

M O D U L E

# 01

## HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

# Life Skills & Employment Success

## Module 1 - Healthy Relationships

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# MODULE 1

## HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

PAGE 3 - SECTION 1 - UNDERSTANDING TEMPERAMENTS

PAGE 22 - SECTION 2 - EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

PAGE 32 - SECTION 3 - SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

PAGE 43 - SECTION 4 - DEVELOPING TRUST

PAGE 54 - SECTION 5 - COMMUNICATION & INTIMACY

PAGE 67 - SECTION 6 - COMMUNICATION SKILLS

PAGE 78 - SECTION 7 - CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Module 1  
Section 1

# UNDERSTANDING TEMPERAMENTS

You can improve your relationships  
once you better understand  
yourself and others.

# IN THIS SECTION YOU WILL:

Learn the differences between  
temperament and personality.

Discover how to identify your own  
temperament and the temperament of  
others.

Recognize strengths and weaknesses in  
each temperament type.

Find ways to improve your relationships  
and reduce conflict.

# UNDERSTANDING TEMPERAMENTS

## The Story of Taylor and Jamie

Taylor and Jamie met through their friends who thought they would get along. Taylor was immediately impressed by Jamie's calm and peaceful nature - the kind of person who was easy to be around. Jamie liked that Taylor was confident and accomplished. They got married and everything felt perfect for a while... but soon Taylor noticed that Jamie seemed lazy and unmotivated. Jamie, on the other hand, became annoyed by Taylor's demands and pushiness. The qualities that brought them together now seemed like annoying weaknesses. Their relationship followed the pattern of "opposites attract, then attack". They became more frustrated with each other and both wondered...

## Why Can't You Be More Like... Me?

This kind of situation happens a lot in relationships. At first, we appreciate the differences in others, but eventually we start wishing they were more like us. Sometimes, we even try to change the other person. We might point out what

we think are their "flaws", criticize or nag them, or make them feel ashamed, hoping they will change. But it doesn't work. Each of us has certain traits that seem to be a part of who we are since we were born. When we understand these traits and how they affect us and our approach to life, we can learn to manage them. Most importantly, when we understand ourselves and others, we have a better chance of bringing out the best in both of us instead of the worst.

## What is the Difference Between Temperament and Personality?

**Temperament** refers to the traits that you are born with. They are natural to you and they influence how you see the world and what motivates you. While you can develop traits from other temperaments (it's good to have a balance), generally you feel most comfortable with your own type. On the other hand, your **personality** can change. Your experiences, temperament, genetics, environment, and more can all influence your personality. What you believe about your experiences affects your thoughts and attitudes. And your thoughts, attitudes, and feelings affect how you behave.

When your responses to situations happen over and over again, it creates your character or personality. It goes like this...

### **Belief - Attitude - Behavior - Character**

Your experiences can affect your values, thoughts, behaviors, abilities, emotional patterns, interests, preferences, etc. and all of these can change over time.

### **What Does Temperament Mean?**

Over 2000 years ago, there was a Greek doctor named Hippocrates who is known as the father of medicine. He noticed that people had certain traits that he put into 4 categories. He saw that people usually had one main type and another secondary type. Since people were a mix of 2 types, this was called "temperament," which means "to mix" in Latin. After that, many tests were made to help people understand themselves better. Some of these tests are called DISC, Myers-Briggs, Kiersey-Bates, and others. The results of these tests usually divide people into the same four groups. Some groups are identified by letters, while others use numbers or colors.

One way to remember these four temperament types is by thinking of them as different countries. Larry Bilotta changed the original names into modern terms and described them as Control, Fun, Perfect, and Peace. Each of these

"countries" has its own language and ways of doing things.

### **Welcome to Control Country**

People from Control Country love to be in charge and take the lead. They want to accomplish tasks and goals. They are good at being leaders, taking action, setting goals, and being confident and independent. Sometimes, they focus so much on their goals that they don't think about how they treat others. They might interrupt others or talk too much without listening. They can also be abrupt and intense. Even though they seem like they don't need anything, they actually need to be appreciated. If they don't feel appreciated, they can become sad. They might try to find appreciation from others if they don't get it from the people closest to them.



When they are at their best, they can be born leaders, quick to take action, goal-setters, have confidence, and be bold and independent. If people from Control Country don't feel appreciated, they can act bossy, impatient, easily angered, demanding, and like they know everything.

## Let's Visit Fun Country

People from Fun Country like to smile and laugh. They can find humor in almost anything and even laugh at themselves. They are open and enjoy being around people. They always want to have fun.

It's important for them to be noticed, but sometimes people from other countries think they get noticed enough. Sometimes, people see them as unstable because they have emotional highs and lows.

When they are at their best, they are inspiring, optimistic, sincere, enthusiastic, fun-loving, social, and the life of the party. When their biggest needs are not met - to be noticed, validated, and understood - they act their worst. Fun Country people can become irresponsible, fake, talk too much, lack discipline, and get easily distracted.



## Onto Perfect Country

What's most important for people from Perfect Country is "getting it right". They are good at paying attention to details and they want things to be perfect and exact. They like things to be organized and structured, and sometimes they use a lot of words to say very little.

People often mistake them for being from Control Country, which can make them upset. But Perfect Country people don't want to control things - they just want everything to be right before they can move on.

They have a desire to make things better and as perfect as possible, even when it comes to people. A person from Perfect Country may point out things that are not perfect in someone else, but they don't mean it as an insult. They do it because they care and want the other person to know how they can improve (even though most people don't take it that way!). These people are often very creative and sensitive.

Because others may think Perfect Country people are being critical or mean, they might think it's okay to be mean back or to treat them roughly. But in reality, Perfect Country people get hurt deeply and have a hard time letting go of those hurts. Forgiving others can be difficult for them because their hearts are so open and sensitive. They take things to heart, and when they get hurt too much, they start thinking that they will never be good enough.

When people from Perfect Country feel understood and supported, they are creative, organized, thoughtful, idealistic, loyal, determined, and caring. Unfortunately, they are often misunderstood and can become moody and sad, remember the bad things, spend too much time planning, feel unsure of themselves, and have very high standards.

### **Final Stop: Peace Country**

People from Peace Country just want everyone to get along so that they can have a peaceful life without conflicts. They are relaxed and calm, and they are okay with having moments of silence in conversations. Peace Country people also like to cooperate and follow the rules, which can sometimes make them get pushed around by people from other countries. Control people want them to be more productive, Fun people want them to be more excited about life, and Perfect people want to show them how to be better.



People in Peace Country will go along with things as long as they are not pushed too far. If they feel insulted or not respected for who they are, they will back away.

Peace Country people understand the idea of working smarter, not harder because they like to be efficient and use as little energy as possible to get things done. They can surprise others with unexpected humor.

Peace Country people are usually calm and easy to get along with, but it can be difficult for them to achieve peace because they try to avoid conflict at all costs. Sometimes, people need to resolve conflicts in order to find peace, and this can be challenging for Peace Country people.

When they are at their best, they are good listeners, patient, funny, capable, patient, and easy-going. However, if they are not respected, they can become unmotivated, stubborn, fearful, shy, worried, and indecisive.

## Resolving Conflicts

Most of the time, when people argue, there is a deeper reason behind it. Let's look at an example of a fight between Taylor and Jamie that happens again and again.

On the surface, it seems like they are fighting because Jamie doesn't help out enough around the house. Jamie is mad because Taylor expects too much and wants chores to be done on a day off from work. Taylor is mad because Jamie is lazy and doesn't do enough.

To solve the fight, Taylor (Control Country) could try not to disrespect Jamie (Peace Country) and instead understand that Jamie values rest and relaxation. Taylor could also remind Jamie that after a few chores are done, the rest of the day can be peaceful. Jamie could show appreciation for everything Taylor does and suggest a compromise to work for only part of their day off.

A good way to handle any fight is to first stop and try to see things from the other person's point of view. Really listen and try to understand what might be going on underneath. Second, acknowledge what the other person is saying. This doesn't mean you agree, but it means you can understand why they might think that way. When the other person feels understood, they are more likely to listen to your point of view and understand how you see things differently.

## Practicing the Languages

It's important to know what motivates other people so we can relate to them better. Let's be honest. We all like our own ways of doing things and sometimes judge others who are different from us. The more we can learn to understand each other and treat people in ways that matter to them, the fewer fights we'll have and the better our relationships will be. Remember, we are all unique, and even people from the same group will have differences (and we all have a little bit of all the groups in us). A balanced person will work to develop the strengths in all of the types and not make excuses like, "This is just how I am." At the core, what we all want is to be fully known and loved and accepted.

“. . . LET EVERYONE BE QUICK TO HEAR, SLOW TO SPEAK, AND SLOW TO ANGER . . .” JAMES 1:19

## Notes



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1

Which two temperament types do you think are most like you?

2

What "country" traits do you recognize in people you know?

3

What traits from each country do you most appreciate and what traits are more difficult for you?

4

Will understanding temperament differences change the way you treat others?

5

What do people tend to misunderstand about you?

6

Are there areas of your personality you would like to change?

7

What beliefs and attitudes, and behaviors would need to be different?

8

What experiences can you identify that have influenced your beliefs, attitudes or feelings, and your behavior?

# PRACTICE, ROLE PLAY, OR JUST MORE TO CONSIDER

1 If you want to convince some friends to take a trip with you, depending on what temperament style they have, what words would you use?

2 Think of a situation where people with differing temperaments need to work together (a job, project, etc.). In what ways might each one be helpful and contribute? What could be some potential challenges?

3 Think about a conflict you have had with someone in which you have a relationship.

Talk about or role play how else the conflict might have gone if you had used some of the skills presented such as -

- listen more and first (instead of trying to get the other person to hear your point of view)
- look for other hidden hurts or misunderstandings that may be fueling the conflict
- try to understand the other person's viewpoint
- validate them (not necessarily agree)
- express your viewpoint or needs

## What is your temperament type combination?

Below are columns with descriptive words. Decide if that word describes you and put a scoring number by it. Be completely honest and don't answer how you **want** to be. Think about what comes naturally to you. Some words are flattering, and some are unflattering - still be as honest as you can. Cross out or put a 0 by words that are - not at all like you or usually not like you.

3 = That is **usually me**    4 = That is **mostly me**    5 = That is **definitely me**

Column 1	Column 2
___ Determined	___ Funny
___ Goal-oriented	___ Emotional
___ Decisive	___ Impulsive
___ Outgoing	___ Outgoing
___ Domineering	___ Spontaneous
___ Competitive	___ Talkative
___ Likes to get the job done	___ Forgetful
___ Strong-willed	___ Popular
___ Persuasive	___ Disorganized
___ Outspoken	___ Lives in the present
___ Practical	___ Difficulty with appointments
___ Bossy	___ Impractical
___ Resourceful	___ Easily angered
___ Bold	___ Cheerful
___ Is a leader	___ Undisciplined
___ Hot-tempered	___ Friendly/sociable
___ Self-confident	___ Interrupts others
___ Workaholic	___ Compassionate
___ Daring	___ Easily discouraged
___ Adventurous	___ Likes to play/have fun
___ Domineering	___ Restless
___ Productive	___ Sincere
___ Persevering	___ Weak-willed
___ Self-sufficient	___ Extrovert
___ Insensitive	___ Very positive
___ Quick to act	___ Inspirational
___ TOTAL	___ TOTAL

Column 3	Column 4
---- Idealistic	---- Adaptable
---- Deep-feeling	---- Easy going
---- Can be pessimistic	---- Selfish
---- Loner	---- Efficient
---- Self-sacrificing	---- Spectator of life
---- Introspective	---- Calm
---- Planner	---- Unenthusiastic
---- Perfectionist	---- Good listener
---- Analytical	---- Worrier
---- Faithful friend	---- Patient
---- Suspicious	---- Competent
---- Scheduled	---- Consistent
---- Creative	---- Lazy
---- Orderly	---- Teases others
---- Moody	---- Content
---- Detailed	---- Stubborn
---- Gifted	---- Not aggressive
---- Considerate	---- Regular daily habits
---- Hard to please	---- Indecisive
---- Sensitive	---- Stingy
---- Indecisive	---- Witty / dry humor
---- Insecure	---- Pleasant
---- High standards	---- Shy
---- Critical	---- Negative
---- Persistent	---- Submissive to others
---- Caring	---- Resists change
---- TOTAL	---- TOTAL

Add up each column. The column with the highest score is your primary temperament and the column with the next highest score is your secondary temperament. Everyone is a blend of the temperaments, but people usually have two that are most like themselves. Read on to learn more about each pair.

# WHICH “COUNTRY” AM I FROM?

Column 1 is Control Country

Column 2 is Fun Country

Column 3 is Perfect Country

Column 4 is Peace Country

**The temperament combinations and brief descriptions are as follows:**

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**Control - Fun:** These people love to stay active. They are productive and purposeful. They are also good at selling things and promoting them. Control-Fun people can motivate others and they enjoy a challenge. Sometimes they seem fearless. They can make even the toughest people like them and they are very good at talking to others. People always notice them when they are around. They are good at leading and getting things done, and other people like to follow them.

Sometimes they can be mean and have a quick temper. They often ask other people to finish something they started because they have a hard time focusing on one thing for a long time. They can also use or take advantage of other people to achieve their goals.

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**Control - Perfect:** This combination combination makes for leaders who you can count on to do a great job. They are very focused on their goals, hardworking, and capable. They can be competitive and forceful in what they do. They often succeed in any kind of business they try. They have a quick and smart mind, are great at researching, and can make decisions easily.

Weaknesses can include a tendency to act like a bossy person. This type is the most determined and their quick thinking and sarcasm can really hurt others. They may have irregular and long work habits. They can hold onto anger and unfriendliness and may have trouble getting along with others. As a parent, this type can be very strict and hard to make happy.

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**Control - Peace:** This type of person is quick and active, but also calm and cool. They take their time and don't rush into things. People like working for them because they are organized and know where they are going. They can help others use their skills without making them feel used. They rarely offend others. They are often great administrators in any job.

However, they have weaknesses too. They tend to hold onto resentment and bitterness. They may say mean things disguised as jokes, so it's hard to tell if they are making fun of someone or not. They can be very stubborn and once they make up their mind, it's hard to change it. They also have a hard time admitting their mistakes. Sometimes, their worrying side stops them from taking risks and reaching their full potential.

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**Fun - Control:** This type of temperament is very outgoing. They are happy, like being around people, and are enthusiastic. They are also organized and get things done. This type of person will do well in jobs that involve working with people, as long as the job is exciting, has variety, and involves activity. They have leadership skills that make people enjoy working for them.

People with a Fun-Control temperament are often talkative and have strong opinions. They say what they think without knowing all the facts, which can sometimes get them into trouble. They are the fun and popular person at parties, but when they feel threatened, they can become insecure and annoying. Other weaknesses include getting angry easily and trying to find reasons to justify their actions.

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**Fun - Perfect:** This type of person experiences a wide range of emotions. They can go from laughing one moment to crying the next. They genuinely feel the happiness and sadness of others. They are good with people and can make a positive impact on their lives. They can succeed in many different fields, especially public speaking, acting, music, and fine arts. They are dreamers, but they need to be careful not to let negative thoughts stop them from reaching their full potential. They are also more easily able to connect with God.

One weakness of Fun-Perfect people is that they tend to be fearful and get angry easily. They can be hard on themselves if they don't meet their high standards. They want others to admire them, which motivates them to keep doing well, but it can also make them feel insecure and afraid. They need to be careful about criticizing others, as it can push people away. They also struggle internally as their two sides compete against each other.

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**Fun - Peace:** These people are very easy to get along with and are very lovable. They are generally happy, have a good sense of humor, and are carefree. They rarely get upset and always see the positive side of things. Fun-Peace people love to tell jokes and stories. They enjoy helping others and are great at sales. They are naturally family-oriented and are loved by their children and others. They would never intentionally hurt someone.

The weaknesses of Fun-Peace people are that they lack motivation and discipline. They would rather socialize than work. They also tend to not take serious situations seriously and make jokes about them.

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**Perfect - Control:** This combination of temperaments combines the mood swings of the "Perfect" side with the determination and self-will of the "Control" side. People with this temperament have strong leadership skills and strive for perfection in everything they do. They are capable of excelling in any job and can efficiently run their own business.

However, Perfect-Control individuals need to be careful not to let negativity affect them. Although they don't stay in a negative or depressed mood for long, they can easily slip into one and become difficult to be around. Their mood is influenced by their thoughts. They can be hard to please and rarely feel satisfied themselves. They may exhibit behaviors such as self-persecution, hostility, nit-picking, and criticism. They are known for getting angry and verbally criticizing others for their failures or mistakes.

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**Perfect - Fun:** : This combination often produces individuals who are gifted and capable. They may have an inclination towards music or art and are usually good students. They can also make excellent teachers. The Perfect side of their temperament allows them to notice small details, while the Fun side makes them great communicators. They are very emotional and have a deep capacity to connect with God. They are willing to sacrifice themselves to help others.

However, if they feel hurt or misunderstood, they can become unreasonably critical of themselves and others. The Perfect - Fun combination is the most conflicted of all the types, as the two sides don't always blend well. When the Fun side dominates, the Perfect side wants to tone it down, and vice versa. They struggle to cooperate if they don't believe something is right and can be too idealistic and impractical.

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**Perfect - Peace:** These individuals are often great scholars and hard workers. They get along well with others and have a kind and caring nature. They prefer a quiet and solitary life. They excel in analytical thinking and strive for perfection in an organized manner. Their families love them for their discipline and dedication.

However, this combination is susceptible to anxiety, fear, and negative self-image. Because they are conscientious and agreeable, they can be easily influenced by others to take on commitments that drain their energy and creativity. If they get caught up in these pressures, they may lose sight of their own well-being.

If someone focuses too much on helping others, they might forget about their own family. Even though they are usually calm and peaceful, they can sometimes seek revenge.

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**Peace - Control:** This type of temperament is the most active among all the Peace Country combinations, but they are not overly energetic. They could become skilled counselors because they are good listeners, they don't interrupt, and they are interested in people. Although they don't usually offer their help to others, they act very professionally when people come to their organized space. Their advice is usually practical and helpful, and they make people feel comfortable and safe with their gentle manner.

Their weaknesses are not very obvious, but they become apparent in their lack of motivation and tendency to be afraid. This type can be very stubborn and inflexible. Instead of getting angry at others, they choose not to cooperate. This type is at risk of becoming more self-indulgent and passive, which can lead to a boring life for themselves and their families.

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**Peace - Fun:** This group of people is very easy to get along with. They are happy, cooperative, thoughtful, and like being around others. They are also dependable, like to have fun, and have a good sense of humor. This type of person rarely acts in a mean or aggressive way. They usually feel satisfied with their families, love their spouse and children, and enjoy a calm and peaceful life.

The weaknesses of Peace-Fun people may not be obvious unless you live with them. They can struggle with discipline and not reach their full potential. They might pass up opportunities or give up on things that require "too much effort". This type of person can become afraid, insecure, and shy. They might put up a wall to protect themselves and avoid getting involved in activities that demand a lot from them.

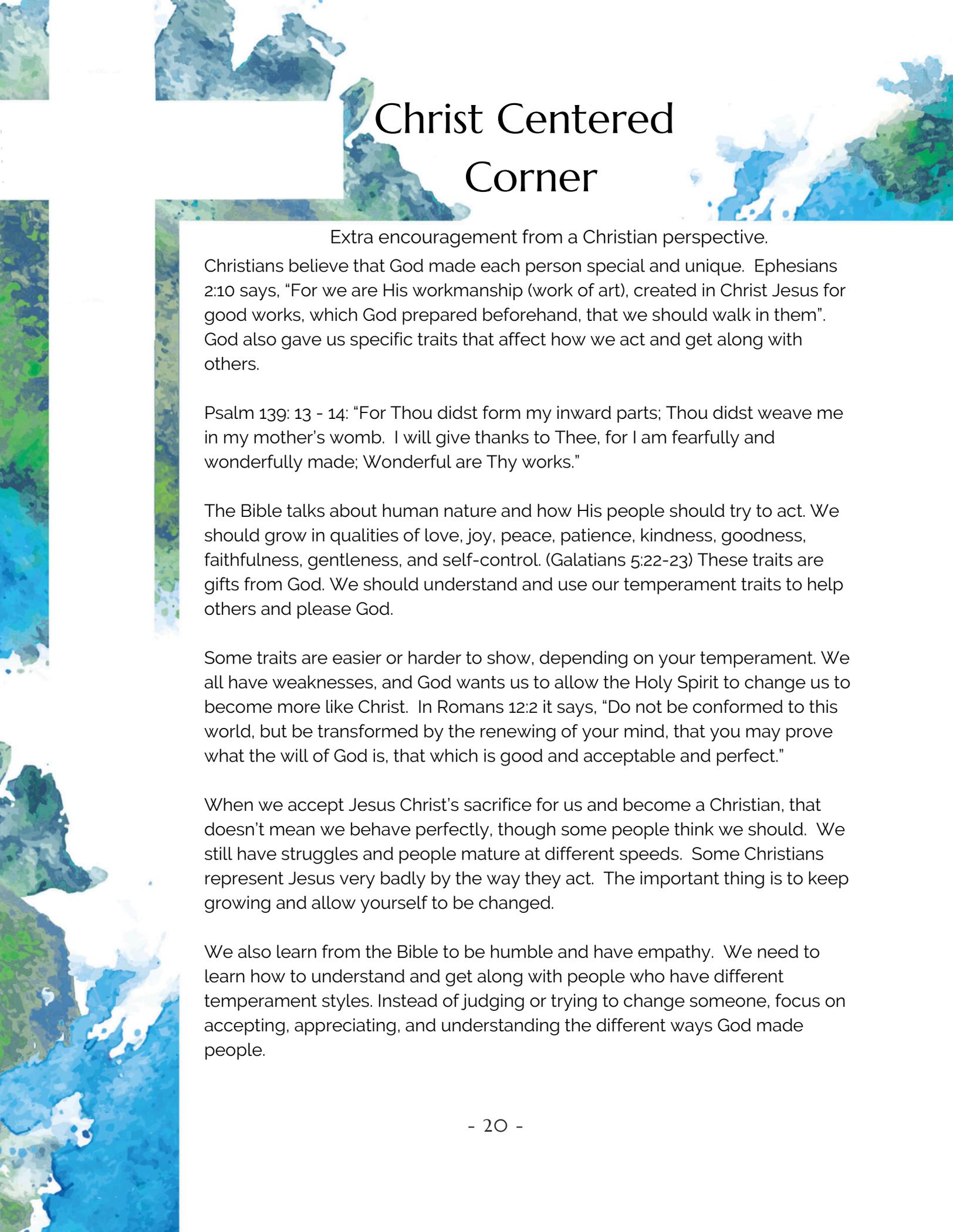
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**Peace - Perfect:** These are calm, kind, and polite individuals who rarely, if ever, become angry or unfriendly. They are reliable and do not cause embarrassment for themselves or others. They behave appropriately and dress modestly. They are usually tidy and organized in their work and are generally nice and helpful. They can handle pressure well, but they need external motivation to do so (they are usually not motivated from within).

Peace-Perfect people avoid getting too involved in anything. They are not motivated from within and resist taking on more responsibility than they believe they can handle. They can become afraid, selfish, and have a negative view of themselves. As parents, they may lack the discipline needed to teach and prepare their children for life.

# RESOURCES

- Larry Bilotta is an author and speaker, specializing in relationships and marriages. He developed the Flag Page temperament test.  
<https://larrybilotta.com>  
<https://youcansavethismarriage.com/>
- Timothy LaHaye graduated with a Doctor of Ministry degree and a Doctor of Literature degree. He served a congregation in Minneapolis until 1956, then became the pastor of the Scott Memorial Baptist Church in El Cajon, California for 25 years. He wrote over 50 non-fiction books and co-authored 25 fiction books on subjects such as family life, temperaments, and Bible prophecy. He died days after he had a stroke on July 25, 2016, at the age of 90.
- Mark Gungor developed his "Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage" seminar in the early 2000s. His innovative program challenged traditional approaches to relationship counseling by incorporating humor and lightheartedness into discussions about serious topics.  
<https://markgungor.com/>



# Christ Centered Corner

Extra encouragement from a Christian perspective.

Christians believe that God made each person special and unique. Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are His workmanship (work of art), created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them". God also gave us specific traits that affect how we act and get along with others.

Psalm 139: 13 - 14: "For Thou didst form my inward parts; Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Thy works."

The Bible talks about human nature and how His people should try to act. We should grow in qualities of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23) These traits are gifts from God. We should understand and use our temperament traits to help others and please God.

Some traits are easier or harder to show, depending on your temperament. We all have weaknesses, and God wants us to allow the Holy Spirit to change us to become more like Christ. In Romans 12:2 it says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

When we accept Jesus Christ's sacrifice for us and become a Christian, that doesn't mean we behave perfectly, though some people think we should. We still have struggles and people mature at different speeds. Some Christians represent Jesus very badly by the way they act. The important thing is to keep growing and allow yourself to be changed.

We also learn from the Bible to be humble and have empathy. We need to learn how to understand and get along with people who have different temperament styles. Instead of judging or trying to change someone, focus on accepting, appreciating, and understanding the different ways God made people.

Module 1  
Section 2

# EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Recognize, understand and manage  
your own emotions and understand  
and influence the emotions of  
others.

# IN THIS SECTION YOU WILL:

Learn about what Emotional Intelligence is and why it matters.

Discover how our brains work.

Understand what happens when our brain and body gets “hijacked”.

Find strategies to be emotionally intelligent.

# EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

## What makes someone smart or successful?

Think about two or three people who you think are smart or successful. Who are they and what qualities do they show that make you think they are smart or successful? Make a list of these qualities by writing them down.

When you look at your list, you probably will discover that the qualities will fall under one of the three types of intelligence:

**General Intelligence** is the ability to learn, to think, and is a reflection of education. It typically is demonstrated by how well people learn to read, do math or memorize things. Sometimes we call that 'book smarts'.

**Technical skill or intelligence** is the ability to build, create, and learn how things work. It is often shown by how well people can see and demonstrate how equipment works, how to build things, or how to create something new.

**Emotional Intelligence** is the ability to understand yourself and others and manage emotions. It is demonstrated by how well people know and manage their emotions and reactions to situations. Sometimes, we say people with emotional intelligence can adapt to people and situations positively.

Researchers looked at the same three areas and asked: "How much does each category contribute to a person's overall success?"

What they found is that there's more than one way to be "smart". Emotional (and Social) Intelligence is even more important to personal and professional success than either General Intelligence or Technical Intelligence.

Emotional Intelligence is about what happens in our brain and body when we are under pressure and how that reaction sometimes helps us and sometimes holds us back.

We define success in others and ourselves by how well we manage our emotions and handle interactions with other people.

## Have you ever....?

- Experienced a situation where you mentally froze, but a few minutes later you thought of all the great things you should have said?
- Experienced a situation where you snapped at someone or lost your cool even though you knew it would probably make things worse?
- Met someone who was supposed to be "really, really smart" but found they were awkward socially?

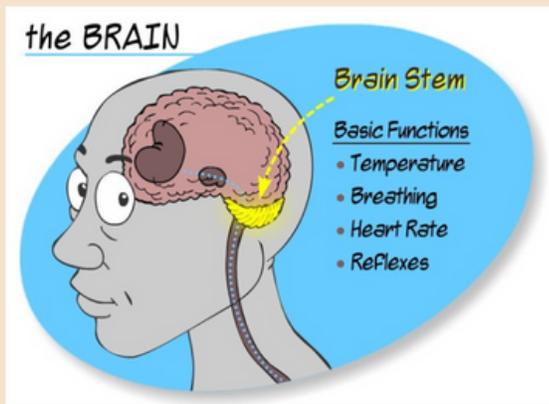
Well, these things happen because we are hardwired that way. It all starts with the brain.

What happens when you drive to work on an icy road and hit a slippery spot and you begin to spin out? You probably have shortness of breath, sweaty palms, and may even hit the break, or swerve out of control.

These are all examples of our brain at work.

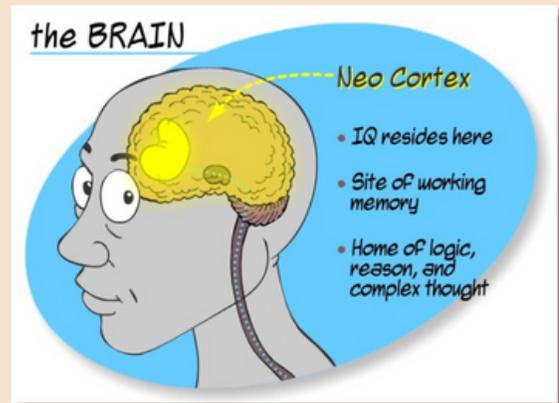
### Parts of our Brain

**The brain stem is like autopilot.** It keeps doing all kinds of stuff for us, so we don't have to think about it. Can you imagine if you had to keep waking yourself up at night to breathe? Or, had to remember to make your heart beat?

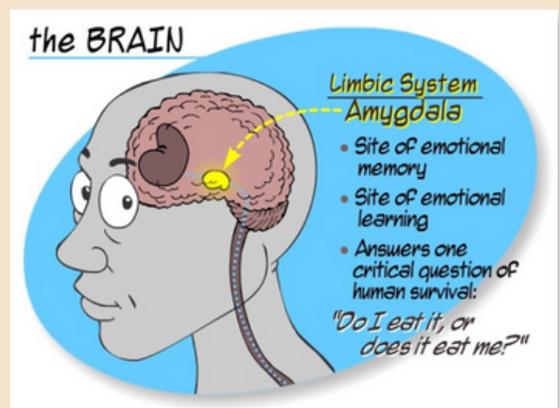


**Neo Cortex is the Logical/Thinking Part of the brain.** This is the largest part of the brain and is the big cap of gray matter. (like what you see in pictures) This is where we do some very important tasks, like problem solving, logical reasoning, creative thinking and complex thinking.

The neo cortex is the site of general intelligence and working memory. What's 2x2? What's 2x4? What does the word appetite mean? That's your working memory. You learned those by repetition and feedback and stored them in your long-term working memory, and you can now call upon them as needed.



**The Limbic System is the emotional part of the brain.** We're going to focus on one part of the limbic system call the amygdala. **Amygdala** is a Greek word that means "almond". This part of the brain is almond-shaped. (It also makes us seem a little nuts at times) The amygdala houses emotional memory.



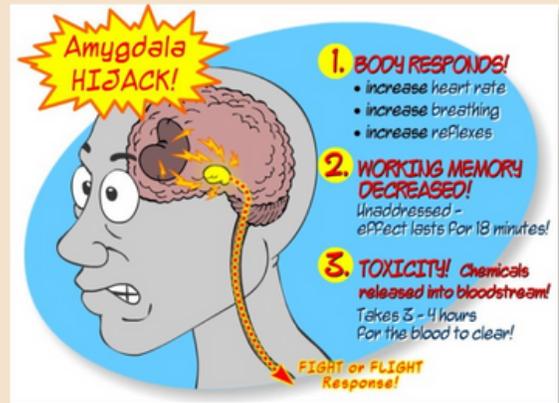
Emotional memory is helpful but different than working memory. For instance, if someone was 'attacked' as a young child by a rooster when they went in the hen house to gather eggs, they may experience fear when they see a rooster on a farm even when they are older. That is emotional memory which is an emotional response.

Emotional memory and emotional learning are very powerful. The amygdala instantly burns new neural pathways in the brain. A Significant Emotional Event (SEE) literally changes the way we SEE the world. Things like trauma of any kind, or events like 9/11. (most people can remember details about 9/11 even though it was years ago – but can't tell you what they had for dinner last Wednesday).

The amygdala deals with a critical question for human survival: Fight or Flight? Do I eat it, or does it eat me? Am I the predator or the prey?

### **The Amygdala Hijack**

Let's take a look at what happens when our fight or flight response is triggered. Think of that time when you had a very close call while driving on an icy road... you spun out a bit over the center line before getting your car back under control. You likely had an instant response through your amygdala which showed through the sensory organs – immediately clammy skin, a rushing sound in your ears, your heart pounding, and an overall weak feeling in your limbs.



Once danger is detected (in milliseconds) – the amygdala releases a flood of chemicals into the neo cortex that literally DUMBS US DOWN. (we don't spend time reasoning through which way to swerve or how much pressure to apply to the brake).

Our breathing, heart rate, and reflexes all increase. Blood rushes to big muscles to prepare us for fight or flight. Our reflexes take over and we react - we swerve in the case of the icy road incident. It takes about 18 minutes for the chemicals to flush out of the neo-cortex.

A stress hormone gets released into the bloodstream. Prolonged exposure to those chemicals (hormones) is toxic for the body. It takes 3-4 hours for the bloodstream to clear. Think of how you feel physically at the end of a really rotten, stressful day.

### **What happens when we get "hijacked"?**

So, is it helpful, at times, to be "hijacked"? YES, when danger is present! It helps us survive in life-or-death situations, like near misses on the road.

BUT, there are times that we find ourselves getting emotionally hijacked when it's not really a life-or-death situation.

The trouble with our brains is that even though one situation is truly life or death, and another is not - such as a disagreement with a co-worker or annoyance with the person in front of us in the grocery line who has 8 zillion coupons, OUR BRAIN REACTS IN THE EXACT SAME WAY. So, in one situation our brain is really helping out. And in the other, it is likely working against us.

Events are neutral. The event can be anything, but still - the EVENT IS ALWAYS NEUTRAL! Always. What is not neutral is how we react to events.

### **Why should we care?**

Emotional intelligence impacts job performance, friendships, marriages, and children's emotions.

Signs of low Emotional Intelligence are:

- Being insensitive
- Outbursts of anger or frustration
- Blaming others for problems
- Relationship struggles
- Overreacting to small matters

People who have emotional intelligence are more likely to be feel successful, relaxed, and confident.

## **Learning Emotional Intelligence**

Self-awareness and self-management are two of the first keys aspects of emotional intelligence.

### **Self-awareness strategies:**

- Stop treating your feelings as good or bad.
- Know and label your emotions.
- Lean into your discomfort.
- Know who and what pushes your buttons.
- Get to know yourself under stress.

### **Self-management strategies:**

- Take control of your self-talk.
- Count to ten or sleep on it.
- Set aside time each day for problem solving.
- Visualize yourself succeeding.
- Put a mental recharge into your schedule.

Increase your Emotional Intelligence. Set a goal! Select two strategies, one for self-awareness and one for self-management. Work on these strategies over the next two months. Tell someone you trust so you can receive feedback.

Emotional Intelligence is something we can learn. The more we learn, the more success we will feel and experience.



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1

Have you ever behaved in a way that showed low emotional intelligence (such as outbursts or blaming)? How did it impact your relationships?

2

Can you think of a time when you had to control your emotions? How did you handle it?

3

Why do you think emotional intelligence is important in our daily lives?

4

Why is being emotionally smart even more important than being book smart or technically smart?

5

What pushes your buttons or causes you to feel stress? How can you handle it Emotionally Intelligently?

6

Think about a time your amygdala got "hijacked". What happened? Was it a dangerous situation or not?

7

What is the most challenging self-management strategy for you to use?

8

How has your level of Emotional Intelligence impacted your job, relationships, or happiness?

# PRACTICE, ROLE PLAY, OR JUST MORE TO CONSIDER

1

## Making Eye Contact

As the name of this exercise suggests, it involves using eye contact to better understand our own emotions and how we connect emotionally with others.

Stage One: Roam around the room as if you are in a public space while not making eye contact with anyone else. Allow one minute for this part.

Stage Two: For this round, seek out eye contact as you go about the room. However, as soon as you have made eye contact, break it and look away. Allow two minutes for this part.

Stage Three: In this round, seek out eye contact and as soon as you have made eye contact with anyone, pair up with that person. They should stand side by side and do not establish eye contact with anyone else. Allocate two minutes for this part.

Discuss how each stage made you feel.

2

## Be the Fog (Regulate Your Emotions)

When you accept the criticism that is thrown your way (without actually taking it to heart), you will find that you disarm the person criticizing you. To practice, ask someone you know well to criticize you at rapid speed, one after the other, and employ the fogging technique to counter it.

If someone tells you something like:

Respond with:

"You just don't understand."

"Yes, I just don't understand."

"You are lazy."

"Yes, I am lazy sometimes."

"You are always late."

"Yes, I was late."

"You don't feel responsible."

"Yes, I just don't take responsibility."

3

## Emotional Self-Awareness

Write down as many emotions you can think of on index cards (or use pre-made emotion cards). One person draws 2 cards and talks about what it would take to get from one emotion to the other. The others in the group can talk about what it would take for them. Then another person draws 2 cards and does the same.

Module 1  
Section 3

# SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

Understand and navigate social  
situations effectively.

# IN THIS SECTION YOU WILL:

Learn the basics of Social Intelligence (SI).

Find out how Social Intelligence helps us  
navigate our social world.

Explore how Social Intelligence helps us  
connect more effectively with others and  
build healthy relationships.

Discover how Social Intelligence  
influences your personal success.

# SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

## Have You Ever...

- Had a really close friend, spouse, or partner who seemed to understand what you were thinking without you even saying it?
- Talked to someone and felt like the whole conversation was awkward and didn't match up?
- Met someone new and felt like you've known them for a really long time?
- Worked with someone who always made you feel in a bad mood?

## Neurons Are Where it Begins

There are 100 billion neurons in the human brain. Each neuron is believed to have around 10,000 connections. Scientists think that the human brain is even more complex than the whole known universe.

Just like Emotional Intelligence, Social Intelligence starts in the human brain. The human brain is really complicated. We still have a lot to learn about how it works, but just like we can tell the difference between galaxies, planets, and stars, our knowledge about the brain keeps growing.

Today, we will focus on two specific types of neurons: Spindle Cells and Mirror Neurons.

## Spindle Cells Are Wired to Connect

- They help us quickly react to things.
- They are always paying attention to our social surroundings and help us make quick decisions about them.
- They work like an internal WIFI.
- They give us a sense of how others are feeling.

Spindle Cells have been called "The Cells that Make Us Human". Even though they are mostly found in humans, they have also been discovered in great apes, elephants, whales, and dolphins - all animals that have big brains and complex social groups. Spindle Cells help us connect with others.

Spindle Cells give us a sense of our "personal space" - they create a field around us that can be felt by others and "light up" when someone enters that space.

They send really fast messages that tell us the mood of social situations (like when you walk into a room and instantly feel that something is wrong).

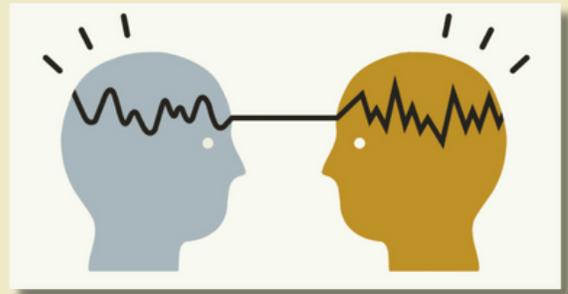
Spindle Cells allow us to connect with others, like how multiple devices connect to a WIFI network. They also, give us a feeling for how others are feeling (and why they might be feeling that way).

Here's an example how they work: Mike went inside the house and immediately felt that something was not right. Even though nobody was talking, there was tension in the air. He went up to his wife, Andrea, and asked her how she was doing. She replied shortly, saying "I'm fine, except your daughter is behaving badly." It turned out that their daughter had argued with Andrea because she wasn't allowed to go to a party that night. She had yelled at Andrea and stormed off, saying that she was being unfair.

Mike's special cells called spindle cells helped him sense the tension. This gave him time to gather information and decide how to handle the situation.

## **Mirror Neurons - Hardwired to Imitate**

Mirror Neurons are found in all people. They react the same way when we do an action and when we see or hear it being done. This helps us learn by copying. The brain (in some way) can't tell the difference between SEEING and DOING. This is thought to be the reason we feel empathy in our brains. Mirror Neurons were discovered by a



researcher from UC San Diego, V.S. Ramachandran. He showed how powerful mirror neurons are in his research. He used the kicking of a ball and found that:

- If you KICK a ball: the part of your brain that controls movement activates.
- If you SEE me kick the ball – the same part of your brain lights up.
- If you HEAR a ball being kicked (thunk!) – the same part of your brain lights up.
- If you hear someone SAY the phrase kick the ball – the same thing happens.
- If you READ the phrase "kick the ball" – your brain reacts the same way (anyone like to read fiction??)

This is how children learn to copy their parents. Remember, they may not understand the meaning of the words they hear their parents say, but they do understand the situation when the words are used. For example, if a parent accidentally drops a plate while serving and says, "oh crap," the child might say the same thing when they drop a toy in the future. It's because the neurons in their brain react to seeing something being dropped.

## Emotional Intelligence Review

You might remember this information from the section in this module about Emotional Intelligence. The top of the chart on the previous page focused on Emotional Intelligence. We specifically looked at how we become aware of our reactions when we're under pressure and the things we can do to control our responses.

The bottom half of the grid is about Social Intelligence. We are social creatures, so EQ is only half of what we need to be effective. To be really good at what we do, we also need to understand what happens when we interact with others. This means we need to learn some skills to navigate social situations better.

Do you remember the activity about the Qualities of Successful People? Many of the qualities identified in that activity had to do with how people interact with others. The competencies of Social Intelligence are what make someone a "Great Person/Successful Person Leader".

### Five Important Strategies for Building Social Awareness

#### **Watch body language.**

Look at people's eyes and facial expressions. If someone's eyes move calmly and they seem relaxed, it means they are open and honest. If their eyes move quickly or they look down, it may mean they are uncomfortable or hiding something.

Pay attention to other facial gestures as well. A smile or open face means you can start a conversation, while a frown or grimace shows discomfort.

#### **Live in the moment.**

Focus on what is happening right now. Don't think about the past or what you need to do later. For example, Rachel often has many things on her mind and thinks about what she needs to do instead of paying attention in meetings. She realized that taking notes during meetings helps her stay present and understand what her boss wants.

Being socially aware means being present in conversations, meetings, and life in general. You will learn more, be more interesting, and remember better if you focus on what is happening here and now.

#### **Plan ahead for social situations.**

Even if you are not in charge of a meeting at your church, a little planning can help. Know the meeting time and location. Understand the purpose of the meeting and bring any materials that are needed. Leave your day behind and be ready to listen and participate in the meeting.

#### **Practice the art of listening.**

Listening is a skill that requires a strategy. Let's look at some traits of a good listener.

Amy is seen as approachable because she has a calm face and looks at people when they talk. People also think she is a good listener because she doesn't interrupt or rush to talk when others are speaking.

Other good listener traits are repeating what someone says to make sure you understand, asking more questions to learn more, and showing respect by not being distracted (put your phone down!).

### **Catch the feeling in the room.**

Remember our friend, Mike. He could tell something was wrong when he walked into his house. Even though no one was talking, there was tension.



### **Ways to Manage Relationships**

Managing relationships includes understanding yourself, controlling your emotions, and understanding others. People who are good at managing relationships have better relationships with different kinds of people, like family, friends, and coworkers. Here are 5 ways to manage relationships:

1. Be Open and Curious
2. Build Trust
3. Get Mad on Purpose
4. Show You Care
5. Explain Your Decisions

## **Be Open and Curious**

What does it mean to be open and curious? Being open means you are willing to share information about yourself. Herb is always on time and gets upset when meetings start late. He told his team that he was in the military, and they had rules about being late. He asked them to be on time in the future.

Some people are naturally curious and ask questions. This can be helpful. Being curious shows that we are interested in others. Asking friendly questions like, "Wow Herb, I didn't know you were in the military. Where did you serve?" helps us learn about others.

## **Build Trust**

Trust is important in relationships. Trust comes from open communication, being consistent in what you say and do, and being reliable. Trust usually comes from being open and curious about each other.

Trust is built by keeping your promises. If you say you will pick up your friend from work, make sure you are there when their shift ends. If you promise your kids a trip to the park on Saturday, go even if you're tired and would rather stay home. A promise is a promise.

## **Get Mad on Purpose**

Sometimes it's okay to get angry, but it's important to direct your anger in the right way. Aristotle said that being angry with the right person, at the right time, and for the right purpose is not easy. For example, if your friend leaves you stranded without a ride home from work, you have a reason

to be mad. But instead of disowning your friend or calling them irresponsible, express your disappointment and let them know you expect better from them. This shows that you have expectations and believe they can meet them in the future.

Anyone can become angry –  
that is easy.

But to be angry with the right person,  
to the right degree, at the right time,  
for the right purpose, and in the right  
way, this is not easy. - Aristotle

## **Show You Care**

When you care about someone, show it through simple actions. Thank people when they help you, lend a hand to someone in need, or send a card or email to someone you haven't seen in a while. These small gestures strengthen relationships and make life easier. You will gain more than you invest!

## **Explain Your Decisions**

Instead of making decisions without explaining them, take the time to communicate your reasoning.

For example, Marshall decided to reorganize the messy shop and threw away some old clips and screws that didn't seem useful. The next day, his supervisor was angry because those clips and screws were needed to repair an old piece of equipment. If Marshall had told his supervisor about his plan to reorganize the workbench, this miscommunication could have been avoided.



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1

Have you ever had a situation where you could sense tension without anyone saying anything? Describe what happened and how you reacted.

2

Think about a time when you felt like you really connected with someone you just met. What was it like? How did it make you feel?

3

Do you think it's important to be a good listener? Why or why not? Share an example of a time when being a good listener made a difference in a conversation or relationship.

4

Describe a situation where you had to manage a relationship with someone who had different expectations or values than you. How did you navigate the differences? What did you learn from the experience?

5

Reflect on a time when you imitated someone else's behavior or actions. Why did you do it? How did it make you feel?

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Daniel Goleman (2005). Emotional Intelligence - Why It Can Matter More Than IQ. Bantam, 10th Anniversary edition (September 27, 2005)

# Christ Centered Corner

Extra encouragement from a Christian perspective.

Social and emotional intelligence is all about understanding and managing our feelings and relationships in a way that shows love and wisdom, just like Jesus taught us.

The Bible helps us learn more about ourselves and other people. It teaches us to be kind and caring towards others, just like Jesus said in Matthew 22:39. This means we should care about how others feel and what they go through.

Emotional intelligence is also important. It's about knowing and controlling our own emotions, as well as understanding how others feel. In Proverbs 16:32, it says that it's better to be patient and calm than to be strong or powerful. This verse reminds us to control our feelings and act wisely. When we know ourselves and can control our emotions, we can handle tough situations better.

The Bible also teaches us about the importance of good relationships and communication. In Proverbs 18:21, it says that our words have power. This means we need to be careful with what we say because it can either hurt or help others. We should listen to others, speak kindly, and try to make peace when there are problems.

When we use social and emotional intelligence based on what the Bible teaches, we can show love, empathy, and wisdom just like Jesus did. By practicing these qualities, we can have better relationships, understand each other more, and follow Jesus' command to love one another. So, let's remember to be kind, control our emotions, and use our words wisely, asking God for help when we struggle with this.

Module 1  
Section 4

# DEVELOPING TRUST

Trust is essential to have strong and healthy relationships.

# IN THIS SECTION YOU WILL:

Discover why trust is needed in every relationship.

Identify characteristics needed to develop trust.

Recognize when you or others are not being trustworthy.

# DEVELOPING TRUST

## What is trust?

We know trust is very important for strong relationships with people. But what does trust really mean? A writer named Charles Feltman came up with a good definition. He says, "Trust is choosing to make something important to you vulnerable to the actions of someone else." This means that trust is when you let someone else have control over something that is important to you. Distrust is when you don't feel safe sharing something important with someone.

Brené Brown is a famous researcher and author who has studied trust. She looked at all the information and came up with an acronym called BRAVING. When we trust someone, we are being brave and connecting with them. Let's look at the parts of trust...

## B.R.A.V.I.N.G.

The letter **B** stands for **Boundaries**. A boundary is like a dividing line that marks the limits of an area. I trust you if you know and respect your own boundaries, and if you understand and respect my boundaries too.

Trust can't exist without boundaries. We have to know our own limits, tell them clearly, and respect other people's boundaries, too.

The next letter in BRAVING is **R** which stands for **Reliability**. I can only trust you if you do what you say you're going to do, not just once, but over and over again. Reliability means being consistent and keeping your promises. It's like a scale that always gives the correct weight when you step on it.

In our work and personal lives, reliability means knowing our limits and not taking on too much. We need to make sure we can follow through on our commitments. For example, if we say we'll call someone to get together, we need to actually do it. We might feel like we're being nice or friendly by saying things like, "I'll call you", but if we don't intend to or follow through, then we're not being honest. That's makes us unreliable and not trust-worthy.

**Accountability** is also very important. I can only trust you if, when you make a mistake, you are willing to admit it, apologize, and make things right. I can only trust you if when I make a mistake, I am allowed to admit it, apologize, and make things right. No accountability? No trust.

**V** stands for the **Vault**. A vault is where people put things that are important to them. It keeps those things safe by not letting other people have access to it. What I tell you, you will keep secret. What you tell me, I will keep secret. If a good friend comes up to you and says, "Wow, did you hear about (fill in a name)?" They have just told you something that was not theirs to tell. Even though they're giving you the juicy details by gossiping, now your trust for them is completely gone.

Does that make sense? So, the Vault is not just about keeping my secrets, it's also about showing me that you understand the importance of keeping things private for other people, too.

Here's the tricky thing about the Vault. Sometimes, we share things that are not ours to share as a way to connect with a friend. Our closeness is built on talking badly about other people. Do you know what that's called? Common enemy friendship. That's not real friendship. The closeness we have is built on hating the same people, and that's fake. That's not real trust. So, the Vault means you respect my story, but you also respect other people's stories.

The letter **I** is for **Integrity**. I cannot trust you and have a trusting relationship with you if you do not act with integrity and encourage me to do the same. So, what is integrity?

Some people describe integrity as not being phony and by acting the same way in private as you do when you know someone is watching. Brené Brown came up with her own three-part definition of integrity. She describes it this way - "It's choosing courage over comfort; choosing what's right over what's fun, fast, or easy; and practicing your values, not just professing your values."

**N** is the next letter in BRAVING and it stands for **Non-judgment** (or not judging). Non-judgment means not making assumptions, criticizing, or shaming others. Trust is built when people feel accepted and respected, no matter their weaknesses or mistakes.

I can have a hard time and ask for help without you judging me. And you can have a hard time and ask for help without me judging you, even though it's difficult because we're better at helping than asking for help.

We might think that we have trusting relationships with people who trust us because we're always there to help them. But, if you can't ask for help and they can't help you back, that's not a trusting relationship. Many people feel good about themselves for being the ones who help others. But true trust doesn't exist unless help goes both ways and there's no judgment.

The last one is **G** for **Generosity**. Generosity means being kind and giving others the benefit of the doubt. Trust grows when people believe others have their best interests at heart and are willing to offer support and understanding. Our relationship is only trusting if you can assume the best about what I say, mean, and do, and then talk to me about it.

So, if I make a mistake, say something wrong, or forget something, you will assume something generous. You may think that maybe I was having a bad day, and you will talk to me about it - instead of assuming I was purposefully being hurtful or neglectful.

### **Why do we need to understand trust?**

How many of you have ever had trouble trusting someone in a work or personal relationship? It should be everyone, right? So, when you tell someone, "I don't trust you," they might say, "What do you mean? I love you and I'm always there for you. Why don't you trust me?"

How can we talk about trust if we can't break it down? Understanding trust helps us express our struggles. We can say, "You're not reliable with me. You say you'll do something, but you don't." Or maybe the problem is not judging others. But we can break it down and talk about it. We can ask for what we need. Instead of using the big word "trust", we can say, "Here's what's not

" working. We have a problem with boundaries."

Something interesting is that when we experience heartbreak, disappointment, or failure, we not only lose trust in others but also in ourselves. When something difficult happens, we often think, "I can't trust myself. I was so stupid. I was so naive."

### **Trusting Ourselves**

The BRAVING acronym also applies to self-trust. When you go through a tough failure, you might ask yourself, "Did I respect my own boundaries? Was I reliable? Can I count on myself? Did I hold myself accountable? Did I protect my stories? Did I stay true to myself? Was I too hard on myself? Did I give myself the benefit of the doubt? Was I kind to myself?"

If building relationships with others is about trust, building self-trust is about self-love. We need to respect ourselves. If you can't trust yourself, you can't expect others to trust you. We need to start with self-trust.

If you struggle with trust, first look at how you treat yourself. We can't ask others to give us something we don't believe we deserve. You will know you deserve it when you trust yourself more than anyone else.

Become trust-worthy. Be brave and build trust with yourself and others.

**B**

**Boundaries**

Know the dividing line that marks your limit; what's okay and not okay.

**R**

**Reliability**

Consistently do what you say you will do.

**A**

**Accountability**

Admit your mistake and make it right.  
Allow others to do the same for you.

**V**

**The Vault**

Keep people's confidences private (safe).

**I**

**Integrity**

Choose courage over what is easy or fast .  
Practice you values, not just profess them.

**N**

**Non-judgment**

Don't make assumptions, criticize, or shame others.

**G**

**Generosity**

Give others "the benefit of the doubt".



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1

Think about a time when you had to set boundaries with someone.

How did it make you feel?

Did it help build trust in your relationship? Why or why not?

3

Have you ever made a mistake and taken responsibility for it?

How did it affect your relationship with the person involved?

What did you learn from that experience?

5

Think about a time when someone broke your trust.

How did it make you feel?

What did you learn from that experience?

2

Describe a situation where someone showed reliability.

How did their actions impact your trust in them?

How can you practice reliability in your own life?

4

Reflect on a situation where you had trouble trusting yourself.

How did it affect your actions and decisions?

What steps can you take to build trust with yourself?

6

Consider a time when you found it difficult to trust someone.

What were the reasons behind your lack of trust?

# TRUST BUILDING ACTIVITIES

## 1 **Common Ground**

Get into small groups and talk about what you have in common. Think of unusual things, as well as the obvious ones, such as eye color.

You have 15 minutes to come up with as many common facts as they can. The group with the most things in common wins the game.

## 2 **Trust Fall**

The "truster" starts in a rigid standing position with arms crossed over the chest. They can stand on the ground or on a raised platform.

The trust team or partner(s) stand behind them with their arms out to catch them. Some teams interlace their hands to create a "bed" for them to fall on. If a person is significantly larger in size, then it's important to verify that they can physically support the other person's body weight.

For everyone's safety, clearly communicate which way they will fall. Do not allow the "truster" to fall forward or sideways. Set up pillows or other buffers to prevent any injuries.

Optionally, the "truster" can close their eyes and count to three. As they let go and fall backward, their team or partner catches them and safely places their feet on the ground.

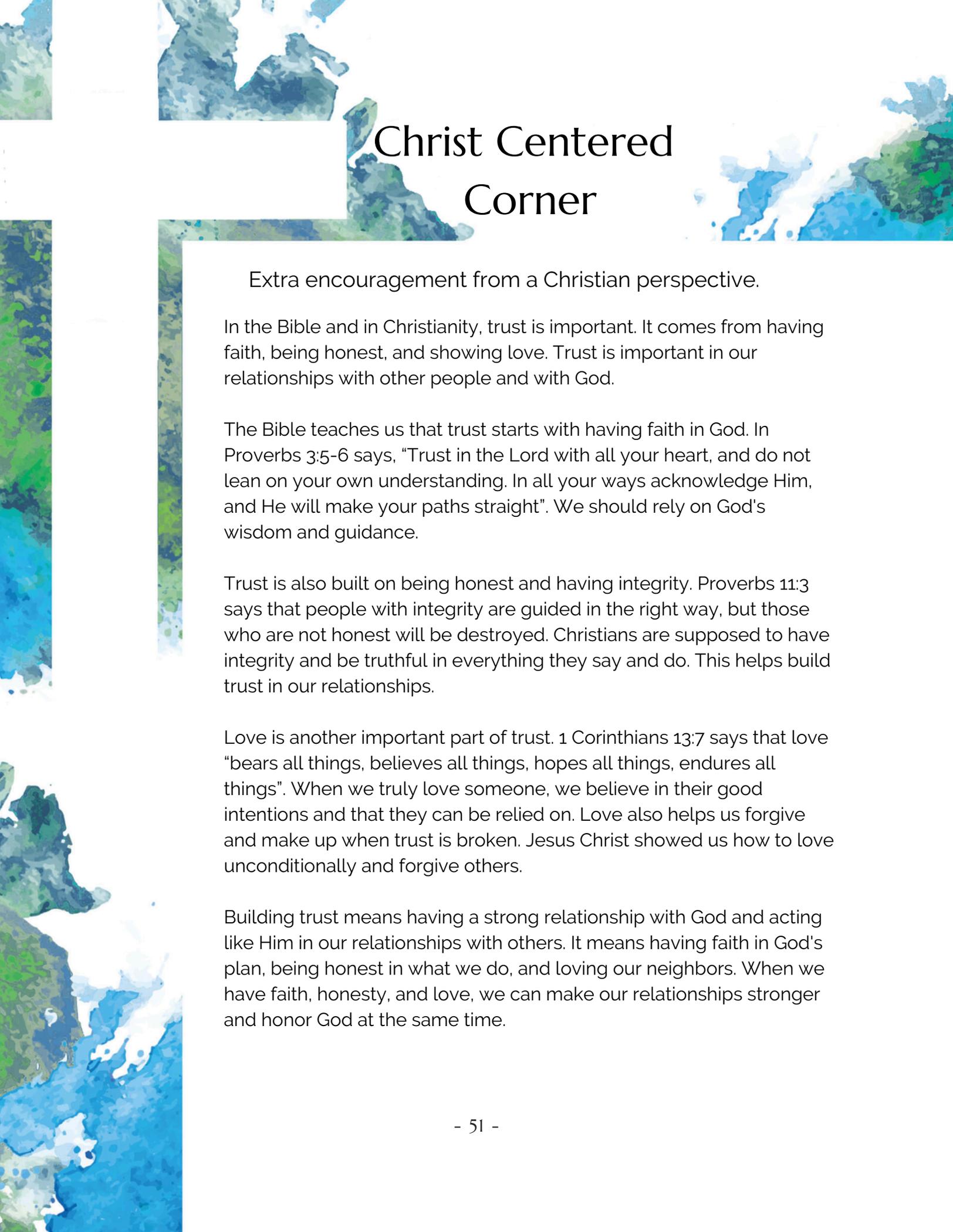
## 3 **Minefield**

To play minefield, use a large, open space and lay obstacles on the ground using cones, cups and other objects. Form teams of two, giving a blindfold to one team member per team.

The blindfolded member walks through the obstacle course while their partner provides verbal instructions to navigate it safely. If the blindfolded member touches an obstacle, have them start over.

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# Christ Centered Corner

Extra encouragement from a Christian perspective.

In the Bible and in Christianity, trust is important. It comes from having faith, being honest, and showing love. Trust is important in our relationships with other people and with God.

The Bible teaches us that trust starts with having faith in God. In Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight". We should rely on God's wisdom and guidance.

Trust is also built on being honest and having integrity. Proverbs 11:3 says that people with integrity are guided in the right way, but those who are not honest will be destroyed. Christians are supposed to have integrity and be truthful in everything they say and do. This helps build trust in our relationships.

Love is another important part of trust. 1 Corinthians 13:7 says that love "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things". When we truly love someone, we believe in their good intentions and that they can be relied on. Love also helps us forgive and make up when trust is broken. Jesus Christ showed us how to love unconditionally and forgive others.

Building trust means having a strong relationship with God and acting like Him in our relationships with others. It means having faith in God's plan, being honest in what we do, and loving our neighbors. When we have faith, honesty, and love, we can make our relationships stronger and honor God at the same time.

Module 1  
Section 5

# COMMUNICATION & INTIMACY

Both what and how you are communicating in your intimate relationships will either strengthen those relationships or tear them down.

# IN THIS SECTION YOU WILL:

Learn how attachment styles can effect relationships.

Discover how your relationship may be impacted by the way you communicate.

Recognize steps you can take to resolve conflicts.

Identify the principles that can help make your marriage or intimate relationship work.

# COMMUNICATION & INTIMACY

## I do?



Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today to join these two people in marriage. Do you agree to take each other as a lawfully wedded spouse? Will you start fights every day and blame each other for your problems? Will you keep a list of faults? Will you bring up past arguments, criticize, and become defensive when confronted? Do you promise to expect your partner to make you happy and give them the silent treatment when you're angry - for as long as you both live?

Nobody enters a committed relationship expecting to be unhappy. At first, everything feels wonderful, but that feeling doesn't last forever.

Relationships are difficult and unless you have good role models and lots of practice with healthy communication and problem-solving, you will run into problems quickly. The good news is that you can learn new skills and work towards having the great relationship you imagined when you decided to be together.

Let's learn about a few areas to help us understand our close relationships better and improve communication, such as:

- how attachment styles affect relationships;
- communication styles and how they impact your level of intimacy;
- steps to take to resolve conflicts; and
- principles for making marriage or a committed relationship work.

## Attachment Styles

Attachment styles are ways that people behave and think about relationships. They start when we are young and can affect how we feel about being close to others when we grow up. A psychologist named John Bowlby came up with the idea of attachment styles, and other people like Mary Ainsworth built on his work.

There are four main attachment styles:

1. **Secure Attachment:** People with a secure attachment style feel comfortable being close to others and having their own space in relationships. They trust their partners, can talk about their feelings and needs, and also listen to their partner's needs. Securely attached people usually think positively about themselves and their partners, and they know how to solve problems in a good way.

2. **Anxious-Preoccupied Attachment:** People with this attachment style often worry that their partner won't be there for them and they might be left alone. They might always need to hear that their partner loves them and values them, and they might rely too much on their relationships to feel good about themselves. People with this style might act clingy or controlling, and they might feel insecure and not think highly of themselves.

3. **Dismissive-Avoidant Attachment:** People with a dismissive-avoidant attachment style usually care more about being independent and doing things on their own than being close to others emotionally. They might avoid or not think much about emotional closeness, and they might keep some distance in their relationships. People with this style might find it hard to show their feelings or ask for help, and they might not think that close relationships are important.

#### 4. **Fearful-Avoidant (Disorganized)**

**Attachment:** This attachment style is a mix of anxious and avoidant behaviors. People with a fearful-avoidant attachment style want to be close to others, but they also worry about being rejected or hurt. They might go back and forth between wanting closeness and pushing their partners away, and they might feel confused and unsure in their relationships. People with this style might have a hard time trusting others and forming secure relationships because of past experiences of trauma or neglect.

These attachment styles can really affect how romantic relationships work. Partners who have similar attachment styles might have happier and more stable relationships, while partners with different attachment styles might have more conflicts, misunderstandings, and emotional problems. But it's important to know that attachment styles can change over time as people learn more about themselves, grow personally, and have supportive relationships. Therapy can also help with attachment issues and make relationships healthier.



## Communication Styles

Communication styles are the different ways people talk and interact with each other. There are four main communication styles. Each style has its own traits and impacts on relationships.

### Passive Communication

**Characteristics:** People who use passive communication tend to avoid saying what they want, like, or feel. They might put other people's needs before their own and keep their emotions and opinions hidden to avoid problems or arguments.

**Effects on Relationships:** In relationships, passive communication can cause misunderstandings, hard feelings, and unmet needs. Partners might feel frustrated because there isn't enough open communication, and they might struggle to solve problems or arguments. Over time, passive communication can make trust and closeness in the relationship weaker.

### Aggressive Communication

**Characteristics:** People who use aggressive communication forcefully say what they want and think, even if it hurts others. They might use mean words, criticize, or threaten to control or scare their partners. Aggressive communication shows a lack of understanding and respect for other people's feelings.

**Effects on Relationships:** Aggressive communication can make relationships feel unfriendly and mean. Partners might feel small, ignored, or scared to say what they think. Aggressive behavior can make arguments worse and hurt both partners' emotions, causing hard feelings and trust to break down.

### Passive-Aggressive Communication

**Characteristics:** People who use passive-aggressive communication express their feelings and frustrations indirectly. They might use sarcasm, tricks, or quietly resist instead of saying what they really mean. They might seem like they agree on the surface but secretly feel angry or upset.

**Effects on Relationships:** Passive-aggressive communication can make trust and closeness in relationships weaker. Partners might feel confused or frustrated because of mixed messages and quiet resistance. Over time, passive-aggressive behavior can make the foundation of the relationship weaker, causing hard feelings and emotional distance.

### Assertive Communication

**Characteristics:** People who use assertive communication openly and respectfully say what they think, feel, and need. They also respect other people's rights and boundaries. They

can confidently express themselves without being mean or avoiding problems.

**Effects on Relationships:** When people communicate assertively, it helps them be honest, respectful, and understanding in their relationships. They feel confident to express themselves honestly and listen to each other's thoughts and feelings. Assertive communication also helps solve conflicts in a healthy way and makes the bond between partners stronger. This leads to more closeness and trust.



The way we communicate is really important in relationships. If we communicate passively, aggressively, or in a passive-aggressive way, it can cause problems and make us feel distant from each other. But if we communicate assertively, it helps us have open conversations, respect each other, and be happy in our relationships.

Learning how to communicate assertively can help partners handle conflicts, build trust, and have deeper connections in their relationships.

## Resolving Conflicts

Conflicts are normal in relationships. Learning how to resolve them in a positive way can make your bond with your partner even stronger. Open communication, understanding, and being willing to compromise are important for resolving conflicts successfully. Here are a few steps to help you resolve conflicts in relationships:

- Figure out the problem or issue that is causing the conflict. Take the time to understand each other's thoughts and concerns.
- Share your feelings and needs honestly and openly. "Own" your part in the problem and resist blaming or criticizing.
- Listen carefully to your partner's point of view without interrupting or getting defensive.
- Try to understand your partner's perspective and the emotions behind their reactions. Even if you disagree, acknowledge their feelings and experiences.
- Work together with your partner to come up with different solutions to the conflict. Be open-minded and think of compromises that meet both of your needs.

- Evaluate the possible solutions together. Think about how realistic and effective they are, and how they might affect your relationship. Choose the solution that works best for both of you.
- Put the chosen solution into action. Make a commitment to support each other and be patient as you make changes.
- Check in on the solution from time to time. See if it's working and make any necessary adjustments. Communication and feedback are important for making progress and dealing with new challenges.
- If conflicts continue or become too much to handle, consider getting help from a couples therapist or counselor. They can give you more advice and strategies for resolving conflicts and making your relationship stronger.

### Principles for making a marriage work.

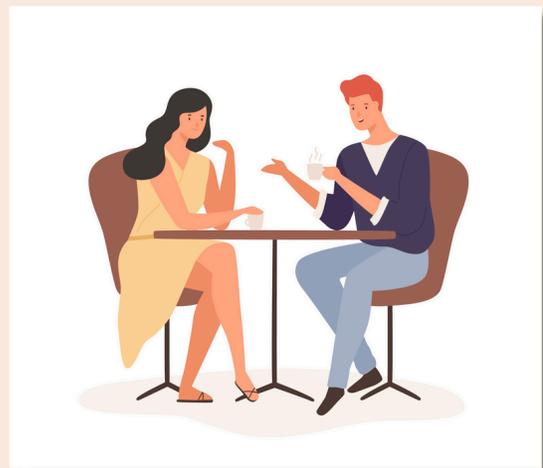
John Gottman and the Gottman Institute have studied marriage relationships for many years. They have discovered what qualities couples have that make a marriage more successful. The following is a summary of what they found.

First of all, it's important to **know each other well**. Take the time to learn about each other's lives, like important events and memories. Keep updating this

information as time goes on. Even though we may think we already know everything about each other, we each have new experiences every day. Our thoughts and views may change as we grow, and we may develop new interests.

**Show love and admiration.** It's important to like each other and have respect in a marriage. When you respect your spouse, you're less likely to get upset or annoyed when you disagree or notice flaws.

To show you care, you need to **be there for each other**. Every day, make an effort to be there for your partner when they want attention, affection, humor, or support. This helps build a strong emotional connection, romance, passion, and a healthy sex life. Think of it as building an emotional savings account.



Sometimes we get focused on our own interests and opinions and want to talk about that. We can have a hard time listening to our spouse, especially if what is important to them isn't as important to us, or if we don't like their ideas. **Learn to listen.** Research shows that women are more likely than men to listen to their partner's ideas. It's important to share power, compromise, and find solutions together.

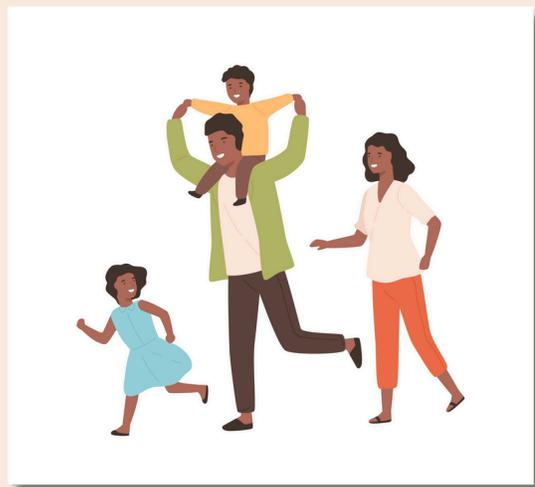
**Solve problems together.** There are two types of conflicts in a marriage: ones that can be solved and ones that can't. You don't have to solve every problem to have a happy marriage. Remember, no one is always right in an argument. It's easier to cope if you respect each other's point of view.

Here are some ways to help you resolve conflicts:

- Start the conversation gently.
- Learn to apologize and accept apologies.
- Comfort and support each other.
- Find a compromise.
- Be understanding of each other's faults.

Instead of avoiding, **deal with difficult problems.** The goal is not always to solve the problem, but to have a conversation about it. Understand why you're stuck and unable to find a solution. It could be because your dreams and wishes aren't being heard or respected. Talk about these hidden dreams.

**Create a meaningful life together.** Build a strong bond by creating traditions, symbols, and rituals that are special to both of you. Understand your roles and goals as a family.



By using these ideas in their relationship, couples can build a closer bond, trust each other more, and become stronger together. It's important to remember that these ideas need constant work and practice, but they can help create a strong and happy marriage.



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1

Think about the different attachment styles mentioned in the text. Which one do you think describes you the best? Why?

3

How do you communicate with others? Do you tend to be more passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive, or assertive? Why?

5

Think about a time when you had to compromise with someone. How did it make you feel? How did it help solve the problem?

7

What are some traditions or symbols that are important to your family? Why are they meaningful to you?

2

Have you ever experienced a situation where you felt worried or scared about being close to someone? How did it make you feel?

4

What are some ways you can practice assertive communication in your everyday life? How do you think it will improve your relationships?

6

Describe a situation where you had to listen to someone without interrupting or getting defensive. How did it make you feel?

8

Describe a time when you felt connected to someone important in your life. What made you feel that way?

# PRACTICE, ROLE PLAY, OR JUST MORE TO CONSIDER

## 1

### Just Listen Activity

- Each person writes a topic on an index card (try to make sure the topics are interesting but not too controversial). Pair off and hand each other your card.
- One partner speaks for three minutes on how he or she feels about the topic on the card.
- The other partner stays quiet while the first partner talks, just listening instead of speaking.
- After the three minutes is up, the listener has one minute to recap what the speaker said (not agree, disagree, or debate, just recap).
- Each pair switches roles and the exercise is repeated so both partners get a chance to speak and to listen.

After each participant has played both roles, discuss how easy or challenging it was to listen, speak, and summarize.

## 2

### Stack the Deck

- Each person takes a card from the deck and keeps it secret.
- The goal is to not talk (use only non-verbal communication) and find others with the same suit (hearts, clubs, diamonds, and spades).
- Once everyone is gathered with their suit, the next goal is to arrange themselves from highest card (king) to lowest card (ace), again without talking.

## 3

### Practice Using "I statements"

One partner thinks of something they'd like changed. Express that using "I statements", then switch roles. The 1st person states, "I feel \_\_\_\_ when you \_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_. I would like for you to \_\_\_\_\_."

The other partner is then asked to respond to that statement with another "I statement."

The other partner answers, "You sound \_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_. Next time, I will \_\_\_\_\_ and I \_\_\_\_\_."

# RESOURCES

John Gottman, Ph.D. and Nan Silver (2015), *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work: A Practical Guide from the Country's Foremost Relationship Expert*, Harmony; Revised ed. edition.

David H. Olson, Ph.D., Amy Olson-Sigg, & Peter J. Larson, Ph.D. (2011), *The Couple Checkup: Find Your Relationship Strengths*, Thomas Nelson, Inc.

<https://positivepsychology.com/attachment-theory/>

<https://status.net/articles/understanding-your-communication-style-4-types-with-examples/>

# Christ Centered Corner

Extra encouragement from a Christian perspective.

In the Bible in Ecclesiastes 4:10, it talks about two being better than one, because if either of them fall down, the other is there to lift them up. Sometimes we "fall down" in other ways, such as not being our best toward each other. If your spouse (or even a close friend) talks or acts in a way that doesn't represent who they really are, instead of getting angry or offended, try to find out what went wrong. See if you can encourage them and lift them up. (Matthew 7:12, Galatians 5:13, I Peter 4:8)

God says He will never leave us or forsake us. Jesus died for us so we can be forever secure in our relationship with the Father. This is the ultimate attachment. Even if we suffer from poor attachments since childhood, He can heal and restore us as we find that rest and security in Him. Everyone needs at least one person in their life who they can form a secure attachment with (where they can feel safe and confident). Those who are truly a disciple of Christ can become that person for others while pointing them to God where they will find everlasting security. (John 13:34-35, Romans 12:10, Galatians 5:13, Phillipians 2:3).

While we are on Earth, none of us will be perfect. We all fall short of representing Jesus and many Christians are poor ambassadors. We are all at differing stages of transformation and need to yield to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. How we communicate is an important area. James 1:19 says, "My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry." Proverbs 15:1 tells us that "a soft answer turns away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger." "A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion", speaks the wisdom in Proverbs 18:2 (and we all know people like that!).

Marriage is a picture of that intimacy God wants to have with us - Christ and His Bride (His Church). By being devoted to each other, loving and honoring each other, we can experience true closeness and emotional intimacy. (Romans 12:10)

Module 1  
Section 6

# IMPROVING COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Talking, Knowing Yourself, and  
When Things Get Tough

# IN THIS SECTION YOU WILL:

Learn how talking and listening help us  
in four important ways.

Discover how to be a really good  
listener.

Explore the importance of sharing your  
thoughts and feelings with others.

Recognize why it is important to know  
yourself well - who you are and how  
you think

Identify how being aware of your  
feelings and being mindful can help  
you communicate better.

Find out about "implicit bias" and learn  
how to recognize your own biases.

# IMPROVING COMMUNICATION SKILLS

## Why is talking so important?

Way back in the time of the ancient Greeks, over 2,000 years ago, people thought talking was really important. They even studied how to talk well and convince others. Talking is something we do all the time, even if we don't think about it. It's like an art that we can learn to do even better!

## Why should we learn to talk better?

Talking is a big part of our lives. Studies show that we spend almost all of our waking hours talking to people. Learning to talk better can help us in lots of ways:

- Getting a job: Companies want people who can talk clearly and listen carefully.
- Making friends: Talking well helps us understand each other and get along.
- Feeling good: Talking to people makes us feel connected and happy.

## Listening is important too.

Have you ever talked to someone and then realized you couldn't remember what they said? It's easy to forget what people say, even though we spend a lot of time listening. Listening is really important for getting along with people and understanding them.

## When things get tough, we need to listen carefully.

Sometimes, when we're arguing with someone, we need to listen really hard to understand how they feel. This is called "empathetic listening." It means trying to see things from their point of view and being kind.

## There are some bad listening habits to avoid:

- Interrupting: Don't jump in before someone finishes talking.
- Distorted listening: Don't just hear what you want to hear.
- Eavesdropping: Don't listen in on other people's conversations.
- Narcissistic listening: Don't make everything about yourself.
- Pseudo-listening: Don't pretend to listen when you're not paying attention.



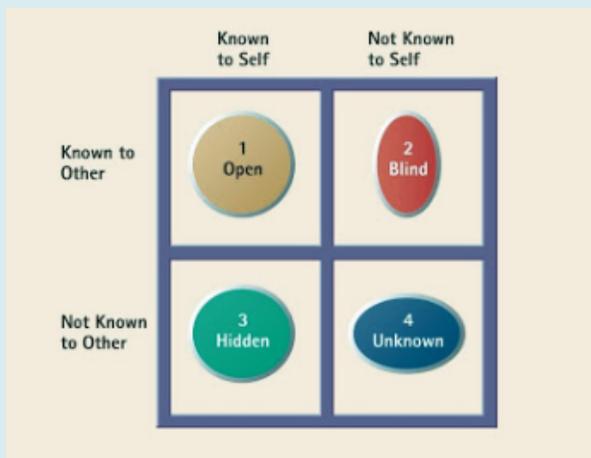
**To be a good listener, try the HEAR method:**

- **HALT:** Stop what you're doing and focus on the other person.
- **ENJOY:** Take a deep breath and be open to what they're saying.
- **ASK:** Make sure you understand what they mean. Ask questions if you need to.
- **REFLECT:** Repeat back what you heard to make sure you got it right.

**The value of talking**

**Knowing yourself is key.**

It's important to understand who you are and what makes you special. Think about your strengths and weaknesses. What makes you happy? What makes you stressed?



**The Johari Window helps us understand ourselves better:**

This can help us understand the differences between how we see ourselves and how others see us.

- **Open quadrant:** Things you and others know about you (like your hair color).
- **Blind quadrant:** Things others know about you, but you don't (like if you talk too fast).
- **Hidden quadrant:** Things you know about yourself, but others don't (like your biggest fears).
- **Unknown quadrant:** Things neither you nor others know about you (like where you'll live in the future).



**Emotional intelligence is important.**

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is about understanding your feelings and how to manage them. It's like being smart about your emotions. People with high EQ are better at getting along with others, handling stress, and making good decisions.

**Mindfulness can help us develop our EQ.**

Mindfulness is about being present in the moment and paying attention to what's happening around you. It can help us calm down and make better choices, especially when we're feeling stressed or upset.

**Here's a mindfulness strategy to try:**

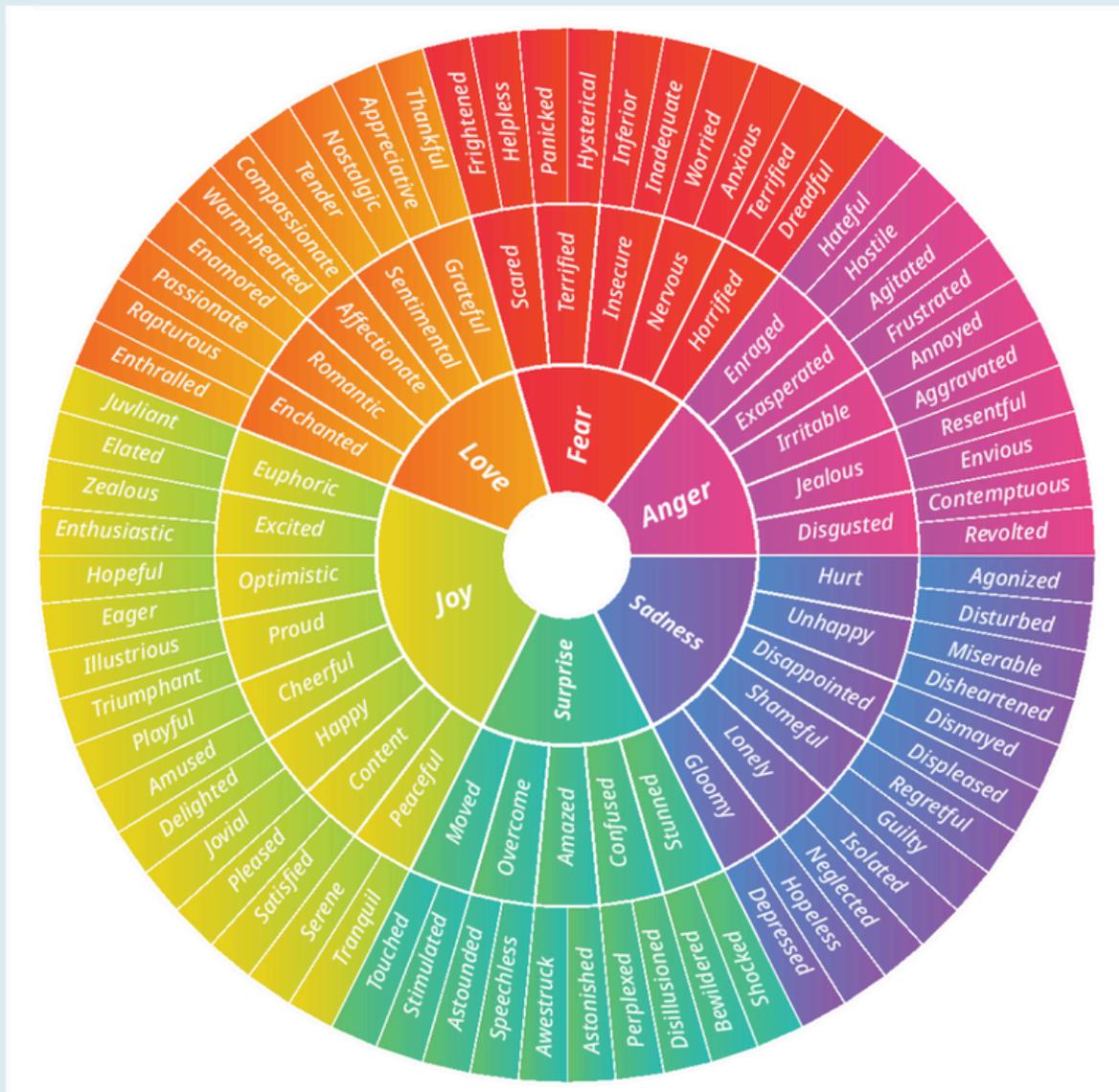
- Notice: Pay attention to your body and your thoughts.
- Shift: Accept your feelings without judging them.
- Rewire: Let go of the need to change how you feel.

**Naming our emotions is important.**

Sometimes it's hard to put our feelings into words. There are lots of different

emotions, and the wheel below can help us understand them better. The wheel shows how different emotions are connected and helps us figure out what's going on inside us.

Understanding emotions can help in arguments, too. When we're arguing with someone, it's helpful to think about what emotions they might be feeling. For example, if someone is acting withdrawn, they might be feeling scared.



## Understanding Ourselves: Recognizing Hidden Biases

It's important to know ourselves really well. This means thinking about the ideas and beliefs that have shaped who we are. Everyone has these ideas, but they can sometimes get in the way of talking to others in a good way.

Think about it: most people like to be around people who think like them. It makes sense! Who wouldn't want a friend or someone they like who shares their interests and beliefs? But sometimes, this can make our thinking stuck. We might start to believe that certain things are true for everyone, even though they are just our own way of seeing things.

These ideas come from our experiences and the way we were raised. They can lead to hidden biases, which means we might have unfair thoughts about others without even realizing it. We might say things that are based on stereotypes, or we might do things that make others feel uncomfortable without meaning to. These are called microaggressions.

For example, telling someone who looks different from you that their English is good, or telling a woman who works construction that she is strong, can be microaggressions. These things might seem harmless, but they can make people feel bad.

Here are some things we can do to avoid letting our biases affect how we talk to others:

- **Be honest with ourselves.** It can be hard to see our own biases, but it's important to try. Ask a friend or someone you work with for their honest opinion about the things you say and do.
- **Get to know people.** When we get to know people, we often find that we have a lot in common and are surprised by how different we are.
- **Watch ourselves.** Think about the things you say and do. Try to avoid making unfair judgments or saying things based on assumptions. Don't put people into groups and assume they all think or act the same way.
- **Apologize.** If you realize you've said something unfair or made a mistake, it's okay to apologize. Everyone makes mistakes, and apologizing can help us build stronger relationships.

### Think about this:

\*When you think about people from different places or groups, what comes to mind? Do you think about their looks, strengths, weaknesses, or how they dress?

\*Do you speak up when your friends or family say things that are unfair or hurtful to others?

\*Do you have friends or people you know who are different from you? Have you tried to get to know them better?

### Conflict: It's Not Always Bad

Many people try to avoid disagreements and arguments, but this can be a problem. Avoiding conflict can make people feel resentful, frustrated, and

angry. It can also stop us from talking to each other in a healthy way and can even lead to problems in our relationships.

Believe it or not, conflict can actually be good. Here's why:

- \* It helps us find common ground.
- \* It helps us learn how to handle disagreements in the future.
- \* It gives us a chance to learn about other people.
- \* It can lead to creative solutions.
- \* It can help us talk openly and honestly, which builds trust.
- \* It helps us grow as people and become better communicators.
- \* It can make us more confident and less aggressive.
- \* It helps us learn to manage our emotions.

When we handle conflict with kindness and thoughtfulness, it can make our lives and the world around us better.

### **Different Views on Conflict**

Just like beauty is in the eye of the beholder, conflict can be seen differently by different people. Some people are comfortable with disagreements and think arguments are normal. Others feel personally attacked when they disagree with someone.

There are also different ways of thinking about conflict. Some people think it's a problem that should be avoided, while others think it's a natural part of life. It's also important to remember that what one person sees as a conflict, another

person might not see as a problem at all.

It's important to remember that everyone experiences conflict differently.

### **How We Handle Conflict**

There are many ways to describe how people handle conflict. One way is to think about the ABCs of conflict management:

- **Avoiders:** These people try to avoid conflict by denying it, making jokes, or delaying the conversation.
- **Battlers:** These people might threaten, blame, shout, or use sarcasm during a conflict.
- **Collaborators:** These people take responsibility for their actions, show empathy, and are willing to compromise.

In the next part of this series, we'll learn more about how to manage conflict in a healthy way.

### **The Power of Forgiveness**

Before we talk about managing conflict, it's important to remember that forgiveness can make a big difference. Forgiveness means letting go of anger and resentment towards someone who has hurt us. It means choosing to be kind and compassionate, even though they may not deserve it.

Forgiveness is about helping others, but it also helps us. When we forgive, we free ourselves from negative feelings. So, be willing to forgive!



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1

Think about a time when you had to communicate with someone to get something you wanted. What did you do to make sure they understood you? How did you feel during the conversation?

3

Think about a new friend you made this year. Did you talk to them a lot? Did you tell them about yourself? Did you tell them too much? Did your friend tell you about themselves the same amount as you told them? Is there anything you would do differently next time you talk to your friend?

5

This section talks about how conflict can be a good thing. Can you think of a time when a disagreement with someone helped you learn something new or understand their point of view better?

2

Think about a time when you listened to someone who was upset. How did you show them you cared? What did you learn from listening to them?

4

Think about a time when you might have made an assumption about someone based on how they looked or what you thought you knew about them. How did that make you feel? How could you have handled the situation differently?

6

Think about how well you know yourself. Do you know your good habits and your not-so-good habits? Or are you like someone who can't see their own mistakes?

# PRACTICE, ROLE PLAY, OR JUST MORE TO CONSIDER

1 Imagine your own life right now. How could being a better talker and listener help you at your job? Would it make your friends and family happier? Could it even help you feel better?

What's One Thing You Can Do? Today, try to do something that makes talking and listening important. What could that be?

2 Join groups or two or three people to help you practice something called the HEAR method. Ask them to tell you about what's been on their mind lately.

Go through the steps: Halt, Enjoy, Ask, Reflect.

After you've listened, discuss what was easy and what was difficult to do. Ask the speaker if they felt like you were listening to them. Then switch roles and the other person becomes the listener.

3 Think about how we see people who are different from us. Answer these questions together and discuss and explore where these beliefs and thoughts came from.

- When you think of people from different places or groups, what pictures come to mind?
- Do you think of them as having certain looks, being good at certain things, or having certain personalities?
- Do you think about how they dress?
- Do you speak up when your friends or family say mean things about people who are different?
- How many of your friends and family look and act differently than you?
- Have you tried to get to know people from different places or groups?

# RESOURCES

“Blind spots Challenge assumptions.” YouTube, 10 November 2022, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_tLbrOoB660](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_tLbrOoB660). Accessed 9 July 2024.

(If you would like more information on implicit bias and the nature of human assumption, this short video is inspiring. Reflect on the quote from the video, “Living our lives with blind spots can put us in a tunnel.”)

\*\*\*\*\*

Robbins, Mel. “5 ways to listen better | Julian Treasure | TED.” YouTube, 29 July 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSohjlYQI2A>. Accessed 9 July 2024.

(I have used this and other Julian Treasure videos with my classes for many years. I especially enjoy the practical strategies provided here to become a better listener.)

\*\*\*\*\*

Westmaas, Laura. “9.4 ABCs of Conflict – Conflict Management.” eCampusOntario Pressbooks, Creative Commons, 2022, <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/conflictmanagement/chapter/9-3-abcs-of-conflict/>. Accessed 9 July 2024.

(This online book shows tactics commonly used by avoiders and battlers, which tend to lead to unhealthy handling of conflicts. In the final section, techniques used by collaborators demonstrate better options for managing conflicts.)

Module 1  
Section 7

# CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

How to Manage Conflict,  
Dangerous Communication, &  
Tools for Unique Situations

# IN THIS SECTION YOU WILL:

Learn various methods for managing  
conflict.

Discover how to handle specific kinds  
of conflict.

Recognize and respond to dangerous  
conflict situations.

# CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

## Talking About Problems in a Good Way

Have you ever felt nervous or unsure when talking about something difficult with someone? It's totally normal. But there are ways to make these conversations easier and less stressful.

A book called "Difficult Conversations" helps us learn how to talk about tough things in a helpful way. It says that we can have better conversations if we understand the difference between good and bad ways to talk.



**Bad conversations** often make things worse. We might jump to conclusions, say things that hurt others, or blame them for the problem. This makes it hard to solve problems and can even hurt our friendships.

**Good conversations** are about understanding each other. We need to be curious about what the other person

is thinking and feeling. We should try to see things from their point of view, even if we don't agree with them. Here are some tips for having good conversations:

**Understand your own feelings:** Think about how you feel and be okay with those feelings. Sometimes we feel lots of different things at once! Share your feelings honestly and try not to judge yourself or the other person.

**Don't make assumptions:** We often think things without really knowing if they're true. Before you jump to conclusions, ask yourself, "What else could be going on?"

**Don't blame:** It's not helpful to spend time figuring out who's wrong. Instead, try to understand how the problem started and what you can do to fix it together.

**Think about the bigger picture:** Imagine you're looking down at the problem from above. Try to see things from both of your perspectives. Work together to find a solution that makes both of you happy.

Another way to talk about problems is called **STLC**: stop, think, listen, communicate.

**Stop.** Take a moment to calm down before you start talking. If you're feeling upset, take some deep breaths or go for a short walk.

**Think.** Think carefully about what happened and what each person is saying. Try to understand why they feel the way they do.

**Listen.** Pay close attention to what the other person is saying. Don't interrupt or judge them. Just try to understand their point of view.

**Communicate.** Talk to each other in a calm and respectful way. Use kind words and body language.

After you've talked, it's good to think about how the conversation went. Did you understand each other? Did you solve the problem? What could you do better next time?

There's another way to think about problems called "**The Third Side.**" It's like being a mediator, helping people find a solution that works for everyone.

- Understand all sides: Try to see the problem from everyone's point of view.
- Work together: Encourage everyone to talk and find a solution that everyone can agree on.
- Find a fair solution: Make sure the solution is good for everyone involved, and for the whole community.

The Third Side helps us remember that we're all part of a bigger community, and we need to work together to solve problems.

## Talking When Feelings Are Big

Sometimes, talking to people can be really hard, especially when everyone is feeling upset. This is called a "**highly emotional conflict.**" It's important to be careful when people are feeling strong emotions because we don't want to hurt our friendships.

Everyone shows feelings differently. Some people don't show their feelings very much. They might think people who get upset easily are being "silly" or "unfair." But it's important to remember that everyone feels things differently. When people are upset, we need to help them calm down so we can talk peacefully.



### Three Ways to Help Calm Things Down

**1. Say What You Hear:** Try to say what the other person is feeling in your own words. You can say things like:

"It sounds like you're feeling really sad."

"That must be really frustrating for you."

"It sounds like you're feeling angry."

**2. Show You Understand:** Let the other person know that it's okay to feel the way they do. You can say things like:

"I can see you're really upset."

"I understand why you feel this way."

"I'm sorry my actions made you feel this way."

**3. Ask Questions:** Before you decide how someone is feeling, ask them questions to get more information. Remember, we want to be curious and learn more! There are two types of questions:

**Closed-ended Questions:** These are questions that have a simple answer, like "yes" or "no." Use these to check facts.

**Open-ended Questions:** These are questions that need a longer answer. Use these to help the other person explain their thoughts and feelings.

## Talking to Different Kinds of People

Let's face it; there are people in our lives who are just hard to talk to! There was an article in the December 2023 edition of Reader's Digest titled "How to Get Along with Anyone". The author, Rosemary Counter, gives tips for dealing with people who are hard to talk to: complainers, contrarians, and chatterboxes, and frenemies.

**Complainers:** These people always seem to be unhappy. Try to listen to them and show that you understand how they feel. Maybe they just need someone to listen.

**Contrarians:** These people love to disagree with everything! You can try to agree with them about some things or ask them questions to understand why they think the way they do. Sometimes, it's best to just change the subject.



**Chatterboxes:** These people love to talk! Listen to them for a while, then politely tell them you'd like to share your thoughts too. If you're short on time, let them know how much time you have left.

**Frenemies:** These people can be nice one minute and mean the next. It's best to be honest with them about how you feel. You can say things like, "I don't like it when you talk to me like that" or "I value our friendship, but I don't always feel like you feel the same way".

## How to Handle Family Conflicts

Families are great, but sometimes they can fight too. Here are some tips for talking to your family:

**Family Meetings.** Have regular meetings where everyone can share how they're feeling. This helps everyone feel heard and prevents problems from getting too





# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1

Think about a time when you had a disagreement with a friend or family member. How did you try to understand their point of view? Did you use any of the strategies from this section? What did you do to communicate effectively?

2

This section talks about the importance of listening carefully when someone is sharing their thoughts and feelings. How can you be a good listener when someone is disagreeing with you? What are some things you can do to show that you are listening?

3

Think about a time when you were feeling angry or upset. How did you show your feelings? Did someone try to help you calm down? How did they do it?

4

Have you ever been in a situation where someone was complaining a lot? How did you feel? What did you do?

5

Have you ever been in conversations with complainers, contrarians, chatterboxes, or frenemies? How did you handle talking to them? What is hardest about talking with them? Which is the most challenging type for you?

6

If you use texting or social media, to talk to people, is your writing clear, or could people misunderstand what you mean? Do you sometimes jump to conclusions or answer messages too quickly? What are a few things you could do to make your online conversations better?

# PRACTICE, ROLE PLAY, OR JUST MORE TO CONSIDER

1 Think about a well-known fairy tale like "The Three Little Pigs," "Little Red Riding Hood," or "Cinderella." Imagine telling the story again, but this time, use the four steps for having good conversations we learned about in this lesson. How would the story end differently if we used these steps to talk things out?

2 Talking about problems with the "Third Side" way takes time and working together. Decide on a conflict that has two sides. Divide your group into three parts. Two parts will each take one side of the conflict. The third part will play the mediator and take the "Third Side". Apply what you've learned in this section.

If you have a personal conflict you want to resolve outside of this class, start by thinking about inviting everyone who needs to be part of the conversation. You can send a note, text, call, or even talk to them face-to-face. Ask them to meet and share their thoughts, listen to each other, and talk things through.

3 Imagine you're in one of these situations:

Situation 1: One person (Person A) loves to keep things clean and tidy. They make their bed every morning and like everything in its place. The other person (Person B) is messy and doesn't like to clean up, which makes Person A really upset.

Situation 2: One person (Person A) worked hard to buy new shoes. The other person (Person B) borrowed the shoes without asking and got them dirty and scratched. Person A is really angry.

Pair off and act out one of these situations. One or both of you can try using the "paraphrasing," "validating," and "questioning" skills we learned. You can also write down how you think the situation would go if you used these skills.

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(Your results on this quiz will indicate whether your conflict management style is passive, aggressive, or assertive—it is a close equivalent to the ABCs of conflict mentioned in the previous section: avoiders, battlers, and collaborators.)

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Ruby, Kathleen. "12 Steps Handout. Planning for a Difficult Conversation." *Washington State University*. Handout, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1S3lVS6Wxf2MfAwO8UjRNodZHqslIaym8/view?usp=sharing>.

(This step-by-step process for preparing to manage a conflict was modeled after the *Difficult Conversations* book by Stone and colleagues. It provides a succinct reminder of how to navigate through difficult topics and reach a satisfying outcome.)

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Moddes, Wendy. "The 10 Commandments of Conflict Management." *College in the Schools Introduction to Communications*, Brainerd High School. Class handout, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1s3wxL8KJdbn8wgQt5GHLylOnuPPnpNxY5fpKZvqTvVM/edit?usp=sharing>.

(This includes a set of guidelines to ensure that difficult conversations are handled with compassion for self and others.)



# Christ Centered Corner

Extra encouragement from a Christian perspective.

When Christians talk to each other and try to solve problems, they try to show love, understand each other, and make things right again. Here are some important ways they do this:

**Listen Carefully.** James 1:19 in the Bible says, "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry." This means we should listen before we talk and try to understand what the other person is saying.

**Tell the Truth with Kindness.** When we talk, we should be honest, but we should also be kind. The Bible says, "Speak the truth in love," meaning we should be honest but also gentle and caring. Ephesians 4:15.

**Forgive and Make Things Right.** One of the most important things Christians do is forgive each other. The Bible says, "Forgive as the Lord forgave you," meaning we should let go of anger and try to make things right with the person we are mad at. Colossians 3:13.

**Don't Spread Rumors.** Christians are told not to spread rumors or talk bad about others. Proverbs 16:28 warns, "A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends."

**Try to Make Peace.** The Bible encourages Christians to try to make peace with others. It says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." This means we should try to solve problems and make things better between people. Matthew 5:9.

**Ask God for Help.** When Christians have problems, they ask God for help. The Bible says, "Present your concerns to God, who provides peace and wisdom." This means we can pray to God and ask him to help us solve our problems. Philippians 4:6-7.

**Get Help from Others.** Sometimes, when people can't solve a problem on their own, they can ask someone else for help. The Bible says we should talk to a church leader or someone else who can help us make things right. This means we can ask for help from someone we trust to help us solve the problem. Matthew 18:15-17.

By following these values, Christians can talk to each other and solve problems in a way that shows their love for God and each other.

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