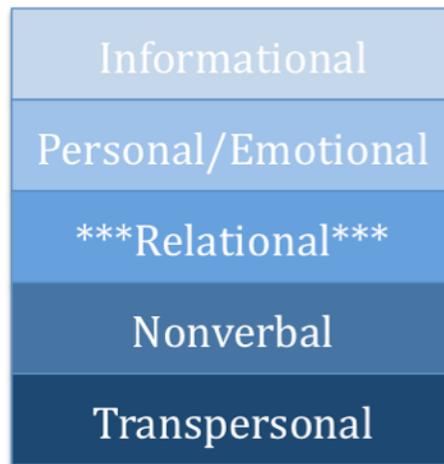


Connection Roadmap:

The 5 Levels of Conversation



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INTRODUCTION

I used to walk up to people I'd never met on the BART train station platform in San Francisco and ask them, "So, what are YOU passionate about?"

I was tired of mundane, superficial conversations, and I wanted to cut to the chase – to the Good stuff!

Well, as you can imagine,



They'd look at me like I was crazy. And there was a reason why.

It's because I wasn't dialed into the "Levels of Conversation".

There's a natural unfolding to a conversation, and when we follow that, it makes way for new levels of connection to emerge.

We've all had that intuition that we could be having a juicier, more rewarding conversation, but like a combination lock, we aren't quite sure what the code is to unlock that deeper level of connection, intimacy, excitement...whatever it is that we're looking for.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Since that time on the BART train station platform, I've become more aware of these levels, and I've put them together in this guide for you to use. It will help you distinguish where you tend to get stuck, and where you can take an interaction deeper.

And that's what the 5 Levels of Conversation are all about.

The first place to start is to first acknowledge Where You're At. **What kind of conversations do you typically find yourself in?**

This guide is a Road Map: By getting clear about what level of conversation we're operating at, and being aware of other types of conversations we COULD be having, new possibilities open up, and we can see other places that we could go, other adventures to explore...

THERE ARE MORE THAN 5 TYPES OF CONVERSATIONS, OF COURSE...

There are probably infinite types of conversations, and multiple levels operating at any moment, given the nature of subcommunication, nonverbals, and body language that are all happening simultaneously...

For example, banter and flirting are other types of conversation that aren't covered in this guide.

Maybe this guide should be called, "5 Levels of Deep Connection", since the real focus of this particular guide is on specifically that: Deep Connection. That said, it should be noted that...

OUR GOAL ISN'T TO REACH THE DEEPEST LEVEL OF CONVERSATION POSSIBLE

Great conversation isn't about "going as deep as possible". It's about celebrating EVERY stage of the conversation for exactly what it is (APPRECIATION), while OWNING your desire (INTEGRITY) to take it deeper, if, in fact that is the case for you!

I, for one, am often just as content to enjoy casual silly banter, than have some deep, eye-gazing Tantric connection. Enjoy all the flavors for what they are!

HOW THIS RELATES TO YOUR COMMUNITY

The conversations happening inside a community are what determine the level of depth of that community. If the community you hang out with tends to talk about technology and politics, and share very little of their personal experience, that's an "Informational" Community.

If they tend to share personally about what's up for them in their lives, this is more of a "Personal/Emotional" Community...

If they tend to explore the moment-to-moment dynamics of what's arising Right Now, this is more of a "Relational/Transformational" community... and so on...

As you read about each level, ask yourself which levels most closely match the communities & social circles you currently find yourself in. And, is this the type of relating that most inspires you? Or, are you looking to bring **other types** of conversations into those communities...?

Ok, without further ado, the 5 Levels...

LEVEL 1:

Informational

At this level, it's just the facts, ma'am. Great for a police report, not so great for deep connection. Also known as "wide rapport", because at this level the conversation is flat and wide.

EXAMPLES OF INFORMATIONAL CONVERSATION

The weather:

"Nice weather we're having. Yes, it's going to be up to 60 degrees today, but I heard it's going to snow tomorrow."

Where you grew up:

"I grew up in Georgia, but I've lived most of my adult life in New York."

Your family:

"I'm the eldest of 3 kids."

Your daily schedule:

"I like watching the Simpsons on Thursdays."

Your job:

"I'm an aerospace engineer with JetBlue."

This is the way most people talk, most of the time.

BENEFITS OF THIS LEVEL

Communicating at this level lays the groundwork for a deeper and richer conversation later. It's also good for "getting a feel" for someone, because even as we may be having a conversation about the weather, we're picking up all other kinds of information about that person through their nonverbals, their voice tonality, eye contact, etc...

In other words, even if the content of the conversation is informational, there are still WORLDS happening that you can tune into for more richness at any point...

LEVEL 2:

Personal/Emotional

At this level, we're sharing our **interior, subjective experience**... emotions and personal preferences.

EXAMPLES OF PERSONAL/EMOTIONAL CONVERSATION

"I feel so tense at work -- I'm scared I'll lose my job any day now."

"Which season is your favorite?..... Oh, the winter? Me too, actually... I feel a thrill whenever I see the first snow of the year."

"What's something that your heart can't help but open to? For me? Babies, definitely. I just feel a blast of gratitude for being alive every time I get to hold a baby."

"What's something you appreciate about your brother? For me? Oh, I'd say my cousin. I totally relax when I'm around him -- ever since we were kids, he protected me."

At this level, potentially sensitive topics could come up, and strong listening skills are important here to take it deeper.

LEVEL 2 IN A COMMUNITY

A community that tends to communicate at level 2 is a great place to confide in each other, with deep personal shares. Healing and clearing away shame as we reveal these vulnerable things in a safe place is one of the greatest gifts a community like this can offer.

PRACTICES THAT CAN TAKE IT TO THE PERSONAL/EMOTIONAL LEVEL

(Covered in our ["Getting Her World"](#) Authentic Relating Program)

Genuine Curiosity, Offer Reflection, Share Vulnerably

LEVEL 3:

Relational

This is the stage at which you move from talking ABOUT stuff, and focusing more on what's happening between the two of you, right now, in the moment.

This is Authentic World's sweet spot – usually the biggest jump from being a nice conversation to being a **rewarding experience**, is the jump from the Informational or Personal level...to RELATIONAL. YES!!

This is also where the feedback and reflection essential for transformation and growth happens.

EXAMPLES OF RELATIONAL CONVERSATION

*"I'm noticing **I'm feeling giddy talking to you right now** – I'm so excited to be connecting with you."*

*"**I just felt confused and hurt** when you said that my mom was never friendly to you."*

*"When you laughed just then, I could hear your **"Southern Belle"** coming through...**I feel drawn to you** when you do that."*

*"As you were talking, **I just had a flash of us taking a trip** to go showshoeing in the Rockies to one of those ski cabins for the weekend..."*

*"Hearing how you've finagled your way into management, **I'm getting how crafty you are**. I'm gonna have to watch myself around you!"*

*"**I notice I feel myself tighten** every time you complain about your boss, and that I feel **hopeless** about you ever addressing the situation with him."*

*"Man, my heart's swelling right now -- **I'm feeling a lot closer to you** when you talk about how supportive your brother has been for you over the years."*

Sharing at this level can be intensely vulnerable, but it's also where a conversation goes from being an exchange of ideas or experiences, to CREATING an experience, in the moment...

LEVEL 3 IN A COMMUNITY...

Sharing at the relational level is THE shift towards creating Authentic Community.

This is the type of community that dramatically evolved me personally and relationally.

Personal development and transformation of consciousness accelerates DRAMATICALLY, as we offer feedback and reflection to each other, in the moment, about how we're experiencing and impacting each other. When this is woven into the culture of a community, **this is a true transformational Sangha.**

That said, this is also the level where things get tricky. As we put attention on serving each other through feedback and reflection, it becomes a rich breeding ground for projecting our disowned aspects (aka shadow) onto each other in service of "being real", etc...

Example of projection vs. owning your experience:

"I feel like you're suppressing your anger right now" vs.

"When you say you're not upset, I notice tension in me, and I don't fully believe you."

*"You need to tell the truth to the people in your life" vs.
"I feel frustrated that you haven't had a conversation with that person yet."*

The antidote to this, and the opportunity here– is to build the capacity to **fully own our experience** – taking full responsibility for our perceptions, asserting no authority on anyone's experience other than our own. We go into much more detail about this in our **8-Week Authentic Community Leadership training** –, including practices and exercises to strengthen this capacity.

PRACTICES THAT CAN TAKE IT TO THE RELATIONAL LEVEL

(Covered in our ["Getting Her World"](#) Authentic Relating Program)

Speak the Moment, Own a Desire, Share Impact, Offer Reflection, Set Context, Offer Direction

LEVEL 4:

Nonverbal

This level of conversation can come straight from the Personal or Relational Levels, and it's not necessarily deeper than the Relational Level, even though we're calling it Level 4.

I'm mainly including this one to highlight that conversations can happen on levels besides the Verbal... nonverbal conversations can express the full range of the human experience just as verbal conversations can...

The reason we call it level 4 is that there are connections deeper than the Relational Level, that don't require words.

NONVERBAL LEVEL IN A COMMUNITY...

Often found in: dance and movement communities – Contact Improv, Partner Dancing (Blues, Tango, Salsa), AcroYoga, and Acrobatics, Martial Arts.

LEVEL 5:

Transpersonal

This level is a little more uncharted, but essentially this is the "tantric" level, where it's not clear where I end and you begin...where the boundaries of a separate sense of self tend to blur...

This level is not as common as the other levels, and often is simply by the Grace of the moment that it happens.

Situations where it is likely to appear, however, are during sexual union, a period of eye-gazing and breathing together, or under the influence of psychedelic drugs ;)

EXAMPLES OF TRANSPERSONAL CONVERSATION

Not really even a conversation, because words are unnecessary... but if there are words, it's almost as if what's being said could have come out the mouth of either one of you.

LEVEL 5 IN A COMMUNITY...

The only place I've heard this level has shown up in community is in meditation / guru-devotee communities, and even then only second-hand... Sounds like a rich experience, however!!!

That said, even if the center of gravity of a community is at a level other than Transpersonal, any group of people in that community may at some time peak into this level of relating.

SUMMARY

A few points:

THIS ISN'T A RIGOROUS PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK

There are certainly other ways to look at or organize these "levels" – they could also be considered as "channels" of connection, for example. and it's debatable whether nonverbal connection is a "higher level" than Relational, etc...

I put this together because I've found these distinctions really useful for helping people have more rewarding connections, and for seeing the "water their community swims in".

Feedback on making it more useful welcome!

REITERATING THE VALUE OF LEVEL 3: RELATIONAL

I find that **this level** is where most people can take their interactions deeper.

From my personal experience, I've found that Relational Conversations can accelerate self-awareness, evolve our consciousness, and rapidly deepen connection and intimacy.

Props for the Relational!

That said, a couple of disclaimers:

CONVERSATIONS DON'T ALWAYS HAVE TO BE TRANSFORMATIONAL OR DEEP

Great conversation isn't about "going as deep as possible". It's about celebrating EVERY stage of the conversation for exactly what it is (APPRECIATION), while OWNING your desire (INTEGRITY) to take it deeper, if, in fact that is the case for you!

Even if you're in a community that values deep connection, it actually SERVES that deeper connection when both of you feel free to CHOOSE deep relating as easily as having a shallower conversation about sports or the weather.

When we get fixated on only having "meaningful conversations", I've found things get over-processy and sticky. Give your deep, personal conversations and "relational experiences" some breathing room!

Finally...

BEWARE OF GETTING “IN YOUR HEAD” ABOUT WHAT LEVEL OF CONVERSATION YOU’RE IN

This is one of those guides that it’s best to read it, than forget it all...let it fall into the background. One of the surest ways to kill a great conversation or deep connection is to keep checking in the moment, “What level of conversation are we at? Ok, how about...now?”

Ideally, it helped shed some light on your personal tendencies, gave you some pointers to look out for the next time you’re in conversation with someone and you want to take it deeper, and highlighted for you what kind of community you’re inspired to invest in.

And, if you’re ready to step up and take active leadership in SHAPING the communities you’re a part of into being more authentic, and accelerating your personal evolution and that of those around you, then enroll in AuthenticWorld’s new program, [the 8-Week Authentic Community Leadership](#) training.

In service,



Bryan

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