

**The Courage to
Be in Community**
Tony Mayo

BONUS CHAPTER

THE COURAGE TO BE
IN COMMUNITY:

How to **BE**
in Courageous, Genuine
Relationships



TONY MAYO

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Paperback ISBN-13: 978-1-941466-02-5
Hard Cover ISBN-13: 978-1-941466-01-8
eBook ISBN-13: 978-1-941466-00-1

Kindle ASIN: B00IRMFAL2
<http://tiny.cc/TonySermon>

Audiobook available on Audible, Amazon, and iTunes.
<http://tiny.cc/hearsermon>

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COMMENTS FROM LISTENERS

“Tony Mayo covers a lot of meaningful ground in a handful of pages - he brings together courage, bravery, belonging, acceptance, compassion and more—and backs it up with insights, experience, AND academic references! I loved it!” – Ron Dimon, author of *EPM Done Right* (Wiley CIO Series)



“I am moved and inspired. It is absolutely great, challenging, and rich. Plus, more adjectives are in me—all superlative, I’m sure. I must listen to it at least 2 more times; there is a lot to grok here.” – Lowell Nerenberg, Executive Coach



“Thank you Tony, for such a wonderful message this morning. It was so uplifting and based on feedback, provided many with a transformational experience.”
– Email from UUCR Board member

“Tony, one of the things I valued most about your sermon is that so few words were wasted. You did not speak just to fill the time; each sentence added to the whole.” – Email from UUCR Member



“Tony, I have it on good authority that your sermon this last Sunday was about the best ever. Could I get a printed copy?” – Email from church member who had been out of town.



“We were inspired by what you shared and how you shared it. Thank you.” – Email from Guest at Service



“I so appreciate your wonderful talk yesterday morning. A great reminder for me to continue to take risks in my life and get out of my comfort zone as well as trusting others. It also reminded me of the importance of meditation in my life.” – Email from UUCR Member

“Your message was loud and clear and magically delivered. Thank you.” – Email from UUCR Member



“Please let me know when you have a written version to share. My life could use more Courage just now, and your talk gave me some ideas that could help.”
– Email from UUCR Member



“I found your sermon to be rich and meaningful. I agree that you should make it available in print. I would like to revisit it, and those who missed it should take a look!” – Email from UUCR Member



“True courage comes from the heart.

“I was fortunate enough to hear this sermon in real life and was glad to see that Tony has put it in writing so it will be easy to share. I love his distinction between courage that comes from the heart and bravery (related

to bravado) that is put on like armor to conceal weakness. He encouraged us to live authentic lives, risking vulnerability as we act from our true selves. I need to revisit what he shared with us on that memorable Sunday!” – Laurie Dodd, Attorney



“It’s rare that I find something so uplifting and encouraging. I am not a religious person and usually when I hear the word ‘sermon’ I run. His message is for everyone and stays clear of religious views that might preclude any person or group from understanding and enjoying what he has to share.

“Tony has a wonderful way with words. I highly recommend reading this book or finding the audio version.”
– Michael Cohen



“Not a sermon, but rather an invitation.

“Though this piece was delivered as a sermon, it is a compelling, intellectual essay on that least intellectual piece of us, our hearts. Tony makes it clear that if we’re going to feel fulfilled, connected and alive, we’re going to have to reveal our hearts.”
– Robert “Rohit” Millstein, Investment Manager



Please post your review on Amazon at:

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BONUS CHAPTER



HOW TO BE IN COURAGEOUS, GENUINE RELATIONSHIPS



Choosing the topic for this bonus chapter to *The Courage to Be in Community* was not difficult. Listeners and readers gave me clear feedback about what was most needed. They all wanted to know what specific actions to take—or behaviors to stop—to foster courageous, genuine relationships for themselves and those closest to them. Several key questions emerged:

- What can I do in my day-to-day life to deepen relationships?
- How can I feel comfortable with people of different backgrounds, tastes, and values?
- How do I help others feel safe to share their lives with me?
- What habits might I establish to reduce loneliness and build community?

The challenge in writing this chapter was not in finding enough material but in paring down the plenitude of powerful practices that I learn, teach, and apply every day as an executive coach to business owners and their teams.

I learned these things the hard way because I am not a “natural” at nurturing friendships and fostering community. Not nearly. I had to learn friendship as an adult, through frustrating and humbling experience.

I suffered the pain of loneliness and alienation as a child and well into adulthood. I had an exceptional talent for generating irritation where I needed

cooperation. I applied anger where curiosity would have served better. Doors were closed to me because I hurled the bomb of righteousness when the healing balm of compassion would have opened doors. I still struggle but I am grateful for the support of authors, coaches, and the many people I have encountered who were more patient and kind with me than I was with them. Sometimes, I am also grateful for the people who were not patient or kind but instead gave abrupt, often unwelcome feedback that spurred me toward a better path in life.

In this short chapter I cannot share everything I have learned but, after much review, consideration, and application; I have chosen to focus on three practices that have opened up a new world of more open communication for me:

1. **Be** humble
2. **Be** curious
3. **Beware** the second person

BE HUMBLE



Some of the most effective coaching consists of bringing to mind a teaching that sounds obvious, that we seem always to have recognized as true and useful, yet which we fail to rigorously apply in day-to-day life. Many of these have become so familiar that we have entombed their practicality in cliché: “Treat others as you would be treated.” “To err is human, to forgive divine.” *Et cetera*. If only we respected such wisdom by consistently applying it, our lives and communities would be better.

But we do not. Our frequent failure to consistently be our best selves is an “obvious” aspect of being human that inspires my first recommended practice: Be Humble.

No one knows what you know. You have a unique set of experiences, opinions, and emotions. Even when in the same room, each person notices different features. Even when two people share the same facts, they may have different reactions to those features. These reactions happen instantly and just below the level of normal awareness; we seldom give a thought to this leap from perception to conclusion. It is just how

we operate. Most of us, most of the time are examining the world “through a glass, darkly.” Everyone *knows* this, though few apply it. We typically assume that our own narrow, distorted, and personal view of the world is the clear, objective, and universal reality.

It is easy to see how this plays out in relationships. My first, unconsidered reaction to people who disagree with me is not to reevaluate my opinion of the *situation* but to lower my opinion of *them*. They must be wrong, ignorant, augmentative, or—if I feel charitable—distracted, inattentive, or tired. I “help” them by explaining my position.

Humility would help more.

I am working to develop the habit of responding to disagreement or even disconnection with humble curiosity. Instead of teaching, I seek to learn. Instead of defending my position, I visit theirs. Maybe I will see something useful from their unique perspective. Even if I do not change my opinion, I improve the relationship, because people prefer having their ideas respectfully received rather than being corrected or rejected.

We all love being heard, because being heard is a big part of being loved.

—Tony Mayo

BE CURIOUS



At a reunion for graduates of a coaching program, we were asked to share the biggest change in our lives since the training. I said, “I have given up my hobby of mind reading. I am no longer satisfied by my assumptions about what other people are thinking and feeling. Now, I ask and listen.”

Everyone wants to matter, to be significant to others. The first step to letting the people around you know that they matter is to invite them to share what is going on in their heads. The key is to ask with genuine curiosity. I care what the person is thinking and feeling. I thank them for being frank and sincere. I adjust my response based on what they say. I share my own thoughts and feelings.

Intimacy is present when the conversation in our heads matches the conversation in our speech.

—Julio Olalla

When we invite someone to sincerely share their feelings and opinions, we risk hearing unwelcome words. When that happens, it pays to be curious and

ask gently what the person meant by what you heard. It is also very useful to start from the assumption that they intended no harm, are not being critical, and are merely doing their best to cope with the situation at hand.

It's not the things you don't know, what gets you into trouble.

It's the things you do know, that just ain't so.

—Will Rogers

More on genuine curiosity at

<http://tiny.cc/morecurious>

BEWARE THE SECOND PERSON



My genuine relationship advice to “Beware the second person” does not mean that you should be afraid of the person with whom you are speaking. Instead, I am suggesting that you be wary of using the second person pronoun, “you.” Using the second person is sometimes correct, of course, but it is also the hallmark of two common speech patterns that undermine genuine relationship.

One corrosive use of “you” occurs when someone expresses his or her opinion of how another person *is*. Every time I tell anyone how they are, what they think, or what they did to me, my words are layering another filter between me and the facts. This distorts reality and confines the other person within the boundaries of my opinion. Sentences that pass judgment on a person with labels such as “rude,” “unreliable,” “foolish,” etc. “pass a sentence” on that person, punishing him or her to serve that “term.” This is called objectifying because it treats a human as if they were an inanimate object with fixed, unchanging characteristics. This objectification makes it harder to see the person as alive, that is, learning, adapting, and growing.

The second way the misuse of the second person pronoun “you” often hurts our friendships, marriages, and working relationships occurs when we try to make our own reactions and opinions seem obvious and universal, even seeking to avoid personal responsibility for what we are saying. Instead of complaining, “When people leave dirty dishes on the kitchen counter for hours, you naturally feel like no one cares about how hard that makes cooking,” try, “When people leave dirty dishes on the kitchen counter for hours, *I feel* like no one cares about how hard that makes cooking.” See the difference? Here is another contrasting pair. “When your husband flips the channels while you are trying to explain a problem with the kids, you know he just doesn’t care.” Rather, “When *my* husband flips the channels while *I* am trying to explain a problem with the kids, *I feel* like he just doesn’t care.”

Two things happen when we make the shift from the universal yet nonspecific “you” and “your” to the personal “I” and “my.” One, it relieves the listener from the burden of agreeing or disagreeing with your generalization. A person talking about their own, unique experience is the *de facto* expert; there is no reason for me to take a position on whether it is true. It is the speaker’s experience and that is all that matters. Second, the speaker in the first person is no longer blaming the other for forcing anything on him or her; the speaker is simply sharing how he or she felt about what happened. It is the shift from, “You made

me angry by changing the subject,” to, “When you brought up a new subject, I noticed that I felt angry.” One is an accusation; the second is a confession. One evokes defensiveness, the other encourages a calm, constructive response. Accusation incites aggression. Confession calls for compassion.

Mindful use of the first person *I* avoids both dangerous uses of *you*. Share your feelings, interpretations, and reactions responsibly by using *I*. This does not demand agreement, it just accesses a response, and that makes for a conversation that fosters genuine, alive relationships.

One friend, one person who is truly understanding, who takes the trouble to listen to us as we consider our problem, can change our whole outlook on the world.

—Dr. Elton Mayo

I have one more suggestion, perhaps the most powerful practice of all:

BE KIND



Just as I often fail to act in accordance with my best knowledge and highest values, I am wise to remember that each isolated action or failure to act by my neighbor or co-worker may not represent her best knowledge and highest values.

When I fall short of my aspirations, I am quick to explain and excuse myself because of fatigue, haste, stress, traffic, etc. Always, my excuses claim some form of, “That’s not me; it was just an unfortunate circumstance. Don’t hold it against me.” When I observe my spouse or the store clerk do something I dislike, I am just as quick to use it as proof of how they really are. And, to use their disappointing action to excuse or explain myself the next time I let that person down.

This common behavior is tempting because it gets us off the hook of blame and responsibility for the moment but over time its effect is corrosive to relationship. Indulge in “It’s not me, it’s them” frequently

and the people around us learn that we are not safe to be near, that eventually we will give them a failing grade. Instead, when someone seems to be letting you down, be humble about your own blamelessness, be curious about what the other person's intentions and circumstances may be, beware of passing a sentence on the second person when first person responsibility would be more nurturing. In short, be kind.

Be kind, for everyone you meet is carrying a great burden.

—Philo of Alexandria

<http://tiny.cc/morekind>



I regret that so little of what I have learned about building courageous relationships could be summarized in this short document. I am sure that I could write an entire book or even three on this topic—and I plan to. Watch for their publication on my [Amazon Author Page](#) or by subscribing to my [free email newsletter](#) and [podcast](#). If you cannot wait for my next books, and I do not see why you would, here are some resources I recommend that are available right now.

A very clear and assessable book is the widely used [*Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High*](#). <http://tiny.cc/cc-book> I gave several classes based on this material at [my church](#) and the participants produced inspiring results at work, with teenaged and adult children, as well as in their marriages. I hope you will, too.

If you are primarily interested in improving your marriage relationship, you can do no better than to attend an Imago Workshop™ with your spouse, such as [*Getting the Love You Want: The Couples Weekend Workshop*](#) <http://tiny.cc/imagocouples>. Imago was developed by the man who has been Oprah's most frequent guest, Harville Hendrix. You

might want to start with his book, *[Getting the Love You Want: A Guide for Couples, 20th Anniversary Edition](http://tiny.cc/imagobook)* <http://tiny.cc/imagobook> but there is no substitute for actually doing the exercises with your spouse and other couples in a workshop assisted by a skilled facilitator.

It can be very hard to get along with the people you love.
It is much harder to get along without people to love.

–Tony Mayo

Another book I can highly recommend, one that emphasizes work and business relationships, is *[The Communications Catalyst: The Fast \(But Not Stupid\) Track To Value For Customers, Investors, And Employees](http://tiny.cc/comcat)* <http://tiny.cc/comcat>. The very first day I learned the methods in this book I witnessed them being dramatically employed by an expert. It happened at an international conference for employees and customers of a large executive coaching organization. While I was in class, the president of the company found himself at the podium in a ballroom filled with very angry customers, some of whom interrupted his speech with loud complaints. He had planned to give a bland speech of welcome and self-congratulation but found himself in a fight for the future of the company. Some longtime clients even stood to announce their resignation and stormed out of the ballroom.

The chairman of the company's board of directors recognized this as an emergency. He interrupted our class on *The Communications Catalyst* to confer privately with the instructor. After the chairman left, our instructor told us that he had been asked to facilitate an ad hoc reconciliation meeting after our class.

It was quite a learning experience for me to go directly from the classroom and downstairs to a live fire demonstration by my instructor. He implemented a textbook approach, just as he taught us to do, and, in the course of ninety minutes, guided about fifty people from contention to cooperation, from hot anger to warm amity. By the end of the meeting, everyone was clear on their common values, eager to improve cooperation between company and client, and people in both camps had committed to specific follow-up actions. It was amazing and inspiring.

For more on improving business relationships visit my blog, [Top Executive Coaching](#).

- A recipe for better conversation, with video and a summary poster.
<http://tiny.cc/concontract>
- How asking questions, even in response to a question, helps improve communications and relationships.
<http://tiny.cc/morecurious>

- My 12 step program to shake a dangerous dependence on avoiding confrontation.
<http://tiny.cc/toughtalk>
- How groups agree.
<http://tiny.cc/groupagree>

There are lots more material there on the specifics of business life and the business of life in general. If you want to be sure to see my newest material, you may [subscribe for free to my blog](#), [podcast](#), or [newsletter](#).

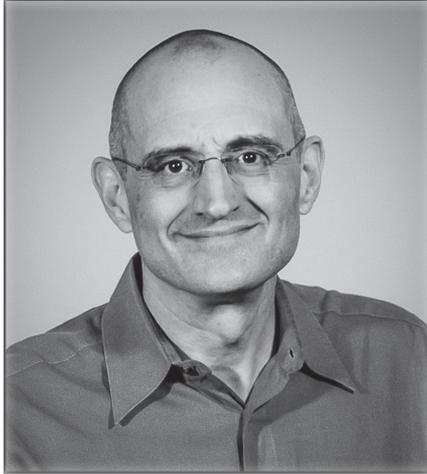


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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



TONY MAYO is an executive coach to owner operators of mid-sized businesses. His work with CEOs and their teams on complex issues of strategic importance includes: one-to-one coaching, design and facilitation of strategy and alignment retreats, and enduring peer-consulting teams of top executives from different organizations.

He is a master of analogy and anecdote whose illustrations are as likely to come from his studies of brain science, high energy physics or eastern

philosophy as from his years of management and sales in high-technology. Whether speaking from a platform, coaching one-to-one, or facilitating a workshop, Tony maintains a laser focus on his goal of helping people realize their dreams.

Tony earned his MBA from the University of Chicago at age twenty-one, after three years of high school and three years in college. He immediately started a business that he sold in 1982.

Tony has worked with Arthur Andersen & General Electric, founded boot-strap and venture-backed start-ups, and taught at the college, graduate, and executive levels. Tony is the sole inventor of US Patents 6,678,663 & 7,930,209. His most important activities today are family fun, working with top executives, and total health. All with one unifying purpose: to promote workplaces of humanity and prosperity where people can be productive and satisfied.

Originally from Rhode Island, he lives in Reston, Virginia with his wife and three children.

Learn more about Tony and read more of his work on his Amazon Author Page at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Tony-Mayo/e/B00IRQPXH4>

his blog at: www.TonyMayo.com

or Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Tony4CEOs>



— OUR CHURCH —

About Unitarian Universalist Church in Reston

<http://www.uureston.org>

Unitarian Universalist Church in Reston (UUCR) has offered a liberal religious alternative in the Reston, Virginia suburb of Washington, DC, for over forty years. Unitarian Universalism is a historic religious tradition with roots in the European Protestant Reformation and New England Congregationalism. Over the course of time, our historic Christianity has broadened to include influences from many other traditions and religious sources, including Buddhist, pagan, and atheist insights, and become a values-based religion rather than a belief-based religion.

Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote the following principles:

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.



THE COURAGE TO BE IN COMMUNITY:
A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SERMON

Available in Kindle format from Amazon at

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Also available in paperback.

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