

Week #2 **Stressful Relationships.** Telka Arend-Ritter LMSW

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In this material you will learn 7 tools:

Tool #1 Stressful Thought Inventory: Passive, Assertive or Aggressive Thoughts?

Tool #2 Range of Human Responses Inventory Passive → Assertive → Aggressive

Tool #3 27 Rights for Healthier Relationships,

Tool #4 Good to Know File & Reasonable Expectations

Tool #5 Checkers Tool- Healthy Boundaries

Tool #6 Practice assertive communication until you are confident.

Tool #7 Words to lose, words to use.

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As you journey through this workbook, be aware that healing “stressful relationships” is a difficult task. Stage 1 of emotional healing requires that you identify and experience YOUR feelings, choices and roles in stressful relationships. This will be painful and difficult.

Be loving and gentle with yourself as you work through this chapter. Take responsibility without blaming yourself or others.

Remember Maya Angelou’s words, “*you do the best you know how, and when you know better, you do better.*”

Remember that you are human.

Cherie Carter-Scott’s Rules for Being Human. Guidelines for life

1. **You will learn lessons.** You are enrolled in a full-time school called “life on planet Earth.” Every person or incident is your teacher.
2. **There are no mistakes--- only lessons.** “Failures” are stepping-stones to “success.”
3. **A lesson is repeated until learned.** It is presented in various forms until you learn it. If you are here, there are still lessons to be learned.
4. **If you do not learn the easy lessons, they get harder.** Pain is one way the universe gets your attention.
5. **You’ll know when you have learned a lesson when your actions change.** Only action can transform knowledge to wisdom.
6. **“There” is no better than “here.”** When “there” becomes a “here,” you’ll notice another “there” that again looks better than “here.”
7. **There is no right or wrong--- but there are consequences.** The universe never judges us; it only gives opportunities to balance and learn.
8. **Your life is up to you.** Life provides the canvas; you do the painting.
9. **Your answers lie inside you.** All you need to do is look, listen and trust.
10. **You’ll tend to forget all this.** You can remember any time you wish.

Cherie Carter-Scott Ph.D. is the author of “*If Life is a Game, These are the Rules: Ten Rules for Being Human*” Broadway: (September 15, 1998).

Stressful Relationships Overview

Relationship stress consists of the beliefs, emotions and actions of the people sharing a relationship. This week you will learn how to choose healthy, *assertive thoughts* as a tool for building and maintaining healthier relationships.

Emotional Healing requires *working through* stressful relationships

1. **Acknowledge**
2. **Learn**
3. **Let Go**

1. **Acknowledge (Identify and Experience).** **Identify** your thoughts and feelings in each relationship. **Experience** your physical emotions.

- **Aggressive** thoughts and behaviors create oppressive, domineering, or abusive relationships.
- **Passive** thoughts and behavior create dependent relationships that attract aggressive partners.
- **Assertive** thoughts and behavior create healthy relationships and attract assertive partners.

2. **Learn.** **The choices you make in relationships reflect the value that you place upon yourself.** Every relationship is an opportunity to learn. Stressful relationships offer the most challenging lessons.

- Assertive relationships make decisions based on values, not emotions.
- Assertive relationships understand personal rights and ask, “do I have the right?” and “who owns this problem?”
- Assertive relationships consider compatibility “as is,” without waiting, hoping or insisting that others’ will change.

3. **Let Go.** Once you *work through* your aggressive or passive thoughts, you are free to become an assertive person. Assertive people attract healthier relationships. They experience acceptance rather than judgment, love instead of fear.

**“Relationships-of all kinds- are like sand held in your hand.
Held loosely, with an open hand, the sand remains where it is.
The minute you close your hand and squeeze tightly to hold on, the sand trickles through your fingers.
You may hold onto some of it, but most will be spilled.
A relationship is like that.
Held loosely, with respect and freedom for the other person, it is likely to remain intact.
But hold too tightly, too possessively and the relationship slips away and is lost.”**
Author Unknown

Stressful Relationships Most Frequently Asked Question

Question: *“I worry about what other people will think, feel, say, or even what they might do. How do I overcome my fear of their response?”*

Olivia, age 21

Answer: “You wouldn’t worry so much about what others think of you if you realized how seldom they do.”
Eleanor Roosevelt.

1. You don’t actually know what other people are thinking, feeling or planning to do unless you ask them.

Your worry is based on thoughts that originated from within YOUR head, not theirs. When worried about “them” ask yourself the following questions:

- *What do I think? What are MY feelings and what will I do?*
 - *What information or evidence am I using when I assume what others will feel, think, or do?*
 - *If I think positively about “them,” what makes me assume “they” would not reciprocate?*
 - *If, on the other hand, I think of “them” negatively, then don’t “they” also have the right to judge me as negatively?*
- 2. Let’s assume “they” actually have negative thoughts, feelings or actions toward you. So what?** What exactly is so worrisome about conflict, criticism, judgment, or an opposing view? Is this simply an opportunity to “agree to disagree” or is your life in danger?

Perhaps your thought process works like this:

“If they don’t like what I say → then they will be mad at me → then they will reject me... → then I will feel shame, guilt... → then I will be unloved ... → I will be alone forever.... Oh No! then I’ll become an unlovable outcast with a miserable lonely life!

Is this thought process even true? Are you in relationships with people who condemn, reject or shun each other when a difference of opinion arises?

Seriously?

If yes, if your thought process is true, then you may want to re-evaluate the health of your relationship. You may be in an oppressive, toxic or even abusive relationship. Would you recommend a relationship like this to someone you care about?

If your thought process is not true, if your thought is a scary story that you made up in your head, ...then challenge your fear. Have a conversation. *“I was afraid to speak with you because the story I made up in my head was that you would get mad at me. I was afraid of your reaction. I realize now that I need to be honest with you. You have a right to whatever you think or feel without me censoring, editing, or making up stories.”*

Tool #1 Stressful thought inventory **Passive, Assertive or Aggressive?**

Relationship interactions range from **passive** → **assertive** → **aggressive** responses. **Understanding yourself requires your ability to accurately identify when your own thoughts or statements fall into the range of passive/victim to aggressive/bully.** When I first learned about this range of thinking, I thought I would only relate to assertive thoughts...I mean, I am a therapist, right?! Upon further reflection, asking my husband if he really wanted to wear *those socks* while he was mowing the lawn... was a tad controlling. Not mean, just not my business. He had not asked for a comment from the fashion police. I also noticed my habit of overloading my schedule, but then complaining that I never had enough time—sounded a tad “victimie”. Do any of the sentences below feel familiar to you?

Personal inventory: Identify your thoughts*. Check each statement you identify with.

Section 1:



1. “They make me feel like I can’t do anything right.”
2. “I never get to do what I want to do.”
3. “Parents manipulate and control me by making me feel guilty.”
4. “I’m afraid I’ll hurt someone’s feelings if I am honest.”
5. “I hate conflict so I just give in. It’s easier that way.”

Section 2:



1. “If they would just follow my advice, they wouldn’t have a problem.”
2. “I have to yell to get what I want. They never listen.”
3. “If I don’t step in and fix their problems, they will ruin their lives!”
4. “I’m usually right, so I insist that others listen to me.”
5. “I wouldn’t have to be so mean if they would not be so stupid.”



Scoring Section 1. Thoughts endorsed in Section 1 are *passive* thoughts. Passive thinking leads to martyrdom and playing the victim. Although passive thinking people claim to be powerless or feel used, they often attempt to gain control through inflicting guilt or expressing passive dependency. Passive thoughts avoid taking responsibility for personal change and growth. Passive people feel selfish, guilty, or unworthy when advocating for self-care. **Blinded by fear of conflict, passive thinking often lacks insight regarding the harm that passive dependency causes.** Passive people truly believe their passivity is just being “nice.”

Scoring Section 2. Thoughts endorsed in Section A are *aggressive* thoughts. These thoughts violate other people’s rights to make their own decisions and to be responsible for their own lives. Aggressive thinking leads to bullying, domineering, controlling, and manipulating behavior. Aggressive thinking lacks empathy and struggles with compromise. Aggressive thoughts will engage in scorekeeping, power struggles and may even justify verbal, emotional, or physical abuse. **Blinded by the thought that they “are right” aggressive thinking lacks insight regarding its toxicity.** Aggressive people truly believe their aggression is “for another’s own good”.

Tool # 2 Range of Human Responses Inventory

Our emotional responses to our relationships vary based on experiences, mood, situation, and the people involved. Which of these matches your responses with family, friends, and others?

- Check all items that represent your thoughts and feelings in various relationships. Yes, you may choose multiple columns. *It is common to range from passive to aggressive, depending on the circumstances or your own stress level or triggers.

Passive: Shut Up!	Assertive Problem Solve & Negotiate	Aggressive Blow Up!
<p style="text-align: center;">PASSIVE RESPONSE </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Violates self. <i>Afraid if I speak up, they won't like me.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Low self-esteem. <i>Everyone is better than me.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Blames self. <i>Everything is my fault.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Excessive guilt & shame. <i>Feels guilty about everything.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Dependent. <i>People pleaser, fear of disapproval, fear of being alone.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Afraid of failure. <i>Mistakes cause shame.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Overly responsible. <i>Feels responsible for everyone.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Learned helplessness. <i>Why bother? Give up, give in.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Dishonest. <i>Withholds truth to avoid conflict, don't rock the boat.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Victim. <i>Depression & anxiety are the expressed emotions.</i> 	<p style="text-align: center;">ASSERTIVE RESPONSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Honors self and others. <i>Healthy boundaries, self-respect.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy self-esteem. <i>All people are equally valuable.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Seeks solutions rather than blame. <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy guilt. <i>Guilt aligned with values.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Independent. <i>My sense of who I am does not depend on your approval.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Learns from mistakes. <i>Mistakes are expected, no shame.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Responsible adult. <i>Responsible for own actions.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Flexible problem solver. <i>Problem solver, not faultfinder.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Honesty and integrity. <i>Aligns words and actions with personal values.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Negotiator, leader. <i>Manages all emotions by coping, learning, and leading.</i> 	<p style="text-align: center;">AGGRESSIVE RESPONSE </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Violates others. <i>Disregard for rights of others.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Grandiose self-esteem. <i>I'm better than everyone.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Blames everyone else. <i>Fingers pointing at others.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> No guilt/shame. <i>You asked for it, you made me.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Domineering. <i>My way or the highway.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Doesn't admit mistakes. <i>Blames others, never apologize.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Avoids responsibility. <i>Takes credit, never the blame.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Rigid, polarized, all or nothing thinking. <input type="checkbox"/> Dishonest. <i>Say anything to get own way.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Bully. <i>Anger & hostility are the expressed emotions.</i>

Tool # 3 27 Rights for Healthier Relationships

Healthy relationships— ask not “am I right?” Ask instead “do I have the right?”

Need rights? Boundaries? Assertiveness? Negotiation skills? Many troubled relationships become stuck between communication styles that vary between passive/avoidant or domineering/aggressive. If conflict triggers you to either “shut-up or blow-up”, you may benefit from understanding how to respect your rights and the rights of others using these 27 rights in healthy relationships.

Your emotional intelligence improves when you align your thoughts and your actions with your values. This alignment helps you become a healthier relationship role model. As you consider these rights, first focus only on yourself. These are YOUR rights. Then take a moment to consider the rights of others. **Remember that EVERYONE has these rights, even those annoying people who you don’t like.**

1. *I have the right to make decisions based on my own values, standards and beliefs.
2. I have the right to be responsible for my decisions, my emotions and my behavior.
3. I have the right to experience the consequences of my choices.
4. I say YES when I mean YES and NO when I mean NO.
5. **I have the right to say NO without feeling guilty.
6. I have the right to trust myself enough to experience all my emotions.
7. I have the right to treat myself and others with dignity and respect.
8. *I have the right to protect myself by ending conversations when I feel violated, afraid, angry, unsafe or for any reason that I choose.
9. *I have the right not to take responsibility for another’s problems, actions or feelings.
10. *I have the right to learn from my mistakes and to allow others to learn from their mistakes.
11. *I have a right to accept myself and others as human without having to be perfect.
12. *I have the right to allow myself and others to grow and change without judgment, comparison or competition.
13. *I have the right to allow myself and others to live in the present moment without the past as a weapon or baggage.
14. *I have the right to take my time.

15. *I have the right to change my mind.
16. I have the right to feel happy, relaxed and safe.
17. In every moment, I am responsible for whether I choose love or I choose fear.
18. I have the right to detach or let go.
19. I have the right to be comfortable with my beauty.
20. I am responsible for the value that I place upon myself.
21. I can trust in myself and trust others who EARN my trust.
22. I am responsible for when I choose to feel wounded.
23. ***I have the right to take care of myself first. “Self-First” is not selfish.
24. I have the right to “be the change I seek.”
25. I am responsible for the life I have chosen.
26. I have the right to forget all of these rights.
27. I can remember them anytime I wish.

Assertive thoughts were inspired and adapted with permission by Charles Whitfield M.D. The Personal Bill of Rights in Healing the Child Within (1987).

Application: Yes these are yours and everyone’s rights, but

*“What if “they don’t respect my rights?” “What if I FEEL guilty?”
“What if they said I was selfish when I disagreed with them?”*

Below are the explanations for the most frequently asked questions about these rights in relationships.

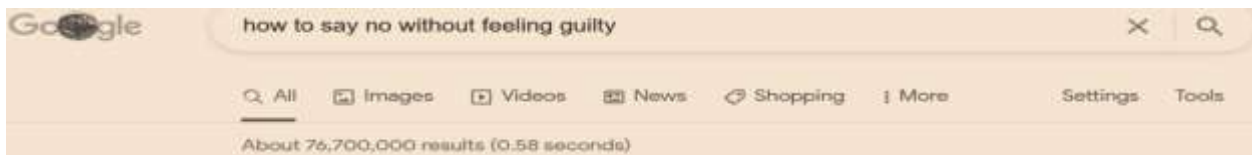
***Differentiate between your personal relationships and your professional, career and workplace relationships.** Red Numbers preceded with *(#1, and #8 through #15) may not apply while you are a member of the armed services, representing an organization or professional licensing standards, working on the clock, or salaried on company payroll. Within contractual agreements and labor law guidelines, your employer has the right to enforce job requirements: codes of conduct, performance standards, production quotas and company policies. Personal rights are also subject to societal norms and health and safety laws. **As we learned during the Covid-19 pandemic, individual rights are restricted if an individual’s actions endanger the lives of the community.**

**** # 5. I have the right to say NO without feeling guilty.**

Saying no without feeling guilty is a confusing thought for people who tend to feel guilty about everything. Further insight may help clarify this point. Moral people feel guilt when their thoughts and actions are not aligned with their values. This type of guilt is *healthy guilt*. **Healthy guilt functions like the breaks and steering on a car. Healthy guilt helps us slow down and notice when we are about to make a wrong turn. Once identified, remorse and corrective action will transform healthy guilt into a learning opportunity.**

What if, however, you say that you feel guilty when you did nothing wrong? If your actions were aligned with your values, if you treated others as you wish to be treated... then using the word guilt is not accurate. For example, *“I felt guilty when I asked him to wear a mask during the pandemic.”* You may feel uncomfortable, but did you do anything wrong or bad? Did you violate your values or standards? If not, then you might have a vocabulary issue, not a guilt problem. A larger emotional vocabulary helps replace the word “guilt”. Instead, ask yourself, “did I feel disappointed? Conflicted? Embarrassed? Sad? Vulnerable? Irritated? Worried? Fearful?” **Using the correct emotional label helps eliminate the unnecessary shame often attached to unhealthy guilt.** Notice each time you use the word “guilt”. Think deeper... were you bad or evil? If yes, then good for you. Insightful people use guilt as a guide toward corrective action. If you were not bad or evil, let yourself develop a more accurate emotional vocabulary. Correct emotional language helps you understand yourself better.

“I no longer feel guilty when I say no. Honesty is nothing to feel guilty about. I respect myself and maintain my dignity when I am honest. I can practice tactful ways to disagree or say no. I can even Google “how to say no” if I need help!”



***** # 23. I have the right to take care of myself first. “Self-First” is not selfish.**

If you feel selfish taking care of yourself, do you also struggle with unhealthy guilt? Many people were raised to believe that attending to their own needs is selfish. This message may be the result of surviving a dysfunctional childhood, or a trauma event. The message could stem from a religious or cultural history of suffering, oppression, or martyrdom. **The intention of “self-first” in the context of healthy relationships, is to function like an independent adult.** An airplane analogy is usually helpful to understand why self-first is not selfish. In the event of an emergency, airline passengers are instructed to secure their own oxygen mask first, before assisting a child or the person acting like a child. Using this analogy, failure to take care of your own needs first, may result in your becoming dead weight in the aisle, blocking the exit for everyone.

Taking care of yourself gives you the mental, physical, and emotional ability to align your actions with your values. What advice would you give your beloveds? Take responsibility for meeting your own needs, then enter the world and be the best version of you, serving as a role model, fulfilling your purpose of service to others.

Tool # 4 “Good to Know” File & Reasonable Expectations

“Good To know” File Now that you have identified your rights and understand that EVERYONE shares these rights, it’s time to put them into a mental file.



The **“Good to Know” File** is a mindfulness tool. You create this mental file by acknowledging information at face value. **You receive information without judgement, fear or emotional reaction.** Rather than become wounded, guilty, angry or fearful, you simply acknowledge the information as data. *“It is what it is.”* You can use your “good to know” file to store information that will help you determine a response that is both logical and aligned with your values.”

Example: When someone has a pattern of lying to you, or a pattern of being critical of you, rather than responding with denial, anger, shame or defensiveness, simply place that piece of information in your “good to know” file. The next time this person speaks to you, pull up the file. **This file allows you to use insight, logic and reason to make a choice about your response.** Your logic and use of this historic file of past events helps you establish **reasonable expectations** of this relationship.

Reasonable Expectations: Apple Tree or Pine Tree?

Your “good to know file” is most useful when combined with “reasonable expectations.” I use the following tree analogy to clarify “reasonable expectations.”

Imagine that an apple tree represents a healthy relationship. The apple tree bares the fruit of **emotional intelligence, love, trust, respect, loyalty, empathy, compassion, communication, conflict negotiation and problem-solving.**



Now imagine that a pine tree represents an unhealthy relationship (Ranges from **Passive/Avoidant to Domineering /Aggressive**). The pine tree needles cause **fear, disrespect, distrust, deception, anger, betrayal, manipulation, verbal or emotional abuse** and perhaps even **addictions or violence.**

Using this analogy, ask yourself if, while sitting under the pine tree, “am I expecting an apple?” People often complain, “they *NEVER listen to me!*” or “*I was cheated AGAIN.*” And “*I can’t believe they KEEP doing that!*”

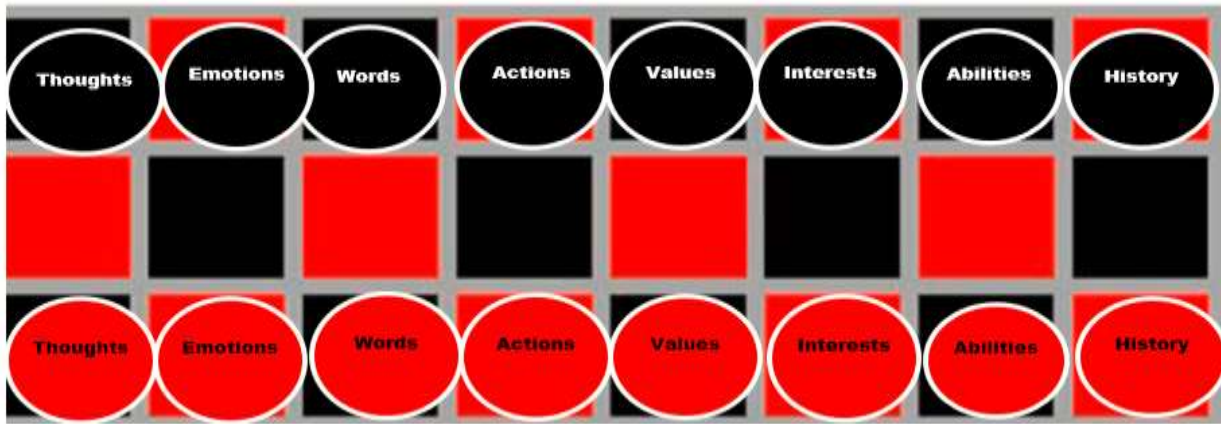
Are you climbing a pine tree, looking for apples? Are you mad every time you get poked by another needle in the same tree? What did you expect?

- ✓ Use your “good to know” file to collect information about people. Notice whether or not their words match their actions. People’s choices and actions reveal character.
- ✓ Once collected, use the data in the file to determine whether you have realistic expectations about your relationships. Realistic expectations improve emotional intelligence by eliminating denial and building stronger boundaries, healthier relationships.

Tool #5 Boundary Tool: Checkers Moves

Popular culture has coined multiple analogies for relationship boundaries—
 “Good fences make good neighbors.”
 “Stay in your own lane.”
 “You do you.”

This visual of a checkerboard and an analogy of playing a board game are another useful tool to understand what’s fair play as you look deeply into your patterns of interacting in relationships. If you can play checkers, you can easily learn how to set healthy relationship boundaries. You would never reach across the board and move another player’s checker, right? You understand that other adults have the right to maneuver their checkers, even if they do so in ways that you believe are silly or reckless. You also understand that you must play your own game, no one else can play it for you.



Just like checkers, relationship boundaries have rules. Boundaries help you understand what does and does not belong to you, what moves you have the right to make and what moves are off limits, or cheating.

Relationship Rules:

It’s not about BEING right, it’s about HAVING the right.

1. Every adult has their own set of checkers. (What belongs to them, their own boundaries.) Relationship boundaries, like the board game, begin by acknowledging the difference between what belongs to you, is your right and your responsibility, and what belongs to someone else, is their right and their responsibility. In this analogy, checkers represent everything that belongs to each person: **○Thoughts ○Emotions ○Words ○Actions ○Values ○Interests ○Abilities ○History.**

2. Your checkers belong to You.

○ You have thoughts inside of your head and you make choices about your thoughts. (*Your thoughts are your move. NO ONE ELSE DECIDES FOR YOU OR CONTROLS WHAT YOU THINK.*)

○**You are responsible for your own emotions** (*NO ONE MAKES YOU FEEL ANYTHING. Others may trigger your emotions, but your emotions, inside of your body, belong to you. Another person's emotions are their "checker".*)

○**You select your own words** (*Your voice belongs to you. It's your checker.*)

○**You are responsible for your actions and inactions.** (*NO ONE MAKES YOU DO ANYTHING. Another's action may trigger your reaction... but your actions are your checkers*)

○**Checkers are adaptive and fluid.** You have the right to evolve and grow at your own pace, Although some details of your life story are facts, your perceptions, interpretations and life lessons learned will evolve based on levels of insight and resilience.

3. No blaming allowed. Each person is responsible for their own checkers.

4. You are only allowed to strategize and move your own checkers. Unsolicited advice about someone else's checkers is called nagging. Even when you *think* you are right, you don't *have the right*.

5. No "Shoulding" on people. Because each person has the right to their own thoughts, emotions, and values, you are cheating when you "should" on others. Notice their moves, then strategize your response.

Playing Tips: For best results, use the *Emotional Onion Tool, 27 Rights Tool, Good to Know File and Reasonable Expectations Tools.

1. To avoid cheating, ask yourself: "Whose checker is this? Who owns this problem? Whose move is it?" If you spend a lot of mental energy thinking about other people's lives, you can even ask, "**whose checkerboard is this?**"

Your parent's relationship with each other, your siblings' relationships with your parents, your adult children's relationships with their other parent or with each other... ALL OF THOSE RELATIONSHIPS ARE NOT ON YOUR CHECKER BOARD.

2. Doing nothing, including avoidance and procrastination are all moves.

3. Mistakes are expected and part of the game, you are allowed to learn and grow, offering the same respect to other players. Learning and growth requires the ability to notice mistakes, take corrective action and offer apologies. Use the Healthy Trust Tool to help with this.

4. Mature adults can be told no without throwing a tantrum. Just sayin.

*Emotional Onion Tool is located in www.TelkaArend-Ritter.com under the tools section labeled Anger Tools. 27 Rights Tools, Good to Know File & Reasonable Expectations are located in www.TelkaArend-Ritter.com under the tools section labeled Relationship Tools.

Tool #6 Practice Assertive Communication— 7 Tips.

1. **Write out** your assertive dialog until you are comfortable with your wording.
2. **Practice** assertive conversations out loud by yourself. No, that is not weird.
3. **Rehearse** difficult conversations with trusted people before you address a stressful person.
4. **Listen to great communicators** and notice how they navigate difficult conversations.
5. **Do-over:** Know that you will mess this up. Sometimes emotions flood your body and trigger fight/flight/freeze response, but that is why you are practicing! You can clean-up a messy conversation by asking for a do-over. **Apologies build trust and respect when they are delivered authentically with the intention of improving understanding and building connection.**

6. Advocating for yourself, setting limits and maintaining boundaries sounds like this:

- *“My personal time is important to me. I will schedule more time to myself.”*
- *“I need time to think this over. I’ll have my answer tomorrow.”*
- *“I have the right to have access to this information.”*
- *“I deserve to be treated with respect.”*
- *“I need to know I can depend on you.”*
- *“I don’t allow smoking inside, but you are welcome to use the patio.”*
- *“I turn off my phone at 9:00 p.m. I will contact you in the morning.”*
- *“I’m sorry, I never lend money. I don’t want loans to damage our relationship.”*
- *“I prefer to keep my personal life private.”*
- *“I will let you know which of my photos or information is ok to post on Facebook.”*
- *“Because this is my problem I must do what I think is best.”*
- *“I am happy to be your (insert relationship preference) But I am not able to be your (insert relationship boundaries).”*
 - *Examples: I am happy to be your friend, but I can’t be your: boss/ therapist /roommate/ bank/ caregiver /date/ employee etc..*

7. Addressing conflict sounds like this:

- *“Help me understand how you thought this was ok after I had said no.”*
- *“Are you angry with me or is something else bothering you?”*
- *“We have an incompatibility issue on this topic, how would you like to problem-solve?”*
- *“I am not upset that you lied, I am sad that I can no longer trust you.”*
- *“I want to clear the air about something, when are you free to talk?”*
- *“I understand that you are upset about my rules. I still value our relationship and I hope that you do to.”*
- *“I will discuss this with you after we both have had a chance to calm down.”*
- *“This is not the place to have this discussion. Let’s find a more private location.”*

Tool #7 Words to Use and Words to Lose

Still need more practice calming down those emotional responses
by tuning into your [wise mind](#)?

Words to Lose, Words to Use Practice Tool

Words to Lose



"What's your problem?"

"That's not true and you know it!"

"Why can't you just do what I say?"

"Shut Up! I can't stand your yelling!"

"You are so stubborn! "

"You are too rough."

"Quit complaining."

"No I can't help you, I'm overloaded."

"Don't interrupt!"

"How could you be so stupid?"

"This is all your fault!"

*"If you didn't make me mad,
I wouldn't have blown up."*

"I hate you. You are such a @#!"*

Words to Use



"How may I help?"

"You and I view this differently."

"I'd like to work this out with you."

*"Please lower your voice. You are
hurting my ears."*

"We both have very strong opinions."

"I prefer your gentler touch."

"This is really hard for you."

*"I can help you as soon as I finish my
other work."*

"You'll have your turn in a moment."

"Help me understand what happened."

*"It's easy to assign blame, let's take a
moment to think this through."*

"I get mad when that happens."

"I can't talk right now, I'm too mad."

Words to LOSE



“You never help me.”

“You never listen to me.”

“You love them more than you love me.”

“You treat your friends better than you treat me.”

“You’re crazy!”

“Why does everything have to be your way?”

“You think you know everything.”

“What made you think I care?”

“You are so mean !!”

“I can’t talk to you!”

“I never understand you!”

“I hate being responsible for everything.”

“You never talk to me!”

“You are being difficult”

Words to USE



“I need to be able to depend on you.”

“I need to know that you hear me.”

“I feel insecure and jealous about your other relationships.”

“I’d like to be treated as respectfully as you treat your friends.”

“I’m having trouble understanding you right now.”

“I’d like to work with you toward a solution we both feel good about.”

“You sound very confident about this.”

“I’m sorry, I just can’t deal with this right now.”

“This is not love.” “I will not participate in this level of interaction.”

“I want to be able to talk to you”

“Tell me more, I want to understand.”

“I’d like to share the responsibilities more equally.”

“Help me understand how I am difficult to talk to.”

“This seems difficult for you, tell me more. Help me understand.”