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## TEN WAYS TO BE POWER POSITIVE

### #4 POWER PROFILE PRACTICE

It is entirely natural to feel wary of power. The news every day gives us a dose of information about misuses and abuses of power, and we all have our own experiences of power being misused towards us. Not often do we hear stories of uses of power that support well-being and promote the good of all. Power has become such a loaded term that you may be surprised to hear a definition of power that does not idolize or vilify it. It is the ability to have an effect or to have influence. Power is a neutral concept. We all need power to take action, to bring forth our dreams, and to influence others, and people are often looking to us to step into our power in healthy ways.

The most basic kind of power is PERSONAL, which everyone has, and is your ability to influence your own life and to decide how to be with others. Other kinds of power are ROLE POWER, STATUS POWER, AND COLLECTIVE POWER.

Using our power wisely and well requires us, rather than avoiding or disowning, to OWN all of these kinds of power. In this TRY THIS exercise we focus on PERSONAL POWER. Personal power is your birthright. We all have power. Even babies can choose to roll a ball, or impact others' behavior when they cry or smile. One of the tasks of a lifetime is to develop skillful use of your personal power so that you have the impact on others that you want to have. This self-awareness can be used to guide you to progressively healthier relationships.

There are many ways we use our personal power to have an effect or to have influence in our personal relationships. These uses of power can be seen as variables, where opposing qualities can be put on a continuum. A good way to explore the range of your own qualities is to write or print the continuums below, then put a mark on the spot on each continuum where you tend to land. Of course, in healthy relationships, there is room for a range of responses based on circumstances, but most of us have natural tendencies. This is what you are looking for in your profile.

As you do this activity, please note that all of these qualities, on all of the continuums are positive. One is not better than another. It is not intrinsically better to be directive or responsive, and having a healthy range of responses to different situations is a good thing. However, misuses and abuses of power tend to happen more at the extremes of each continuum. For example, someone who is at the extreme of the strength side of the continuum may be experienced as forceful, inflexible, or mean. While someone at the extreme end of the heart side of the continuum may be experienced as a push-over, conflict-avoidant, or unable to give direct instructions. At both extremes, people become disconnected and relationships become painful, confusing, and difficult.

Directive -----Responsive

Firmly boundaried -----Flexibly boundaried

Task focused ----- Relationship focused

Persistent -----Letting go

Truth focused -----Harmony focused

Strength centered -----Heart centered

Extroverted -----Introverted

Now you have a picture of your personal power profile. How do you feel about your profile? Are there any tendencies that you would like to shift in one direction or the other to have more of the influence you want to have? Are there any tendencies that feel particularly 'stuck' in one place? What's it like to OWN your power so that you can have conscious choice in how you use it for good? If you want to explore this further and initiate an interesting conversation, try comparing your profile with people you are closely related to. You will be more and more able to have the kind of relationships you want and are capable of, the more you understand and own your power.