

Better Relationships, Happier Lives: 12 Keys to Getting There

Terry Turner

Balboa Press (Oct 19, 2015)

Softcover \$11.99 (136pp)

978-1-5043-4124-0

This self-help book harnesses the power of effective communication to mend and strengthen relationships in families, workplaces, and beyond.

Better Relationships, Happier Lives: 12 Keys to Getting There by Terry Turner is a simple look at communicating well.

Nearly everyone is eager for the promise of this book's title, especially in the face of today's competitive workplaces and high divorce rates. Even in an increasingly impersonal, technology-driven world, relationships are vital. This volume dedicates itself to equipping people with the tools necessary to stop communicating in ways that harm relationships and to start practicing more effective strategies.

While twelve keys may seem, at first glance, like twelve burdensome rules, these insights are concise and manageable, helping people feel empowered to improve first themselves, and then their relationships. With most poor communication, the book shows, the root of the problem isn't in the words themselves; that's why the first key here is "Pay Attention."

Turner is a communications expert who teaches in colleges and business settings. The text shares her 101-level insights, giving vital skills to build on. Its examples are concise and relatable, from conflicts with coworkers to adjusting to different family values after marriage.

The book demonstrates throughout the power of a multifaceted, multisensory, proactive, and positive strategy. A chapter on stopping the use of victim words is particularly powerful in showing how words affect the perceptions of both a speaker and a listener.

Turner's positive, unemotional outlook is central to the volume. Her instruction cuts through tension and frustration to get at the heart of a solution. It's clear that she believes that everyone can become an effective communicator and that every relationship can be balanced, healthy, and fulfilling. This optimism is an asset.

Each principle is simple, yet powerful, and the chapters are short and easy to digest. However, the simplicity and brevity make the book easy to rush through. It would be best to pause, think deeply, and truly apply each concept—already a particularly challenging task within toxic relationships or intensely complex communication challenges.

The concluding section, "Marking Your Success," charts the path ahead, from learning these keys to truly living them. It acknowledges that this long process is a battle, and a few short pages won't be enough to instill the grit and perseverance necessary for change in all cases.

This book would be an asset to young professionals and others stepping foot into new relationship environments. Its basic skills will help those who aren't building on a long history of poor communication start off on the right foot, setting themselves up for success. For those in more seasoned relationships, these skills are still transformative,

though it could be much more complicated to use them to unravel years of poor relating.

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MELISSA WUSKE (September 30, 2016)

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