

Welcome to the Military Families Learning Network Webinar: 9 Important Communication Skills for Deescalating the Cycle of Abuse and Violence

A few days after the presentation, we will send an evaluation and links to an archive and resources.

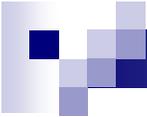
We appreciate your feedback. To receive these emails, please enter your email address in the chat box before we start the recording.

All chat will be recorded and archived.

This material is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Office of Family Policy, Children and Youth, U.S. Department of Defense under Award Numbers 2010-48869-20685 and 2012-48755-20306.

U.S. DEPARTMENT
OF DEFENSE





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Today's Presenters

Dr. Victor Harris



is an Assistant Professor and Cooperative Extension Specialist at the University of Florida in the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences. His teaching, research, and programming focus on close relationships with a specific emphasis on dyadic and group communication practices and their influence on relationship quality.

Dr. Heidi Radunovich



is an Associate Professor and Cooperative Extension Specialist in the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences at the University of Florida. She is a licensed psychologist whose teaching, research and Cooperative Extension activities connect to military families, domestic violence, stress, developmental disabilities, childcare provider education, disaster stress, and academic integrity. Dr. Radunovich is also the project leader for the Military Families Learning Network (MFLN) Family Development.

9 Important Communication Skills for Deescalating the Cycle of Abuse and Violence



What We Will Cover Today

- Introduction to the webinar series
- Background and context related to communication skills and family conflict
- 9 Important Communication Skills



Introduction to the Webinar Series

- New series
- MFLN Family Development team
- Goal: provide continuing education to support professionals who work with military families, particularly related to family strengthening and abuse prevention and intervention.



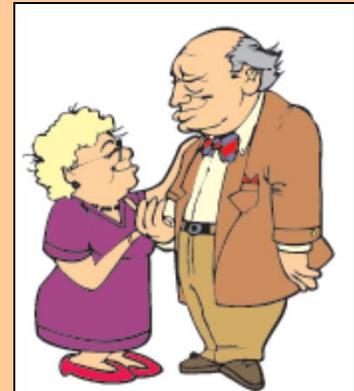
Background and Context

- Role of communication in family conflict
- Models of family stress
- What we know about stress, conflict and abuse

9 Communication Skills

Welcome!

- Electronic Data Information Source (EDIS) Publications
 - 9 Important Communication Skills for Every Relationship
 - Online: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fy1277>
 - 10 Rules for Constructive Conflict
 - Online: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fy1276>
 - Book: Gottman, J.M. (1994). *Why marriages succeed or fail*. New York: Fireside.



Family Strengths Perspective

- Appreciation and Affection
- Commitment
- Positive Communication
- Time Together
- The Ability to Cope with Stress and Crisis
- Spiritual Well-Being



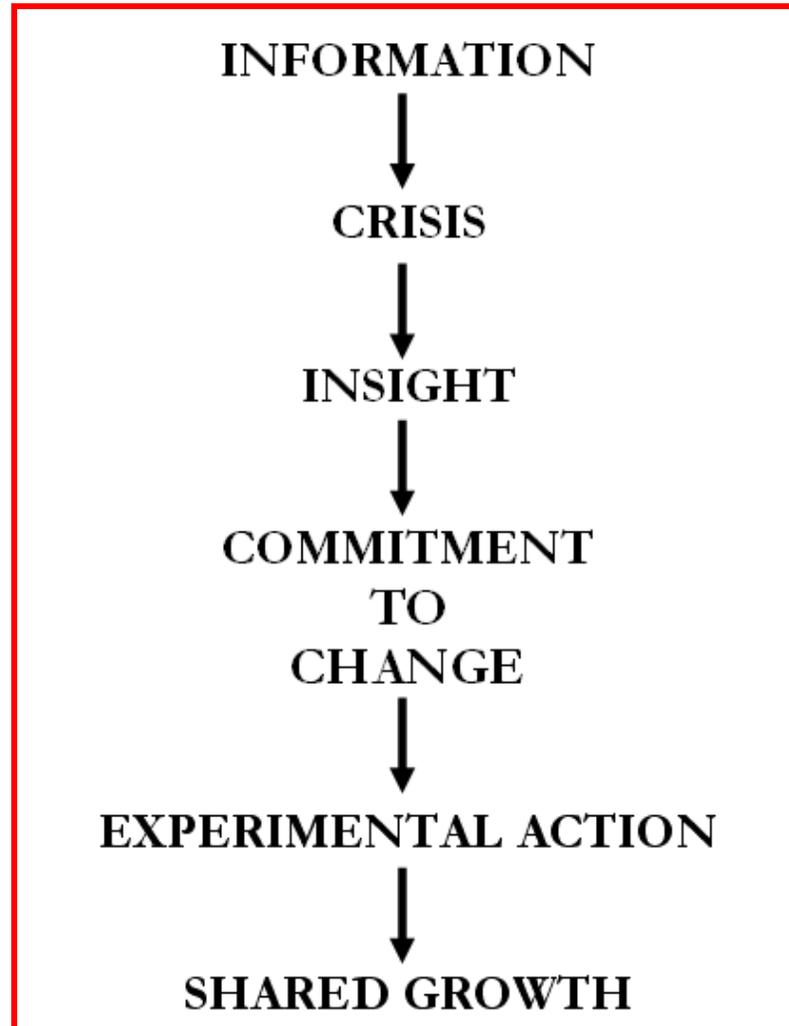
Community Strengths

- Supportive environment
- Effective educational system
- Support for families practicing religion
- Support for families needing assistance
- Safe, secure, and healthful environment

Cultural Strengths

- Rich cultural heritage
- Shared cultural meanings
- Political stability
- Economic stability
- Understanding of global culture and society

The Process of Change



Source: Mace, D. (1981). The Long Trail from Information Giving to Behavioral Change. *Family Relations*, 30, 599-606.



9 Important Skills Training

Learning Objectives

Knowledge

- Part I: The Four Don'ts
- Part II: The Five Dos

Skills

- Provide Opportunities to practice the 9 Skills (in webinar and at home)

Learning Outcomes

Knowledge

- Understand the Four Don'ts
- Understand the Five Dos

Skills

- Practice and apply the 9 Skills (in webinar)
- Practice and Apply the 9 Skills (at home)



9 Important Skills Training

- *Knowledge*: Defined as awareness and accessibility to “information, facts, ideas, truths, and principles” (Encarta, 2007).
- *Skills*: “The ability to do something well, usually gained through training or experience” (Encarta, 2007).



Why Did the Chicken Cross the Road?

It All Depends On Who You Ask –

- ❑ **Kindergarten Teacher:** To get to the other side.
- ❑ **Plato:** For the greater good.
- ❑ **Aristotle:** It is the nature of chickens to cross roads.
- ❑ **Darwin:** Chickens over long periods of time have been naturally selected and are, therefore, genetically disposed to cross roads.
- ❑ **Karl Marx:** It was an historical inevitability.



Why Did the Chicken Cross the Road?

It All Depends On Who You Ask –

- ❑ **Sir Isaac Newton:** A chicken will continue crossing the road in a uniform motion unless acted upon by some other force.
- ❑ **Albert Einstein:** Did the chicken really cross the road or did the road move beneath the chicken?
- ❑ **Ralph Waldo Emerson:** The chicken did not cross the road...it transcended it.
- ❑ **Robert Frost:** To cross the road less traveled by.



Why Did the Chicken Cross the Road?

It All Depends On Who You Ask –

- ❑ **Earnest Hemingway:** To die, in the rain.
- ❑ **Sigmund Freud:** The fact that you are at all concerned about the chicken crossing the road reveals your latent sexual insecurities.
- ❑ **The Bible:** “And God came down from the heavens, and He said unto the chicken, ‘Thou shalt cross the road.’ And it came to pass that the chicken obeyed and crossed the road and much rejoicing was heard in all the land.”



Why Did the Chicken Cross the Road?

It All Depends On Who You Ask –

- ❑ **Dr. Seuss:** Did the chicken cross the road? Did he cross it with a toad? Yes! The chicken crossed the road, but why he crossed, we've not been told.
- ❑ **Captain James T. Kirk:** To boldly go where no chicken has gone before!
- ❑ **Harry Potter:** To find the final horcrux, die, come back to life, and defeat Lord Voldemort!



Why Did the Chicken Cross the Road?

It All Depends On Who You Ask –

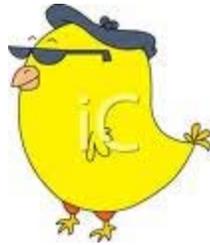
- ❑ **Martin Luther King, Jr.:** I envision a world where all chickens will be free to cross roads. Free at last! Free at last!
- ❑ **Richard Nixon:** The chicken did not cross the road. I repeat, I knew nothing about the chicken crossing the road.
- ❑ **Bill Clinton:** I did not cross the road with that chicken. What do you mean by 'chicken?' Could you define 'chicken,' please?



Why Did the Chicken Cross the Road?

It All Depends On Who You Ask –

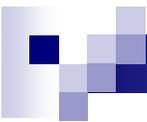
- ❑ **Bill Gates:** Who cares! We own the road! We own the chicken!
- ❑ **Grandpa:** In my day, we didn't ask why the chicken crossed the road. Someone told us that the chicken crossed the road and that was good enough for us.
- ❑ **Colonel Sanders** (Founder of Kentucky Fried Chicken): I missed one?



Why Talk about How to Communicate?

It All Depends On Who You Ask –

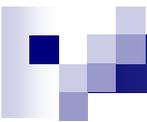
- Why talk about how to communicate?
- Many meaningful (and heated!) discussions take place about money, health, friendships, parenting, grand parenting, etc. within the context of marriage and the family.
- How we *think* and *talk* about these issues impacts our relationships. **FOCUSING ON THE PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS!**



What Do Healthy Relationships Look Like?

- Are satisfied overall with their relationship
- Are committed to each other for the long-term
- Have positive communication
- Can resolve disagreements and conflicts
- Never resort to violence or abuse
- Are sexually (and psychologically) faithful
- Spend positive, enjoyable time together
- Provide intimacy and emotional support
- Are mutually committed to any children they have

Source: National Healthy Marriage Resource Center : Moore, K.A. et al (2004). *What is a Healthy Marriage? Defining the Concept. A research brief.* Available at www.childtrends.org



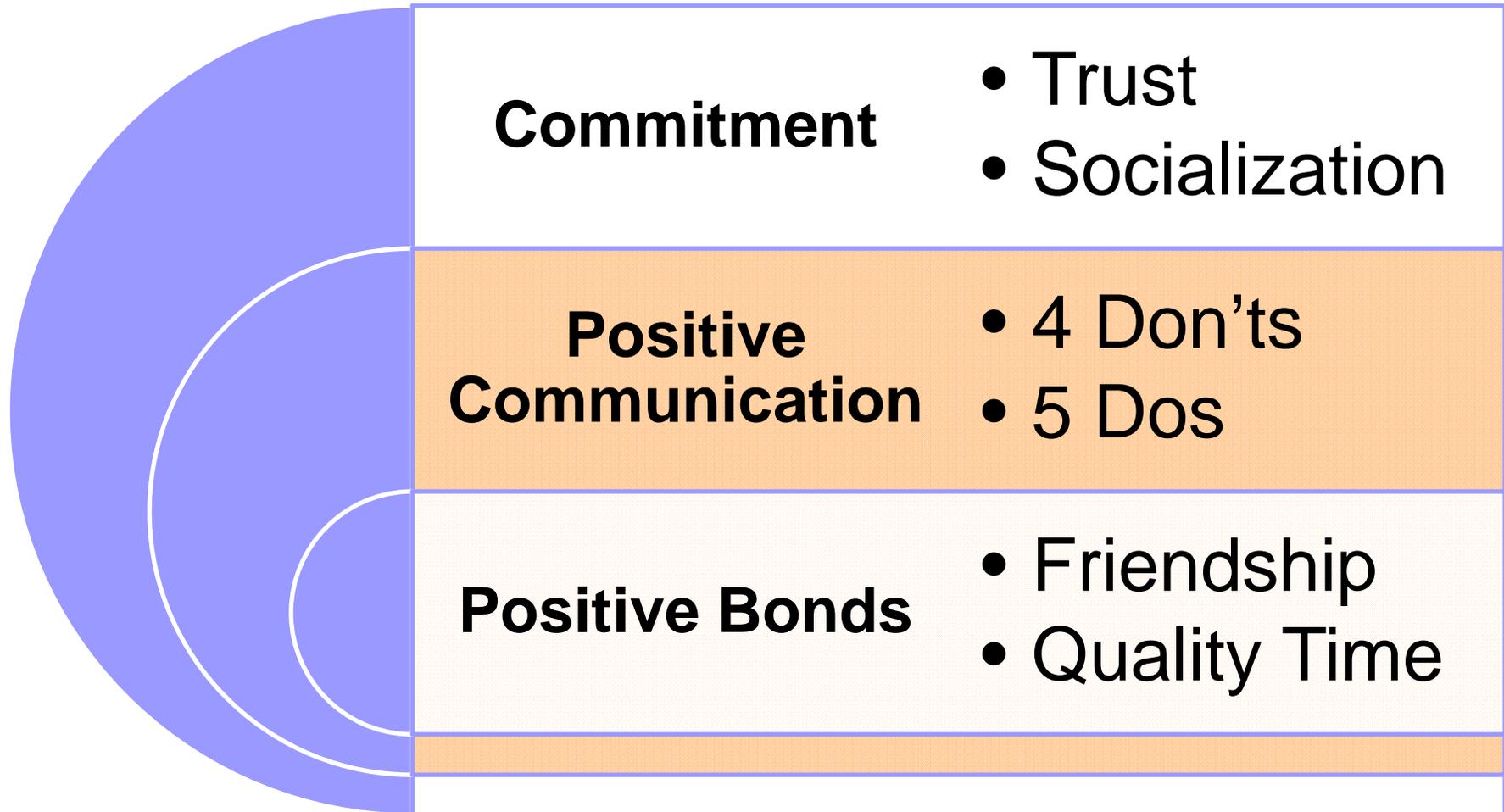
What Do Healthy Relationships Look Like?

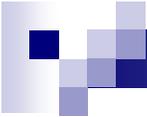
“A healthy [relationship] is a safe, secure, loving relationship that is built on friendship, passion, and commitment. Healthy [relationships] . . . can handle life’s ups and downs. They are partnerships based on respect, trust, and a willingness to communicate and resolve differences. Domestic violence plays no part in a healthy [relationship]. Children that live in the homes of those who have healthy [relationships] are respected and nurtured by two dedicated and loving parents.”

Source: Harris, S.M., Glenn, N.D, Rappleyea, D.L., Diaz-Loving, R., Hawkins, A.J., Daire, A. P., Osborne, C., & Huston, T.L. (2008). *Together in Texas: Baseline Report on Marriage in the Lone Star State*, p. 5. Austin, TX: Health and Human Services Commission.



Keys to Relationship Satisfaction





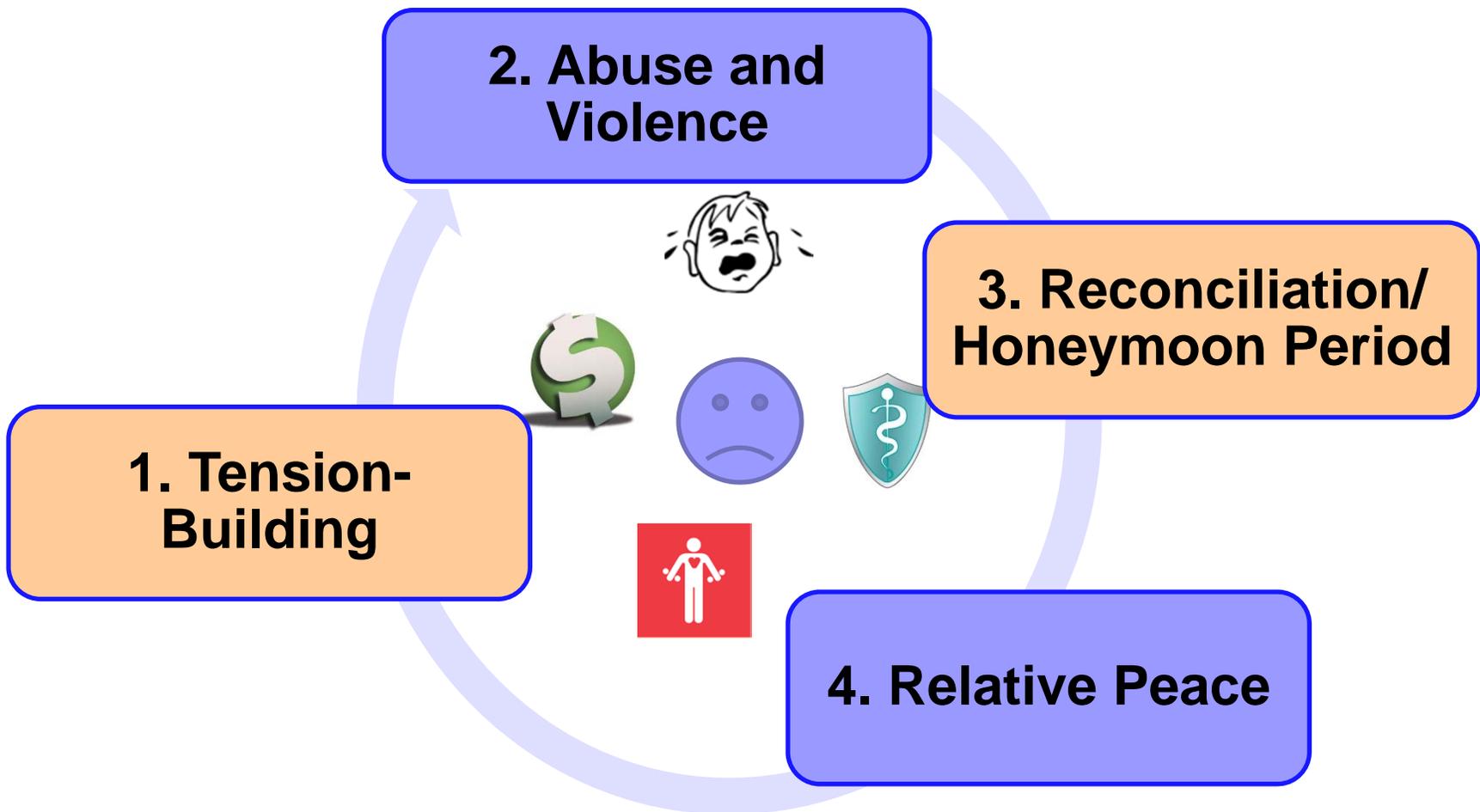
Major Reasons for Divorce

Nationally

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ A lack of commitment▪ Too much conflict and arguing▪ Infidelity, extramarital affairs▪ Getting married too young▪ Unrealistic expectations of marriage | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Lack of equality in the relationship▪ Little or no helpful pre-marriage preparation▪ Domestic Violence▪ Financial problems, economic hardship▪ Conflict about division of labor |
|---|--|

National Fatherhood Initiative (2005). *With this ring: A national survey on marriage in America*. Retrieved from <http://www.smartmarriages.com/nms.pdf>

The Cycle of Abuse & Violence



Four General Phases



The Faces of Abuse and Neglect

- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Physical Neglect
- Emotional Neglect
- Abandonment
- Multiple Forms of Maltreatment

Key Principles

- 80-20 Rule
- Do the Right Thing for the Right Reason
- Change Yourself First
- Seek Marital Therapy

Individual Traits

Liabilities

Difficulty coping with stress
Dysfunctional beliefs
Excessive impulsiveness
Extreme self-consciousness
Excessive anger and hostility
Untreated depression
Chronic irritability

Assets

Extroversion
Flexibility
Good self-esteem
Assertiveness
Commitment
Love

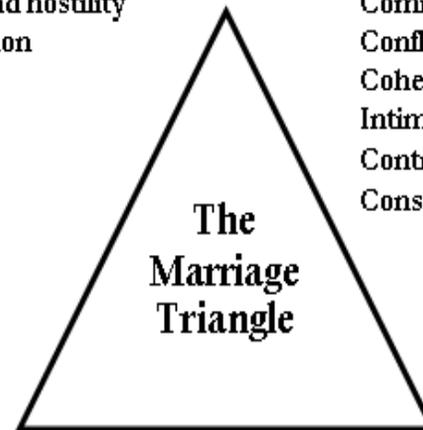
Couple Traits

Liabilities

Negative interaction styles

Assets

Communication skills
Conflict resolution skills
Cohesion
Intimacy
Control or power sharing
Consensus



Contexts

Family-of-origin influences
Family process leftovers
Autonomy from family
Parents' marriage
Parents' and friends' approval
Work stress
Parenting stress
Outside interests stress
Other stressors (debt, health, in-laws)

Source: Larson, J.H. (2003). *The Great Marriage Tune-Up Book*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Part I: The Four Don't's





What Do We Talk About?

- Describe a happy family . . .
- What I like most about myself is . . .
- What I appreciate most about you is . . .
- What worries me most is . . .
- Define true love . . .
- My favorite thing to eat is . . .

- What makes me happy is . . .
- My most prized material possession is . . .
- I like to spend money on . . .
- Something I do pretty well is . . .
- I exercise . . .
- Something that bothers me is . . .



What Are Some Things We Argue About?

1. Gender Issues and Perspectives
2. Commitment and Loyalty
3. Power and Control
4. Money and Finances
5. Sexual Issues and Ideologies
6. Autonomy and Privacy
7. Children and Parenting
8. Health, Nutrition, and Health Care



Bathroom Fight

Adapted from: Gottman, J.M. (1994a). *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail*. New York: Fireside.

Gottman, J.M. (1994b). *What Predicts Divorce? The Relationship Between Marital Process and Marital Outcomes*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Gottman, J.M., Katz, L.F., & Hooven, C. (1997). *Meta-Emotion: How Families Communicate Emotionally*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.



The Crying Baby

When James' oldest daughter was a newborn, he and his wife lived in a small two bedroom condo. James and his wife were in one bedroom and their daughter was in the other. James' wife was not working outside the home at the time and he had a 45 mile commute each way to work that required him to wake up at 5:30 a.m. One night about 3:00 a.m., James was awakened by the sound of his daughter crying in her crib. The first thought or feeling that popped into his head and heart was, "go attend to your daughter's needs," whether she needed to be changed, held, fed, or covered by a blanket. Almost as quickly as that thought . . .



The Crying Baby

occurred to James, he dismissed it and continued to lie in bed, although he was wide awake now. At the moment that he refused to help his daughter as he felt he should, he began to have some strange thoughts and feelings towards his wife. He began to think how lazy and inconsiderate she was, although she was still sleeping and had not heard their daughter cry. He felt justified in continuing to lie in bed because he was the one who had to get up in a couple of hours anyway to get ready for work. She could take a nap later in the day if she wanted to and he could not. James was upset that she had not yet heard their daughter cry and he . . .



The Crying Baby

found himself not only accusing her in his heart of being inconsiderate of his need to sleep, but of their daughter's needs as well. The crying continued and grew in intensity, and as it grew so did James' sense of being victimized. James' wife was soon awakened by the crying and immediately got up to check on their daughter. James did not let her know that he was awake, but as soon as she left the room he rolled over with a "humph!" thinking that now he would be able to get back to sleep. However, sleep did not come easily.

Communication Patterns

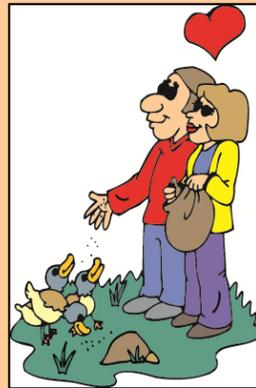
What principles and patterns can we learn from this story?



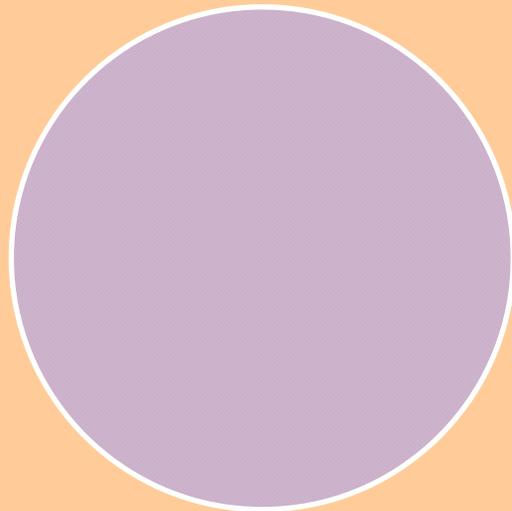
How do these communication patterns play out when we talk about money, health, relationships, marriage, parenting, and children?

Doing the Right Thing for the Right Reason

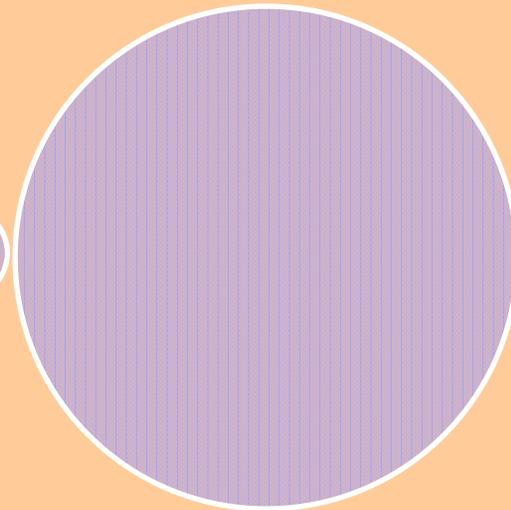
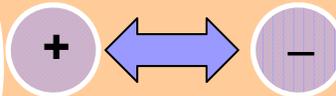
**The
Constructive
World**



**The
Destructive
World**



Emotions



Emotions



9 Important Skills

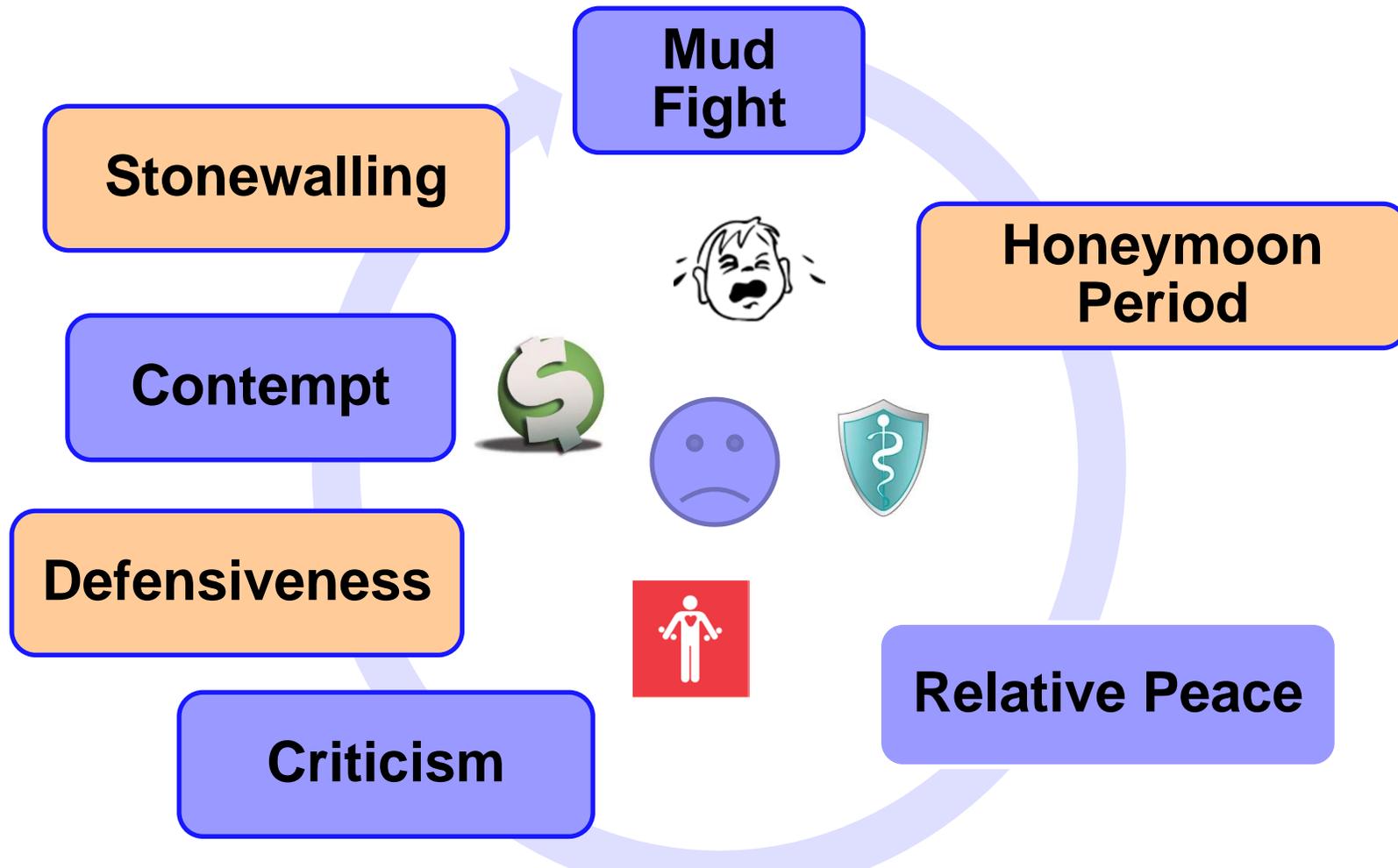
Part I: The Four Don'ts

1. Criticism
2. Contempt
3. Defensiveness
4. Stonewalling

Part II: The Five Dos

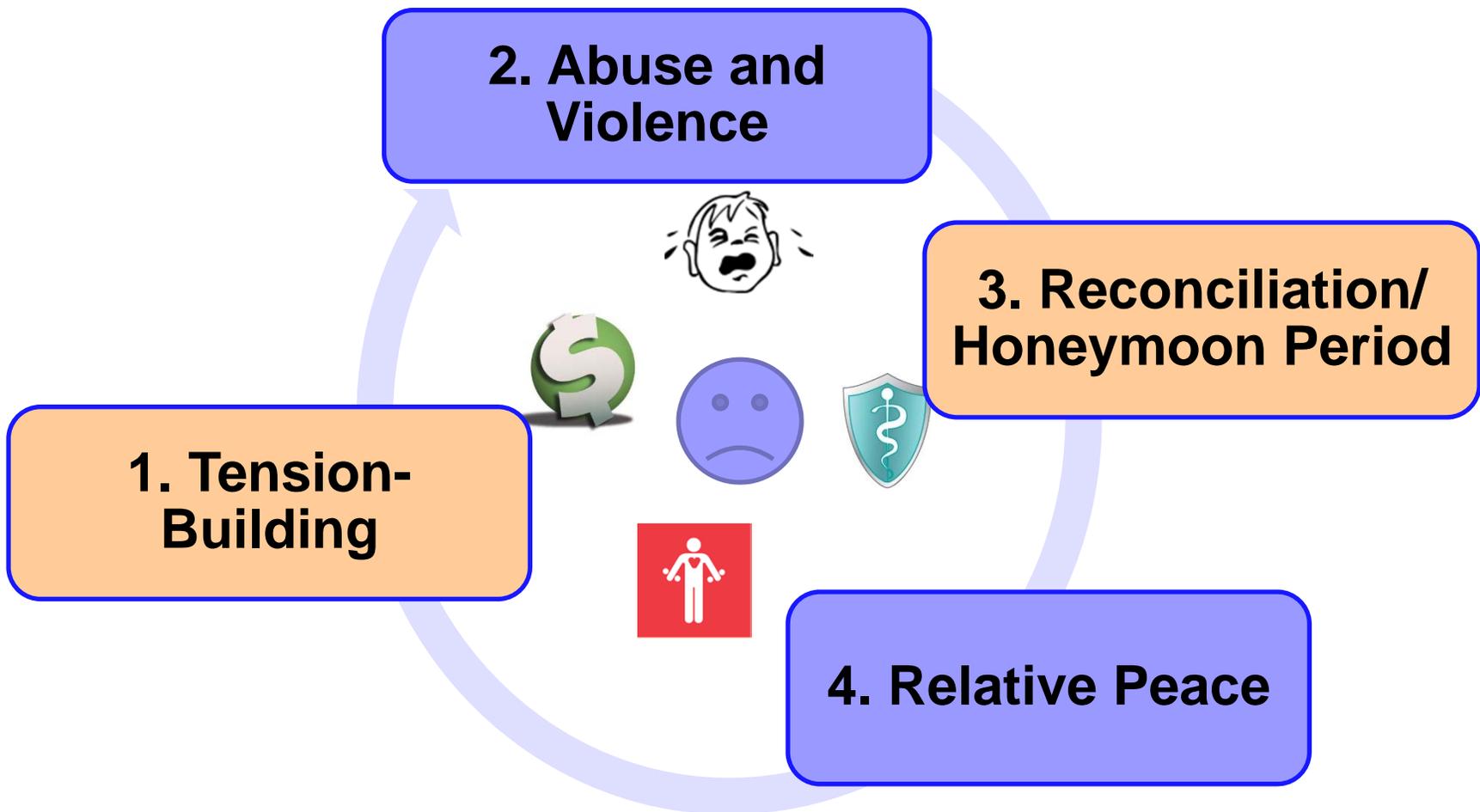
1. Calm Down
2. Speak Non-Defensively
3. Use Specific Complaints
4. Validate
5. Overlearn 9 Skills

The Cycle of Negativity



How might this cycle play out with people when they talk about money, health, relationship, or parenting issues?

The Cycle of Abuse & Violence



Four General Phases



9 Important Skills

Criticism

- You never
- You always
- I accuse you ...
- I blame you ...

Contempt

- Mock, sarcastic, yell, mimic, roll the eyes, call names, ignore

Defensiveness

- Deny responsibility
- Make excuses
- Rubber man/
Rubber woman
- Yes-but . . .
- Repeat yourself
- Whine
- Body language

Application: Choose One!

-  Scenario 1: Your partner just overdrew the bank account.
-  Scenario 2: Your partner has diabetes and just ate something that was not a part of the strict dietary plan.
-  Scenario 3: Your partner is playing *good cop* as a parent and forcing you into the role of *bad cop*.

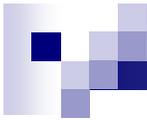
➔ Use the *Four Don'ts* to discuss the issue.
Have fun but be nice! 😊



Application

- Scenario 1: Discuss a recent conflict you had.
- Discuss how criticism, contempt, defensiveness or stonewalling may have been involved in the conflict.
- Identify how you can avoid the use of criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling in future conflicts.

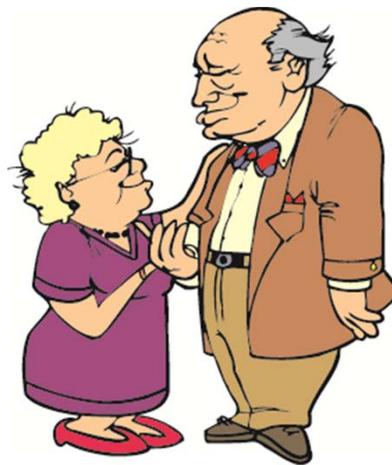




Target Behavior:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Totals
1. Don't Criticize	+							
-Don't attack core personality	-							
-Don't use "never" or "always"								
2. Don't Become Defensive								
-Do accept responsibility								
-Don't make excuses								
3. Don't Use Contempt								
-Don't mock, call names, roll eyes								
4. Don't Stonewall								
-Do be open and available to talk								

Adapted from: Gottman, J.M. (1994). *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail*. New York: Fireside.

Part II: The Five Dos





Effective Communication

- “I’m getting more exercise lately,” really means ... “The batteries in the remote are dead.”
- “I got a lot done” really means ... “I found Waldo in every picture!”
- “Take a break honey, you’re working too hard,” really means ... “I can’t hear the game over the vacuum cleaner!”
- “You know I could never love anyone else,” really means ... “I’m used to the way you yell at me and I realize it could be worse.”



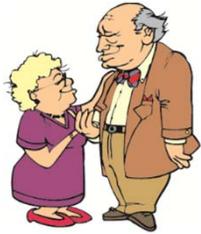
Effective Communication

- “This relationship is getting too serious,” really means ... “I’m starting to like you more than my truck.”
- “I know exactly where we are,” really means ... “No one will ever see us alive again!”
- “Will you marry me?” really means ... “Both of my roommates have moved out, I can’t find the peanut butter, and we’re out of toilet paper.”

Anonymous

Application: What Would You Say?

-  You check your account and notice there has been an unexpected large expenditure. You suspect your partner is the culprit.
-  You tell your partner about a health or nutrition concern you have regarding them and s/he becomes defensive.
-  Your partner is upset about how little you or your children are doing to help around the house.



10 Rules for Constructive Conflict

- RULE 1: Refuse to Use Destructive Conflict Tactics**
- RULE 2: Choose to Gain the Skills to Conflict Constructively**
- RULE 3: Focus on Feelings First, then Move to the Specific Issue**
- RULE 4: Focus on One Issue at a Time**
- RULE 5: Identify the Patterns of Behavior that Reveal the Root Cause of the Issue**
- RULE 6: Think Win/Win**
- RULE 7: Learn to Calm Yourself**
- RULE 8: Learn to Calm Your Partner**
- RULE 9: Be Congruent in Your Communication**
- RULE 10: Seek Closure and to Resolve the Specific Issue ASAP**



9 Important Skills

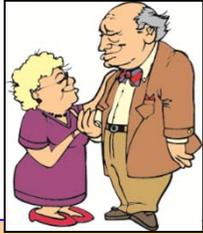
Part I: The Four Don'ts

1. Criticism
2. Contempt
3. Defensiveness
4. Stonewalling



Part II: The Five Dos

1. Calm Down
2. Speak Non-Defensively
3. Use Specific Complaints
4. Validate
5. Overlearn 9 Skills



Steps to Fair-Fighting

- Step 1: Soften Your Start-up
- Step 2: Learn to Make and Receive Repair Attempts
- Step 3: Soothe Yourself and Each Other (Calm Down, Call “Time Out”)
- Step 4: Compromise (Learn to Accept Your Partner’s Faults)
- **Key: Focus on fondness, respect, and admiration**



9 Important Skills

I-Messages

■ “I feel...when this ..
(behavior), because

- Describe a feeling
- Identify a behavior
- Identify a reason

Accept Responsibility

- I'm sorry . . .
- I understand . . .
- I now realize . . .

Speak Nondefensively

- Soft start-up
- Reduce emotion

Validate

- Listen
 - Eyes, ears, mind, heart
 - Needs and emotions
- Use bridge words

Cycle of Positivity



Adapted from: Gottman, J.M. (1994). *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail*. New York: Fireside.



Application: “I-Messages”

Rewrite the statements using positive I-Messages.

1. You never call.
2. You're always late.
3. That's stupid.
4. You always ignore me when we are together.
5. Don't yell at me!
6. You probably won't think it is important, but I need to talk to you about . . .

1. I like it when you call...
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

5. _____
6. _____



Application: Speak Non-Defensively

Practice using I-Messages, soft voice, low emotion.

1. You never call.
2. You're always late.
3. That's stupid.
4. You always ignore me when we are together.
5. Don't yell at me!
6. You probably won't think it is important, but I need to talk to you about . . .

1. I feel/behavior/because

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____



Application: Accept Responsibility

Practice accepting responsibility for the criticisms.

1. You never call.
2. You're always late.
3. That's stupid.
4. You always ignore me when we are together.
5. Don't yell at me!
6. You probably won't think it is important, but I need to talk to you about . . .

1. I need to call you more.

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____



Application: Validation

Determine the needs/emotions being expressed.

1. You never call.
2. You're always late.
3. That's stupid.
4. You always ignore me when we are together.
5. Don't yell at me!
6. You probably won't think it is important, but I need to talk to you about . . .

1. feel loved/lonely-hurt

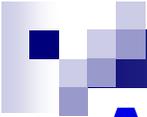
2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____



Application: Validation & Appreciation

Practice listening with the eyes, ears, mind, heart.

1. Partner 1: Tell a recent story of an experience you shared together that you really enjoyed and why.

2. Partner 1: Use bridge words and listening with your eyes, ears, mind, and heart to validate what s/he is saying.

1. Partner 2: Use bridge words and listening with your eyes, ears, mind, and heart to validate what s/he is saying.

2. Partner 2: Tell a recent story of an experience you shared together that you really enjoyed and why.



Application: Putting it All Together

- Scenario 1: Discuss a recent conflict you had (e.g., money, health, relationship).
- Discuss how calming down, complaining, speaking non-defensively, and validation could have been used to negotiate the conflict more effectively.
- Identify specific ways you can calm down, complain, speak non-defensively, and validate in future discussions to short-circuit the negative cycle of communication.



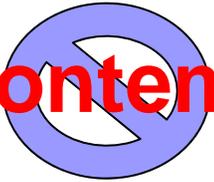
Antidotes to the Four Don'ts

Criticism



**Complain w/o Blame
(I-Messages; Speak N.D.)**

Contempt



**Build a Culture of
Appreciation (Validate)**

Defensiveness



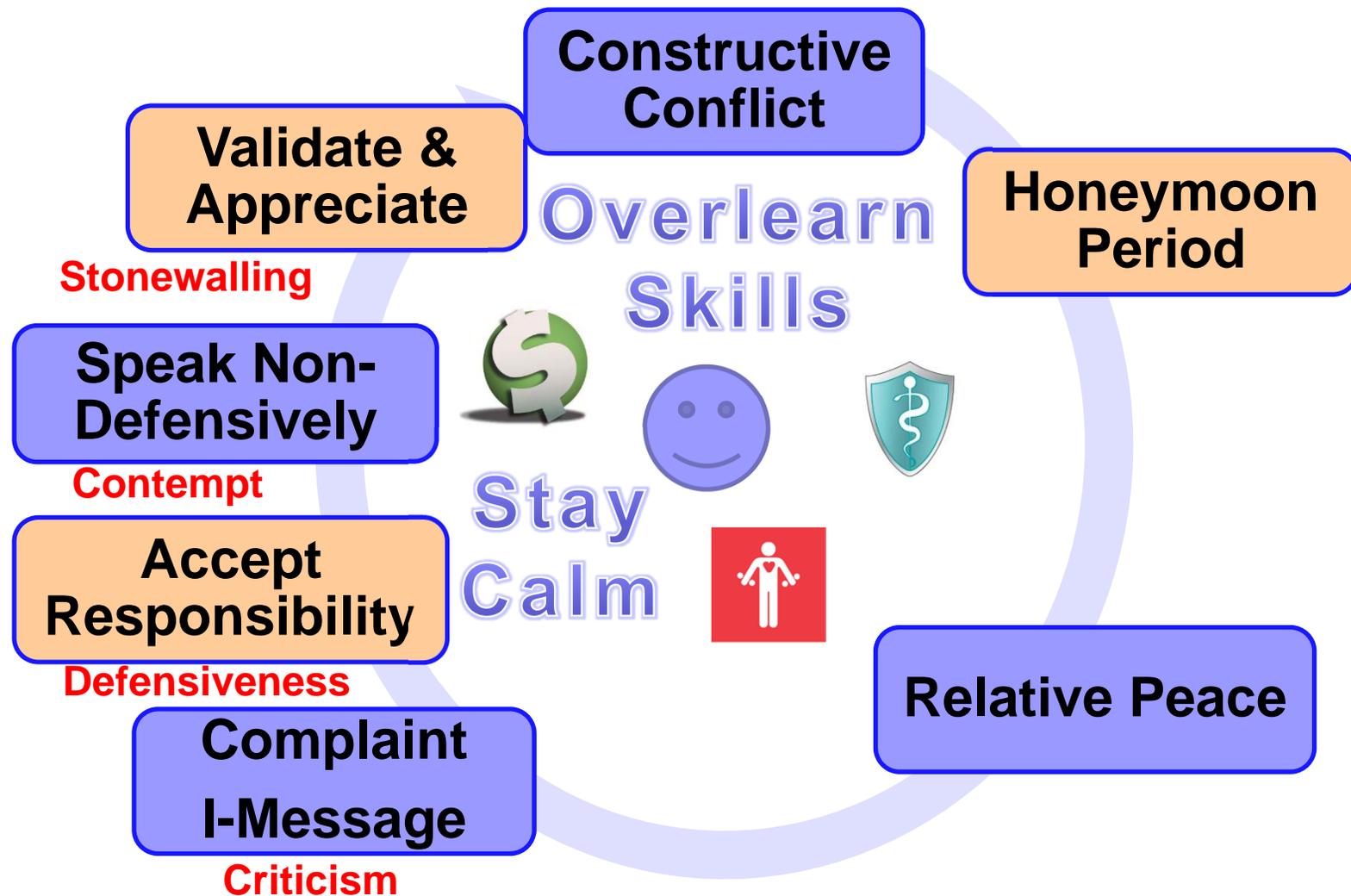
**Take Responsibility
(Speak N.D.; Validate)**

Stonewalling



**Do Physiological Self-
Soothing (Calm Down)**

Cycle of Positivity



Adapted from: Gottman, J.M. (1994). *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail*. New York: Fireside.

Target Behavior:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Totals
1. <u>Don't</u> Criticize (<i>Complain w/o Blame-I-Message</i>)	+							
2. <u>Don't</u> Become Defensive (<i>Take Responsibility</i>)	-							
3. <u>Don't</u> Use Contempt (<i>Build Culture of Appreciation</i>)								
4. <u>Don't</u> Stonewall (<i>Calm Down & Soothe Partner</i>)								
5. <u>Do</u> Calm Down								
6. <u>Do</u> Complain Using I-Messages								
7. <u>Do</u> Speak Non-Defensively								
8. <u>Do</u> Validate w/ Eyes, Ears, Mind, & Heart								
9. <u>Do</u> Overlearn the 9 Skills								

Adapted from: Gottman, J.M. (1994). *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail*. New York: Fireside.



9 Important Skills Training

Learning Objectives

Knowledge

- Part I: The Four Don'ts →
- Part II: The Five Dos →

Skills

- Provide Opportunities to practice the 9 Skills (in webinar and at home) →

Learning Outcomes

Knowledge

- Understand the Four Don'ts
- Understand the Five Dos

Skills

- Practice and apply the 9 Skills (in webinar)
- Practice and Apply the 9 Skills (at home)



9 Important Skills Training

- *Knowledge*: Defined as awareness and accessibility to “information, facts, ideas, truths, and principles” (Encarta, 2007).
- *Skills*: “The ability to do something well, usually gained through training or experience” (Encarta, 2007).

The Process of Change



Source: Mace, D. (1981). The Long Trail from Information Giving to Behavioral Change. *Family Relations*, 30, 599-606.



How Do We Achieve Success?

It All Depends On Who You Ask –



- *Relationship Satisfaction*: Defined as a positive perceptual evaluation of the health of a friendship and the levels of well-being (e.g., happiness) each member of the friendship experiences.
- How we *think about* and *talk about* issues influences our mental health and relationships.

THE PROCESS IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS!



Good Luck!





How Do We Achieve Success?

It All Depends On Who You Ask –



Questions?

How might these skills relate to the work that you do?

