[One’s identity requires a sense of safety and stability to evolve. Lacking safety and stability, our sense of who we are becomes frozen in time.

Caring is an emotional event that allows us to resume the developmental process of taking in important information as we interact with the world and expanding our sense of who we are. When hostility is replaced by genuine caring, we can better tolerate information from others about how we are causing them harm, enabling us to look at ourselves with new eyes.

When we care, we learn

Seeking False Dignity:  False dignity is the belief that our worthiness comes from external sources. Beware of the desire for external recognition in the form of approval and praise. If we depend on others alone for validation of our worth, we are seeking false dignity. Authentic dignity resides within us.

**Many of the successful men I know have a common refrain: “I’ve made it. I have all the money I need, I can go where I want, I do what I want, and I don’t have to answer to anyone.** – this sounds wonderful

Because of our usually stunted emotional development, most of us have self-preservation instincts that are unchecked . . . we have little option but to retaliate or retreat when someone harms us.

 for children to gain a sense of inherent worth, they need to have it mirrored back to them early on—in fact, as soon as they leave the womb.[1](https://calibre-internal.invalid/ops/xhtml/ch23_notes.html#ch14not1) They need to see the joy and love in their caretakers’ eyes when their caretakers look at them.

Although I know people who have a strong I and are aware of their inherent worth, they are the exception. As a species, we have little awareness of the importance of honoring dignity; some of us are still looking for the love and approval in others’ eyes that we needed early on. We have developed a Me-dominant consciousness**; we believe that there is a deed to accomplish or a quality to acquire before we can feel good about ourselves.** This lack of a strong I in adulthood because it lacked childhood nurturing is a paradox: our I is part of our birthright, but it needs to be strengthened early on to become the stabilizing source of our dignity.

This dramatic tension between the primal desire to be connected to others and the hardwired instinct to protect ourselves from others’ possibly hurtful attacks explains why relationships are so hard.

Seeking false security: Don’t let your need for connection compromise your dignity.  
If we remain in a relationship in which our dignity is routinely violated, our desire for connection has outweighed our need to maintain our own dignity. Resist the temptation to settle for false security.

Avoiding conflict: Stand up for yourself. Don’t avoid confrontation when your dignity is violated. Take action. A violation is a signal that something in a relationship needs to change.

Option one: speak up.

Option two: know a BATNA (best alternative to a negotiated agreement) and speak up

Option three: say nothing, but take steps to defend dignity:   
1. Avoid personalizing indignities.

2. Reframe what happened. (by reframing the situation or deciding the incident says more about the offender’s behavior than yours)

3. Practice self-restraint.

4. Find social support.

Option four: remove yourself from the situation permanently so conflict does not recur (which makes sense if you can’t stop the insults to your dignity)

Before confronting Mark, Laura must be clear in her intentions: “I do not want to inflict harm on him; rather, I want to give him feedback about the ways he is harming others. He may not be aware he is causing harm.”

When we learn about our blind spots, we inevitably experience what I talked about earlier as a tolerable level of shame. . . . [which] gives us the motivation to act on the new awareness and not repeat the behavior again in the future.

By holding up a mirror to a narcissist, you are playing out his or her worst fear: exposing the narcissist’s inadequacy and worthlessness to the world.

[When speaking up,] “Develop your BATNA (best alternative to a negotiated agreement)] . . . Good preparation for failure to meet your primary goal is to develop an alternative that you would be able to live with. . . . we appear much less vulnerable and more confident when we know that we can live with an alternative plan if the conversation doesn’t go well.  I have seen many people go into job interviews without a BATNA and end up not getting the job because without a backup plan, they unconsciously communicated their neediness and vulnerability.

. . .

Reframing what happened is directly tied to not personalizing the violation. Instead of personalizing Mark’s undignified behavior (let’s say he made an inappropriate joke about Laura during a staff meeting), she could tell herself that even though she was offended, she would interpret the violation as the result of Mark’s lack of social skills—he could have told the joke about anyone: Laura just happened to be the target.

Or, let’s say that he did something even more hurtful—he yelled at her at a staff meeting because she didn’t agree with a plan he had proposed. Even a good reason to disagree wouldn’t justify his aggressive outburst. Although she would feel the impact of the injury, she wouldn’t have to take it personally: the incident said more about his behavior than hers, she could decide, and it reflected his inadequacies, not hers.

S-TLC: Stop Think Listen Communicate.

Stop - Recognize the existing conflict. During this step any emotional frustrations/tensions should be subdued, to maintain serenity, and to keep a clear mental mind.

Think - analyze prior to acting. You need not take the message personally; or think of their and their partner’s goals, needs, and wants, pertaining to the situation (Cahn & Abigail 2007).   
  
Listen - active listening. This means that instead of thinking of the next thing that’s going to be said, or a defense; the message that is being sent is being taken into account.

Communicate- decide what message to send, and send it. Whether that is a physical, verbal, or non-verbal message will be up to the sender; consequences of each message should be taken into account (Cahn & Abigail 2007).

Retrieved from <https://rmsoul.weebly.com/communication-studies-blog/s-tlc-system>

Insights: **Many of the successful men I know have a common refrain: “I’ve made it. I have all the money I need, I can go where I want, I do what I want, and I don’t have to answer to anyone.** sounds great but also lonely. It’s a good midlife goal, but not a great late-life goal.

Before confronting Mark, Laura must be clear in her intentions: “I do not want to inflict harm on him; rather, I want to give him feedback about the ways he is harming others. He may not be aware he is causing harm.”

Depersonalizing the situation is something I’m good at – for *other* people’s situations.

Avoiding conflict situation I’m willing to get some feedback on: I wanted to do/buy something that wasn’t really a great idea. Felt like I couldn’t tell husband. Got angry that I couldn’t tell him. Ended up telling him that I resented not being able to tell him. And then everything was OK.