

Relationships

The Need for Relationships

Everyone is wired for relationships. Research has shown that relationships improve our mental and physical health. In contrast, a lack of relationships actually increase mental health symptoms and negatively impact our physical health.

The problem of having this need is that we have all been damaged by relationships. Some more than others. That damage can cause us to isolate and avoid the very thing we need.

We use the image of a turtle to explain the principle of relationships. The turtle who feels safe comes out of its shell. We should always work to make others feel safe around us by our words and actions and seek people who keep us safe by their words and actions.

If you do not feel safe around someone you can ask yourself how they are hurting in order to act the way they are. Instead of taking their words personally, ask yourself these two questions.

1. Is there truth to their words? If yes, then make corrections and repair. If no, setup boundaries and proceed assertively.
2. Can you tell why they are hurting based on what he/she said or did? If yes, offer support. If not, give them space.

Rate how you feel about taking risks to trust others in order to build new relationships.

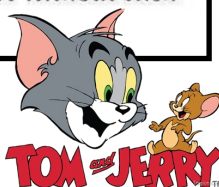


Entering into relationships requires that we take risks in trusting others. The good news is that we can learn skills to help us identify safe people with who we can enter into relationships with.

We can also learn skills to put up boundaries for those who violate our values and even learn how to end a relationship if needed. These skills can make taking those risks a little easier.

Nothing matters more than relationships that are equally safe for all involved.

Some relationships are like Tom and Jerry... they irritate each other... they tease each other.. but they still can't live without each other!



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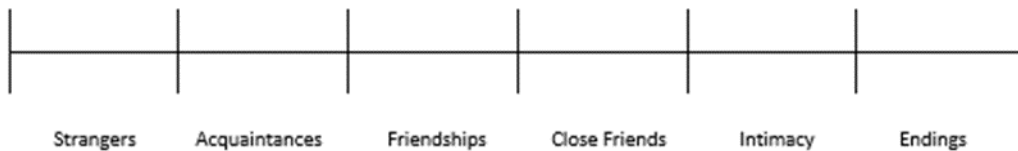
Types of Relationships

Each of us have many relationships. But each relationship is unique. Some are formal relationships, meaning that one person is paid or volunteers to offer support or services to another. An example of this is our doctor, a social worker or an employer.

Formal supports lack intimacy and usually come with clear boundaries that cannot be crossed. This is to protect each person in the relationship and ensure that it remains within the structure of the services provided.

Other relationships are informal, meaning that each person benefits mutually from the relationship. Building supports that are informal are very important as they can last many years. Our goal is to help you build these types of supports in order to reduce your need on other formal supports so that you can grow deeper. Relationships can move from formal to informal such as being friends with your boss.

Relationships also have a natural progression ranging from strangers to intimate relationships, and ultimately endings as shown on the image below. Moving along this scale naturally can help identify whether someone is a safe person for you. Moving too quickly along this scale can cause you to miss clues to another person's character and ultimately become hurt by their actions.



The person who plays it safe and remains in the first two parts of relationships often appears very independent. Being afraid of rejection or future pain, they avoid the unpredictability of friendships. The person who moves too quickly to close friends or intimacy will often have signs of co-dependency. They often find their identity (self-esteem) through the approval of others. The problem with this is that others then hold power over them. When the other person disappoints them, this person's self-esteem tumbles downward.

Learning how to move along this continuum well requires social and relationship skills.

Mental Health & Relationships

Mental illness affects approximately one in five people. There is a good chance that you will engage someone with a mental illness or you yourself may have a mental health diagnosis. There are various symptoms that go with different diagnosis'. Those symptoms are often considered character defects which adds to the stigma of mental illness.

However, the symptoms are not character flaws but exist are medical in nature much like a heart condition. The source of mental illness is based in the functioning of the brain and is treatable.

Left untreated, however, symptoms can impact personal relationships with symptoms being confused as personality traits. For example, someone can be an introvert by nature but they can also be an introvert due to anxiety or depression. Knowing the difference between personality traits and mental health symptoms is important. All mental health symptoms can be addressed by getting appropriate help and mastering skills to make wise choices.

What mental health symptoms do you struggle with? Examples for depression might be sleeping too much, isolation or irritation with others. Examples for borderline disorder might include emotional swings, impulsivity or jealousy of others.

How do you think your mental health symptoms impact the relationships around you?

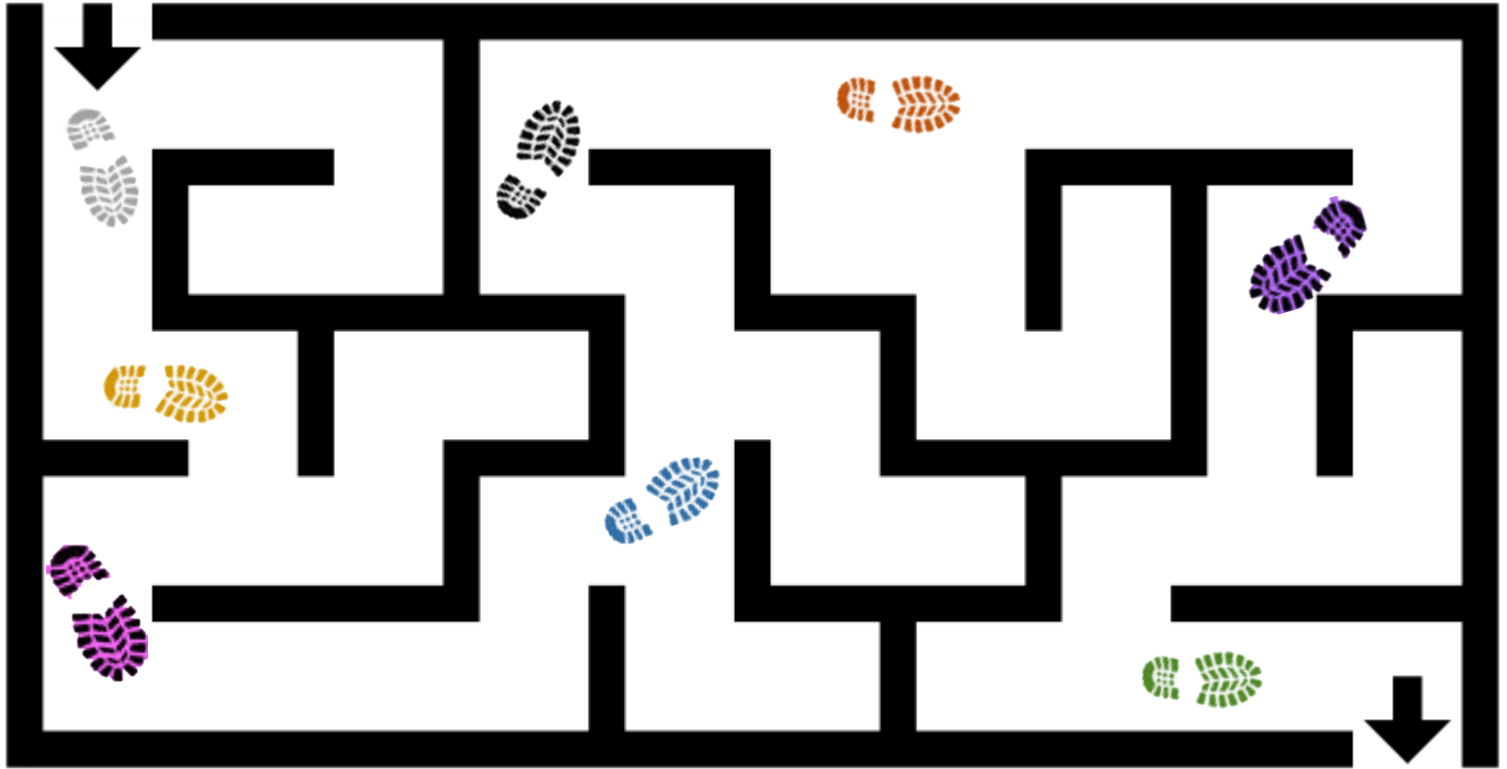
How has the mental health symptoms of others impacted your relationship with them?

What steps can you take to minimize any negative impact on these relationships and increase having a positive impact?



Getting Past Your Past

All of us have stories from our past that continue to cause pain in the present. There are steps you can take to minimize the pain and begin a new journey. The past does not always have to be allowed to intrude on the present and it certainly does not need to have a prominent part in your future. Journey through these steps to begin to change the course of your story. Each step is represented by a different color.



Face your story. It is normal to be afraid of revisiting the past because it caused so much pain in the first place. However, you have more wisdom and tools today. What has already occurred can not hurt you. But allowing it to remain can taunt you. You are braver than you



Picture a future without the past. The brain responds well to imagery. The future is unwritten and you are the author going forward. No one else can finish your story unless you allow them permission. Imagine what your hopes and dreams look like if you were to begin writing the remaining part of your story. Then walk into it.



Rewrite your story. Because you are wiser and have more tools, you will be able to see your story more accurately so that you do not accept lies that are hidden within the details. Those lies keep you trapped and do not allow you to become the person you were meant to be. Find new facts that help you escape fear, shame and guilt.



Purposefully build supports. There will be hard days ahead. We are not able to avoid them but we can prepare for them. One of the greatest indicators to success is a strong support system that you can turn to during difficult times. Never underestimate the power of friendships. Be intentional in developing healthy supports.



Grieve the losses. There are always losses in painful stories. Identify what those are and allow yourself to grieve what should have rightly been yours. This can allow you to honor what should have been and begin a journey to reclaim some losses while allowing others to rest in peace, thereby giving you peace.



Forgive those who harmed you. The baby elephant is tied to a stake and unable to get away. As an adult, the elephant could break free from the stake but does not believe it can so it remains tied. Likewise, you no longer have to be tied to anyone who caused you harm. You too can break free through the act of forgiving.



Recognize the power of choice. No matter what the story, you now have renewed power to make choices that either keep you with one foot stuck in the past or to all-together leave it. There are times we are the victim but there are also powerful times we have full control.



Inspire others with your story. There is incredible power in being able to share your story with others. You will find healing and will also provide inspiration for another person beginning the journey you took. Keeping your story locked inside is a lost vessel of hope for someone else.

When the Past Creeps Into the Present

Every now and then our past creeps up to us. Things that have happened can leave a lasting impression about ourselves, others and the world around us. Unfortunately, this is often harmful to our relationships. Take, for example, Jen who lacks trust because of others who were not trustworthy. Jen can often place all of that fear onto one person making it impossible for her to gain any trust.

When this happens it is not fair to either party. Jen, lacking trust, reacts to things inappropriately and her friend Karen may never understand why. This strain on the relationship can cause Karen to pull back. This can leave Jen wondering what happened and add to their problem of mistrusting people.

The line below represents Jen's life. Each purple star represents an event that left Jen feeling she can not trust others. The green star is a current interaction. If Jen does not manage her past, all of the past events come flooding forward into her current relationships. When this happens, it negatively impacts the current, becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. This is when we are the ones who cause our fears to actually happen. In this case, Jen setup the scenario of being disappointed by Karen by allowing the past to interfere with the present.

One way to know if you are allowing the past to interfere with the present is to ask yourself a few clarifying questions. If you answer yes to these questions, you might want to identify how the past is sneaking into your current situation and learn to separate it from what has actually happening today. This can help improve your relationships so that your current friends are not responsible for past wounds.



1. Name and rate your emotion. Ask yourself if this emotion is valid to the situation. For example, if you rate yourself at a five because someone did not say hello to you, it is probably not a valid rating. This means that you are overreacting and is a strong clue that the event has triggered something from the past.
2. If you are aware of someone who is very emotionally stable, ask yourself if this person would have reacted the way you did. If the answer is no, then it is likely that you are overreacting.

It is possible to underreact as well. You can withdraw, isolate or pull away from others for the same reason you might overreact. Watch for both extremes as either can be symptoms that the past has triggered you and is trying to be a part of your current scenario.

When you recognize that you are past has been triggered, learn to tell yourself that the past situation and the current one are not the same. Focus solely on the current and not blame anyone today for acts from long ago.

Remember to check if your emotions match the current situation. If they do not, then problem solve the current and then address the past.



Kristi's Story

Kristi's never knew her biological dad. But she was very close to her stepdad who she knew from her earliest memories. She always knew he was her stepdad but never felt like he was. She loved him with all of her heart. The day came when her mom and he divorced. A few years later, her stepdad remarried and his new wife did not want him to have anything to do with Kristi since she was not his child.

This news devastated Kristi and she became very angry over the pain this caused. As a young adult, she began dating. Dating Aaron, she found herself really caring about him but it scared her to be so vulnerable. She started picking fights. This caused strain between her and Aaron but he was extremely patient with Kristi.

One day Kristi confided in a friend saying that she could not understand why she keeps picking fights over meaningless things. Her friend asked her, "what do you want him to do?" Kristi replied, "I want him to fight for me."

It was at that moment that Kristi realized that the pain she had over her dad leaving was revisiting her. She wanted her current boyfriend to "fight for her" in a way that her stepdad did not. Knowing this, she could now begin the hard work to stop picking fights and not require Aaron to be responsible for the pain she felt over her stepdad.

From this story, can you recognize ways that your past might be effecting your current relationships? If yes, what can you do about it?

Skills vs. Worth

Self-esteem is how you feel about yourself. Your identity is based on the facts about who you are, whether you believe them or not. This is an important that you do not confuse worth with skills. Your worth remains no matter the choices you make. This applies to everyone. We are all equal in worth or value. You are not the sum of your choices.

Equal value



Equal Worth



Skills, however, are different. We are not all equal when it comes to skills. Rating skills 1-10 with 1 being poor at the skill and 10 being an expert, Jane might rate herself at a 3 for typing skills while Paul rates himself at a 9. Paul is not anymore valuable or worth more than Jane. He simply excels at this skill. Jane, on the other hand, is an excellent gardener whereas Paul can not keep a fake plant alive. People often think they are not worth much because they confuse their abilities to do things with their worth. The millionaire is not worth more than the homeless person.

People can lack skills and they can learn them. You might have a friend who struggles with skills, such as boundaries or communication. You yourself may lack these skills as well. This does not change a person's worth. We can all learn new skills. Keep reminding yourself that skills are separate from your worth.

What are traits that you think make someone a 'good person'? Write them below.

Underline the traits that you think you have that you listed above. It is common to put yourself down. But we are often harder on ourselves than we are on others. Most people actually have positive traits that they see in others but fail to give themselves credit for them. Whatever your list of good personal traits are, chances are that you already have several of them. Most traits that people list are traits any of us can learn. Keep in mind that almost all of our behaviors are learned. The good news is that we can unlearn negative traits and learn positive ones. Are there any that you would like to learn or unlearn?

Separating Your Worth & Skills

Knowing that you are worth just as much as others is one thing. Feeling it is another thing. In the space below, identify someone who you feel insecure around. Write their name and then write the reasons you feel insecure. What is it about them that is "better" than you? Is this difference a skill or something that validates worth? Do this on a separate piece of paper for others that you think of.



Person's Name _____

Why I feel insecure around them:

Validate if this is a skill or value:

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

Be careful that you are not placing someone's skill as a worth, such as being rich (skill of making money) or that you are not comparing traits that are opinions such as pretty or successful. Worth is not based on what you have accomplished, how many mistakes you have made or your inability to reach any goal you set for yourself. Do not be afraid of personal weaknesses. We all have them and they can be worked on.

You might look at your life today and think you do not have skills. Yet it could be that you simply have not found your passions and purpose yet. Your story is still being written so do not cut yourself short. If you could change one thing that would make you like yourself more, what would it be?

Working on Your Skills

If you find that you have some negative traits or need to grow your relationship skills, here are a few things you can do to begin doing that. Check those that you might need to consider?

- ☐ Recognize everyone will not like you. That is normal and their opinion of you is just that...an opinion. We all have them. There are people you will not like either. Your opinion does not change their value either. It goes both ways. Learn to accept this fact.
- ☐ Know your triggers and symptoms and take full responsibility for them. Knowing them can help you avoid them as much as possible. Taking ownership for them helps others in understanding and accepting them.
- ☐ If you struggle in an area, understand that you can improve with practice. It may be more difficult for you than it is for someone else, but they also have their own struggles. No one is the same.
- ☐ Avoid at all costs the victim mentality. Everyone has their story and we all struggle with something. Be gentle with your story and recognize how it has harmed you. But then determine to move forward and change the ending of the story rather than allowing the story to dictate your future. Recognize that you have control over your future choices and how you see the world around you.
- ☐ Grow your support network even if you think you have enough friends. People come and go in and out of our lives. A large support system will help you when this happens. It also allows you to end unhealthy relationships or go through a trial when you have extra support. Having a small support system means that you need a lot from a few people rather than spreading across a wider pool.
- ☐ Find and engage in healthy therapy that moves you to change unwanted behaviors. Not all therapists are equal. Keep looking.
- ☐ Remember the 60/40 rule - no medication will ever solve your problems. You will always need to learn skills. You can do it!
- ☐ You are responsible for your life. Avoid expecting someone else to fix things or be your solution. Live with grateful anticipation that you are capable of handling what comes your way. Each trial is an opportunity to strengthen your skill level.

Safety in Relationships

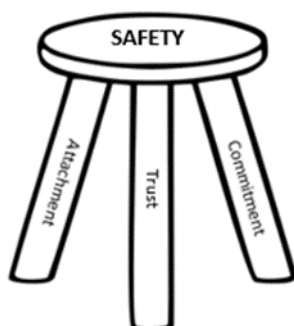
Odds are you find it difficult to feel safe with others. When we have been hurt by someone, we tend to withdraw. Remember the image of the turtle is that safe relationships help us come out of our shell and move toward people, not away.

But hurts cause us to not trust because our brain is doing exactly what it is meant to do, protect us. It makes sense to avoid the thing that hurt you.

Unfortunately, the reality of relational hurts is that the very thing we fear, relationships, is the very thing we need. Anytime that you feel like pulling away, it means you do not feel safe. But our brains can often trick us. The emotional brain wants to avoid any chance to be hurt but the logic brain knows that relationships are important to us. So then how do we choose?

Think of safety of having three elements, like the legs on a stool. Personal safety requires these three things. Each one is explored in more detail on the following pages.

1. Attachment
2. Trust
3. Commitment



Attachment

We learn to attach (bond) to others as children. Read the story of Zoey and Joey. Imagine each child in two different homes. One home is supportive and encouraging. The other is dysfunctional and filled with abuse and neglect.

How do you imagine these two children are impacted by living in the supportive home? What kind of adults might they become?

How do you imagine they are impacted by living in the abusive home? What kind of adults might they become?

Secure attachment, like that the children might have if they experienced a supportive environment, assumes that the world

is fairly safe and that people are generally good. They can take the good with the bad and recognize that trials happen but that they have the skills needed to get through adversity. We call this resilient.

Children who lack a healthy environment where they can trust caregivers often lack the ability to attach and are at best cautious about caring too deeply.

Unbalanced Attachment

Children who have had a supportive and stable environment easily get their needs met by their caregiver and therefore learn to trust.

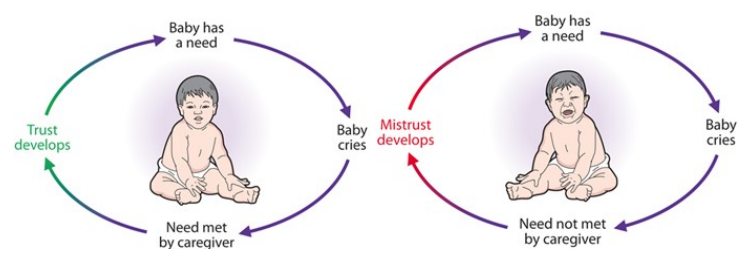
Children who have experienced trauma may not be able to attach to others well. They mistrust people because they could not get their needs met by caregivers. This can negatively impact future relationships unless steps are taken to learn how to connect to others. The aloof person has stopped trying to get their needs met through others even though we are hard-wired to connect. They become distant toward others and are hard to get to know.

This person is trying to avoid getting hurt again. However, the sad truth is that they actually continue to hurt due to not having healthy relationships. Anger and bitterness begin to creep in and this person tends to be constantly unhappy. The sad thing is the aloof person seldom realizes their unhappiness is partially due to their unwillingness to risk entering into relationships. So, their need for relationships goes unmet and their pain deepens.

On the other hand, there are some who have had similar experiences yet respond very differently. Instead of the inability to bond like the aloof person, they become overly attached to others and are very clingy because they are trying too hard to get their needs met by others. Clingy people often have unstable relationships because they need too much from others and are often unable to give as much as they need.

While the aloof person avoids intimacy because no one meets their standards, the clingy person is willing to be in a relationship with anyone to fill their need for relationships. The clingy person often lacks boundaries as their self-esteem is very low. So they do not set them and may also not respect them in others. Their behaviors can be exhausting and cause others to pull away. The clingy person too becomes disillusioned with relationships, feeling people are unreliable because no one can fill their continuously empty joy tank.

There are several mental illness diagnosis' we might see from someone who has had traumatic experiences and struggles to bond to others.



Some of those diagnosis' include:

- ♥ PTSD
- ♥ Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD)
- ♥ Anxiety
- ♥ Depression
- ♥ Borderline Personality Disorder
- ♥ Dependent Personality Disorder





Learning relationship skills and personal healing can help this imbalance for both the aloof and clingy person. Ideally you want to be able to engage in relationships with healthy boundaries, somewhere between these two. Avoiding relationships or entering into them too quickly can result in problems.

Do you feel either extreme relates to your approach to relationships?

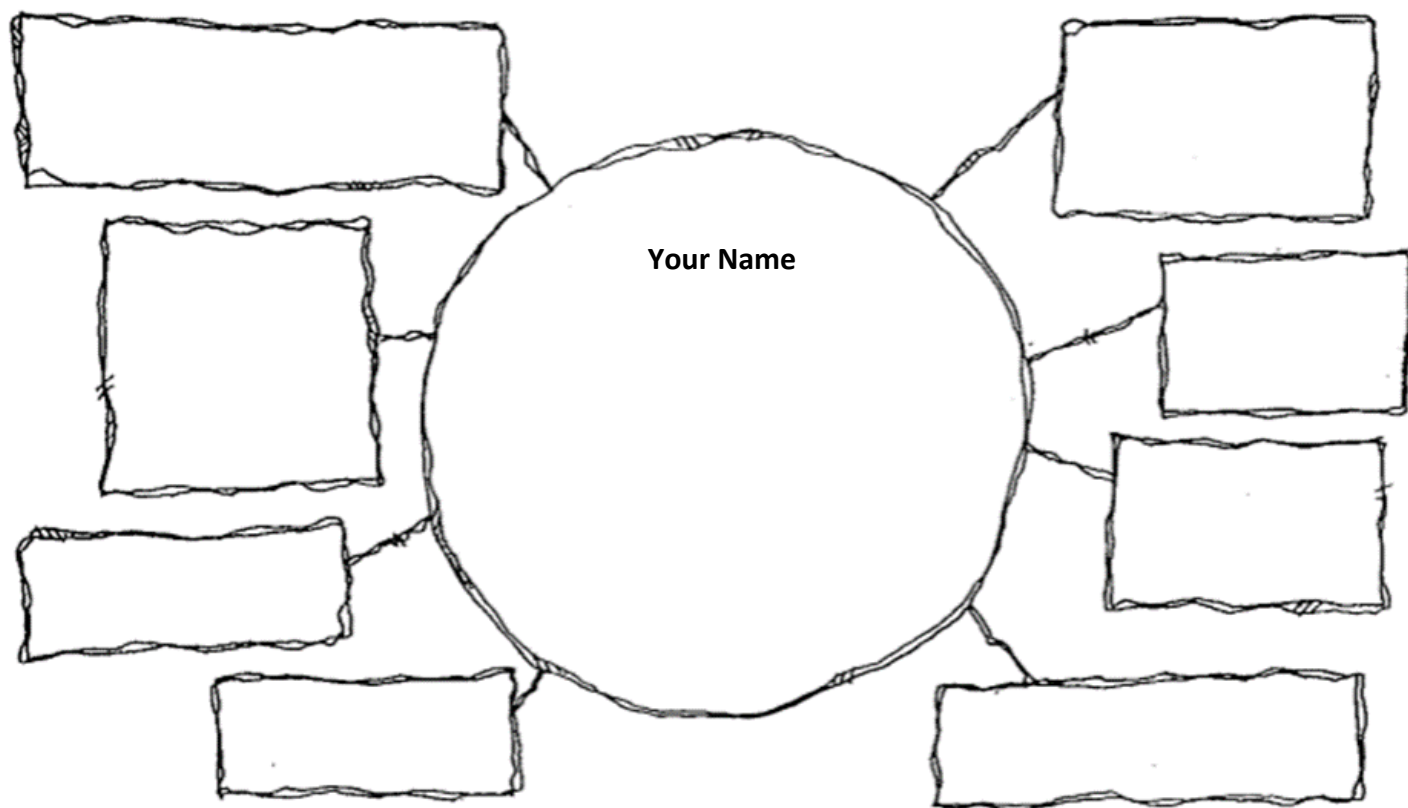
What could you do to live more balanced by learning to attach to others in a healthy way?

Were your needs met well as a child?

- ♥ Secure attachment: Balanced approach to relationships. Respects and sets healthy boundaries and has a balance between give and take in relationships.
- ♥ Preoccupied attachment: Anxious about being alone and requires more of others than they are able to give. Seeks approval from others and dependent with low self-esteem.
- ♥ Dismissing: Prefers being alone and not depend on anyone. Has difficulty identifying with emotions or attaching to others.
- ♥ Fearful: Wants to bond but is fearful of trusting or getting hurt. Mistrusts intentions of others, lacks self-esteem, suppress own emotions and struggles expressing affection.

 Secure Peppermint Patty	 Preoccupied Lucy van Pelt
 Dismissing Schroeder	 Fearful Charlie Brown

Write your name in the circle below. Think about those you currently have relationships with. Fill as many spots as you can with informal supports. Write their names in the squares of the diagram. Color the squares green if the person is a positive support for you, meaning they challenge you to grow personally. Color the squares yellow if that person either might not support your growth or they might be someone that might engage in unhealthy behaviors with you.



Consider the following questions regarding your personal supports.

1. Do you have sufficient “informal” supports or do you need to grow this support system?
2. Are your supports more positive (moving you toward your goals) or negative (moving you away from your goals)?

About Your Supports

Based on the names you entered above, answer the questions below for each one. You can use a blank sheet of paper or process your answers with someone.

1. Name five traits about this person that you really like.
2. Name five traits about this person that you may not like.
3. Do you think this person’s other relationships are healthy (family/friends)? Why or why not?
4. Does this person encourage you to have other friends or discourage other friendships? In what way?
5. Name three things this person is interested in besides you.
6. Name three activities you do with this person.
7. Do you both have equal decision-making power or does one control the decisions over the other?
8. How do the two of you handle conflicts?
9. Do you generally feel better about yourself from this relationship, worse about yourself or the same?
10. How might this person answer these questions about you?



Healthy Attachment Assessment

See how many of the following statements you can answer “yes” to. The more you can honestly check, the healthier your attachment style is. Ask a friend or family member to help if you are not sure. Do not worry if you do not have a lot of checks. You can learn these skills.

- ☐ I am confident and able to meet my own needs while being mindful of meeting the needs of others I am in a relationship with.
- ☐ I do not get lost or controlled by my memories, emotions and impulses.
- ☐ I understand that others make mistakes too and so I do not take them personally and offer forgiveness and grace often.
- ☐ I set healthy boundaries, expect others to respect them and I also respect theirs.
- ☐ I can handle adversity without taking things personally.
- ☐ When others act out emotionally, I recognize it for what it is and show empathy but do not become entangled in the drama. Instead, I can label their emotion, validate it and engage to constructively problem-solve with them.
- ☐ I allow my needs to be met through relationships but can also get them met outside of a relationship.
- ☐ I experience healthy long-term relationships.
- ☐ I accept others as they are when they are emotionally struggling. I can be a support and cheerleader to help them get through a hard time because I want them to grow.
- ☐ I listen to others well and I avoid giving advice unless asked for. I try not to fix their problems but help them make wise choices.
- ☐ I make time for others because I know relationships need quality time to grow.
- ☐ I do not harm others with my words or actions when I am upset. I work hard to keep others emotionally and physically safe.



Building Initial Trust

Building trust is not an easy thing but is worth the effort. Check the boxes below of those things that you feel you already do. Then identify one or two areas to work on to improve your skills at being a trustworthy person for others.

- ☐ Allow time for trust to grow. Enjoy the ride.
- ☐ Be intentional about being trustworthy.
- ☐ Make sure your first impression sets the standard.
- ☐ Show others that you care about them.
- ☐ Keep your word.
- ☐ Never sacrifice a long-term relationship for short-term gains.
- ☐ Do not look down on others.
- ☐ Give credit to others when it is due.
- ☐ Live consistently by good values.
- ☐ Care without ulterior motives.
- ☐ Never threaten to leave or end the relationship.
- ☐ Give grace for mistakes and forgive.
- ☐ Keep your word.
- ☐ Be vulnerable and share your emotions, hopes and dreams.
- ☐ Make your point while making others feel safe.
- ☐ Work on yourself and recognize your weaknesses.
- ☐ Always address the behavior and not the person.
- ☐ Remember trust is an action not a feeling. Choose well.



Elements of Trust (BRAVING)

Boundaries (kindly say 'no' when needed)

Responsibility (keep your word)

Accountability (take responsibility for your actions)

Vault (do not gossip)

Integrity (live by your values at all times, when no one is looking)

Non-judgment (allow others to make mistakes and have flaws)

Generosity (assume the best in others)

Are you
BRAVING?

Relationship Phases

All of us....repeat....all of us will break trust at some point. We will all let someone down. Everyone struggles with low self-esteem and we all have weaknesses. This flawed state of affairs impacts others so we all have to learn how to navigate mistakes.

Knowing this, it is important to learn that trust can be restored. All relationships go through a common cycle. In fact, many businesses learn this in order to maintain strong teams.

- Forming is a phase that we form a relationship. It is sometimes called the honeymoon phase. We are all on our best behavior during this phase.
- Storming is when we begin to let our true selves be known. We might have differences or disagreements. It is a very normal phase but unfortunately, many people who have been hurt tend to leave at this phase assuming they can not trust others. But there are great rewards if you can stick it out beyond this phase. Recognize it is there and you will find it easier to handle knowing that it is normal.
- Norming is the phase where we know each other better and things become "normal". It is where things settle down and we are closer by having gone through the storming phase and are becoming very authentic.
- Performing is the phase where we "get things done".

Knowing that relationships go through these phases, try to settle in for the ride. Do not assume mistakes mean that a person can not be trusted. Instead, allow for them and you will be happier because you too can make mistakes. It allows us to be real with each other.

However, that does not mean we can not expect that repairs be made when mistakes happen. Repairing mistakes is very important and should be expected by everyone. Repair can be a simple apology. But someone might want more than an apology. Think of apologies in steps as outlined on the next page.

Restoring Broken Trust

The following checklist can help you learn skills to restore trust with someone. You can use this list as well to voice how someone can restore trust with you. Using this list can help you engage in relationships if you struggle with trusting others.

- ✓ Be fully aware of the pain caused. The person causing it should take full responsibility. The person harmed should express the damage.
- ✓ Allow time to heal.
- ✓ Always give the other person permission to mistrust if you have violated trust.
- ✓ Be open to talk about what happened.
- ✓ Ask how you can repair - then do it.
- ✓ Never use "but" when apologizing.
- ✓ Do not make promises you can not keep.
- ✓ Keep realistic expectations. No one is perfect.
- ✓ Focus on the long-term.
- ✓ Remember the other person's positives.
- ✓ Renew commitments when needed.

Can you think of any other actions?

How can you
restore trust?

Apology Languages

Repairs mean correcting the damage done, but also taking steps to ensure it does not happen again. This is especially true for people who have been repeatedly hurt by others. Simply apologizing may not be enough as they have heard that over and over again but nothing changes. Dr. Gary Chapman is a therapist who has identified four apology languages. Read these descriptions and rate which ones mean the most to you from 1-4 with 1 being least important and 4 being the apology you prefer.

- ☐ I am sorry.
- ☐ I am sorry for _____ (insert actions that caused damage).
- ☐ I am sorry for _____ (insert actions that caused damage) and that it _____ you (insert how it affected the person). Will you please forgive me?
- ☐ I am sorry for _____ (insert actions that caused damage) and that it _____ you (insert how it affected the person). I will _____ (insert what action will be done to repair). Will you please forgive me?

You will notice that each level requires taking more responsibility. Saying, "I am sorry" is a good start. But you or others may need just a little more in order to restore trust.

Four Horsemen

Dr. John Gottman, a psychologist and author, conducts lab research using couples to better learn about love. He and his team have worked hard to identify things that make relationships work and have passed what they have learned onto others.

He has identified *Four Horsemen* that are four actions that indicate a relationship is in trouble. They can be fixed but he states that these four are hard to get rid of once they exist in a relationship. If you find these in your relationships, begin working to get rid of them right away.

1. Criticism - when you criticize others it is saying that there is something wrong with them and you are right. Words like, "you always" or "you never" are common in criticism. To get rid of criticism, point out the person's action rather than attacking their personality. We can not change who we are, but we can change what we do. Instead of saying, "you always forget" say, "you forgot and it made me feel unimportant".
1. Defensiveness - being defensive is showing yourself as a victim rather than taking responsibility. To get rid of this, instead of saying, "I do not always forget, last week I remembered" say, "you are right, I forgot this time and I am sorry."
1. Contempt - rolling eyes, mocking someone or calling someone names is having contempt. It is the most serious of the four as it is very destructive and disrespectful. For contempt to go away, you will need to identify aspects of the other person that you like and focus on those. Everyone has strengths. Step two is to learn to speak your needs or expectations and have boundaries when they are not met. Then the responsibility is on the other person.
1. Stonewalling - this is when one person walks away from a conversation and refuses to engage. Take a break if necessary but ALWAYS come back to finish restoring trust when all is calmer. It is worth the effort.

TRUST TAKES
YEARS TO
BUILD,
SECONDS TO
BREAK, AND
FOREVER
TO REPAIR.

honesty people respect
accept na p relationships loyalty accept
TRUST belief

Commitment

Till death do us part...or at least until I get bored. You will never hear that in a wedding vow. Yet many of us treat all relationships, not just marriage, as what we get out of it. History tends to repeat itself and the pendulum swings one way and then the other. Long ago it was uncommon for people to leave their marriage and get a divorce. But that did not guarantee the two people in the marriage had the necessary skills to keep it alive.

Unfortunately, we did not place responsibility on learning relationship skills. Instead, we saw that people stayed in unhappy marriages which ended up changing our values and beliefs about marriage. The pendulum went from no divorce to ending marriage when it became hard. But it did not stop at marriage. All relationships go through struggles but we are ending them so quickly that we have lost the art of fighting for each other.



Relationships are treated like consumerism (buying/selling). It is like saying, I will be committed to you as long as I am getting something out of it. Once I no longer feel there is benefit to our relationship, I am out.

Commitment does not mean to stay in a relationship (marriage or friendship) regardless of its quality. What it does mean is that each person involved is committed to:

- ♥ working through the difficulties,
- ♥ protecting the dignity and honor of the other,
- ♥ being accountable for personal choices,
- ♥ building the other up rather than tearing down,
- ♥ their own personal growth and learning relationship skills.

Commitment is a crucial part of healthy relationships. Without it there is almost a 100% guarantee that we will experience further and unnecessary pain. Look for these three safety elements before entering into relationships. If you remember only one thing from this principle it would be this:

The most important thing in life are relationships.

When you get hurt in a relationship, and you will, always remember to remain committed. Running from hurt is a very natural reaction. But it rarely helps us. If you are being abused, then by all means, retreat to safety. But most hurts are not abusive in nature but negligence or lack of skill on one or more person's part. These are relatively manageable and most of us tend toward quitting when that happens.

Commitment to each other is critical for safety to exist in a relationship. We need to be committed to keeping each other safe and to the relationship over our personal hurts. The problem with ending a relationship after a hurt is that we lack the ability to learn to grow our "distress tolerance muscle". We also keep the other person from growing personally and taking responsibility for their actions.

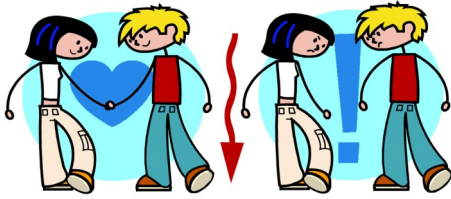
Our Western culture has a very "consumeristic" mindset. This means that we consume things or take anything, including relationships, from a perspective of what gains we get from it. This approach is harmful because we typically end relationships that no longer benefit us. But true and solid relationships must go through the hard times in order to deepen. It is very possible to have big arguments but come out on the other end stronger.

Four Greek words for *LOVE* were identified in the emotions chapter. They give insight into our need for commitment. For those purposes, here is a quick reminder of those.

- ♥ Phileo - this is a 'brotherly love' where we care about each other simply because we are human. There may or may not be any depth to this or can refer to close friends.
- ♥ Eros - this refers to erotic love or passion. This exists in a relationship early on and can be reignited over and over. However, it relies on feelings and therefore is not always sustainable.
- ♥ Storge - this refers to familial love. Something we express about our family. It is not as intimate as eros, but more so than phileo.
- ♥ Agape - this is an 'unconditional' love. A love with commitment knowing that there are flaws in people.

Caring for someone requires that we commit in an 'agape' way that is unconditional. That does not mean that each person should not take full responsibility for mistakes or poor choices. We can still hold that standard and have unconditional love. Commitment is important so that we can feel safe from abandonment or neglect. Commitment for the other person's well being is what we refer to as "other centered". Without this element in relationships we all struggle with trust. What keeps you from being committed to others?

Healthy or Unhealthy?



It is common for someone to be in an unhealthy relationship and not even know it. This is usually because the relationships they have always known were unhealthy, so it is normal to them. Just because a behavior is normal does not make it healthy.

The list below looks at a few behaviors to analyze if your relationship is healthy or unhealthy. Think about this list from two different perspectives.

- 1) See if there are any of these behaviors that you do. If you recognize them, pick one or two to begin working on so that you become a healthier friend.
- 2) See if any of your current friends or family members engage in these behaviors. If so, determine how you can minimize their negative impact on you.

Taking steps to ensure that your relationships are healthy will help you to engage in good behaviors. It will be difficult for you to end unhealthy behaviors if everyone around you are still doing those. Awareness is key. Taking steps toward change can dramatically improve your life.

IS IT HEALTHY?

- ♥ Have fun together more often than not.
- ♥ Enjoy spending time separately, with other people.
- ♥ Always feel safe with each other.
- ♥ Trust each other.
- ♥ Respect each other's opinions.
- ♥ Solves conflicts without walking away, putting each other down, cursing or making threats.
- ♥ Accepts responsibility for own actions.
- ♥ Apologizes when they are wrong.
- ♥ Has equal decision-making power.
- ♥ Proud to be with each other.
- ♥ Has privacy (diaries, phone calls, etc.)
- ♥ Never pressures for sex or any behavior the other does not want to do.
- ♥ Allows each other to have space, does not get upset when the other does not call right away.
- ♥ Always talks with respect.
- ♥ Encourages growth and does not pull others into negative behaviors.
- ♥ Does not share personal information of other even when they are upset.
- ♥ Does not use emotional blackmail to get their own way (if you do not....then I will hurt myself, get angry, etc.).
- ♥ Builds the other up with words.

IS IT UNHEALTHY?

- ♥ Gets extremely jealous or accuses the other of cheating.
- ♥ Puts the other down by calling names, cursing or making the other feel bad about him/herself.
- ♥ Yells at and treats the other like a child.
- ♥ Does not take the other person, or things that are important to him/her, seriously.
- ♥ Does not listen when the other talks.
- ♥ Frequently criticizes other and/or their friends or family.
- ♥ Pressures the other for sex or other behaviors the other does not want to do, or makes sex hurt.
- ♥ Uses emotional blackmail to get their way (I will hurt myself or others if you leave).
- ♥ Cheats or threatens to cheat.
- ♥ Bosses the other around (telling how to dress, etc.)
- ♥ Grabs, pushes, hits or injures other.
- ♥ Blames the other for their own behavior. (If you had not done then I would not have had to.....)
- ♥ Embarrasses or humiliates the other.
- ♥ Smashes, throws or destroys things.
- ♥ Keeps other from succeeding.
- ♥ Goes back on promises.
- ♥ Ignores the other.
- ♥ Controls the other.

Meeting New People

Reason #1 People Avoid Meeting New People

Some people say they do not want to meet other people because they are afraid of losing them. There is truth to that. To that it is important to know that all relationships end at some point. If not simply through life changes or hardships, then certainly by death.

While it might seem tempting to people who think this way to avoid relationships all together so that they avoid any painful losses, it is important to note that they actually lose on a daily basis with this thinking pattern. They miss out on the joys that happen every day and are lonely always.

Come to terms with the fact that relationships end. It is a part of life. But new ones begin just as easy. Expanding your network of friends can decrease this pain as you have others to lean on. Life takes many twists and turns. Enjoy the ride because there truly is more joy than pain.



Reason #2 People Avoid Meeting New People

Some people say they do not want to meet other people because they do not know if others will like them. The thing is, there is some truth to that reason as well. Not everyone will like us. Some will, some will not. In the same way, you do not like everyone.

Personalities are different as are interests and values. So there is no way that we will please everyone we meet. Learning to take the good with the bad is a life skill. We usually find the root of this fear in our childhood. School is a hard place to learn relationships and belonging has always been the hardest thing about this setting.

Learn to separate past experiences and simply be okay that you are likeable and the right ones will accept you for who you are.



Reason #3 People Avoid Meeting New People

What if I do not know what to say? As humans we have a lot in common. Simply start a conversation by asking the other person about themselves. Most of us like talking about ourselves. Listen for free information. If someone tells a story about their dog, then ask them more about the dog.

If the topic of discussion is intimidating, ask them to explain further. Do not get too hung up on having to know it all. Enjoy learning from someone else. You can also change the subject with a question of your own on a topic you are familiar with.

Be careful of disclosing too much information up front. Feel the flow of how much to share by listening to how much the other person shares.



Maintaining Relationships



AVOIDING GOSSIP

So you have decided that you enjoy spending time with someone and want to move to the friendship phase. Congratulations! Now the

hard work is done but there are still many tidbits of information that will help you navigate any relationship. The first is disclosure. Going slow is always better. Why? Because you can always go forward, but it is pretty hard to take steps back.

Let us say you shared something vulnerable about yourself. The first fight you and your friend get into, you find out they told everyone else that sensitive information. It is always a good rule to go slow

until you can tell if a person is safe with your information. Think about your personal stories and opinions as valuable items, like money. You would not just give it to anyone would you? Then save those things for someone who has had time to earn your trust.

Gossip is one of the most destructive things any relationship can experience. How has gossip hurt you before?

How have you hurt someone else with gossip?

APPROPRIATE 'TOGETHERNESS'

You enjoy hanging out with your new friend so much that you find you have no time for anything else. This is the 'honeymoon' phase but is not meant to last. Meeting someone new, even just a friend, can cause our hearts to get excited to see them again. That means we are bonding.

ENMESHED However, people with low self-esteem can sometimes



become so enmeshed with someone else that they spend too much time together. While this might sound dreamy, the problem here is there is little room for either person to remain an individual or have different viewpoints, friends, or

interests. One or more in this relationship needs the other too much. Differences are usually not celebrated.

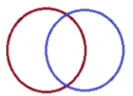
DETACHED



On the other hand, someone can be too detached and never move beyond the acquaintance stage. Two people sharing an apartment but doing nothing together is an example of this. But one or both of them isolate their emotions and will not allow the other to get too close.

Finding a healthy balance of togetherness and autonomy is what you should strive for. You should have a variety of friendships and not put all your needs into one or two people.

ENGAGED



SOLID COMMUNICATION

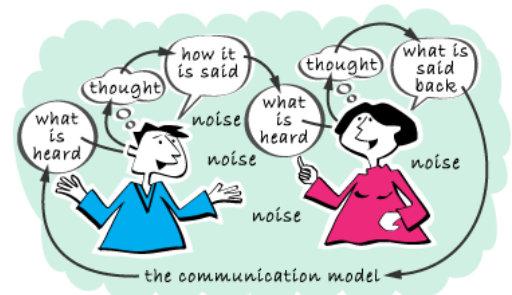
Communication might sound simple. You say something and the other person responds. But there is all this other stuff going on at the same time. Have you ever noticed that something you said did not sound the same way it was in your mind?

There are things I mean to say, what I actually say, what you heard me say, what I think you heard me say, what you say back, what I think you said back....oh my, it goes on and on.

Communication is an art form. It takes practice, patience and attention. Quite often one person is talking while the other person is actually thinking more about what their response will be than really listening. Active listening requires that we put aside all of that and really listen. Trying to listen for words, meaning and intent can make communication better.

See how many of these communication errors you find yourself doing from time to time. Know that we all do these. But recognizing them can help us to intentionally communicate better. Check the ones you know you have done.

- ☐ Comparing your experiences to their story.
- ☐ Mind reading - you just know what they mean by that.
- ☐ Rehearsing - gotta get my next comment ready.
- ☐ Filtering - tuning out what I do not want to hear.
- ☐ Judging - deciding your opinion ahead of time.
- ☐ Personalizing - topping their story with one of your own.
- ☐ Advising - they really need to know my advice.
- ☐ Needing to be right - waiting to let them have it!
- ☐ Derailing - using sarcasm or avoiding uncomfortable topics.
- ☐ Sparring - waiting to find a flaw or something to argue.
- ☐ Day dreaming - simply not present.
- ☐ Placating - never wanting to rock the boat so you just agree.



Maintaining Relationships



TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY

It takes two to tango. Every disagreement involves at least two people. Rarely, if ever, is one person 100% right and the other person 100% wrong

Each person bears some part of responsibility in the argument. Defensiveness causes us to place blame somewhere. People fall into one of two categories. On one extreme, they blame everyone else and don't see their part in the problem.

On the other hand, they take all the blame, which is usually the case in co-dependency. Neither extreme is good. Extremes are usually the result of past wounding.

It is good to learn to be self-reflective by accepting both strengths and weaknesses. Being able to take responsibility for your part requires that you be okay with being wrong (weaknesses) and also that you don't take on another person's responsibility. That is setting good boundaries (strengths).

The next time your instincts want you to blame someone else, step back and look at the situation objectively. See how your words or actions played a part and take full responsibility for that.

Emotions Hit Like A Wave



RIDE THE WAVE

It is very easy for our emotions to take over a situation. We say or do things that we later regret.

Think of emotions as a wave in the ocean. They come in and out quickly

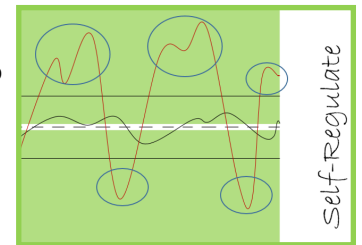
and can leave a person standing in a shallow pool of water wondering what just happened. They can feel overwhelming.

Science has shown that emotions don't last very long. They come to alert us of a message but subside rather quickly, like a wave. But we can keep them alive by feeding them.

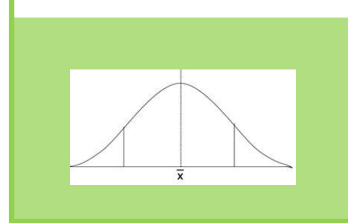
If your goal is to always manage your emotions and keep safety in relationships as a top priority, you'll learn to let those waves of emotion go over you without holding onto them.

It is not an easy skill to build but very worth it. Studies show that people who can manage their emotions in relational difficulties are more likely to succeed in jobs, rate themselves happier and even have more relationships than those who cannot regulate emotions.

Ride emotions like a wave. Keep yourself in check in those times.



Live In The Norms



LIVING IN THE NORMS

Life is full of extremes. Throughout this material we point out many extremes. One day we might make a choice that lands on one extreme such as not setting boundaries. The next day we set boundaries so firm

that they are like a brick wall. What causes us to live in the extremes rather than the middle ground?

Past wounds is one culprit. When we are wounded, we tend to react to situations based on that wound until we deal with it and put it to rest. If you find yourself defensive, judgmental or other negative emotions, check to see if those emotions and their messages are connected to your past.

Another culprit is submissiveness due to a lack of self-esteem. People who struggle with liking themselves can often allow others to walk all over them. Learning assertiveness skills can be very helpful in cases such as these. When you find yourself feeling like you don't want to deal with conflict or face the person head on,

check to see what experiences you have had that cause you to back down. Then work through those issues until you are able to respectfully stand up for yourself.

The word "respectfully" is underlined because a person might try standing up for themselves in an effort to overcome co-dependency. However, they risk doing this with anger because that is the emotion that helps us confront. This is because the person is simply trying to change the behavior without dealing with the underlying wound.

Remember, beliefs drive behaviors. You can engage in behavior modification techniques but you will usually not do this well without facing the underlying belief.

In situations where you find yourself living in the extremes, ask yourself how someone that you admire and who lives in the norms well, what they would do in your situation. Would they blow up? Would they allow others to walk all over them? How might they handle the confrontation well?

We can learn a lot from those in our support network.

Pushing Buttons

Do you find that people “push your buttons”? They are those things that set you off or are pet peeves. We all have them. But to have the best possible relationships, it is helpful to know them and manage them so that they can not be pushed.

The military does this because they know that soldiers can not be overly emotional when they are on the field. To be safe, they have to manage those things that annoy or anger them.

Likewise, we need to do the same thing. But we are not always interacting with others who know how to manage theirs. All you can do is control how you respond in situations. Be ready for someone to push your buttons.



Storm Makers

We have all experienced interactions with “storm-makers”. Storm makers create storm centers. They are often long on problems and short on solutions. Now and then maybe you have been a storm-maker. Look over the list below to see which behaviors you want to eliminate.

Storm-makers:

- ☐ **Break deals and destroy schedules** (time is a tool for abuse, they spring needs on at the last minute or need to leave early/come late.)
- ☐ **Expect special treatment** (do not believe they need to do what others do like eat together. Theirs is ALWAYS a special circumstance.)
- ☐ **Discount your reality** (no matter how important your timeline or resources, they violate your needs. They ACT like they hear your boundary but say things like, “I know you said no on this/that...but...”)
- ☐ **Spend your time and money** (they always need one more thing, one more errand, one more dollar, and one more minute.)
- ☐ **Triangulate those they deal with** (they get others involved and step out and drain your energy by saying things like, “so and so was telling me this and that about you...”)
- ☐ **Blame others** (it is just not their fault or responsibility, self-evaluations are difficult to them, if someone would have done something they could have done their part.)
- ☐ **Create dramas – usually outside of themselves** (they are stuck and want others stuck for their own comfort, they are jealous and threatened, they impose their agendas upon others, they have trivial questions/needs when you have something important to accomplish, they minimize your efforts.)
- ☐ **Dislike order** (chaos is their comfort food, calmness makes them uneasy, they show how others can not meet their expectations.)
- ☐ **Are ungrateful** (they have entitlement issues by believing things, money, time, attention, friendship, etc. are owed them – by you, they complain and are not content.)
- ☐ **Are skeptical** (they distrust others’ motives, actions, beliefs, they mind read, they make assumptions about others.)
- ☐ **Deny they are Storm-makers** (they are sure it is the other persons fault, problem or issue, they rarely can take criticism or ideas.)
- ☐ **Hate other Storm-makers** (they can see themselves in others and are critical but can not see it in themselves because their actions are justified to themselves.)

Work to end these behaviors and avoid people who do them as well. This will help improve all of your relationships. Awareness is

important in order to make any
these, by all means, repair, repair,

personal improvements. If you find you have done any of
repair.



10 things

you probably need to adopt to move forward:

1

Do not let opinions of others control your emotions.

- *Everyone has opinions but it does not mean they are accurate.
- *Know yourself and be proud.

2

Learn your buttons and work on them.

- *Stop blaming others for pushing your buttons.
- *Those triggers mean there is unresolved stuff from the past.

3

Make wise choices.

- *Choices have consequences. Pay attention to them.
- *Anyone can make poor choices so raise your standards.

4

Always make relationships the most important thing.

- *Resolve conflict right away without needing to be right.
- *Be 'other-centered' and get your eyes off of yourself.

5

Always keep improving.

- *You are never done growing so set & reach goals each year.
- *No growth means situations have gotten the best of you.

6

Stay in the present.

- *Let go of shame and guilt from the past. It is gone!
- *Stop worrying about the future. You can not control it.

7

Be okay with your strengths and weaknesses.

- *Strut your strengths! Use them to change the world!
- *Stop kicking yourself for weaknesses. We all have 'em.

8

Find the good in all things and in all people.

- *We all face trials. Accept that and use them as an opportunity to grow.
- *Your gratefulness reflects your recovery. Stop complaining.

9

Makes plans instead of excuses.

- *Long-term problems came from short-term choices.
- *Be a solution finder instead of looking for a reason to be unhappy.

10

Stop being a victim.

- *You can be addicted to your problems as a way of getting attention. Stop it!
- *We all face trials. Do you want to get beyond them?

Conflict or Abuse?

So you have spent all this time working on your relationship skills but find you are still getting hurt by others. Odds are they are not at the skill level you are at. Be patient with them but do be careful that their lack of skills does not cause too much damage.

If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed by the thought of being with this person, you can be assured there are problems. Most people will work on their problems but some people are so very toxic that we have to set strong boundaries, or even distance ourselves from them.

So how do you tell if it is conflict or if the problem is rooted in abuse? People work on problems and take ownership of them. In healthy relationships there will be conflict. But both parties are committed to making everyone feel safe. Abusers do not care about safety.

There are acts of abuse that some people do not recognize as abuse because it is been a normal part of their life. The following wheel can help you understand what abuse is. It is important for your safety and well-being to recognize abuses. Abuse is ALWAYS about control.



The Toxic Person

Were there areas of abuse that you were not aware of? If so, list them.

Abusers are toxic. A person who is toxic is much different than a person lacking relational skills. Their motive, which is something we can not see, is very self-centered to the point that they rarely care about your pain even if they caused it. Recognizing toxic people is an important relational skill to have. Below are a few examples of toxic characteristics.



The Controller - This person is a master manipulator and constant controller. They want to be in charge, not just of their lives, but of yours and everyone else's too. They watch you like a hawk, ready to pounce on your every flaw. They micro-manage down to the last detail. They have trouble letting go, so they do not, they hold on, too tightly, until it about chokes out all those around them, suffocating others with their drive to be superior.



The Abuser – This person is desperately needy inside, and takes it out on you and the world around them. Through their own experiences of internalized past hurt, they have become angry, vicious, and cruel to those they say they care the most about. These people need help from counseling and outside sources. They need healing. If you find yourself in the home of an abuser, get help, now. Do not stay in a potentially dangerous situation with your false hope that you can somehow change their old patterns of abuse. It is not up to you. Protect your life and the lives of those in your care.



The Too Easily Angered – This person is the one you always feel like you have to tiptoe around. Like you never know what will set them off and fly into a fit of rage. These people become easily irate at even the smallest thing, which is a sure sign, there is a deep rooted problem inside. They have been known to throw things, hit things in their way, or spout off angry words they can never get back. They yell, they scream, they curse. You may see them on the ball fields, the golf course, the stressful office meetings, or even on the highway. Fits of rage not easily soothed, out of control temper tantrums that more closely resemble the patterns of a 2 yr. old.



The Bully - This person can be subtle or outright offensive in their attempts to bully, but either way, their desire is to dominate and make themselves look powerful. They have a strong need to feel better and look better than those around them, so they choose to bully anyone in their path. They use words, they use fists, they use lies, they use fear – but all in all, they want to push others down and exalt themselves and will stop at nothing to achieve their goal.



The Addict – This person is addicted to a substance or to a negative pattern or behavior that has severely affected their well-being as a person. They need help. They need professional help and they need help. They need people who will be brave to speak truth into their lives and not those who will feed their habit, enable their actions, or ignore dangerous signs of addiction. Recognize that this toxic pattern is bigger than just you. You are not to blame for the problem. But you can be the persona able to get them help. You will never see the addict's true character while they are using.



The Negative – This person is the one who rarely has anything positive to say, because they see everything with a negative slant and have no problem telling you why. The sun may be shining, but in their mind, "It is probably about to rain." Life is viewed through shaded, cloudy lenses. They tend to be complainers, worriers, and whiners. These people often do not even realize what they are doing because it is become such a natural part of the way they talk. They tend to zap the energy and suck life right out of you if you are around them too much. They walk in defeated and choose to believe the worst about most things – even you.



The Blamer – This person is never to blame, for it is always "your fault." They will blame everything on others close to them. If they are having a bad day, it is your fault. If they are running late, it is your fault. If they lose something, it is your fault. If they fail at something, it is your fault. You will never "win" around the blamer, because they are aim is to bring you down through their constant blame game.



The Gossiper – This person is always talking, and usually about someone else. They have an overriding need to be "in the know," and to pass on the next juicy morsel to an open, listening ear. They can be vicious with their words, and cruel in their hearts towards another's feelings. They have no regard for the reputation of another. They feed on lies, exaggerations, mere hearsay, and half-truths. They tend to feel better while talking about others so they can somehow feel better about themselves.



The Arrogant – This person is proud, self-serving, and always, always "right." They never want to made the fool, but have no problem labeling others as foolish. They prey on the weak to make themselves appear better. They are quick to judge, quickly offer their opinions, and are rude to others in more subservient positions. Their goal in life is to be superior to all those around them.



The Victim – Not to be confused with one who really has been victimized in life and who is seeking peace and healing, this person is one who tends to feel they are constantly the victim. In every situation. All throughout life. They are always feeling taken advantage of, always needy, always telling you what others have done to them, or how no one cares. They see themselves constantly as the victim and before long, if you keep lending an ear; you may be the next one they feel victimized by.

Learning About Boundaries

It sure seems normal to begin putting up a wall when we have been hurt. The challenge is not to build an emotional wall which keeps everyone out but rather to build a fence with a gate that can choose to let some in and others out. The way we build appropriate protections for our heart is to set boundaries. A boundary defines a line that others do not cross without permission. It marks your values, standards and expectations.

Some people find it difficult to set a boundary because they feel like it hurts the other person's feelings. This is an example of what is called co-dependency. Setting a boundary is actually a healthy thing to do. We often set physical boundaries, like a fence, to let others know what is okay and what is not. But emotional boundaries are something we can not see. So setting them makes it clear to others what your expectations are. Never feel bad for setting a boundary.

Other people have trouble accepting boundaries. This is usually due to their lack of relational skills. When they violate boundaries, it is important that you do not keep the natural consequences from happening. We learn from pain. In the emotion chapter we learned that pain is a message that something is wrong. For example, a person who does not pay their rent on time will be responsible for a late fee. Letting them off the hook says to them that the boundary really is not important. Therefore, they do not learn from their mistake and might take advantage of the grace given to them. Learn to get comfortable setting and respecting boundaries.



Boundaries are put in place because someone has caused damage. This can be in many different forms as shown on page 18 in the control wheel. When someone has harmed you with words, you may need to set boundaries with them by asking them to respect you. If you do not respect yourself, others may not either. Here are a few ways to think about self-respect:

- ◇ Intellectual worth and boundaries (you are entitled to your own thoughts and opinions, as are others)
- ◇ Emotional worth and boundaries (you are entitled to your own feelings to a given situation, as are others)
- ◇ Physical worth and boundaries (you are entitled to your space, however wide it may be, as are others)
- ◇ Social worth and boundaries (you are entitled to your own friends and to pursuing your own social activities, as are others)
- ◇ Spiritual worth and boundaries (you are entitled to your own spiritual beliefs, as are others)
- ◇ Financial worth and boundaries (you are entitled to earn your own money and spend according to your own wishes, as are others)

All of these entitlements are reasons to set healthy boundaries for yourself.

Signs of Healthy Boundaries

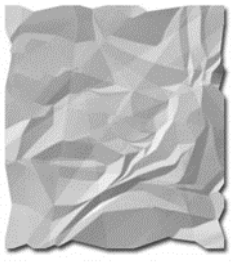
- ✓ Appropriate trust
- ✓ Moving step-by-step into intimacy
- ✓ Staying focused on your own growth and recovery
- ✓ Maintaining personal values despite what others want
- ✓ Saying “no” when someone invades your boundaries
- ✓ Saying “no” to food, gifts, sex, touch that you do not want
- ✓ Revealing a little of yourself at a time and checking to see how others handle your disclosure
- ✓ Putting new acquaintances on hold while you check for compatibility
- ✓ Watching to see how others respond in a crisis (do they gossip, blow up, etc.)
- ✓ Letting go of a toxic relationship
- ✓ Asking a person before touching them or using their items
- ✓ Talking to yourself with gentleness, love, humor and respect
- ✓ Respecting the boundaries of another
- ✓ Be assertive, not passive or aggressive

Healthy Boundaries

When we fail to set boundaries and hold people accountable, we feel used and mistreated.

Brene' Brown

When it Goes Wrong



Imagine a clean white sheet of paper. Now consider that paper having a crease in it for any part of damage or hurts that exists between those involved. If there are a lot of issues or things said that can not be taken back, this paper may be a wrinkled mess. Reconciliation is like flattening this paper out and even ironing it. No matter how hard you try, the paper will never again look the same. This represents what happens to our hearts when we hurt each other. Words and actions can have lasting effects. It may never be as it once was.



Do not let that be a discouragement though. We are capable of forgiving and moving forward to relationships that can even be stronger than they originally were. However, we rarely forget so the scars (creases in the paper) remain. Every relationship goes through its ups and downs because we are all flawed and will at some time disappoint or even hurt another person unintentionally. Knowing this, we need to know how to repair any damage we cause as well as forgive others when they have let us down. Forgiveness and apologies go both ways for anyone involved. Never forget our words have power to harm or to heal.



There are a lot of steps involved in repairing relationships. Being sorry does not always fix the problem. Reconciliation comes in different levels because it takes two. Check these out...

Partial reconciliation: A partial reconciliation is when all parties may be involved, but enough mistrust exists that you may not fully gain what was once had. Another reason for partial reconciliations can be that changes have occurred that make it difficult to go back to the way it was.

Full reconciliation: This is when both parties come back together and can even be stronger than before. We do not always forget our pain but we choose to forgive because we are committed more to the relationship than we are in being right. We do what we can to heal and move on.

No reconciliation: This is when we can not repair the relationship. This can be for several reasons. Perhaps the damage is too deep, it is not safe to remain in the relationship or due to a death of someone. This requires us to go through the grieving process for personal healing.

Gottman's Repair List

I Feel

I am getting scared.
Did I do something wrong?
That hurt my feelings.
I feel blamed (defensive, worried, etc.).
Please do not withdraw.

I feel unappreciated (insert feeling).
I think you do not understand me right now.
Please do not lecture me.
I do not feel trusted (or do not trust you).
This is not a good time.

I Need to Calm Down

I need things to be calmer right now.
Can you help me feel safe?
I need your support right now.
I am having trouble hearing right now.
Can you tell me you love me?

Can I take back what I said?
Can I have a break?
Please just listen to me.
I need to finish what I was saying.
I am starting to feel flooded.

I am Sorry

My reaction was too extreme.
I really blew that one.
Let me try this again.
I want to be patient but do not know how.
I can see my part in this.

How can I make things better?
What I think you are saying is
I am sorry, please forgive me.
Let me make it up to you by
What would you like me to say or do?

Let us Stop

I might be wrong here.
Let us take a break.
Please stop.
Let us start all over.
I want to change the topic.

We are getting off track.
Hang in there, do not withdraw.
I will wait until you are ready to hear.
I need some space to think.
My emotions are too much.

I am Moving to 'Yes'

You are starting to convince me.
I agree with part of what you are saying.
Let us compromise.
Let us find our common ground.
I never thought of it that way.

We are making this bigger than it is.
I think you are making sense.
Let us agree to see it differently.
What are your concerns?
I am wondering if ____ would work.

I Appreciate

I know this is not your fault.
My part of the problem is....
I see your point.
Thank you for....
That is a good idea.

I think we are saying the same thing.
I am thankful for....
I see what you are talking about.
This is OUR problem.
I understand.

Ending a Relationship

There comes a time when we need to end a relationship that is maybe damaging, unsafe or unable to get through difficulties. Ending these well takes skills that we can all learn. Checkout the list below to think about how to end a relationship well.

1

Separate your emotions from them. It is not easy to make the hard decision to end any relationship. Carrying the emotions of the other person can confuse the issue and remain on course.

2

Write down the reasons you are ending a relationship. You might need these if your emotions get in the way, which is a normal thing that happens.

3

Grieve the lost relationship. Even bad relationships can tear our hearts because we have bonded. The grieving process is unpredictable so take your time. Avoid watching them on social media or asking others how they are doing. This can confuse everyone.

4

Journal your story to process thoughts and emotions. Let your journaling repair the damage you have experienced. Do not let it cause you more pain by reliving the issues or getting stuck in the pain.

5

Do not assume their thoughts or that they are doing well. It is common to compare and think they are not hurting like you are. Remember that we all have a private life and a public life. They do not always match. They have to be alone with their thoughts too even if it appears they are doing okay.

6

Wish them well. Even if they are 99% guilty of all the problems, no one needs help being torn down. Recognize they struggle having good relational skills and wish them well in learning these skills. Your pain does not need to harm them. Remain gentle. Nothing good comes from getting even, putting them down or hoping bad things for them.

7

Gather support but be very careful of gossiping. Processing is helpful but should be done with someone not close to the situation to protect everyone. Watch your motive to make sure you are not wanting the other person to dislike them.

8

Focus on what you can control and let go of the rest. There are things that went wrong but not everything can or will be fixed. Allow for those unchangeable things and use your acceptance skills.

9

Increase your self-care. Do not stay in bed or avoid others. Make sure you are eating healthy and exercising. Self-care can be an important factor in moving through the grieving process.

10

Evaluate all endings. No matter the situation, you had a part to play and can ALWAYS learn something about yourself. Take time to evaluate your part in order to avoid repeating those patterns. Remain humble.

Can you think of a relationship that ended that you learned from the situation? Explain.

Be sure to be safe when ending relationships. Get support if needed. If safe, do so in person and be clear on your reasons and needs. Be ready to handle difficult responses. The other person may cry, become angry, start a fight or any of many kinds of responses. Do not let yourself get derailed by their behaviors or opinions. But be realistic afterward to do self-reflection to best understand what went wrong to avoid it again in the future. Work on yourself before getting into a new relationship.

Intimate Relationships



Better together - We are designed to be in relationships and many people find great joy from intimate relationships. Unfortunately, our culture does not have a strong track record in maintaining these relationships. Many people think that is because of a lack of commitment. That could be, but it may actually have more to do with how we pick or choose a mate.

Moving too quickly into relationships and therefore do not give adequate time to really get to know someone. Divorce is usually what happens when one or both partners think someone else will fulfill them. However, the statistics show this thinking is faulty. 41% of first marriages end in marriage while 60% of second marriages end in divorce and a whopping 73% of third marriages end in divorce. So it does not seem divorcing and

finding the right person the next time around is working very well.

So then people determined that failure is not an option so they decided to live together in order to get to know each other before getting married. Yet statistics again show this thinking to have errors. Up to 85% of people who lived together before marriage or never get married end up divorcing or breaking up. This is higher than those who get married!

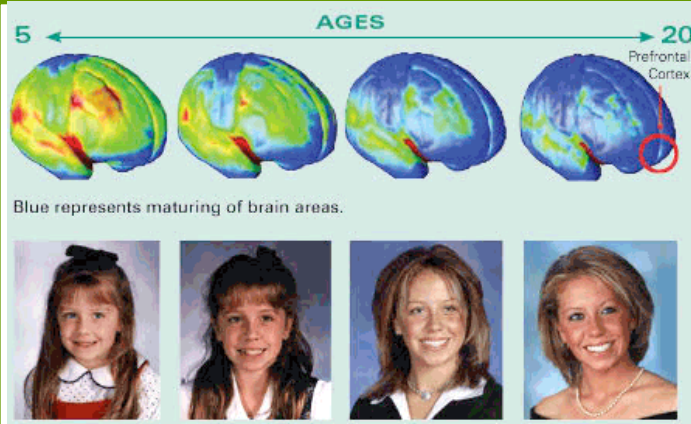
No one goes into a relationship expecting to break up. It is interesting that countries where they still have arranged marriages tend to rate themselves happier than most American marriages. The reason might have to do with three major differences in how they view marriage.

1. Cultures where arranged marriages occur are done so by the family. The family is able to see things about their child that maybe the child cannot see. Ever known someone in a relationship that you could tell was not good but they could not? When we are too emotionally involved, it is hard to see the truth. Love is blind is an accurate statement here. We live independent lives where they live interdependent lives.

2. Marriage is considered as an entity that benefits the

community. Stronger marriages and families make healthy communities. People in those cultures feel they have a responsibility to their community (other-centered) rather than their own happiness. They do not think this is a bad thing like we do. We like to choose ourselves and only remain if we are happy.

3. Marriage is a contractual arrangement much like a business partnership. Seen this way each partner is committed to making things work and realize that true love is an action word (Agape) and not a feeling. Americans tend to view love as an emotion. When that emotion no longer exists we begin questioning the relationship.



Early Dating

Some of the best predictors of successful marriages are ability to trust, be compatible, communicate and handle conflict. The number one predictor is the ability of both partners to repair after conflict.

The ability to repair, as well as all the other predictors mentioned, require a mature brain. Entering into relationships at a young age can actually damage brain development as young girls and boys' brains are unable to cope with the emotional strain of relationships.

The brain images above show how the brain develops at different ages. The brain's prefrontal cortex develops into our 20's. This area

is responsible for long-term planning, managing emotions and personality development. Our society is pushing pre-teens to enter into relationships so young when they are not emotionally and physically ready to.

The breakdown of families also causes kids to seek their needs outside of the family when parents are absent. They are hoping that someone being interested in them will replace the void they have from their mothers/fathers only to find out that a rocky relationship is hurtful too.

Studies show that waiting until late teens to date can reduce behavioral problems by as much as 50%. Those dating earlier were found to lie, cheat, run away, engage in unsafe sex and have emotional breakdowns and ultimately bigger trust issues than those who waited to date until their later teen year.

Engaging in extra-curricular activities, graduating school, working or volunteering have proven to lift a person's self-esteem more than early dating. Being a wise and healthy whole person before entering into a relationship can help you avoid many painful situations. Waiting for love is safer than being damaged by it too early. What are your thoughts on dating later?

Set your eyes on what is ahead.

Directions:

- All questions are “behavior” based, meaning that you are rating yourself on what you “do” rather than what you “know”.
- Answer the questions below by rating yourself as follows:

0 - Does not apply to me at all.

1 - Applies sometimes, but not often.

2 - Applies to me often.

3 - I have this one down on a regular basis.

Check the boxes of the behavior you would like to work on during this section.

Pre		Post
	I recognize that relationships have hurt me but I need them for healing.	
	I am working to eliminate how my past interferes with my ability to keep healthy relationships.	
	I watch for strong emotions triggered from the past and work to keep them separate from the present.	
	I am growing my social skills and can verbalize how I have improved.	
	I set healthy boundaries and respect them in others.	
	I am safe for others even when my emotions are strong.	
	I do not need an intimate relationship to feel whole.	
	I can emotionally attach and trust others with a healthy balance.	
	I work to repair broken areas of relationships and work toward reconciliation.	

“I Will” Statements

To get closer to my Big Hairy Goal, “I Will” do the following:

◇

◇

◇

◇

What I Got Out of This Section
