

Module 1

Unclear about something? Discuss with your fellow peers in the discussion board!

Here are some of the important concepts that we've covered in Module 1.

Why do people get involved in relationships? ❤️

We are interested in relationships because they are important in our lives.

Key question: **Why do people want relationships?**

The key idea is needs.

There are different categories of needs:



Physical: Can be survival, material, and physical resources (i.e. food, shelter, comfort, etc.)

Psychological: Interpersonal needs (i.e. Security, attachment, affiliation, intimacy, etc.)

Social: (i.e. Connections with others, status, identity, etc.)

Existential/Spiritual: Personal/being needs; Needs that pertain to the whole person or being (i.e. Happiness, spiritual meaning, etc.)

Human beings get involved in relationships in order to address or satisfy some of these needs. The maintenance of a successful relationship often depends on the ability to identify your own needs.

Intrinsic & Extrinsic Needs

- 1) **Intrinsic:** Getting involved in the relationship for its own sake; meeting needs such as attachment, affiliation, and intimacy.
- 2) **Extrinsic:** Getting involved in the relationship not for its own sake, but to achieve something else. Two subtypes:
 - a. **Extrinsic personal:** Example would be, needing someone to pass time with so you don't feel insecure, bored, or lonely
 - b. **Extrinsic instrumental:** Example would be, building a relationship with someone in the legal system in order for them to help get your son out of trouble

*Always ask yourself:
What are MY needs?*



N3C Analysis

The SSLD framework emphasizes the concept of N3C. The N3C analysis can be applied in understanding and improving relationships.

N: Needs (see recap above)

Broad categories:

- Physical, Psychological, Emotional, and/or Spiritual

Types:

- Intrinsic
- Extrinsic
 - o Personal or Instrumental



C: Circumstances

Three levels of circumstances:

- **Macro Level:** The “big picture” such as historical demography, global warming, global financial crisis, etc.
- **Mezzo Level:** Local or regional realities such as political system, taxation, healthcare, education system, sociocultural realities (i.e. social circles, reference groups, culture), etc.
- **Micro Level:** Personal circumstances such as employment status, relationship status, health condition, life stage, etc.

C: Characteristics

Three types of characteristics:

- **Physical:** Such as height, body type, physical features, age, skin or eye colour, voice
- **Psychological:** Such as personality, world view, values preferences, emotional and behavioural patterns
- **Sociocultural:** Such as lifestyle, cultural practices, religion

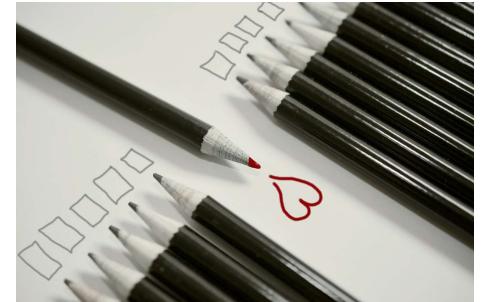
C: Capacity

Capacity is actually a subcategory of Characteristics, wherein we emphasize the positive traits and strengths that people possess. Hence, Capacity has the same domains as Characteristics:

- **Physical:** Such as physical strength, energy level, immune system
- **Psychological:** Such as intelligence, knowledge, wit, self-efficacy, emotional capacity (resilience, social or interpersonal skills)
- **Sociocultural:** Such as social capital, symbolic capital, financial capacity

It is important to note that the SSLD system does not generalize people; rather, it takes into consideration individual differences. As such, one's N3C is completely unique.

This helps us to understand concepts such as compatibility, mutual needs gratification, interactions in a relationship, etc.



Biodiversity

Individual differences can be challenging in a relationship. Helping people understand the value of differences is an important step in overcoming the challenge.

Biodiversity is a necessary condition for natural selection and ultimately human evolution. Variations in the expression of our genes are what allow us to progress – it's a beautiful thing!

There will always be differences in relationships. Being able to deal with (and even embrace) differences is the key to the success of any relationship. Managing diversity, in our opinion, is part and parcel of human growth and evolution.

Similarities and Differences

Another key factor in relationships is the balance between similarities and differences. We are attracted to things that are both similar **and** different than us.

Our preferences vary across time, context, and relationship.

SSLD seeks to help people **appreciate and recognize** differences and how to **manage them effectively** so that we will always be able to create a win-win situation.

Capacity for Differences

The capacity for differences is our ability to deal with differences in a constructive manner. It is important to realize that differences will continue to emerge as you get to know the other person better.

People are expected to grow and change. As such, instead of tolerating, it is encouraged that you develop an **interest or curiosity** towards traits that are new or different from your own. This will be your capacity for dealing with differences.

What would life be like if everyone was exactly the same? Differences (and learning how to manage them) are a necessary ingredient for a healthy relationship



Managing Differences

Remember in Module 1, we introduced the idea of *biodiversity*? You'll recall that this is the very condition required for the successful growth and development of a species. Likewise, differences between you and your partner can be viewed as an opportunity to survive and thrive.

Despite the inevitability of differences, SSLD posits that there is still room to highlight and appreciate the commonalities that exist between partners as well.



Module 2

Unclear about something? Discuss with your fellow peers in the discussion board!

Here are some of the important concepts that we've covered in Module 2.

Social Scripts

Social Scripts: Just like actors in the theatre, human beings follow socially constructed “scripts”. These scripts will govern the way we conduct ourselves and live our lives.

- These scripts are often unspoken and not written
- Most people in a given community would have some awareness of these scripts and knowingly or unknowingly following them
- We do not all choose to follow the same scripts, but certain ones are more dominant and more easily accessible
- For example, a dominant script in Western cultures usually covers the following: showing interest, dating, getting to know each other, proposing, getting married, and so on.

Scripts will also govern how we negotiate relationships. It's good to at least be aware that you are **following certain scripts**. If possible, ask yourself why you are following those scripts and consider whether these guidelines are helping to achieve your needs.

That **it is possible to author your own relationship script**, but this process can require considerable energy, creativity, and courage – not to mention another actor(s) who is willing to collaborate on this script!

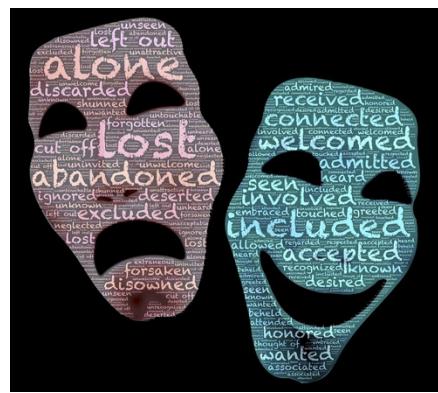


Social Scripts and Traps

Each society subscribes to different **social scripts** (concept mentioned in Module1). Most of these popular scripts have “**traps**” that are unrealistic, idealistic, or otherwise unhealthy for the relationship. In many ways, they do not take into account the lived experiences and diversity that exists within and throughout relationships.

The trap of **consumerism** is dominant across Western relationship scripts. It is used as a means for partners to express love and affection, but is it really the most effective? For instance, we spend thousands on engagement parties and glamorous weddings, but how much do these actually contribute to the health of a relationship?

Attachment Theory



Attachment Theory ([Mary Ainsworth & John Bowlby](#)): Early childhood experiences (such as one's relationship with primary caregiver) will have a lasting impression on a person's adult understanding of the world and future relationships.

According to this theory, people with unhealthy attachment styles in earlier life are likely to end up repeating similar patterns with their partners due to internalized ideas and feelings about themselves and relationships.

Insecure attachment patterns can be changed. Using an SSD perspective, for instance, allows us to reflect on our N3C, which may help us to identify what needs are not being met and to work on strategies that will allow us to modify our cognitive, emotional, and behavioral patterns that maintain the cycle of unhealthy relationships.

Game Plan

Spontaneity and Self-determination

It's important to have a good understanding of you and your partners' N3Cs, the functions of relationships, and your goals within the relationship (that is, having a “game plan”). When we have that understanding, the relationship should not feel overly predictable or deterministic – in fact it should be **empowering!** A strong game plan will actually allow you to be more spontaneous in your relationship (if this is something that you want). Just like skiing, once you have learnt the basics, you can go have fun, take chances, and carve your own path. Game plans will also allow you to be more prepared for the challenges that come your way.

Initial Contact

This section of the module required students to be critical and reflect on some important topics that we seem to take for granted when it comes to the beginning stages of interpersonal relationships.

First impressions make a difference. But when you get ready in the morning, consider whom it is that you're trying to look good for. What message do you want to present to others? And who exactly are those “others”, anyway? The same appearance, tone, and attitude can send a very different message depending on the context and the person receiving this message.

Are physical characteristics the only ingredient for interpersonal attraction? What other traits make us desirable to others? How can we change both the individual and societal understandings around beauty?

Self-Help Tip:

If differences in the relationship are causing tension, we would want to sit the couple down to talk about it. Perhaps on the material level, wants and interests appear to be different. But through gaining a greater empathic understanding of our partners' underlying needs and values, we may begin to see more similarities than we initially thought.

Impression Management

One's feelings of confidence and self-efficacy will impact others' perception of how attractive (or interesting, smart, funny, exciting) you are.



Sometimes a change in context/environment will contribute to our feelings of self-confidence. Other times, we can use our bodies to portray this sense of self-assurance to both others and ourselves (e.g. Power Posing!)

Positive Reframing: Finding the silver lining in what we initially would have perceived as a negative situation.

Positive self-statements: a technique whereby one can make optimistic declarations about him/herself. Can be about the past, present, or future. Allows us to see the positive qualities in ourselves and preserve/enhance self-confidence.

“Keep telling yourself that you’re worthwhile”

Module 3

Here are some of the important concepts that we've covered in Module 3.

Reception: How we receive and understand messages from the other party

Expression: How we express messages to the other party

Communication: How does the interaction of reception and expression play out?

Remember: The capacity to listen and understand can often be more important than the expression

Reception

A simple statement actually consists of four main **content areas**. To be a skilled receiving party, one should work towards identifying and responding to all four:

Facts, attitudes, emotions, and needs.

1. Facts:

- The information provided by the speaker about a given subject.
- Even factual messages are not completely objective. They can carry a lot of social significance or implications.
 - For example, what facts does the person choose to highlight? These most likely reflect what is most important to the speaker.
 - Facts are greatly influenced by the other content areas.

2. Attitudes:

- What the party believes to be right or wrong (e.g. "I don't think blaming is a good thing"), or the party's viewpoint on a given topic (e.g. "minimum wage is bad for the economy").
- Taken into consideration when analyzing the situation or communication.
 - **Position** – Who you are and from which position you speak (e.g., as a parent or as a child, as an employer or an employee)
 - **Opinions** - Your opinions of others generally reflect your own values and attitudes, and perhaps even your opinion of yourself.
 - **Characterization:** how the speaker describes other people.

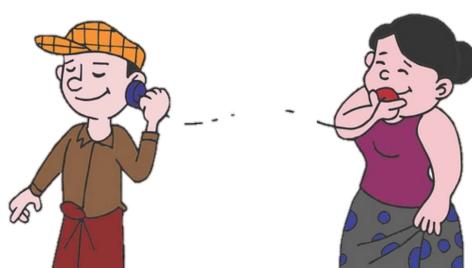
- **Characterization Frame:** how the speaker characterizes others ultimately reflects what facts are most significant to them and therefore gives us (the receiver) information about the speaker. For example, if the speaker tends to describe people based on their profession, things like class, income, and job title might be particularly important to the speaker. Another speaker might choose to describe physical features such as body shape or hair colour, suggesting the significance that they place on appearance.

3. Emotions:

- How the expresser is feeling (e.g. “what you did made me feel sad”).
- One’s emotional state can construct her/his interpretation of the situation or subject matter. In this way, emotion influences one’s choice of tone, words, and memory of what they are expressing.
- Even emotional content and how one expresses it can be highly regulated by society (e.g. gender expectations, your religion’s views on sexual expression, etc.)

4. Needs:

- What is the party actually trying to achieve? What underlying needs are to be met?
- Communication is a result of an unmet need and there is something that we want to accomplish or attain through this conversation (e.g. need to be valued or understood, need for mastery and control).
- Frequently, one or both parties are not aware of their needs and therefore these needs will not be expressed as effectively as one would like.



Trust is developed in part through understanding the other party. How to build this understanding? Careful listening is important along with the four content areas. Another key element to receive during communication is “**signifying acts**”.

Signifying acts: one’s behaviours/actions that can convey implicit or explicit messages. These can hold considerably different meanings in different cultural contexts and must be analyzed and/or presented carefully (i.e. need understanding of the given environment).

- Example: In some cultures, it may not be appropriate for parents to apologize. Instead of doing so verbally, parents might indirectly apologize through other means, such as offering ice cream to their children as a token of apology.

Attributions

Attribution: When people experience or see something, they make attributions to try to explain the cause of what the experience might be, whether it is factually true or not.

- In a relationship, people might be attributing to something simple to explain the cause of a breakup. For example, when your partner has left for someone much younger, you're then attributing the cause to age.
- We make these overly simplistic assumptions because it takes too much time and energy to deal with multiple and complicated attributions. Furthermore, these views tend to make us feel better and are consistent with our world outlook.

Multiple Contingency Theory: Recognizes that people's realities are more complicated than a simple one-to-one relationship. When a relationship has broken down, it's because of multiple reasons and not just a single attribution.

Emotional Content

Emotional expressions are often regulated by society. For example, in some cultures, the expression of sadness may be suppressed. It may be all right to express joy yet sorrow or grief may be considered inappropriate.

Another concept introduced is the **Cultural Literacy Approach**.

Cultural Literacy Approach: This framework recommends an interested party to study a given culture and thereby become "literate" about the people from the said cultural group. This, however, requires us to make broad (and frequently inaccurate) assumptions about people in that group.

- **Homogeneity Assumption:** Simplified notion that everyone coming from a certain group is the same.
- For example, The Chinese are often seen as hardworking, family oriented, and conservative. We have to understand that, however, not everyone from the country is the same. The homogeneity assumption ignores the fact that there are huge differences across generations, gender, educational level, income level, and even one's level of exposure to other cultures.



Self-Help Tip: Possessing a general understanding of the other party's culture/ethnicity/religion can be important. From here, consider which, if any cultural (or in-group) values a given person has internalized into their own worldview. This allows you to learn about the other party while perhaps having a seminal foundation of understanding. If there is something that you're not sure about, don't fall back on easy conclusions but rather assume diversity across individuals. As well, we can always learn directly from the other party. Just ask.



Expression

Expression: The ability to communicate facts, ideas, emotions, and needs

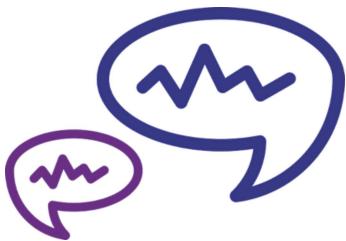
Facts: How do we present facts in the best manner? People are trained in different disciplines to present facts in different ways (e.g. management student present facts differently than how a law student would).

- In interpersonal situations, we have to focus on *how* to present facts and *which* facts to present. This depends on the purpose of our engagement: Building a friendship or establishing a romantic relationship? Trying to close a sale or resolve a conflict?
- A good understanding of your partner allows for effective communication by knowing this person's N3C (concept introduced in Module 1)

Ideas: Ideas are not just facts but also built on one's perspective, orientation, values, etc., which eventually allows other people to understand who we are.

- In an interpersonal relationship, sharing ideas also means negotiating how similar/different we are, seeing how compatible we are, and assessing the odds of sharing moments together.
- During interpersonal conflict, both parties may be wrapped up in their own ideas while ignoring what is expressed by their partner.

Self-Help Tip: In expressing your idea to someone, think: "how can I make this idea more palatable to the other individual?" Identify what aspects of your idea the other party might meet with resistance and work on how you wish to present your view in a way that will better acknowledge or meet the other party's needs.



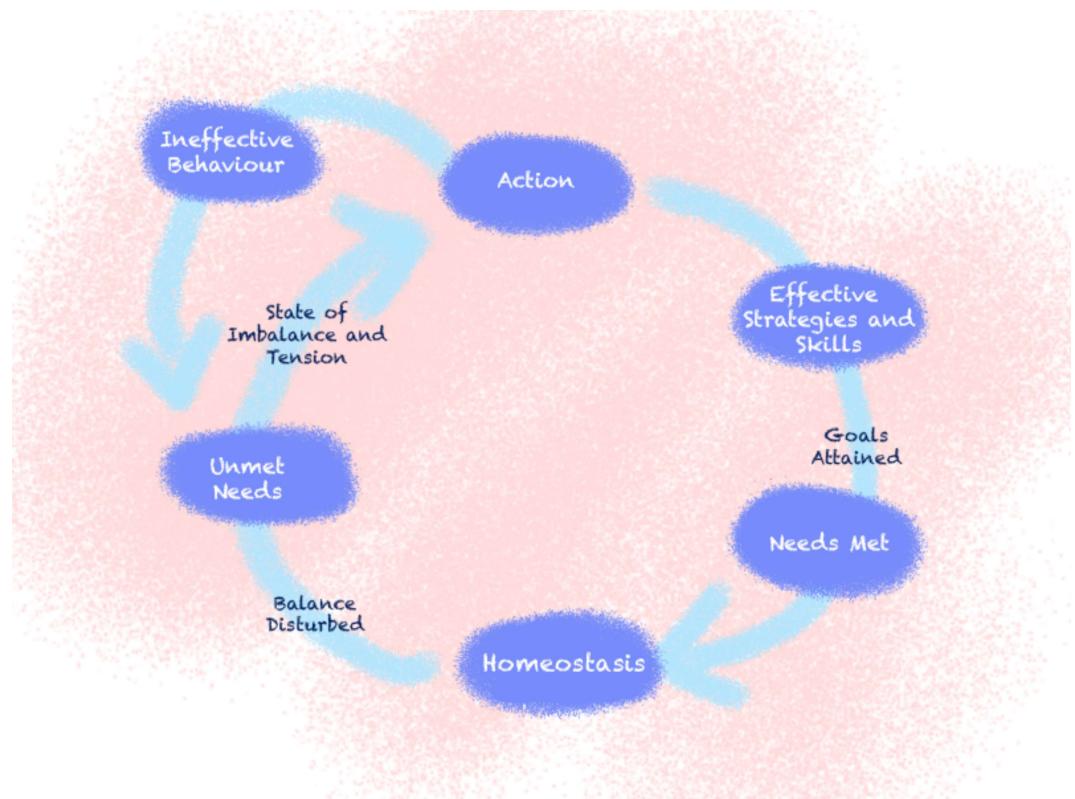
Tips for Expression

- Make sure you assess both your own and the other party's N3C and work towards solutions that match with each.
- "Explaining the unfamiliar with the familiar": Use language and metaphor that is appropriate for the person whom you are speaking to (e.g. age, education level, language, cultural background).
- Be creative and flexible throughout the communication process
- **Attunement** - in expression, it is key to know whether people have understood what you have said. Depending on the setting, you can seek feedback by asking a discussion question that requires the listener(s) to respond critically, for instance.



Emotions - When emotions kick in, we cannot expect people to express thoughts rationally. The two mechanisms described below help us to better understand emotional processes:

1. **Emotional Regulation:** Dealing with the current emotional state at hand. Having the capacity to return to “**homeostasis**” –our normal physiological and emotional state – is critical. Individuals who cannot return to homeostasis may experience mental or physical health consequences.
 - Note: Emotional regulation does *not* mean suppressing or denying our feelings. Feel what you feel, and eventually return to a state that allows you to function normally.



The above graph shows how homeostasis is achieved.

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- Unclear about something? Discuss with your fellow peers on the discussion board!*
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- Effective strategies and skills could be **emotional work**
 - Balance is disturbed **externally** (ex. Stimulation, arousal, etc.) or **internally** (ex. Unpleasant memory)
 - There may be emotional or mental health problem arise if needs are always unmet

2. **Emotional Work:** An intricate process whereby we work to recognize the complexity of the feelings we carry and experience. Our emotions can be rooted in past experiences or possess other deep meanings.

Expressing Needs - Expression of our needs can be challenging. It may leave us feeling vulnerable or inadequate. Negative experiences from the past might also play a part in our discomfort or even fear of expressing our needs.

How to Best Express Your Needs:

- Assess your N3C!
 - This is not a linear process – you may only begin to acknowledge or start to feel comfortable expressing your needs once you've spent a lot of time in a safe and trusting relationship.
- Find a way to communicate these needs with your partner in a way that (s)he will understand or empathize with.
- Consider strategies that allow you to work toward meeting those needs
 - e.g. establishing a friendship with a local traveller in a new place in order to begin feeling a sense of security. This may be a process that also meets other needs (such as affiliation) along the way. Moreover, this strategy allows you to present yourself in a more desirable way. That is, rather than grabbing someone on the street and loudly proclaiming your fear of being alone in a strange city, you can get what you want in a more covert way.
- Seek and foster relationships that permit you both to feel safe exploring or discussing your needs



Incorporating *reception* and *expression* concepts into our daily interactions will allow for greater understanding and trust within our relationships. This can ultimately lead us toward more open and effective communication patterns.

Module 4

Unclear about something? Discuss with your fellow peers in the discussion board!

Here are some of the important concepts that we've covered in Module 4.

Scripts

In Session 2, the concept of **scripts** was explored. Existing within many relationship scripts are particular themes that arise. Some examples discussed:

Natural Imagination: We tend to view the idea of spontaneity within a relationship as something that is positive and “natural”. This logic therefore implies that aspects of relationships that are planned are therefore negative or “unnatural”.

- However, what we consider “natural” is also socially constructed. Just as an eagle builds her nest to lay her eggs, is it not natural for humans to build, create, and strategize too?
- In fact, planning is part of human nature. Preparation can be understood as a symbol of how much we care or want the relationship to function positively



Planning doesn't eliminate the opportunity for spontaneity! For example, maybe you decide to do something exciting and board the next flight out of town – wherever it may go! You'll still take the time to pack clothes, money, and your passports; otherwise you will not have much of trip at all.

“The One” Myth: The assumption that there is only one person out there for each of us to be romantically involved with and spend the rest of our lives together.

- Convenient for those who subscribe to monogamous relationships, but most likely not the case
- You may be in love with multiple people at the same time, or at different points of time
- Furthermore, you may have certain needs met by one person, yet you require a different partner to satisfy another set of needs
- As we grow and develop, our N3Cs will change, and you and your partner may no longer feel as compatible as you once did

Serendipity: The belief that everything happens for a reason. Often referred to as “destiny” or “God’s will”.

- This viewpoint can potentially result in one taking on a less proactive stance in her/his life or relationship, choosing to leave things to chance
- It is important to acknowledge our own self-determination. Each of us must accept a certain degree of responsibility for our actions and the consequences that these actions led to

The Mind-Reading Fantasy: An unrealistic expectation that your partner ought to know what you’re thinking or what you want without you having to express this to them

- Like the Serendipity Myth, those who believe in the Mind-Reading Fantasy to take a less proactive role in their relationship, missing out on differences they could otherwise make
- As well, this can be an unfair assumption that may lead to miscommunication or resentment

Social Exchange Theory, Prospect Theory, and SSLD

Social Exchange Theory (George Homans, 1958) posits that human beings are rational creatures, always conducting a cost-benefit analysis within a given relationship.

According to this theory, we consider how much we put into the relationship in comparison to our partner (“**equity**”). We also calculate how much we are getting out of the relationship (“**self-interest**”). We only remain in the relationship if we feel that the relationship is fair or if the benefits outweigh the costs.

However, we know that many people do choose to stay in relationships despite the fact that they are getting the short end of the exchange.

Prospect Theory (Daniel Kahneman & Amos Tversky) Understood primarily as a social economic theory. Proposes that even in business and economics, people do not act in a “rational” way to maximize their earnings.

Human decision making process is more complex than simple cost-benefit analysis.

Value: SSLD highlights the concept of value as an important element that factors into our decision-making within relationships.

What is considered “valuable” within the context of a relationship changes over time and holds different meaning to different people.

- For example, receiving a box of chocolates and flowers (worth \$100) from your sweetheart during your first Valentine’s Day might be extremely valuable (perhaps priceless because s/he was so thoughtful!). However, every subsequent year that your partner presents you with the same gift (most likely worth more than \$100 with inflation), it becomes less and less valuable, since it may have lost the creativity and sentiment that it once possessed. Therefore, objective value (e.g. price) may be consistent or rise overtime, but subjective value (e.g. sentiment) can decrease.



N3C Reminder

You'll find that individuals may value certain gifts, opportunities, or experiences more than others. Likewise, our N3C changes as we move through life – and with that, what we value most is also likely to change considerably

Six Domains of Human Life

These areas help to provide a more comprehensive picture of the human experience within a relationship. The main domains that influence our decision-making are:

1. **Environment** – physical, where you are at a given time
2. **Body** – physical, characteristics and features of ourselves and others
3. **Motivation** – needs, wants, drive, goals, incentives for what we are doing
4. **Cognition** – thoughts, ideas, planning, worldview, belief system, values
5. **Emotion** – feelings and emotional patterns, reactions, regulation abilities
6. **Behaviour** – how we actually say something, what we do, or how we react in a given interaction

Compatibility

From an SSD perspective, we might consider compatibility not as having the same or similar N3C, but perhaps as having N3Cs that can compliment each other. Yet as always, our N3Cs are ever-changing. Thus, a couple that starts off compatible may have to work in order to maintain that sense of compatibility over time.

Needs: In the context of a nurturing relationship, we will learn to effectively communicate our own needs, as well as better understand the needs of our partner. When the couple can be mutually receptive to each other's needs, there will also be high motivation for self-improvement.

Changes in **circumstances** can significantly impact one's needs and thus how relationships are handled moving forward (e.g. immigrating to a new country [circumstance] might affect one's need for esteem. Now one might look to their partner to satisfy this esteem need whereas back home they had this need met in other ways)

Characteristics and Capacity: Some people may have greater capacity to effectively maintain compatibility within a relationship. For example, if you are easy going and open to change, or if you are motivated to work hard in the relationship, these characteristics will influence sustained compatibility. If you are insecure, stubborn, argumentative, jealous, or easily frustrated by your partner, it will be more challenging for you and your partner's N3Cs to jive overtime.

Intimacy

The definitions and needs associated with intimacy will differ across individuals.



We all fall along complex spectrum that dictates our intimacy needs. On the extremely intimate end: “Romeo and Juliette”, will die for each other, need to be powerfully connected on various levels, high trust and openness. On the extremely “unintimate” end: a purely instrumental relationship - do not need to know a lot about each other, perhaps only in the relationship for monetary gains, physical security, sex, or children.

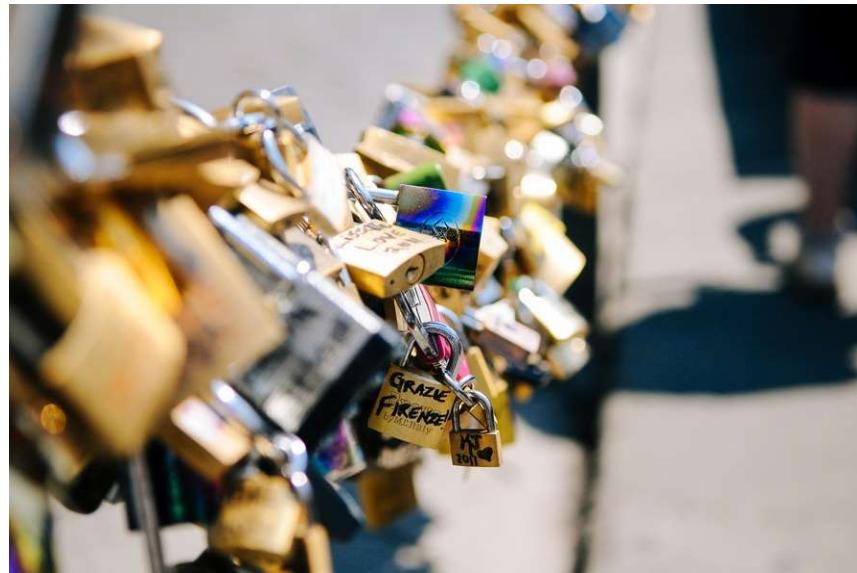
Fear of Intimacy: Some people are afraid of opening up or connecting on an intense or deep level. Perhaps because this leaves us vulnerable. Intimacy can open us up to potential hurt, shame, guilt, trauma, sadness. Hence, this fear can be natural for some of us and is not necessarily a bad thing for everyone.

- **Approach-Avoidance Conflict:** Struggle whereby one craves deeper intimacy, but when given the opportunity, will withdraw due to fear.

Physical Intimacy: Physical intimacy is not synonymous with “sexual intercourse”. This concept is fluid and subjective. Holding hands, looking into each other’s eyes, kissing, having a conversation, can all be examples of physical intimacy. Likewise, you can be engaged in physical or sexual acts without feeling intimate at all.

Happenings: Certain events or experiences that are out of the ordinary or unprompted. For example, a surprise party or trying out a restaurant that is different from what you’re used to.

Happenings contrast to **rituals**, which are reliably practiced customs, often rooted in culture and/or history. Both happening and rituals can hold important meaning in interpersonal relationships.



Self-Help Tips: If you're looking to build intimacy, here are a couple helpful suggestions.

- Recognize that despite the intense bonding that is taking place, you do not want to become “enmeshed”. Maintain your own personhood and individuality. Create a “safe space” between you and your partner. This space should be conceptualized in an open conversation to make sure that you are both on the same page.
 - o This itself requires *trust*, which is a necessary condition to foster intimacy.
- Physical, emotional, and psychological intimacy is fluid and overlapping in many ways.
 - o For instance, being physically intimate (holding hands, hugging, having sexual relations) with someone may trigger feelings of emotional intimacy. Connecting on an emotional level may open you up to greater feelings of psychological intimacy, et cetera. You may find that one form of intimacy will strongly impact the others.
- Show support! When your partner knows that they can rely on you for support during times of need, trust will follow.
- Consider you and your partner’s goals for change: if either of you are mainly seeking stability and comfort, pursuing high degrees of intimacy may prove difficult. Growing intimacy entails exploring each other’s “dark sides” and undergoing some forms of transformation. This journey can be challenging at times and will likely have a significant influence on the relationship itself.



Module 5

Unclear about something? Discuss with your fellow peers in the discussion board!

Here are some of the important concepts that we've covered in Module 4.

Transformation – when there is a change in the relationship

- E.g. work colleagues to friends, married couple to separated, strangers to teacher-student dyad etc.
- Virtually all relationships undergo some form of transformation overtime

Termination

- Termination can be seen as a *type* of transformation (e.g. when you divorce, the relationship will continue but in a different form; even when a loved one dies, one can argue that there still exists a spiritual connection).



Culture, History and Technology

- Relationship transformations can be **culturally or historically dependent**.
 - Example: in some East Asian societies, it is not uncommon for a student-teacher relationship to transform into a life-long friendship, whereas in North America or Europe, the relationship is more likely to terminate after the student leaves that teacher's class
 - Example: obtaining a marriage license or divorce may be made more challenging for certain people (e.g. based on their gender, sexual orientation) depending on the culture and period in history



Six Domains of Transformation

Below is a quick overview of the six domains of transformation. These realms are all interconnected and can have a significant impact on one another

(1) Environment:

- Physical location, area, or setting (e.g. house, city)
 - Social scripts help to govern our environment based on our relationship status.
 - E.g. after breaking up, you no longer need to go to your ex-partner's parents' home for the holidays and you may choose to move out of your shared apartment.

(2) Cognition:

- Our thoughts and beliefs can also influence a relationship transformation
 - E.g. "she wasn't right for me"; "I can't live without him"

(3) Motivation, Needs and (4) Emotion:

- "Will this transition or change better meet my needs?"
 - E.g. of needs: security, identity, sense of worth
 - Strongly connected to emotions

(5) Body and (6) Behaviour:

- Our bodies will physically reflect the transformation that has taken place through our voluntary and involuntary behaviours and feelings
 - E.g. after a break up, you and your ex-partner may no longer be physically intimate. If you see each other on the street, you may stand farther apart from each other, look more rigid, feel more tense or uncomfortable. You may even experience feelings of sickness, or changes in sleep patterns.
 - E.g. some people may make changes to their body such as tattoos or weight loss/gain

Mutual Needs

- A key concept in the SSD perspective
- Ideally, a relationship is undergoing change in order to best meet each others' needs

Separation-Individuation

Proposed by Margaret Mahler (1897-1985), refers to a process beginning in infancy/early childhood wherein the **individual begins to differentiate** between herself and her caregiver as she forms her own **sense of identity and individuality**.

- Associated with Attachment Theory

SSLD utilizes this concept in a broader sense to understand transformation:

- Belief that some people do not experience separation-individuation in childhood – may take place much *later in life* depending on the person and their N3C
- Can be looked at from the *caregiver's perspective*. E.g. Some parents' sense of identity and purpose may be strongly connected to their child, and therefore the parent may have trouble "letting go" and allowing both the child and the parent to form new individual identities
- Why separation-individuation can be difficult or delayed?
 - One feels that most of their needs are being primarily or exclusively met within the context of the one relationship. Those who have other sources of need gratification are less likely to experience challenges around relationship transformation or separation individuation
- How can we help those experiencing challenges with separation individuation?
 - Empower the person. Perhaps by working to develop a larger set of skills, feelings of self-efficacy, or find other ways that some of his needs can be met outside of the relationship

Separation-Individuation in the Context of Intimate Relationships

- Our challenges with separation-individuation are at least partially influenced by prominent social scripts which dictate that couples have a high degree of reliance on one another (i.e. that one person should help you meet as many needs as possible)
- In *extreme* instances, results in abusive relationships, where the dominant partner restricts the actions of the less powerful partner (e.g. won't let partner spend time with family/friends or pursue a career. Leads to less needs being met and increased reliance on dominant partner). Likewise, where one partner feels dependent on her partner to meet many needs, she may react aggressively or in an abusive way due to the fear of losing that person.

When a relationship transforms, how can we address our needs?

Build the **capacity** to negotiate these changes that are taking place

How? Ideally through **open and direct communication**

- E.g. "this is how I'm feeling", "this is what I need", "I want to help respect and meet your needs too", "how can we work together to mutually meet our new needs?"

Aging

- As we grow older, our **relationship with the people, objects, and institutions** around us are destined to transform
- Likewise, our needs will change – sometimes due to societal norms and expectations imposed upon us (often *ageist discourse*)
 - E.g. beliefs around taking risks, intimacy needs, ability to learn and develop
 - **Relationships with People**
 - Not only do many relationships transform as we age, we also develop new relationships
 - Equipping aging adults with the tools and/or support to feel comfortable navigating these new and transformed relationships can be important in the fostering of healthy and positive attitudes amongst older adults
 - **Relationships with Objects**
 - E.g. go from driving own vehicle to relying on public transit or taxis
 - **Relationship with Bodies**
 - Managing changes or limitations in our bodies
 - E.g. not as strong or flexible as I once was; getting tired sooner



Tips for Coping with Transformation and Termination

- (As stated before) Try to **identify** your newly unmet needs and find innovative ways to **address** them
- **Self-acceptance:** Don't be too hard on yourself! It is common to experience very strong feelings during this time. Your physical and emotional response is generally natural, and it's ok to feel what you're feeling
 - **Journaling or documenting:** helps to give you a sense of control over your life at a time where you may otherwise feel out of control
 - **Recognition of emotions:** simply identifying the emotions that you're feeling can be helpful when you're in a difficult state
- **Manage Risky Behaviours:** Some individuals engage in “dangerous” behaviours such as excessive drinking or eating, substance use, self-harm (e.g. cutting), fighting, or speeding in one's car, for example
 - The SSDL approach views these behaviours as a way in which we are trying to meet our *unmet needs*
 - In order to increase our own and others' health and safety, consider other drastic actions that can serve a similar function without the same level of risk (e.g. take up boxing lessons, go on a shopping spree)
- **Build up your supports:**
 - Talk to someone who makes you feel good. This could be a family member, friend, spiritual leader, bar tender, hairdresser, etc.
 - For those who are **overwhelmed** by their emotions and having **extreme difficulty** functioning or utilizing the above strategies, they may wish to **seek professional help**

- Counselor, therapist, psychologist, social worker, doctor, psychiatrist, spiritual leader. Can be in person, or even online or via phone
- If you have someone that you care about experiencing these challenges, you may wish to offer support and motivation by providing resources, making calls, or accompanying the person to appointments

Module 6

Unclear about something? Discuss with your fellow peers in the discussion board!

Here are some of the important concepts that we've covered in Module 6.

Love

There is no absolute definition. In the West, we can understand that love can vary based on *classification, component, and intensity*.

6 Domains of Love

1. Cognition

- o Knowing and understanding a person

2. Emotion

- o Particular emotional investment toward someone

3. Motivation

- o What needs drive this love? (security, intimacy, sharing, affiliation, validation, etc.)

4. Body

- o How our bodies receive and express affection (e.g. a baby being soothed by mother holding and comforting him; partners engaging in sexual intercourse)

5. Environment

- o Physical environment (e.g. level of food/resources can impact how we negotiate a loving relationship)
- o Cultural, social, and/or the political reality impacts how we experience love

6. Behaviour

- o How we actually show our love and affection to others

Sexuality

Not just about the sexual act(s) itself. Can also be about one's views, feelings, identity, and needs.

- **Asexuality:** There are a small proportion of individuals who identify as asexual, whereby they experience low or no sexual desires toward others.

Needs Addressed by Sex

SSLD believes that sex helps us to fulfill various needs. Below, we discuss some of those common needs. Note that many of these needs overlap or intersect with each other



- **Biological**
 - E.g. Drives for physical pleasure, stimulation, procreation, security
- **Psychological**
 - E.g. intimacy, domination, expression of power, aggression, gratitude/appreciation, security, self-esteem, self-worth
 - **Sexual Activity** – anything that is sexual (with or without the involvement of other people, objects, etc.)
 - **Sexual Interaction** – involves two or more people that are engaging in sexual activities, but can exist outside of a relationship
 - **Sexual Relationship** – generally involves at least more than one sexual encounter with the same person/people
- **Interpersonal/Social**
 - How we feel about or understand ourselves and others within the context of a sexual act/interaction/relationship
 - E.g. self-esteem/social-approval, reciprocity, domination, intimacy,
- **Spiritual/Existential**
 - Sexual acts can have a profound or transcendent element to them that transports the parties to a “higher level” of experience outside of their usual realm of being.
 - E.g. Tantric Sex, associated most commonly with the Eastern religions, was practiced by some couples in order to experience a sense of liberation from earthly reality and reach a more spiritual plane
 - E.g. feeling a sense of “completeness” through sexual acts

Does the quality of sex predict the quality of the relationship?

- Not necessarily! Every relationship is different and therefore may have a very broad or narrow definition of sex. They may also not view sex to be very important element of their relationship.

- Thus the couple ultimately:
 - Defines what is sexual
 - Determines how important sex is within their relationship

Diversity in Sexual Expression

- What we consider “deviant” or “different” is extremely subjective based on one’s own preferences, values, and beliefs as well as the larger contexts of culture, religion, and history.
- From the SSLD perspective: try not to get “stuck” on the issue of whether a certain sexual act is “good or bad” or “natural or unnatural” within your relationship. Instead, try to explore the *deeper meanings*:
 - What needs does this address?
 - What does this act mean to me/you if we do/do not engage in it?



Erotic Justice

- **Social justice:** a concept widely used in the social sciences. It refers to intersecting factors that can significantly impact one’s access to resources and opportunities.
 - These factors include (but are not limited to): income, race, immigration status, gender, sexuality, ability/disability, social status, and age
- The same can be applied to sex: we do not all have equal access to meaningful sexual acts, interactions, or relationships. This is what is meant by **erotic justice** (“idea of equitable distribution of life chances with regard to the development of erotic/intimate relationships”)
 - E.g. a white person having more power/advantage within an interracial partnership
- SSLD believes that empowerment of individuals and groups is an important way to influence one’s power within relationships
 - E.g. learning skills for addressing others’ N3Cs and interacting/communicating in effective ways

Instrumental Relationships



- We get into these types of relationships in order to achieve a very specific goal. In general, we do not view these relationships as “personal”.
- Despite the nature of these interactions, it is important to have full regard of that person as a fellow human being. We do not want to view the other person as “subhuman” or as a “machine” of some kind.

Relationship Problems

Communication and Compatibility

- Communication can allow us to explore compatibility and vice-versa. The two components will also facilitate relationship transitions, transformations, or even terminations
- It is possible to be in a relationship where seemingly nothing is wrong, however you may not feel fulfilled or satisfied. There are various responses that one may have to this scenario:
 - Communicate and explore ways in which needs can be better met within the relationship
 - Transform the relationship in some way (including the option of breaking up)
 - Suppress your feelings/needs because you do not want to compromise other needs of yourself or your partner
 - Attempt to meet some of those desires for satisfaction outside of the relationship

Self-Help Tips: Affairs

How do you manage if you find out your partner has had an affair/cheated?

- **Cognition:** making sense of it. Often we question ourselves “is she having an affair because I’m inadequate in some way?”, “What did I do wrong?”
 - Tell yourself that you’re worthwhile – don’t fall into self-doubt
 - Understand that your partner is attracted to or seeking out another person because of certain *needs* that are not being met
- **Emotion:** how we feel about the situation. We would often feel hurt, angry, jealous, sad, frustrated.
 - *Jealousy* is often grounded on a sense of inadequacy. When we work to feel better about ourselves, we will feel less intense feelings of jealousy
 - Preserve your sense of self. Engage in emotional work
 - Try not to be hard on yourself, try to accept how you are feeling
 - Practice asking more objective questions (e.g. what needs are/aren’t being met?)
 - If you are hoping to stay in the relationship, negotiate a better arrangement that works to meet both of your needs – *not just theirs or yours*

Dysfunctional Relationships

An unhappy relationship that both parties do not feel good about

- E.g. feeling undervalued, blamed/judged, abused, prevented from taking opportunities to grow/develop

Transforming a Dysfunctional Relationship can be Hard

- Dysfunctional relationships often offer a partial satisfaction of needs
 - Therefore can be very hard to leave the relationship
 - Individuals who do not leave a dysfunctional relationship may possess very low levels of self-efficacy
- Psychological economy
 - There is great risk and emotions at stake in leaving one’s current relationship or changing it
 - Your partner may find it difficult or may not want to make the necessary changes
 - Very effective communication and self-monitoring becomes crucial