

# The Science of Connection

## Vanessa Van Edwards

+ Founder & Lead Behavioral Investigator, Science of People



Vanessa Van Edwards is the national best-selling author of *Captivate: The Science of Succeeding With People*, which has been translated into 16 languages. Over 36 million people have seen her on YouTube and in her viral TED Talk. Her behavior research lab, Science of People, has been featured in *Fast Company, Inc., USA Today, Entrepreneur Magazine*, and on CNN, CBS, and many more. For over a decade, Vanessa has been leading corporate trainings and workshops to audiences around the world. Her latest book is *Cues: Master the Secret Language of Charismatic Communication*.

Vanessa Van Edwards explains how leaders think differently by using emotions to connect to those around us. Drawing on her research and experience, Vanessa shows us how leaders can bond quickly and effectively using better questions that move our relationships deeper through the three levels of connection.

## Identify the Levels of Connection

Vanessa shows us how great leaders literally think differently by understanding the importance of connecting emotionally with those around them. She helps by introducing us to three levels of connection, and how to move through them.

- **Level 1: General Traits.** Occupation, hometown, family status.
- **Level 2: Personal Concerns.** Goals, worries, values, motivations, concerns.  
(This is the *beginning* of true connection.)
- **Level 3: Self-Narrative.** The stories we tell ourselves about ourselves.

When have you seen a leader leverage emotional connection well? Describe below what the leader did to authentically connect.

Thinking about your team or your family, how would you describe your overall emotional connection to them? Take some time to note your insights below.

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## Break the Social Script

Vanessa used six different conversation starters and measured their effectiveness in engaging people in deeper (Level 2+) conversations. Our most often used questions “How are you?” and “What do you do?” were the lowest rated.

The following questions were the highest rated, and leveraged dopamine to help produce an emotional connection:

1. What was the *highlight* of your day?
2. What personal *passion* project are you working on?
3. Do you have anything *exciting* coming up in your life?

If you are with your team, allow each person to pick one of the questions above and share their response with the group. Then, reflect together on how you felt after you listened and shared. In what settings, can your team use these questions to continue to build a strong team connection?

## Understand Your Self-Narrative

Vanessa tells us that there are three common stories that people tell themselves about themselves. If we’re not aware of the stories that we’re telling ourselves, we keep creating the same story over and over again. The three stories are:

- Hero
- Healer
- Victim

Take some time to personally reflect on which of these three stories you tell yourself.

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Describe below how your self-narrative has impacted your leadership or life.

## **Five Name Challenge**

Vanessa challenges us to level up with five people whom we interact with the most. Take some time to note the names below, and which of the three levels you are connected to them.

	Name	Level of Connection	Light Up Moments
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

Now, take some time reflecting on the names you listed above, and challenge yourself to recall a “light up moment” for each one. (Light up moments are times when you noticed they experienced a rush of joy-inducing dopamine.)

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## **Level Up with Someone**

Vanessa challenges us to identify one person from our list of five that we'd like to "level up" with and use her "Connection Blueprint" to go grow deeper. Circle one name from the list (on page 3), and decide when you could intentionally level up.

## **Act**

Commit to one thing you can do different as a result of this talk.