



From Transaction To Trust, by Mark Manson

The most precious and important things in life are, by definition, nontransactional. And to try to bargain for them is to immediately destroy them. You cannot conspire for happiness; it is impossible. But this is often what people try to do, especially when we seek out self-help and other personal development advice -- they are essentially saying, "Show me the rules of the game I have to play and I'll play it," not realizing that it's the very fact that they think there are rules to happiness that is preventing them from being happy.

While people who navigate life through bargaining and rules can get far in the material world, they remain crippled and alone in their emotional world. This is because transactional values create relationships that are built upon manipulation.

Adults need to be shown that bargaining is a never-ending treadmill, that the only things in life of real value and meaning are achieved without conditions, without transactions. It requires good parents and teachers not to succumb to the adolescent's bargaining. The best way to do this is by example, of course, by showing unconditionality yourself. The best way to teach an adolescent to trust is to trust him. The best way to teach an adolescent respect is to respect him. The best way to teach someone to love is by loving him. And you don't force the love or trust or respect on him -- after all, that would make those things conditional -- you simply give them, understanding that at some point, the adolescent's bargaining will fail and he'll understand the value of unconditionality when he's ready.

It's difficult to act unconditionally. You love someone knowing you may not be loved in return, but you do it anyway. You trust someone even though you realize you might get hurt or screwed over. That's because to act unconditionally requires some degree of faith -- faith that it's the right thing to do even if its results aren't what you expect.