

On Relations with Others

“Show respect to all people, but grovel to none.” - [Tecumseh](#)

Marcus Aurelius’s Outlook Toward External Stimuli

The Roman emperor [Marcus Aurelius](#) outlines in his personal memoirs his adopted father’s philosophy on life, including the following:

- His restrictions on acclamations and all attempts to flatter him.
- His attitude to the gods: no superstitions.
- His attitude toward men: no demagoguery, no currying favor, no indulging, no vulgarity or prey to fads. Always sober and steady.
- Material comforts: enjoyed without arrogance or apology. If present, they were taken advantage of. If not, he didn’t miss them.
- Not vain, but not ignoring his appearance either.
- Willingness to yield the floor to experts in their field and support them so they can fulfill their potential.¹

Be Clear in Your Speech

Avoid confusion by making clear which kind of conversation (debate, discussion, teaching) you are having and recognize that the purpose is ultimately to obtain the truth, not to prove that someone is right or wrong. [Separate the people from the problem](#). Avoid getting tangled in positions because the ultimate goal is not to “win”, but to get to the best answer. There is also a difference between “I believe you made a bad decision” and “I believe you are a bad decision maker.”² Telling someone they are wrong strikes a direct blow to their intelligence, judgement, pride, and self-respect. It instigates retaliation and will never make them want to change their minds. Even if it is with good intentions, telling someone outright that they are wrong gives the perception that their opinion is not respected. If you must prove a point, do it subtly and as diplomatically as possible.³

If, on the other hand, it is found that you are mistaken, it is better to learn self-criticism rather than hear condemnation from others. Admit all your faults before the other person has a chance to point them out, this takes the fight out of them. You and the other party alike will be

much less likely to become entrenched in positions if there is no need to engage or [defend egos](#). To sum up this point; have the courage to seek no excuses.⁴

People Want Praise, Appreciation, and a Sense of Importance

Understand that people crave praise and appreciation as much as they crave food, it gives them a sense of importance and belonging. However, be sure to know the difference between showing appreciation and showing flattery, [flattery will do more harm than good](#). The difference between appreciation and flattery is that of sincerity and insincerity; one comes from the heart and the other from the teeth; one is selfish and the other unselfish. To show appreciation and not flattery, we must stop thinking about ourselves for a moment and think of the other person's positive attributes.⁵

In our interpersonal relations, never forget that all associates are human beings and hunger for appreciation. It is the legal tender all souls enjoy. [Friendships are formed by leaving small sparks of gratitude along your daily trip](#). People cling to the genuine gratitude shown toward them like a drowning man clinging to land. It is the basis of healthy interpersonal relationships. People will cherish your words, long after you've forgotten them.⁶

Takeaway: Give of others what you want yourself, support them in their undertakings, and more likely than not they will support you. [Give credit where credit is due](#) and show sincere appreciation for the good that others do. This is what people crave most and how friendships are formed.

1. "*Meditations*" -[Marcus Aurelius](#)
2. "*Principles: Life and Work*" -[Ray Dalio](#)
- 3-6. "*How to Win Friends and Influence People*" -[Dale Carnegie](#)