelings; empathy/connection; the bigger picture; visual, auditory and sensory awareness; stories; metaphors.

(Neuroscientists tell us the heart literally touches people. It has an electromagnetic energy field that stretches at least ten feet beyond the body and is 5,000 times bigger than that of the brain.<sup>i</sup>)

Weaving head-based words between heart-based expression usually has more impact than using only the heart or head, although sometimes using a compassionate expression or one simple fact will suffice. Also, tone of voice is paramount.

A simple 'heart and head weave' looks like this: 1. Show you care and connect to feelings that might be behind the spoken words. 2. Gather facts, make sense of the situation and find solutions if appropriate. 3. Show connection and care again.

For example: A colleague is limping badly and tells you about his/her fall on the way to work. S/he says, “The pain is getting worse and I feel awful.”

**HEAD response:** “How would you rate your pain on a scale of one to ten? Have you cleaned the wound? Is there anything I can do?”

**HEART response:** “*Ouch! You sound a bit shaken up. I feel for you.*”

**HEART AND HEAD WEAVE:** “*Ouch! You sound a bit shaken up. I feel for you. What can I do to help? Do you need medical attention, a cup of tea or for me to arrange to get you home? I want you to feel better and be where you need to be.*”

Perhaps the common belief that sharing feelings is not professional is shooting efficiency in the foot! Showing *overt* care that can be *felt* rather than assuming that care is demonstrated by fact-finding and solutions could be a magic bullet.

## Persona and Roles

*The persona is that which  
in reality one is not,  
but which oneself  
as well as others  
think one is.*

~ CARL JUNG

Authentic relating is only possible when we learn to detach ourselves at will from the roles we play. There are countless roles to be acted out in the drama of life, which can become merged with who we think we are – our persona. We can identify so closely with a role that we define ourselves by it and find comfort in its familiarity. A role can range from being a mask we try to hide behind, without which we feel uncomfortable, to a useful way of operating. Attachments to our work-life roles can be rudely revealed by unemployment or retirement, but why wait for external circumstance to offer the revelation of who we really are?

How much do you consider you are seen by others as a role rather than the real being who’s playing that role? Roles such as ‘boss’, ‘doctor’, ‘nurse’, ‘counsellor’ and those that cause others to change their behaviour in relation to our job description offer the greatest challenge for us to retain our approachable humanness – although perhaps the roles of ‘mum’ and ‘dad’ also fit this greatest challenge category!

Roles are unavoidable and come with criteria to be met and with status that can influence the way we communicate. We need to become conscious of the archetypal behaviour patterns we have absorbed with the territory of our roles so that we can be in a position of choice. It is up to us to align our real selves with the roles we are playing and to learn how to step in and out of them consciously.

### Useful questions:

How do I communicate differently when in my role?

Does my role cause me to look down on or up to others?

To what degree can I allow myself to express full-heartedly?

What needs to change to attain more authentic relationships?

Carmella B’Hahn is a Conscious Communications Coach and Bereavement Counsellor. Her third book, *Heart of Relating: Communication Beyond Ego* can be purchased from [www.heartofrelating.com](http://www.heartofrelating.com)

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<sup>i</sup> Research on the human heart see: [www.heartmath.org](http://www.heartmath.org)