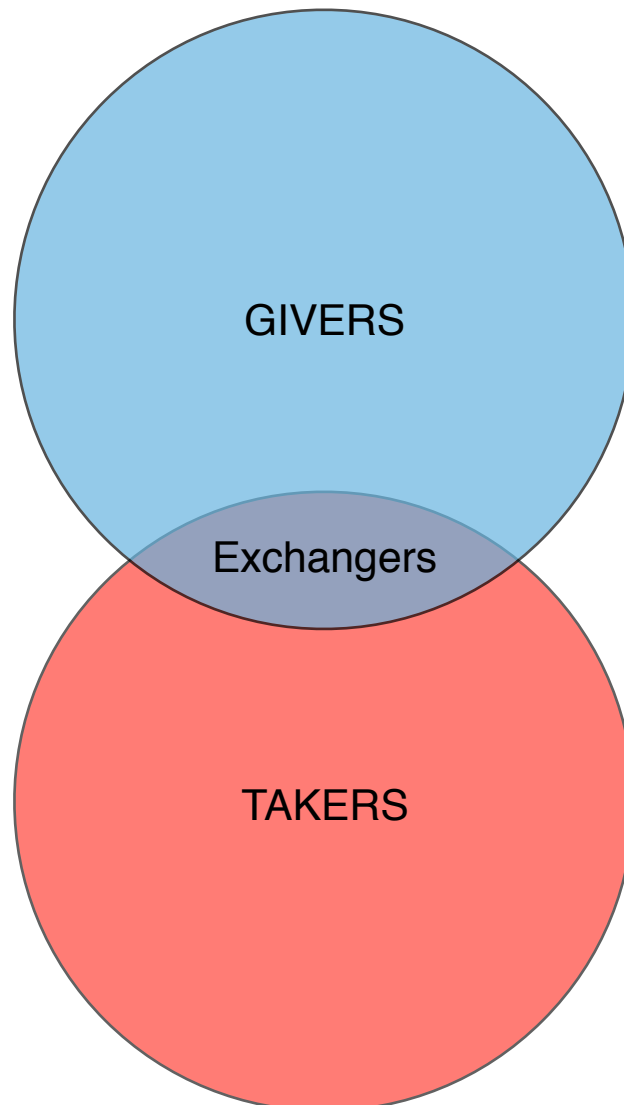


# The Give and Take: Relational Dynamics

by Ryan Johnson

**Not all relationships are created equal.** This should be a freeing statement. Such an understanding could act as a pressure release valve for many people. “Why so much pressure?” you ask. To put it simply, expectations create pressure in a relationship. Each person brings their own hopes and assumptions that could ultimately strengthen or destroy the association. When those assumptions are fulfilled the joy is hard to match. At the same time, unmet expectations can be disappointing at best and devastatingly debilitating at worst.

**The secret is not to manage expectations but to understand three major dynamics of relationships.** Our expectations will shift naturally when we place the proper emphasis on the relationship. To help us have a language with which we can discuss these ideas, I’ve adopted the following terms for the major dynamics or categories of relationships: Givers, Takers and Exchangers. Another secret is that you need *all* three of these relationships in your life at *all* times. On the next page, we will discuss these relationships one at a time.



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**Givers\* are people who provide you with more than you give in return.** In other words, this relationship is more one-sided than mutual. Mentors, teachers and parents (to some extent) are examples of this type of relationship. They give you information and guidance. Do not expect a Giver to open up too much about their personal life or struggles. Even if they do open up at times, it is usually to make a point or teach a lesson not to receive counsel or affection from you. Your time is limited with a Giver because they are not mutually invested in the relationship. They are most interested in how they can help you.

**A Giver is not an enabler.** In this context, I am referring to someone who provides emotional and intellectual support, not someone who pays another person's bills. You do not even have to have a personal relationship with a Giver to receive from them. When you read their books or blogs, listen to their podcast or messages, you are receiving emotional and intellectual support. You should strive to have a wide base of Givers in your life at all times.

**Takers\* are people who take more from you than they give you in return.** I am not referring to people who use or abuse your generosity. Those relationships should be severed quickly. Rather, I am referring to people that you are leading or teaching. These are people that you do not expect to give you advice or counsel. In other words, you are in the role of Giver.

**Yes, you need to have Takers in your life.** This is a real measure of your life's impact: how many Takers are benefiting from you? I do not mean how many Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest or Twitter followers read your posts or view your images. *How many people are you giving to with the main objective of making their lives better?*

**Exchangers are people who give as much to you as they take from you.** This is truly the highest form of relationship. As such, it will consist of the smallest number of people in your life. A husband and wife should have an exchanging relationship. Both should benefit equally from the relationship. Best friends and siblings often fall into this category, as well. Due to the intimate nature of this mutual dependency, this type of relationship has the greatest potential for relational satisfaction when it is protected and heartbreak when it comes apart.

**To an extent there is give and take in all relationships; however, the majority of relationships are disproportionate in these areas.** When we expect every relationship to be mutually beneficial we are setting ourselves up for disappointment, frustration and, to put it plainly, unhappiness. When we stop trying to force Givers and Takers into becoming Exchangers, our relational responsibilities become more clear and our level of satisfaction will increase.

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\*Depending on your context, both the Givers and Takers could expand into the hundreds or thousands. Think of an author or podcast host.

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Take a few minutes to categorize some relationships that you have. This exercise will help you prioritize your relationships. Remember that you need *all* three types of relationships, but you do not have to spend an equal amount of time in each. Don't allow the Takers to monopolize your time and energy. And don't over use the Givers. Your most precious quality time should be reserved for the Exchangers in your life because you are depending on each other equally.

**Exchangers:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Givers:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Takers:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Unhealthy Relationships:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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