

## ***Communication Climate: The Foundation of Personal Relationships***

### **Features of Satisfying Relationships**

- Investment
  - time, energy, thought, feelings, money
- Commitment
  - intention to share the future
- Trust
  - believing in another's reliability and another's effort to look out for our welfare and our relationship

### **Relational Dialectics**

#### **Autonomy/Connection**

- Tension between wanting to be independent (not relying on another person), but also interdependent (being able to rely on a person) in a relationship
- Ex: Enjoying spending time with another person going out to dinner, taking walks, and hanging out together vs. needing alone time to recharge

#### **Novelty/Predictability**

- Tension between wanting spontaneity, newness, and excitement, but also wanting the comfort of a set of expectations and duties in a relationship
- Ex: Wanting the stability of going to the same restaurant that you know you love vs. the newness of trying a new restaurant that you might not like (or may like more)

#### **Openness/Closedness**

- Tension between wanting to share so that intimacy grows, but also having some privacy
- Ex: Wanting to tell someone everything they need to know to get to know you and feel comfortable with you vs. wanting to keep things to yourself for various reasons (it's irrelevant to the other person, it may hurt the other person, they just don't need to know)

### **Negotiating Dialectical Tensions**

- Neutralization
  - Balance between dialectical needs (compromise)
- Selection
  - Give priority to one dialectical need and neglect the other (one side or the other - cycle)

- Separation
  - Assign dialectical needs to spheres of interaction (one tension in one realm and another in a different realm) (*work vs. family*)
- Reframing
  - Redefine contradictory needs as not in opposition (tension adds to intimacy)

**Gibb's Confirming and Disconfirming HANDOUT** found at the end of these notes

## **Guidelines for Creating and Sustaining Confirming Climates**

### **Actively Use Communication to Build Confirming Climates**

- Honor your needs for the dialectical tensions
- Enhance communication climates by using Gibb's confirming communication behaviors

### **Accept and Confirm Others**

- Be honest with others
- Acknowledge others and accept the validity of their thoughts and feelings
- See things from others' perspectives

### **Affirm and Assert Yourself**

- Be sure you feel valuable, meet your own needs, and follow your preferences in a relationship
- Use assertion over aggression by asserting what you need without disparaging others' wants and needs

### **Respect Diversity in Relationships**

- Respect a range of communicative choices
- Understand that others do not communicate the way you do and allow for differences
- Don't impose your meaning on others' communication

### **Respond Constructively to Criticism**

- Seek more information when others criticize you
- Explore the validity of the criticism

### Gibb's (1988) Confirming and Disconfirming Communication

SUPPORTIVE BEHAVIORS	DEFENSIVE BEHAVIORS
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Description</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-judgmental</li> <li>• Describe events in terms of what is seen and/or heard</li> <li>• Do not use terms like “good” or “bad”</li> <li>• Offer suggestions rather than prescriptions for change</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pass judgment by criticizing or blaming</li> <li>• Evokes defensiveness</li> <li>• Assign value (or lack thereof) to people and their actions</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Provisionalism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open minded</li> <li>• Willing to explore alternative points of view or plans of action</li> <li>• Willing to admit personal position isn't the only position</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Certainty</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resist considering other points of view</li> <li>• Believe that personal path, opinion, etc. is the right one or only one that matters</li> <li>• Less about problem solving and more about getting personal point across</li> <li>• Ethnocentric</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Spontaneity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible</li> <li>• Straight forward (what you see is what you get)</li> <li>• No hidden agendas</li> <li>• No manipulation</li> <li>• Focus on making things better</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have hidden agenda</li> <li>• Manipulative</li> <li>• Tries to make self look better</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Problem Orientation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work in collaboration with others</li> <li>• Find a solution that everyone finds acceptable</li> <li>• Reduce conflict and keep lines of communication open</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Control</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exert or impose personal opinions</li> <li>• Tell others what to do, what to feel, and/or what to think</li> <li>• Tell others their opinions are wrong</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Empathy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Truly involved in communication event</li> <li>• Identify with others</li> <li>• Respect others and their opinions</li> <li>• Accept others for who they are</li> <li>• Attempt to understand who others are</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Neutrality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indifferent</li> <li>• Remain detached from communication event</li> <li>• Do not participate in communication</li> <li>• Remain distant or detached</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Equality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not deny differences in power or ability</li> <li>• Participate and contribute to the communication event</li> <li>• Work <i>with</i> others to problem solve</li> <li>• Recognize contribution and worth of each individual</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Superiority</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arouse feelings of inadequacy in others</li> <li>• Don't recognize worth in others</li> <li>• Feel personal knowledge is higher than others</li> <li>• Communicates feelings of authority to others</li> </ul>

