



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What is an important conversation you need to have with someone this week?
- What is a need you need to advocate for (for yourself or someone else?)
- What have been "successful" conversations you have had in the past? What were the aspects of that conversation that went well?
- What can "get in the way" for you to have open communication with others?



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HAVING HEALTHY CONVERSATIONS

RESOURCES & REFLECTIVE GUIDES

No matter the season of life, learning how to engage in healthy conversations is of paramount importance.

And especially when facing difficult moments in life that are emotionally charged, effective communication can provide comfort, understanding, and support to everyone involved.

Open and compassionate dialogue allows individuals to express their feelings, fears, and wishes, fostering a sense of connection and reducing the isolation often experienced during such challenging times.

It enables families and friends to make informed decisions, plan for the future, and ultimately walk in greater peace in the day-to-day. Healthy conversations not only ease the burden of those facing illness or loss but also contribute to the healing and resilience of all involved.

Use these activities to experience greater awareness and even self-discipline in your conversations.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What are some conversations weighing heavy on you today? (advocating with a doctor, talking with a family member who has hurt you, advocating your needs to a friend, etc.)
- Think through each one of the words: honest, vulnerable, gracious, and respectful and what they might mean/look like in the context of having a difficult conversation with someone?



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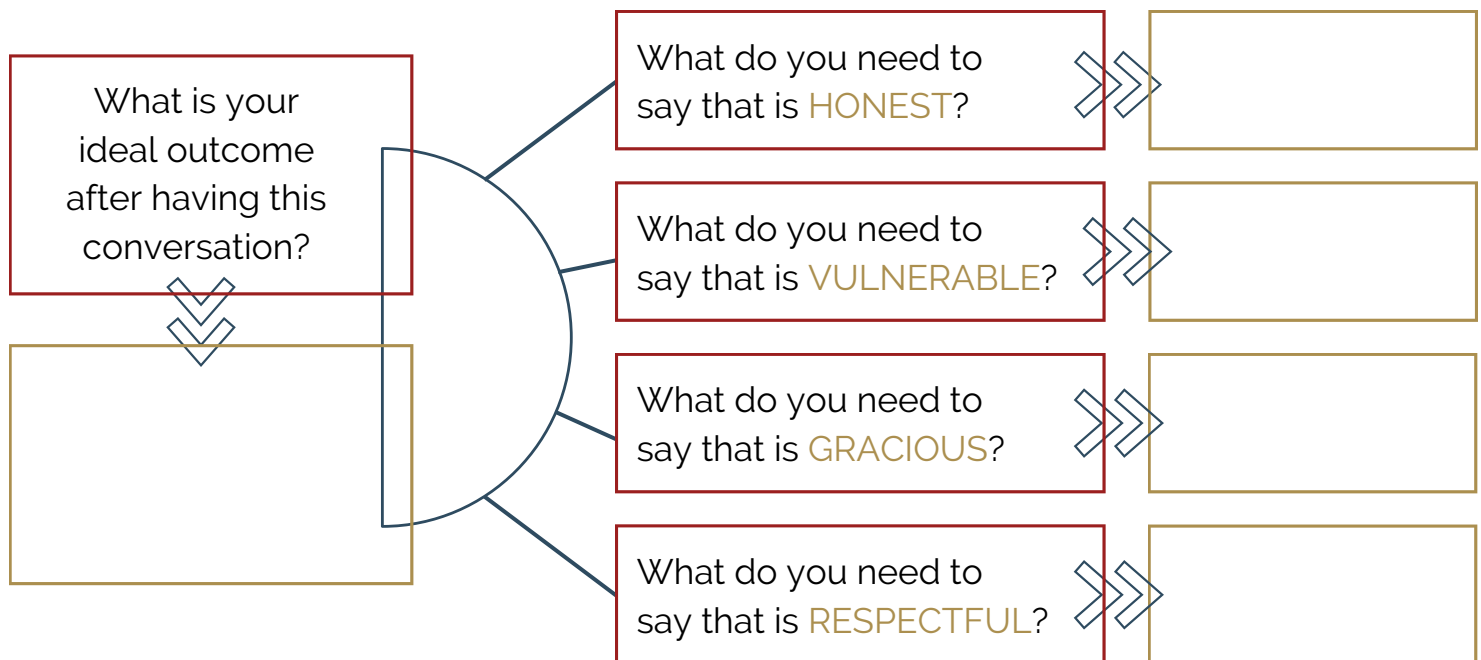
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ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

Sometimes the word “assertive” might be perceived as “aggressive” or “too direct”.

But in all actuality, assertive communication aims at seeking unity and restoration in relationships. Assertive communication is void of aggression and is instead infused with grace. Rather than placing blame, assertive communication takes on a humble approach.

Whether you are navigating communicating your wishes to a medical team or expressing needs to family members, utilize this flowchart to help you have the conversations you need to have in order to experience greater unity and understanding.



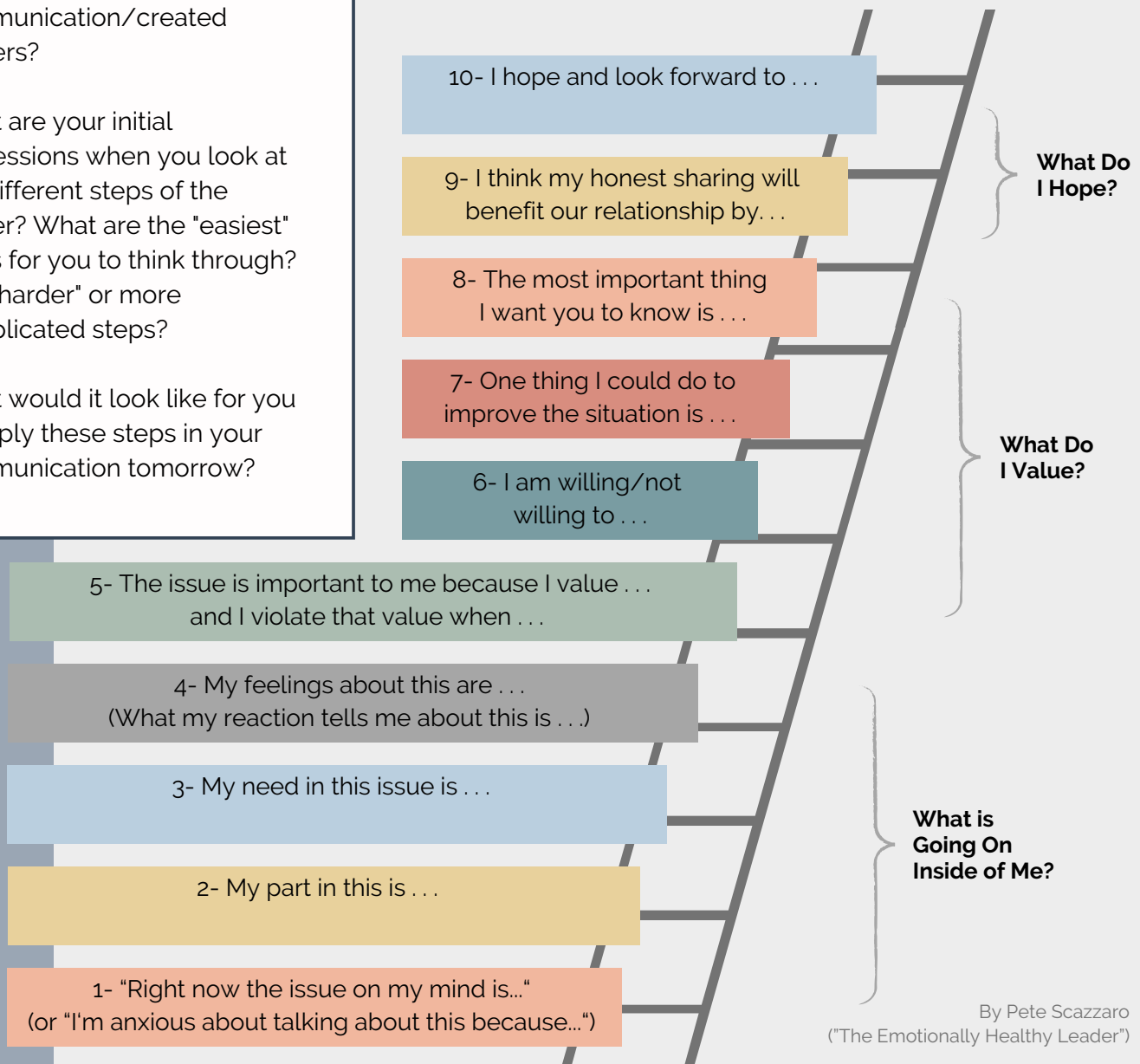


REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What are (or have been) places where you have felt tensions in your relationships/communications with others?
- How has your experience with illness complicated your communication/created barriers?
- What are your initial impressions when you look at the different steps of the ladder? What are the "easiest" steps for you to think through? The "harder" or more complicated steps?
- What would it look like for you to apply these steps in your communication tomorrow?

THE LADDER OF INTEGRITY

When experiencing stress (especially when faced with illness or loss), it can be all the more critical to keep the communication lines open between loved ones. Yet all too often, the stress of the situation can cause misunderstandings and miscommunication. As you approach conversations, consider using "The Ladder of Integrity" to discover your own internal thoughts and discern how to communicate in a unifying and respectful way.



By Pete Scazzaro
("The Emotionally Healthy Leader")



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- When is a time when we have talked as a family about a “big conversation”? (i.e. household rules, needing to forgive someone, planning a trip, or sharing hard news).
 - What do you like/not like about those conversations?
- Example of a conversation (Ex: We won't be able to travel to see family this year for the holidays).
 - Mom: “Kids, we wanted to talk with you about plans for the holidays with you. Do you want to talk about it now or after dinner?” (hit the balloon to the kids).
 - Kid: “I want to talk now” (hit the balloon back and stands in the corner of how they might feel)
 - Mom (stands in the corner of how she might feel): “We really want to make things feel special this time of year. I know we normally have gone to see our cousins. Because of X, Y, and Z barriers this year, we won't be able to go visit them and I would love to talk to you about how we can still stay connected with them and have a special holiday season. What are you thinking?” (hit the balloon to the kid)
 - Kid (stands in the corner of how they might feel): “I feel ...”
 - And so on!



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FAMILY ACTIVITY: PING PONG CONVERSATIONS

Model healthy ways of communicating through a game with the whole family! Conversations should have a good back and forth of listening and responding to one another, rather than dominating or reacting. What a better way to demonstrate that than through a good back-and-forth game of ping pong!

SUPPLIES NEEDED:



Ping pong paddles (or you can make your own out of a paper plate with a popsicle stick attached).



A balloon



Sticky Notes



Writing utensils

STEPS: Use the discussion questions to the left to help guide discussion.

STEP 1- Begin by drawing different faces for feelings or emotions on sticky notes and place them around different parts of the room.

STEP 2- Then determine a “big conversation” you either have talked about before or want to talk about now (can even be a silly one!). Write that conversation on the balloon and then assume your positions around the room with paddles in hand.

STEP 3- For young children, consider modeling a back-and-forth conversation first. Take turns saying something you would say for the conversation while moving to the emotion that you might feel when you say it. Engage in back-and-forth and discuss tools to listen and respond well to one another.