

EMOTIONALLY
HEALTHY



RELATIONSHIPS

THE AUTHENTIC — YEAR OF COMMUNITY

Listening Deeply

Proverbs 20:5 & James 1:19

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“Emotional health and spiritual maturity are inseparable. It is not possible for a Christian to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature.”

- Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*

1 Corinthians 13:2-3

If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the

poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

“I-Thou” relationships vs.

“I-it” relationships

- Martin Buber (1878-1965)

“For Buber, the experience felt like a judgment on his whole way of life. He realized that it is possible to have profound spiritual experiences and a ‘faith that can move mountains,’ but that such a faith is worth nothing without a deeply present love for people.”

- Pete and Gerri Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Relationships Day by Day*

“Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person, they are almost indistinguishable.”

- David Augsburger

Proverbs 18:2

Fools find no pleasure in understanding,
but delight in expressing their own opinions.

Proverbs 18:13

To answer before listening—
that is folly and shame.

Proverbs 20:5

The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but the one who has understanding draws them out.

James 1:19

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.

“The first service one owes to others in community involves listening to them. Just as our love for God begins with listening to God's Word, the beginning of love for other Christians is learning to listen to them. God's love for us is shown by the fact that God not only gives us God's Word, but also lends us God's ear. We do God's work for our brothers and sisters when we learn to listen to them. So often, Christians, especially preachers, think that their only service is always to have to 'offer' something when they are together with other people. They forget that listening can be a greater service than speaking. Many people seek a sympathetic ear and do not find it among Christians, because these Christians are talking even when they should be listening. But Christians who can no longer listen to one another will soon no longer be listening to God either; they will always be talking even in the presence of God. The death of the spiritual life starts here.... Those who cannot listen along patiently will always be talking past others, and finally no longer will even notice it. Those who think their

time is too precious to spend listening will never really have time for God and others, but only for themselves and for their own words and plans.”

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*

Listening Requires Presence

“Because of our relational design we cannot change without the presence of others. Changing the way we learned to attach, resetting the thermostat of our learned level of intimacy and recalibrating our implicit emotional memory is ultimately beyond our ability. We can modify some aspects of our capacity, but satisfying relationships require a transformation we cannot make through self-help methods. We must have the presence of others (remember, we are created for and by relationships). A transforming presence must be personal. ... we need the actual presence of another to experience a fundamental shift in our relational capacity. A transforming relationship is not generic or virtual; it is concrete and particular. There is a shift in our relational capacity when a particular person shows up in particular way in our life.”

- Plass & Cofield, *The Relational Soul*

“To care means first of all to be present to each other. From experience you know that those who care for you become present to you. When they listen, they listen to you. When they speak, they speak to you. Their presence is a healing presence

because they accept you on your terms, and they encourage you to take your own life seriously.”

- Henri Nouwen, *Out of Solitude*

Listening Requires Incarnation

John 1:14

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14 (The Message)

The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes.

“To listen at a heart level with empathy, attuned to the words and nonverbal communication of another person so that the other person feels felt by you.”

- *Emotionally Healthy Relationships Workbook*

How to listen deeply (Proverbs 20:5):

Give the person your full attention.

As you listen begin to step into the speaker's world. Try to feel what they are feeling. Listen to their words and their emotions.

Avoid judging, interpreting, fixing.

“We need to understand why the habit of fixing, saving, advising, and setting each other straight has such a powerful grip on our lives. There are times, of course, when that habit is benign, when what grips us is simple compassion. You have a problem, you share it with me, and wanting to help, I offer you counsel in the hope that it will be useful. So far, so good. But the deeper your issue goes, the less likely it is that my advice will be of any real value. I may know how to fix your car or help you write a paper, but I do not know how to salvage your failing career, repair your broken marriage, or save you from despair. My answer to your deepest difficulties merely reflects what I would do if I were you, which I am not. And even if I were your...clone, my solution would be of little use to you unless it arose from within your soul and you claimed it as your own...our habit of advising each other reveals its shadow side. If the shadow could speak its logic, I think it would say something like this: If you take my advice, you will surely solve your problem. If you take my advice but fail to solve your problem, you did not try hard enough. If you fail to take my advice, I did the best I could. So I am covered. No matter how things come out, I no longer need to worry about you or your vexing problem. The shadow behind the ‘fixes’ we offer for issues that we cannot fix is, ironically, the desire to hold each other at bay. It is a strategy for abandoning each other while appearing to be concerned. Perhaps this explains why one of

the most common laments of our time is that ‘no one really sees me, hears me, or understands me.’ How can we understand another when instead of listening deeply, we rush to repair that person in order to escape further involvement? The sense of isolation and invisibility that marks so many lives—not least the lives of young people, whom we constantly try to fix—is due in part to a mode of ‘helping’ that allows us to dismiss each other.”

- Parker Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness*

Reflect back to the person what you understood them to say without judgment.

Confirm what they said and how they felt was correct.

Ask, “Is there more?” or “Tell me more about that...”

Repeat until the person feels heard and you understand where they are coming from.