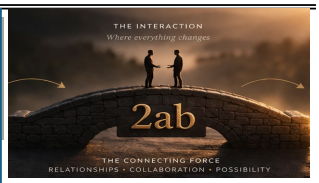
NEWSLETTER: Dr. Mani's Insights

06/F/F/0 Food | Family | Business | **Society**

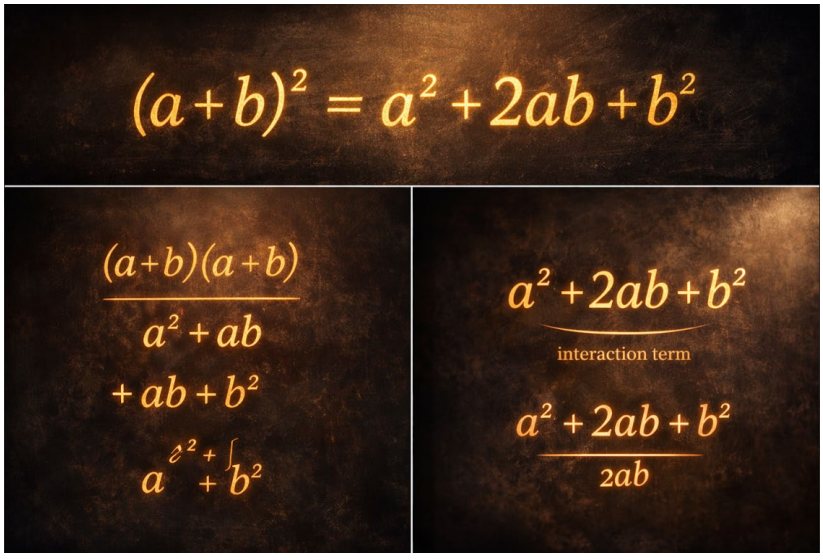


More Than A Formula



What $(a + b)^2$ Taught Me About Life

This is called the **square of a binomial** (or a **binomial expansion**).
When I was growing up, I learned algebra the way many of us did.
We memorized formulas.
One of them stayed with me:



We repeated it again and again, almost like a rhythm, until it became automatic.
It lived in memory.

But it did not live in understanding.

No one paused long enough to ask a simple question:

Why does this work?

Years later, I came back to it with a different perspective.

Not as a student trying to pass an exam…
But as someone trying to understand.

And then it became simple.

$(a + b)^2$ is nothing more than:
$(a + b)(a + b)$

Now expand it:
a into a…
a into b…
b into a…
b into b…

That's all.

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a^2
ab
ab
b^2



Which becomes:
$a^2 + 2ab + b^2$

No mystery. No magic.

Just clarity.

And then, something deeper revealed itself.

There is “a.”
There is “b.”

Two independent parts.

Each has its own identity.
Its own value.

a^2 represents what “a” becomes on its own.

b^2 represents what “b” becomes on its own.

Both matter.

But they are not the whole story.

Because right in the middle…
is something often overlooked.

2ab.

In mathematics, this is the interaction term

the result of “a” and “b” coming together.

It exists only because there is a relationship.

And that is where the deeper lesson begins.

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Recently, I had the opportunity to attend a function at a couple's home.

The husband is a contractor.
The wife is a designer—an architect by training.
They run a company together.

And as I observed their work, their space, and their conversation, something became very clear.

He brings the ability to build.
She brings the ability to envision.
Individually, each is strong.
He can construct.
She can design.

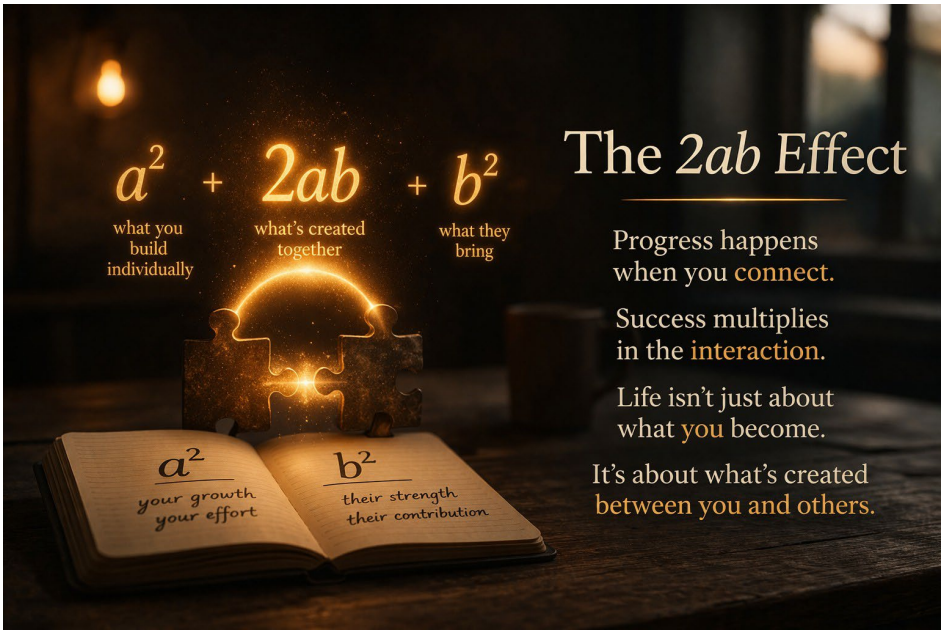
That is a^2.
That is b^2

But what they have built together is something else.

He builds what she imagines.
She imagines what he can build.

Their conversations shape decisions.

Their collaboration refines ideas.
Their interaction creates outcomes neither could achieve alone. **That is 2ab.** Their success is not just in what each one does. It is in what happens between them.



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In mathematics, we write it simply: 2ab.
In life, it is a partnership.
It is trust.
It is alignment.
It is a shared creation.
We are often taught to focus on individual achievement.
Build yourself.
Strengthen your skills.
Develop your identity.
All of that matters.
But much of what creates meaning and impact in life
does not happen in isolation.
It happens in the interaction.
Between people.
Between ideas.
Between vision and execution.
We memorize formulas.
But we miss the structure.
We see a^2.
We see b^2.
But we **overlook the 2ab.**
And yet, that is where value multiplies.
That is where something new is created.
That is where life expands.

So, the next time we see $(a + b)^2$,
It may be worth remembering:

It is not just a formula.

It is a way of seeing the world.

a^2 and b^2 will shape who you are.

But the 2ab…

will shape the impact you have.

Because in the end,

Life is not only about what you become…
It is about what is created when you connect with others.



Mani Skaria, PhD. Professor Emeritus

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Newsletter $(a+b)^2$
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