

NOTES FROM: *What's In It for Them?*, by Joe Polish

SUMMARY: They call him the most connected businessman on the planet, and this book is the distillation of Joe Polish's absolute *best* advice for creating and sustaining win-win relationships that last a lifetime.

If you've ever played "6 Degrees of Kevin Bacon," you could probably play "3 Degrees of Joe Polish," because it can seem like there's *no one* in the online entrepreneurship space who *hasn't* been helped by him in some way and eventually come to call him a friend.

His story is a pattern interrupt that diverges from the expected script. Joe succeeded in business by rejecting self-interest - or at least putting it to the side - so he could ask a very simple, yet very powerful question: "*What's in it for them?*"

It's a useful question that changes the conversation and can change your life in the same way that it's changed Joe's life and damn near everyone with whom he's shared it.

What's In It For Them? covers some of his main ideas, such as the three keys to connecting with others, the five major assets you need to invest in your relationships, the importance of becoming a "pain detective" to figure out how you can best help the people you encounter in life and business, and how you can become a "first domino" in the lives of others, spurring them on to greater growth and self-actualization.

Think of Joe's book as Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People* for the 21st century. While Carnegie's book is still *absolutely* worth reading, Joe's book represents the future of networking - while at the same time, the underlying themes and success strategies are as old as humanity itself.

"The secret to success in life and in business is learning how to connect and form relationships with other people – *and most people don't know how to do that.*"

"How are they suffering, and how can I help?"

"Trust is comfort plus time."

"Where can you build greater trust, rapport, and comfort in a key relationship today?"

"At the lake, I explained my situation to this man sitting on the tailgate of a pickup truck – how I wasn't making money in carpet cleaning and wondered if there wasn't a better business to go into. 'Does anybody in your business make money?' he asked. I told him that a few people did. 'Then the business isn't the problem. You're the problem.'"

"By identifying pain points and making positive space for people, you open the door for transformation. Good marketing applies this seamlessly: identifying and connecting with the pain of the other person, connecting with their bigger future, and being the bridge."

“To be better at life and relationships, learn to ask, ‘How are they suffering, and how can I help?’”

“When facing problems in life or relationships, remember that *everyone* is suffering in their own way – and often more than you realize. This will increase your empathy, create opportunities for relationships, and much more.”

“Where are you? Where do you want to go? How are you going to get there?”

“The first secret to the successes I’ve had in life and business is simple: I invest more time, attention, money, effort, and energy into my relationships than I do anything else, and I do so on the longest timeline possible.”

“A relationship is a *collaborative connection*.”

“Will this make the boat go faster?”

“Does this grow the relationship?”

“The lesson for how you deploy your time, attention, money, effort, and energy is simple: Relationships have a built-in feedback mechanism called *growth*. Any relationship, positive or negative, will develop and grow as you invest more and more. The question is, are you growing together in the right direction? Or are you spiraling off into the darkness? What are the by-products or fruits of the relationships? What internal and external transformations is it producing?”

“Whenever you expand a person or situation’s energy, you create incredibly powerful network effects.”

“I treat everybody I meet as if I will run into them again. As much as I can, I want to make a lasting impression and whenever possible, leave everything better than before I showed up. The most positive impacts I’ve made haven’t been overly calculated strategic decisions. They have grown organically out of this simple philosophy. The bottom line: Spread as much positivity and love as you can wherever you go, not to avoid some imagined future punishment, but because you don’t know the magnitude of the impact that possibility will have on others and the world. Usually, our humble efforts have an effect reaching farther than we think.”

“There is a difference between a return *from* relationships and a return *on* relationships. Understanding the difference is key to figuring out how to allocate your time, money, and energy. The first is a qualitative question: ‘If I were to invest time, money, and energy, would I get a return *from* this relationship?’ The second is a quantitative question: ‘Now that I’ve decided, how much time, money, and energy should I invest to get a return *on* this relationship?’ It’s the difference between merely having high-quality people in your network and interacting with those people in a meaningful way.”

“When maintaining relationships, nearly all the biggest dangers and traps come from mismanaging three things: your time, energy, and money.”

“There is no perfect way to build relationships without some mistakes, no right list of the people to know. We are always missing opportunities, and there are always ways we can better leverage our time. At the end of the day, though, are you happy? Is your life working? Are you learning and expanding yourself? Most importantly, are your relationships *fun*? They’re supposed to be. People hang out with people they like. People do business with people they like. People may do business with people they don’t like, but usually because they have no other choice. As soon as they have options, they will find the people who can solve their problem *and* make them feel good. It is true no matter where you go.”

“As much as life is about connecting with others, it is also about *disconnecting* from what doesn’t serve you. As you go through this journey, realize that you always have the power to walk away. Also notice when other people are *walking away from you*, particularly if it’s a repeating pattern.”

“Be the person others want to connect with.”

“You don’t fall in love with another person; you fall in love with who you get to be around them.”

“The specifics can change, but in virtually any situation, being *useful*, *grateful*, and *valuable* are the three keys to connecting with others – and they never depreciate or go out of style.”

“We can be paid for our work in five distinct ways. Aside from being utilized, we can be rewarded, appreciated, referred, and enhanced. As it turns out, all five ways also happen to be *useful*.”

“What’s interesting is that the more you give, the more your gratitude seems to grow.”

Joseph Campbell: “The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure you seek.”

“Of course, when it comes to value, as we’ve seen, we have to differentiate between what is real value and what is up for debate. For the mere fact of being alive and conscious, you have value. You are valuable because you are you and because you exist, and nothing can change that fact (though we find it all too easy to forget). When we’re talking about value here, it’s built on top of that truth. That secondary value we’re talking about is how you move through the world and how other people respond to you. It’s not that other people’s opinions of you don’t matter at all, because they do to a degree – it’s just that you can’t stake your value on something that can go up and down every day. You have to stay anchored in your own goodwill and your own value. Then you have to put in the work so other people can see it too.”

“There are some games in life that you can only win by not playing.”

“Is it more important to you to be a positive and giving person than it is to avoid negative experiences?”

“The important thing to remember is that you’ll need to connect with other people to make big things happen – and understanding what they want from life and how they want to be treated is crucial to that.”

“Instead of saying, ‘Have a great day!’ he says, ‘Make it a great day!’”

“I believe laughter has a greater impact on a person’s well-being than gratitude or grit, even though those are also enormously valuable.”

“In any given situation, we have an expectation of how polite people will be, how kind they’ll be, and how interesting the overall event will be. Similarly, we can get our energy drained by a disappointing social experience – or we can be invigorated when people surprise us by being kinder, cooler, and more memorable than we expect! The goal is to exceed whatever expectations someone has. That makes them happy and you memorable.”

“To connect in virtually any situation, focus on being useful, grateful, or valuable – or some combination of all three. Put another way, all three of these things deliver a *positive result* of some kind to other people.”

“Sometimes the best way to get out of a hole is to stop digging.”

“Deal with people at the level at which they respond.”

“The difference between lettuce and garbage is timing.”

“One of Ray’s biggest ideas is the idea of ‘the singularity,’ when there will be a melding of humans and machines. In fact, we’re already experiencing this with smartphones, VR, and other technologies that he refers to as ‘brain extenders.’ While Ray’s ideas appear to be mostly about technology and brain extension, you can think of the network effects of appreciation in exactly the same way. Phones, computers, VR, and tablets expand our capabilities to find things out, to connect with others, to appear smart, to get answers. If you become a brain extender for others, people will love you the way they love their phones. If you think of yourself as an extender of what people want, they’re going to want to hang out with you. You do this by connecting them to people, insights, solutions, results, and so on that extend their capabilities, or simply by making them laugh or helping them get what they want. By doing so, everyone you touch sees their value increase; you are quite literally *appreciating* them.”

“Some people don’t effectively establish authority, perspective, and value, so they get taken advantage of or taken for granted. Some people are simply too accessible and too available.”

“You can genuinely appreciate people at the intersection of their wants and your awareness of those wants. Sometimes you do that with a smile, sometimes you do it with a kind ear, and sometimes you do it by selling them a product or connecting them to someone you know. With appreciation, it’s not about what you want. It’s about what they want and your ability to link them to it. It’s about what power they have to be helpful and valuable in the world and the space you can create for them to step into that power.”

“Always get as close to in-person as you can.”

“Close the emotional distance in your relationships.”

“Why don’t we treat all of our conversations as crucial?”

“We tend to look for what seem like the ideal situations and scenarios to deploy our best selves. But what if we just led with our best, no matter what?”

“There is no relationship between being good and getting paid, but there is a huge relationship between being good, being a good *marketer*, and getting paid.”

“What I’ve learned in writing this is that even if the appearance of things changes, the essence stays the same. People want to connect. People want to feel special and cared about. People want to feel appreciated. People want to have their problems solved. And if you’re a person who cares about others and can solve their problems – someone who understands what’s in it for *them* – there’s no limit to what you can accomplish or the peace and joy you can find in your own existence.”

“Finally, a big thank-you to everyone who has ever been patient and kind to me even when I acted like a jerk to them. We tend to judge ourselves by our intentions and others by their actions, so thanks for doing it the other way around! I promise to do my best to live up to the words of this book, to help others create ELF lives and businesses, and to keep asking, ‘What’s in it for them?’”