

Relationships and Conflicts
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Current Corona Virus Situation

- We are having to relate to each other different ways:
 - some at a greater distance
 - some in more confined space – with limited external outlets
 - some in each other's presence 24 hours a day
- We know that in normal life Christmas and the being with family can be a time of heightened stress – but this is time limited – we do not know how long this situation may last
- We know that often people talk about retirement and partners have to be together all day as being stressful, but this can be planned for and adaptations made over time, but these changes have been sudden.
- We are having to deal with these changes to our relationships at a time of heightened uncertainty, stress and anxiety, financial pressures, etc.
- Everyday normal stresses will be magnified

Valuing & Understanding Our Differences

- Family members may all be in the same family, but their personalities may be very different and we all have our own personal history that has shaped us
- In order to value difference we must know, accept, value and be secure in WHO I AM and NOT TRY TO BE SOMEONE ELSE
- Our personalities / personal histories will impact
 - how we think/ process information /make decision
 - how we relate to each other / show emotions
 - how we approach and deal with change and difficulties
 - how we relax and the things we enjoy
- Difference will mean that we will naturally get on better with some people than others and this is true within families

Valuing Difference

- But if we can understand each other better we may:
 - better understand & accept each other’s strengths & weaknesses
 - work and live more effectively together
 - our gifts, qualities and skills can be used in the best way
 - better understand what makes each of anxious, angry, sad, happy, relaxed and try work out how we can support each other
- People will feel that they can be REAL – not have to be like someone else or live up to false expectations
- Accepting and Valuing DIFFERENCE involves
 - Not expecting everyone else to think, feel, react, decide , behave as we do.
 - Not expecting ourselves to think, feel, react, decide, behave as others do.

Expectations

- We all have all sorts of expectations both realistic and unrealistic
 - Of God - Of ourselves - Of others - Of relationships
- People can feel too much is expected of them and some of us expect too much of ourselves
- People can feel that others have too low expectations of them (skills not recognised)
- We place expectations on people to change, to not be themselves...
- We place expectations on ourselves to change to please others...
- Being real, accepting people as they really are, without a list of expectations is the ONLY way to model unconditional love

Communication

- “Laws” of Communication:
- If communication can fail IT WILL
 - If a message can be understood in different ways, it will be understood in the way that does the most harm
 - There is always somebody else that knows better than you want you meant to say
 - A vacuum with no communication has to be filled – usually with rumour, speculation & inaccuracy
 - Modern conversations are often described as “a dialogue of the deaf”

Effective Communication

- Involves SPEAKING and LISTENING
- Being aware
 - not just what we say, but how we say it
 - not just what the other person audibly hears, but what they unconsciously hear
 - not just how the other person reacts but how we expect them to react
 - how our own fears, prejudices, experiences affect current relationships and our communication – not projecting them onto others
- Seeing the difference between “right” and “wrong” and just “my way of doing it”
- Setting aside time to discuss issues, not burying them
- Genuinely trying to understand the other person

7

PROJECTION & TRANSFERENCE

- Both projection and transference can have a significant impact on how we communicate with each other:
- **Projection** is a form of defence mechanism in which a person:
 - unconsciously denies some aspect of their behaviour or attitudes
 - displaces them onto another person, when they feel threatened
 - accuse *everyone else* of behaving, thinking or feeling in the ways that they are denying within themselves
- A common form of **projection** occurs when an individual, threatened by his own angry feelings, accuses another of harbouring hostile thoughts
- Blame will be placed on an outside force – the government, society, the neighbours, the church, etc.
- **Transference** is the process of responding to someone or something as if they were someone or something else.

8

TRANSFERENCE EXAMPLE

What was said

“Jonathan – I’m not sure about using the music group this Sunday. Perhaps we need to have the organ this week”

What is heard or thought:

“You don’t think I’m good enough.”

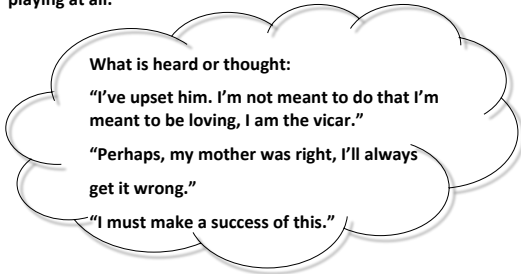
“I’ll never be good enough.”

“You’re always having a go at me.”

“You’re just like my Dad, I thought you were meant to love me.”

Reaction

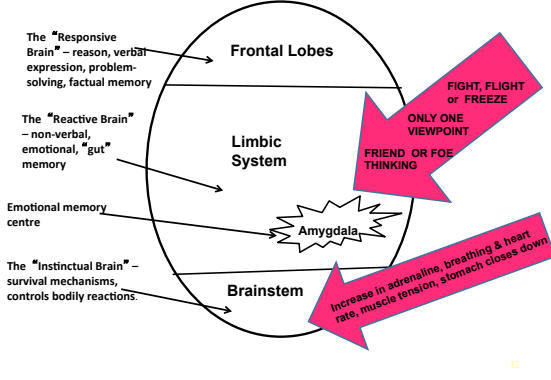
"Well. If you don't think I'm good enough, I won't bother playing at all."



The vicar now has a choice:

- He decides that he has to keep the peace at all costs and gives in. **ACTING FROM THE PAST**
- He gets angry because the sense of failure that he has grown up with has surfaced again. **ACTING FROM THE PAST.**
- He addresses the real issue and challenges his own and the other's behaviour. **ACTING IN THE PRESENT**
- Unless the underlying issues are acknowledged and addressed – the conflict and the destructive behaviour will just escalate

The Brain in Conflict



Surviving Conflict

In any conflict situation we need to consider:

- How to handle the conflict when it explodes
- how we work through the issues after the explosion

Handling the Explosion - Getting through the first 90 seconds ...

- Breathe deeply and slowly
- Ask for time out
- Count backwards from 10 slowly
- Calm, physical movement - stand up, sit down, have a drink of water, walk around the house / garden, tense and un-tense muscles in legs, etc.
- Have a "grounding" object to carry holding cross, stone, small ball, etc.
- Focus on a physical object or an image that calms you down

13

After the first 90 seconds: Reflect On

- Own and understand your own anger Who are you angry with? / What precisely about their behaviour has upset you?
- Are my reactions just to the current issue or from the past then separate the issue now from the issues of the past
- Try to evaluate how important the issue really is
- Am I seeking a solution or seeking power/ just trying not to feel powerless?
- How do I handle conflict?

14

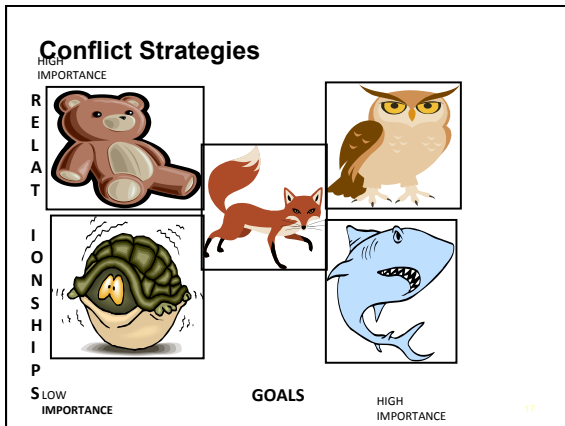
Conflict Strategies

- We each manage conflict differently, which may be influenced by our personalities, our experiences of and learnt reactions to that conflict
- One way of thinking about how we handle conflict is to think about the importance we place of the relationship aspect and achieving "goals".
- The following is a way of thinking about different strategies:
- **THE SHARK** – Assertive and uncooperative. Very high emphasis on achieving personal goals, getting the job done, little concern for relationships. Play to win –forceful, direct, set out to get others to accept their viewpoint. They either do not care what others think about them or it comes over that way, but later may feel bad about unwittingly hurt peoples feelings.
- **THE TURTLE** – Unassertive and uncooperative. Neglects both goals and relationships. Overwhelming priority to avoid conflict at all costs by withdrawing. Must have time to think things through on their own.
- **THE TEDDY BEAR** – Co-operative but unassertive. Priority relationships, but little attention to goals including their own. Avoids conflict by smoothing over the rough edges. Can bring a calm atmosphere, but often cause issues to remain unresolved.

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- **THE OWL** – Assertive & co-operative – relationships and goals both have a high priority and needs to have both fulfilled to be happy with situation. Seeks win-win situation. Work by identifying & confronting what they see as “real” issues.
- **THE FOX** – The middle way in terms of goals and relationships, and assertiveness and co-operation levels. Genuine negotiators – prepared to trade own agenda for mutually acceptable outcome. Value pragmatic effective solutions rather than ideals.

When we are in conflict situations it may help to know what strategy we adopt and what the other person(s) adopts and work out how to negotiate the differences. Sometimes the different strategies can themselves be the cause of more conflict.



CARING CONFRONTATION

- Visual way to think about negotiation– holding out a left and right hand palm up, not pointing an accusing finger
- Left hand – establishes the relationship first Right hand - raises the issue
- Key thing is that in any kind of care confronting you must stay in the present moment and not act from the past – thinking back to the transference example

CARING - (RELATIONSHIP IN THE LEFT HAND)	CONFRONTING - (ISSUE IN THE RIGHT HAND)
I want to get our relationship rightbut there are some deep issues between us
I want to give you a chance to express your side..... but I want you to hear my side clearly
I want to give you the freedom to express your real feelingsand I want you to allow me to express mine.
I'll try my best to understand your viewpoint.....and I want you to try to understand my viewpoint
I'll try not to manipulate or pressure you or distort the differences between us....and I want your clear, unpressured, honest view of our differences.
I'll try to stay with the discussion until we've worked through to a place of mutual understanding.....and I want you to keep working with me until we reach this place.

- After the first 90 seconds and Beyond**
- Set aside time to discuss issues – not wait until the conflict arises again
 - Choose to stick with a discussion – not avoid it . BE REAL
 - Try to understand and talk about how we function as individuals – our differences, our expectations of each other our communication methods and how we deal with conflict
 - Be real about forgiveness if there is a need for it it is hard, takes time & has to be worked at as a choice not a feeling and it is not about saying that “it doesn't matter” or that behaviour does not have to be addressed
 - Work out what space each person needs
 - Somewhere to be alone, uninterrupted
 - Discuss boundaries – times of the day when rooms are for certain people / who uses computers, etc.
 - When do we need a break from each other – may be an idea not to take your exercise always together
 - Think about how you manage your own stress – relaxation activities / exercises, taking care of yourself physically and mentally
 - Does each of us need to interact with others outside of the family? A private chat – somewhere to be there for us

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22

Dear Lord
Help us to live at peace with You
at peace with ourselves and so
healthily at peace with others
Give us grace in our relationships,
Shine your love in the relationships that surround us, so
that they may grow
Give us patience and understanding
to bear disagreements and
the generosity to share our joys.

In the name of Jesus
