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“God gives us a Spirit of Power (Ability), Love & Self-Discipline (Control)” 1 Tim 1:7 // “Everything is Possible for Those who Believe” Mark 9:23

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS: 5 A's / 5 CHOICES – A Roadmap for Connection – Dance Well & Keep the Rhythm Going

CHOICE # 1: ATTITUDE of LOVE, RESPECT & HUMILITY to NURTURE LOVE & BUILD TRUST

Ultimate Attitude: *Compassion* – Manage The *VIBE & TOO*

Understanding & Empathy: Seek to Understand & Be Empathic ≈ Seek to Be Understood

Be: Authentic ≈ Calm ≈ Thoughtful ≈ Reasonable ≈ Flexible ≈ Adaptable

3 Part Dance: Assert Self ≈ Acknowledge Other ≈ Accountability to Admit Responsibility

CHOICE # 2: AWARENESS / MINDFULNESS / EMOTIONS to NURTURE LOVE & BUILD TRUST

Awareness & Attunement Internally to the Myriad of Mind-Trips and Emotional Weather

Staying Present, Attentive & Sensitive to the Other in Order to Maintain Balance & Dialog Thoughtfully and Meaningfully

Emotional Regulation: Critical – *Dashboard of the Soul*

Time-Out: When Emotion Intensifies and Balance is Lost between you Both of Emotion, Reason, & Logic

Check Pt: Are you Aware of How You Are Managing Your:

Perceptions ≈ Expectations ≈ Emotions ≈ Stress ≈ Needs ≈ Desires ≈ Motives ≈ Beliefs ≈ Judgments ≈ Opinions ≈ Meaning

Control: You only have Control of Self, Not Other

Defense & Explanations: Denial ≈ Minimizing ≈ Excusing ≈ Rationalizing ≈ Projections

Codependency: We are All Codependent

CHOICE # 3: ASSERTIVE / LISTEN to NURTURE LOVE & BUILD TRUST

KEY: Demonstrating Accountability & Giving Understanding Gives Greatest Potential to Be Heard

Assert: Express Your Feelings, Needs, Concerns, Issues Calmly & Clearly

Listen: Be Quick to Listen, Slow To Speak, Slow To Anger – Don't Interrupt

Seek Clarity: Of Other's Thoughts, Feelings, Meaning, Issues, Concerns, etc.

Consideration: Of Other's Thoughts, Feelings, etc and Their Perceptions & Experience of You

Needs or Desires of Other: Ask

Check Pt: Be Attentive to How You Are Managing Your *Dashboard*

Trigger Words: You ≈ Always ≈ Never ≈ But ≈ Disagree

CHOICE # 4: ACCOUNTABILITY / TAKE RESPONSIBILITY to NURTURE LOVE & BUILD TRUST

No Dialog is Perfect – Over-Reactions, Judgements, etc. will be made – Easy to see more Fault in the Other than Self

CHOICE # 5: ACKNOWLEDGE / VALIDATE to NURTURE LOVE & BUILD TRUST

Everyone's Emotions are Important, and each has a Valid Point of View and and Perspective

Learn to Respect, Value and Consider Differences of Views and Perspective – *That makes sense!! If it doesn't, ask questions.*

Assessment: You are either on the Path of Love & Trust OR Perpetuating Stress & Pain:

If The 5 A's are Mutual there will be greater Potential for Mutual Love, Trust, Healing, Growth, and Problem Solving;

If The 5 A's are Not Mutual there will be greater Potential to Perpetuate Stress, Pain and Problems.

You Are Either Part of the *Solution* or Problem, *Responsive* or Reactive, *Purposeful* or Problematic, *Effective* or Ineffective, *Connecting* or Disconnecting.

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS - 5 A's & 5 Choices

GOAL: Process & Dialog Effectively with Awareness of Self, Other, & Context. Effective Process Helps Nurture Love, Trust, Decision Making & Healing.

You can Measure Progress on a Daily Basis according to following 5 A's & Choices

CHOICE # 1: ATTITUDE of LOVE, RESPECT & HUMILITY to NURTURE LOVE & BUILD TRUST

KEY & CRITICAL: Attitude & Awareness Will Determine Effectiveness of Assertiveness, Acknowledgement, and Accountability.

The Vibe & Too

VIBE: The Vibe reflects our Attitude, Why Attitude is Critical – We Give Off a Vibe & We Feed Off the Vibe of the Other.

We often React or Respond according to the Perceived Attitude of the Other, so do the Best you can to ensure a Loving & Respectful Attitude.

The Vibe will fundamentally be either Warm & Caring or not.

“The exact words that you use are far less important than the energy, intensity, and conviction with which you use them” - Jules Rose

TOO: It's easy to get Angry & Frustrated, and when this happens it's therefore easy to become *Too* Controlling, Demanding, Defensive, Blaming, etc.

You have the Ability to Manage a Humble, Loving, and Respectful Attitude.

If your Attitude is Proudful & Self-Focused, you can Expect a Negative Outcome & Reaction.

If your Attitude is Humble and Other-Focused, you can Expect a Better Outcome & Response.

Perspective - Critical to Maintain Awareness of the Whole Picture even in the midst of Pain, Stress, and Frustration, or dialog will crash.

Perspective can get Lost & it can be Re-Gained - It's easy to get short-sighted and self-focused.

Understanding & Empathy – The Bridge of Relationship

Seek First To Understand & Be Empathic, Seek Second to Be Understood.

Understanding will give Potential for Needed Healing & Change.

Understanding comes in 4 parts:

1. Understand what you did to Trigger the other and what it brings up in the Other;
2. Understand how the other felt by your Trigger;
3. Continue to Understand & Unfold whatever else is being experienced between you both.
4. Share how you felt triggered and what it brings up for you.

You Both have Valid Perspectives; You Both Think what you Think and Feel what you Feel for Reasons.

The Need is to Make Sense and Understand why you both Think & Feel as you Do in order to Problem Solve & Make Decisions.

You Can't Change & Solve What You Don't Understand.

An Empathic Heart Strives to Understand the Pain & Stress Underneath the Issues and Concerns.

Triggers

Relationships are an ongoing Ebb & Flow of Cause & Affect - you will both trigger each other at times, even simultaneously & unexpectedly, & usually unintentionally.

Triggers can be like turbulence from flying in an airplane - they can seem to come out of nowhere.

Learn to Admit when you get Triggered – Learn that it's OK to be Triggered, because we are Human.
Triggering can cause our Attitude to Sour Quickly and Act Reactively – again why it's critical to Acknowledge when Triggered.

Learn to Manage Internal World of Defenses, Stress, Difficult Thoughts and Feelings while Focusing on the Other while Expressing Yourself Calmly & Authentically.

3 Part Dance – *Slow Down*

Maintaining Attitude & Awareness you can Be Assertive, Acknowledge and Be Accountable *simultaneously* – Slowing Down Helps Tremendously.

It's a Juggling Act for sure !!

Recommended Reading from this website:

Self-Skills–Boundaries – (for further Elaboration of Needs / Desires / Motives / Perceptions / Beliefs / Judgments / Expectations / Should's)

CHOICE # 2: *AWARENESS / MINDFULNESS / EMOTIONS to NURTURE LOVE & BUILD TRUST*

KEY & CRITICAL: Attitude & Awareness Will Determine Effectiveness of Assertiveness, Acknowledgement, and Accountability.

Think - Be Attentive & Conscious

Yes, *Think Well* – Think & Meditate upon these 5 A's.

Stay Attentive & Aware to the Flow of Dialog & Emotional Climate while Maintaining Your Attitude.

Stay Sensitive to the Dialog – is the Dialog staying Connected or Becoming Disconnected; *how's the Rhythm & Dance going?*

Call Process (Time-Out) when you Sense a Disconnect.

Stay Attentive to your Delivery (Manner, Tone, Words, Attitude); your Delivery can be Triggering if you are not careful.

Emotional Regulation – *Dashboard of the Soul*

GOAL: Understand Each Other's Emotions, there are often a Myriad of Reasons Why we feel as we do.

CRITICAL: No One Makes Another Feel. We Behave and Say things that can Cause another to feel, but this is Different.

Be sure you are in a Calm and Thoughtful space before launching into an important conversation.

Interactions are very Personal & can become very Emotional – *It's OK to be Emotional, we are Human* – again, the Challenge for Balance.

Emotions are Neither Right nor Wrong, nor do they Lie – Again, they Are To Be Understood.

How Well you Both Understand each other Emotionally will Determine your Level of Connection, Intimacy and Trust, and will also Determine your Potential to Problem Solve and Make Important Decisions.

Something Triggered an Emotion, now the Goal is to Understand what Caused the Emotion, and often takes more therapeutic process to understand the complexity of many things that cause varied emotional states.

Expectations & Perceptions is often the place to start: What Expectation did not get met? How was the Issue Perceived?

Emotions are most often the Results of Beliefs, Interpretations, and Meanings that have been Made, but people are generally unaware that their internal process of beliefs, meanings, and interpretations can perpetuate hurt in various ways.

People often Believe the Other is The Reason for Emotional Distress; it's usually a Complication of Both, the Other & How We Process Internally.

We either Perpetuate our Pain or Alleviate it – all depends on how we process.

You Can Not Problem Solve Well if you BOTH Do Not Take Ultimate Responsibility for your Internal World while Simultaneously Striving to Understand Each Other.

Learn to be Aware of and Manage Emotions especially when a conversation begins to heat up — if you don't learn to Pay Attention and Catch yourself early enough an argument can arise quickly; *it's easy to crash and burn.*

When things Heat-Up, it is easy to slip into Blame; when you are into Blame-Mode you Lose Perspective and See the other as the problem.

Learning Emotional Regulation is like *Walking on Ice.*

If you were walking on a trail and approached a frozen creek you needed to cross over in order to get to the other side, think about how Slow and Careful you would be stepping on the ice, and how Conscious you would be with each step – it's similar to sensitive conversations – you will probably be more successful if you are Careful & Patient & Conscious. *Do you want to get to the other side?*

Words Can Be Very Powerful - they can either Build Up or Tear Down.

Learn to Balance Reason, Logic & Emotion.

When Emotions Rule, Reason, Logic, Understanding, & Perspective can be Compromised or Lost. When Reason & Logic Rule, Intimacy can be Compromised.

Problematic when you fall into Attack-Defend & Judge-Justify modes.

Problematic when you Personalize what the other person is expressing; this can be when you make it all about you.

Personalizing is taking it to the Extreme, believing something is Wrong with you Or that it's all your Fault Or you are making it all about you.

We all can Personalize, this is not a character defect; what is important is understanding when Personalizing is happening.

You may have said something hurtful or did something harmful, but that does not mean something is completely wrong with you nor is it All your Fault.

Personalizing can prevent you from Understanding what the other is trying to convey about their self or you.

Learn to Receive Feedback Constructively as you can Benefit & Grow.

Sometimes what is expressed is a Projection of the other.

Sometimes what is expressed can be Valid both of Self and Other.

Control

You can only Control your self – not the other.

We have Ability to Control not only our Words and Behaviors, but our Manner & Tone.

Serenity Prayer.

Codependency

A very short definition of Codependency is Losing Your Sense of Self & Taking Too Much Responsibility for the Other.

Recommended Reading from this website:

Codependency

Mindfulness - Mindfulness A's & F's for Process

Mindfulness - Mindfulness and the Full Catastrophe

Mindfulness - Acceptance & Willingness

Emotions - Processing Difficult Thoughts & Emotions

Emotions - Emotions as Messengers

CHOICE # 3: ASSERTIVE / LISTEN to NURTURE LOVE & BUILD TRUST

KEY & CRITICAL: Do Not Share Unless You are Equally Willing to Hear & Understand the Other.

Be as Clear as Possible on how you were Affected, What Hurt, etc.

Express Your Needs & Desires and Care to Hear the Needs & Desires of the Other.

Listen & Don't Interrupt; Interrupting is probably one of the most upsetting and triggering behaviors.

Be as Clear & Calm as Possible Expressing your Issues & Concerns as to Why you Think and Feel as you do AND Reciprocate.

Maintain Control & Ownership of yourself Before you Express anything otherwise your conversation could become Problematic, *Quickly*.

Keep Your Motive & Focus Constructive & Purposeful - easy to Attack or Complain.

Easy to be more concerned about getting your point across than caring for what the other has to say.

Focus on the Issue & Not the Other.

Respond – Catch yourself if you slip into a Reactive mode, easy to do.

Don't Minimize – Don't Catastrophize, both easy to do.

Be Open to Reconsidering your Beliefs and Perspective – this Reflects *Humility*.

Give and Receive Compliments – This *Helps* and no one tires of experiencing Kindness!!

Be Constructive with Feedback without anger or defense.

Let your body language reflect Openness and Warmth.

Listen

Listen – *Listen* – and *continue to Listen* with The Goal of Understanding and Be Able to Express What you are Understanding.

This requires Practice, Patience, and Focus.

Strive to Listen More & Speak Less.

Be Quick to Listen, Slow to Speak, and Slow to Anger / React - James 1:19.

Clarity

Seeking to get Clear on the Intention, Meaning, Issues, Concerns, Needs, Wants, Expectations, Perceptions, and Feelings of Both of You.

“So what I hear you saying is... Is this accurate?” “Is this what you mean?”

It's ok if you don't understand, or if it doesn't seem clear.

Learn to make Comments or ask Questions until you gain Understanding and be able to express, “that makes sense.”

Consideration

An Ultimate Goal – you won't always like or understand the other's point of view, thoughts, feelings, etc. yet you can Learn to Always Consider each others thoughts, feelings, ideas, etc - this is the ultimate difference in decision making.

Consideration also has to do with Hearing how you are Perceived and Experienced by the other.

Sometimes you have a Need to say what is bothering you about the other's attitude and or behavior.

Be Open to what the other has to say about you, and the manner in which this is done is critical – this could be life-changing.

Needs / Desires of Other

Find out what the other Needs or Desires; “Do you need feedback? Do you just need me to listen? Do you need a hug? Please be clear of what could help.”

Needs / Desires Can and Do Change.

Time-Out

Time-Out is Necessary when it becomes Very Emotional, either very upsetting or very angry.

Time-Out is necessary when you've lost Balance of Emotion, Reason, and Logic, and when you are sensing Attack-Defend and Judge-Justify modes.

You Need to Regain Calm so you can Regain Perspective & Understanding of the other.

DURING Time-Out do some deep breathing, give yourself permission to experience and understand your feelings, check your Ego, and yet you need to reflect and be able to understand where the other is coming from too.

DO NOT RETURN from a Time-Out until you are willing to give understanding to the other.

Taking Time-Outs prevents resentment and pain building up; you need to establish Trust that you will return to the conversation when ready – sooner than later.

It can be good to practice Time-Out from time to time as it can be easy to get very Confused, Overwhelmed, Frustrated and Tangled Up.

Defense & Explanations

Defense Mechanisms are Denial, Minimizing, Catastrophizing, Excusing, Rationalizing, and Projecting.

Too much Defense & Explanation Inhibits Problem Solving and Growth.

It's Normal to want to Explain and Defend yourself which can reflect your need for Justification, or possibly being more concerned about getting your point across than caring what the other has to say.

Explaining yourself is important because you Need to be Understood – learn to hold on to what you Need to say and Remain Focused on the other – again, Balance.

Trigger Words

You, Always, Never, But, Disagree.

CHOICE # 4: ACCOUNTABILITY / TAKE RESPONSIBILITY to NURTURE LOVE & BUILD TRUST

KEY & CRITICAL: If you don't Demonstrate Accountability you will will Not Have Trust.

Accountability, which is Admitting & Taking Responsibility for Your Part in the Problem is the Hallmark of Trust.

You know you can Trust someone when they Own their Responsibility and Understand the hurt they have Caused in you or others.

When you take your Responsibility, the more Effective you will be in Contributing to The Solution; You are either part of The Problem or The Solution.

The Problem is Not the Problem – The Problem is how you Cope with the Problem.

We are All Problematic at times; we Need the Grace to Remember we are Fallible Creatures.

In every scenario we could have played our part differently and more effectively.

Problematic if you generally Believe the Other is more at fault than you; this is a recipe for Greater Conflict, Tension, and Misery.

Depending upon how many years you've been married will reflect how established your Relational Patterns are.

It took time for Both of you to Create your Patterns and it's going to take time for Both of you to Recreate Healthier Patterns.

The Good News is that a Change of Pattern is Possible.

CHOICE # 5: ACKNOWLEDGE / VALIDATE to NURTURE LOVE & BUILD TRUST

KEY & CRITICAL: We would not Communicate if we didn't have a Hope & Expectation for Understanding – perhaps the greatest Discouragement in Communication is Not Experiencing a Felt-Sense of Understanding from the Other.

Validating is Valuing the other's Point of View, Thoughts, Perspective, Feelings, etc. with Genuine Understanding, Care, Regard, and Interest, all of which helps to nurture Trust

Do your best to let the other know you Care & Understand them as Best as possible.

It's ok if you don't Understand, once again this means you need to either ask questions or make comments until Understanding is gained.

Important to note that Validation is Not about Agreement or Disagreement; you can still Validate and Acknowledge even though you have a hard time of why the other thinks and feels as they do.

More times than not, expressing Disagreement can be Invalidating of the other's feelings, point of view, etc.

It's normal to have differences of opinions, perspectives, etc.

CHECKLIST TO MEASURE PROGRESS

Do you *Choose* to **Listen** to Others as well as Yourself ?

Do you *Choose* to **Consider** Other's thoughts, feelings, etc. as well as Yourself ?

Do you *Choose* to **Understand** Others as well as Yourself ?

Do you *Choose* to **Validate** Others as well as Yourself ?

Do you *Choose* to **Take Personal Responsibility** for yourself and for your Attitude ?

Do you *Choose* to Be **Responsive** or Reactive ?

Do you *Choose* to Be **Purposeful** or Problematic ?

Do you *Choose* to Be **Effective** or Ineffective ?

Do you *Choose* to Be **Part of the Problem** or Part of the Solution ?

Do you *Choose* to Be In **Control of Yourself** or attempt control of Others ?

To the Degree you Experience the above is the Degree of Love & Trust you will Have.

The Goal is To Be in Process For Progress & Growth, Not Perfection.