



PAIRS Essentials IronBond

Curriculum for Strengthening
Fathers, Families, and Futures
IronBond Edition

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www.pairs4me.com

“ Being a father doesn’t
mean having all the
answers — it means
showing up, even when
it’s hard, and loving
your children with
everything you’ve got.”

~ **Unknown**



PAIRS Essentials IronBond Edition

A PAIRS IRONBOND EDITION for Strengthening Relationships, Families and Communities

With profound appreciation for the contributions of Virginia Satir, Daniel Casriel, Lori Heyman Gordon, George Bach, Williard Harley, Gary Chapman, John Gray, and each of those pioneers whose passion for understanding and empowering fulfilling human relationships illuminated our path.

PAIRS Foundation is the sole provider of training, certification, and licensure for PAIRS trainers and facilitators worldwide. Our global community of providers delivers PAIRS classes in accordance with rigorous ethical and licensing standards designed to ensure consistent excellence in program delivery and the satisfaction of every program participant.

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PAIRS Programs

PAIRS programs range from intensive half-day, one-day, weekend workshops, and multi-week seminars, to the hallmark 120-hour, semester-long Mastery Course. Classes are facilitated by coaches, trainers, educators, counselors, health care professionals, clergy, and others trained and accredited by **PAIRS Foundation**.

Rigorous, multi-level, professional certification training, ethical practices and accreditation standards, ongoing research, refinement, and proprietary quality management systems have earned PAIRS programs their standard as industry leader in relationship skills education.

Knowledge
skills & practical
for enhanced
communication,
empathy, emotional
connection,
& understanding,
& love.



PAIRS ESSENTIALS

Nine to 18-hours research-validated, experiential learning delivered in intensive weekend and extended multi-week formats. Introduces essential skills for improving communication, self-worth, empathy, emotional expression, and healthy conflict resolution on behalf of lasting breakthroughs in relationship satisfaction.

PAIRS IRONBOND

IronBond is a 24-hour fatherhood program that combines PAIRS Essentials relationship skills with practical guidance for parenting, co-parenting, and family stability. Fathers learn to listen with empathy, handle strong emotions, repair mistakes, and build dependable connections with their children through everyday actions.

PAIRS PASSION

For PAIRS Essentials graduates, explore chemistry, compatibility and commitment. Discover a more focused and sensual style of connection, work creatively with differences, deepen intimacy, confiding, and bonding, and learn to break-out of cycles of guilt and frustration that can sabotage pleasure.

PAIRS FOR PEERS

Age-appropriate classes for youth to improve communication, confiding and emotional understanding, empathy, compassion, self-esteem, self-worth, constructive conflict resolution, healthy decision-making, and forgiveness as a foundation for healthy peer relationships, families, and thriving classrooms.



Introduction



ABOUT PAIRS Essentials

PAIRS is a research-validated, highly experiential approach to creating and sustaining successful relationships. Through an innovative, proprietary technology researched and refined over more than a quarter century, PAIRS consistently delivers experiences that empower participants with practical, usable skills to strengthen emotional literacy, empathy, communication, problem-solving, collaboration, connection, and bonding.

PAIRS stands for Practical Application of Intimate Relationship Skills. The range of **PAIRS programs** emerged out of a multi-decade search for answers to all the questions of what it took not to fall in love -- that's the easy part -- but to sustain healthy, intimate relationships through life's natural passages, transitions, and challenges. Beyond the domain of romantic love, our capacity to create and sustain successful interpersonal relationships is increasingly recognized as the basis for thriving families, schools, teams, organizations, workplaces, and societies.

Inspired by the pioneering work of Virginia Satir, widely considered the mother of family therapy, the nonprofit **PAIRS Foundation** was established in 1983 to create a safer, saner, more loving world through experiential learning that strengthens human connection. The skills delivered in **PAIRS Essentials** empower participants with practical, usable, time-tested tools for accurate, authentic

communication; deepening empathy and compassion; listening attentively to create an environment of emotional openness and honesty; navigating conflict and differences constructively on behalf of a shared vision and mission; uncovering hidden expectations to avoid assumptions and misunderstandings; recognizing the influence of past experiences; and embracing opportunities for growth, learning and collaboration.

Advanced programs more deeply explore the self, family, and system dynamics; the role of bonding in the accelerated re-education of emotions, behaviors, and attitudes; creatively sculpting, living, and celebrating the very essence of purpose in daily life at home, work, and within community; expanding sensual and sexual connection in committed relationships; and empowering young people to connect with peers through experiences that boost self-esteem, self-confidence, and decision-making.

Congratulations & WELCOME

“Your faith, courage and commitment is the foundation of our work to help create a safer, saner, more loving world.”

Congratulations & Welcome to IronBond!

Your **PAIRS experience** begins with a simple commitment: become a father your children can count on. This workbook offers skills for listening, expressing care, managing differences, and repairing mistakes. Fatherhood asks us to keep learning, even when we wish we already had the answers. Whether you are raising children at home, co-parenting across households, preparing for fatherhood, or rebuilding contact, there is room here for your experience and your next step.

PAIRS Essentials provides the relationship-skills foundation for this edition. We will practice emotional openness, empathy, clear requests, and constructive ways to handle conflict. You can bring these skills to your adult relationships and model them for your children. Learning takes practice; no father has to arrive knowing it all. Information about PAIRS research is available at pairs4me.com/research.

Thank you for bringing your experience to **PAIRS**. Your willingness to reflect, listen, and try a different response matters. Consider what you want to carry forward from your own upbringing and what you want to change. Your children do not need perfection; they need care they can experience and commitments you work to keep.

Use adult practice partners for adult concerns. Children should not carry your relationship conflicts or be responsible for comforting you. Invite participation, respect boundaries, and offer affection in ways that are welcome.

As you learn, ask: What will my children see me do differently this week? Choose one small action and follow through.

Congratulations!

With much appreciation,



Seth D. Eisenberg
President/CEO

Introduction by VIRGINIA SATIR

“In a world where equality between human beings is generally not practiced and maybe not known, the material contained in PAIRS is a truly significant, pioneering effort.”

- Psychologist Virginia Satir (1918-1988), widely considered the “Mother of Family Therapy”, significantly influenced the development of PAIRS and served as honorary founding chairperson.

As we moved into the 20th century, we arrived with a very clearly prescribed way that males and females in marriage were to behave with one another. The man was the undisputed head of and authority in the family; he was to provide for and protect his wife and children.

The woman’s role was to obey her husband, take care of him, take charge of the house, bear and take care of the children and be responsible for setting the emotional tone in the family. She was also responsible for the sexual fidelity of the home. In the marriage vows of the time, women pledged to love, honor and obey; men only had to love and cherish their wives.

The pattern of the relationship between husband and wife was that of the dominant male and submissive female. Society of that day only gave recognition and status to those who married. Others who did not marry, especially women, were considered misfits, objects of pity, and sometimes scorn. As a result, women scrambled to get married; to be respectable, a woman had to have a Mrs. in her name.

A new era has since dawned. This began when women attained the right to vote in 1920. That gave them control over their lives. Slowly, states began to liberalize divorce laws as well. There had always been divorce possible under the grounds of adultery, insanity, and desertion; now, they were being extended to neglect and abuse.

During World War II, much of the work formerly done by men was successfully done by women. This gave women a new sense of confidence. They learned they could be successful heads of families themselves. When the men returned from war, the climate of relationships had changed; women were no longer willing to be submissive.

The women’s rights’ movement emerged soon thereafter. The end of the dominant/submissive model in relationships was in sight. However, there was very little that had developed to replace the old pattern; couples floundered. New forms for the new values had not yet emerged, and the old ones were no longer acceptable.

The aim was to develop a new kind of equality, based on equal value of each person. Old role definitions were no longer appropriate, and chaos was setting in. Retrospectively, one could have expected that there would be a lot of chaos and a lot of fall-out. The change from the dominant/submissive model to one of equality is a monumental shift. We are learning how a relationship based on genuine feelings of equality can operate practically.

PAIRS is a splendid preparation toward enabling couples to develop new satisfying patterns of relationship based on high self-worth for each one.

In a world where equality between human beings is generally not practiced and maybe not known, the material contained in **PAIRS** is a truly significant, pioneering effort.

Session One

Session One of PAIRS Essentials introduces the foundations of connection through the lens of fatherhood. You will explore how stress shapes communication and practice the Leveling Style to speak honestly while respecting others. Daily Temperature Reading and Talking Tips support listening, clear requests, and connection with a willing adult partner. The Love Bank and Caring Behaviors help you recognize what leaves each person feeling cared about. As a father, consider how your attention, dependable routines, and welcome affection can help your children feel seen. Begin with one question: What does my child experience when I am fully present?

The Heart of Intimacy

Key Goals

- Learn PAIRS concepts as a framework for connection in fatherhood: Levels of Learning, Stages of Relationship, Three Hopes/Three Fears, and the Relationship Road Map.
- Identify how stress affects your communication as a father. Practice the Leveling Style to speak clearly, listen, and stay connected.
- Learn Daily Temperature Reading and Talking Tips with an adult partner; model attentive listening and respectful requests for children.
- Use the Love Bank and Caring Behaviors to notice how loved ones experience care. Plan dependable, age-appropriate ways to connect with your children.

Topics & Tools

- Levels of Learning
- Stages of Relationship
- Three Hopes/Three Fears
- Relationship Road Map
- Stress Styles of Communication
- Leveling Style
- PAIRS Invitation
- Daily Temperature Reading
- Talking Tips
- Love Bank
- Caring Behaviors

“PAIRS changed a 29-year marriage of confusion, hurt, silence, and missed opportunities into a vibrant relationship of pleasure and trust that thrives on change and growth.”



The Language of Love

PAIRS has been called the **Language of Love**. Throughout **PAIRS Essentials**, you will learn new terms and a unique meaning of some that may already be familiar.

At the heart of **PAIRS** is a unique technology that combines practical knowledge and skills in an experiential process to empower joyful, fulfilling relationships built on a foundation of goodwill, empathy, and compassion.

- **GOODWILL** includes kindness towards others. In PAIRS, goodwill is represented by four c's: commitment, caring, communication, and change.
- **EMPATHY** is the ability to identify with or experience the feelings, thoughts or attitudes of another person.
- **COMPASSION** is the expression of our desire to alleviate suffering.
- **BONDING** goes beyond the traditional definition of a close relationship that often develops as a result of intense, shared experiences to represent the biologically-based human need for the combination of emotional openness and physical closeness with another person.



Other terms likely to take on new meaning through your PAIRS Essentials training include phrases such as "Relationship Road Map," "Stress Styles," "Leveling," "Daily Temperature Reading," "Empathic Listening," "Talking Tips", "Love Bank", "Emotional Stages", "Emotional Jug", "Time-Out", "Dirty Fighting", "Fair Fight for Change", "Relationship Agreement", "Love Knots", "Powergram", "Emotional Allergies", and "Infinity Loops".

Throughout PAIRS, we encourage you to be a detective on your own behalf, open to exploring, connecting, and growing.

Part of the gift of new experiences such as those offered by PAIRS is that you can try them out -- similar to how you'd try on a new outfit -- and decide what fits for you at a given moment in time and what may not.

The goal of PAIRS is to give you the best opportunity for your wishes, hopes, and dreams to have the greatest chance of coming true. Embracing the opportunity for learning and discovery will help you decide what will best contribute to the goals and values that are most important to you.

**"I have sought love, first,
because it brings ecstasy -
ecstasy so great that I would
often have sacrificed all the rest
of life for a few hours of this joy.
I have sought it, next, because
it relieves loneliness - that
terrible loneliness in which one
shivering consciousness looks
over the rim of the world into
the cold unfathomable lifeless
abyss. I have sought it, finally,
because in the union of love I
have seen, in a mystic miniature,
the prefiguring vision of the
heaven that saints and poets
have imagined."**

— Bertrand Russell

Levels of Learning

Where were we supposed to have learned?

When learning something new, we all start out in a stage of **Unconscious incompetence**: we don't know what we don't know. A goal of PAIRS is to reach the stage of **Unconscious Competence**, where the skills you learn become habits. **Conscious Incompetence**, is about becoming aware that there are things that we are starting to discover that we didn't know. **Conscious Competence** is where we can often become open to learning because we recognize there are things that we didn't know that can make a difference. Conscious competence is what we're going to do a lot of in our time together.

Getting to the final level, the level of unconscious competence, is about giving ourselves the chance to develop new habits. Learning about relationship dynamics and the attitudes and skills that contribute to happy, lasting relationships will help you become aware that there may be things you're doing -- or not doing -- that are preventing you from experiencing the level of love, connection, and fulfillment you most want. Developing new habits requires deciding what you want to change, changing it, and sustaining the change under stress. **Patience is vital.**



Learning Through Experience



Stages of Relationship

Illusion

We are in love and hope that everything will be fine. We are looking for what is right in the other person and finding it. This stage can end as something happens that we didn't expect or something we did expect doesn't happen, leading to disappointment and...

Disillusion

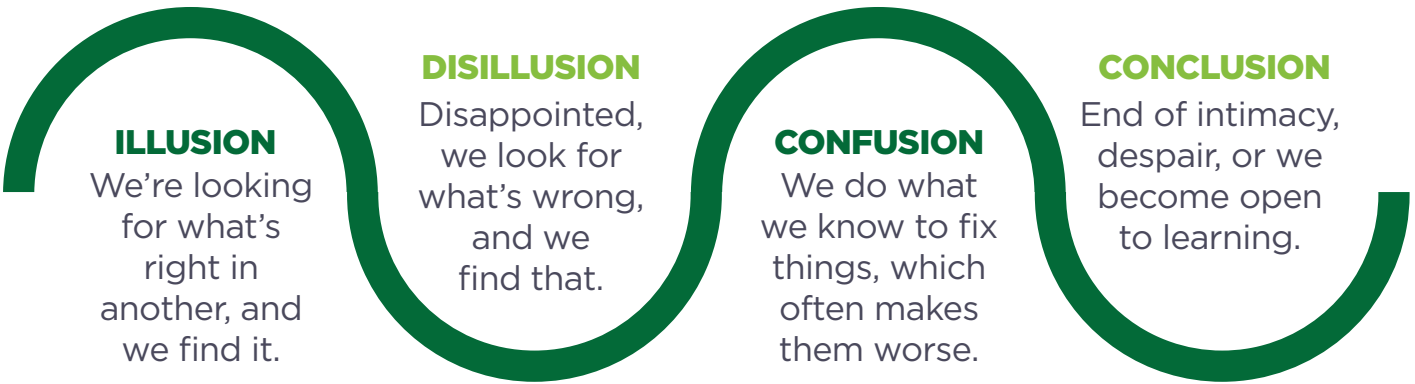
We begin to look for what is wrong, and we find that. Every human being has strengths, challenges, and the potential for growth. It's easy to find what's wrong with another person when that's what we're looking for. That leads to the next stage, where we use whatever we know -- often including "dirty fighting" and "power struggles" -- to try to get what we want.

Confusion

What is wrong, and how do I change it? Anger, pain, sadness, and disappointment leak out in a variety of ways, such as blame, sarcasm, labeling, name calling, withholding, the silent treatment, etc. All of which lead to a...

Conclusion

That often becomes despair, the end of intimacy, trust, confiding, and joy. Or you open yourself to learn the skills to deal with conflict fairly and non-destructively and with goodwill -- so you don't need to lose each other and dreams that were once cherished.



Three Hopes

Everything good I ever wanted
in my life, I will find with you.

All the good things
I have, I will keep.

All the upsetting, unhappy things
that happened to me before,
will NOT happen with you.

Three Fears

Good things I hoped for will not
or are not happening.

Good things I had, I will or am losing.

Upsetting, hurtful things that happened
before are happening again with you.

CLARIFYING EXPECTATIONS

Disagreements, differences, even a relationship crisis or breakdown can be opportunities to improve understanding, connection, relationship satisfaction, pleasure and resilience. These five questions can help.

1. What are you getting in your relationship that you do want?

2. What do you want from the relationship that you are not getting?

3. What are you getting in the relationship that you don't want?

4. What are you giving in the relationship that you don't want to give?

5. What would you like to give your partner if things were better between you?

Relationship Road Map

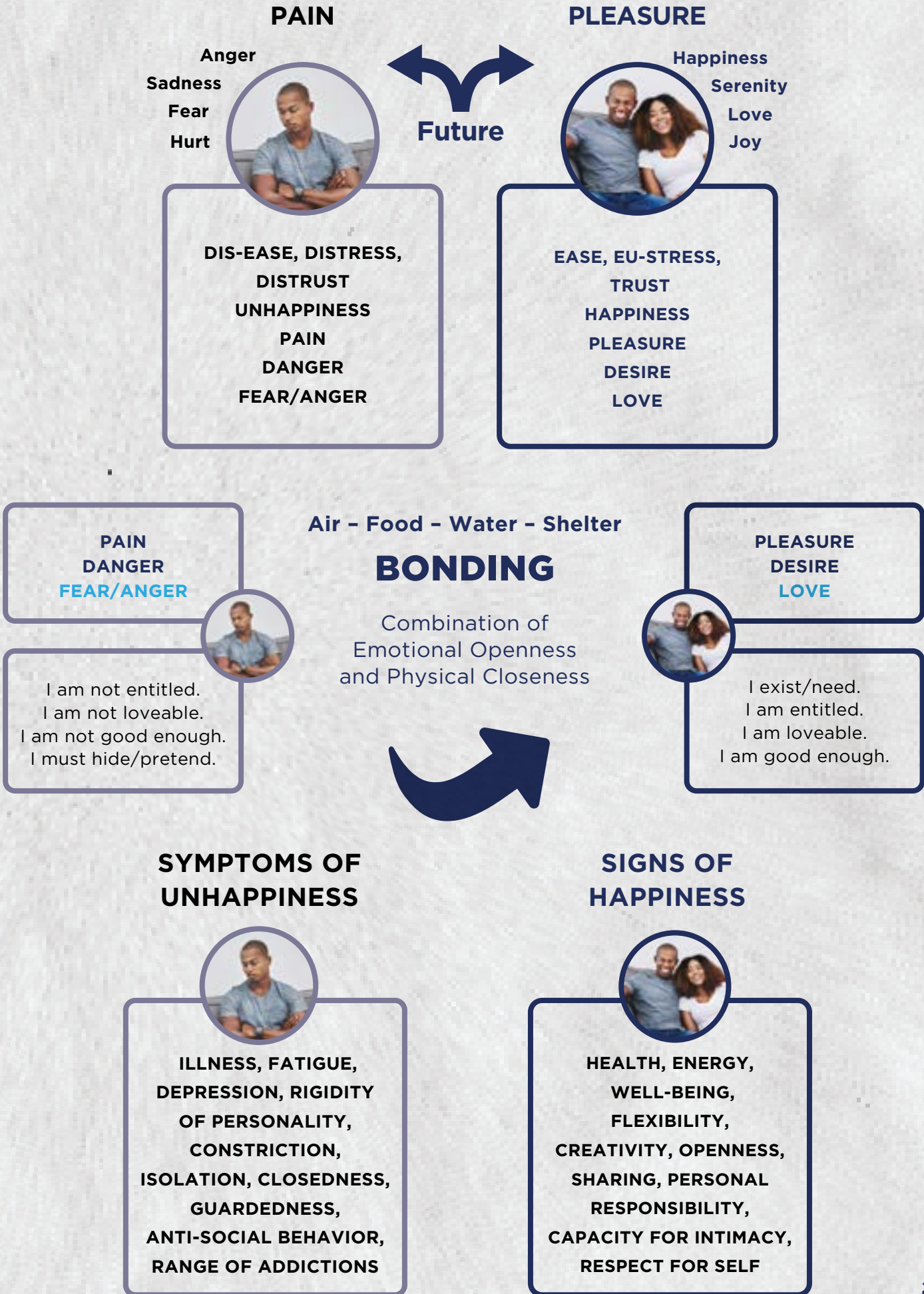
Bonding as a Biological Need

Biologically-Based Needs: Air, Food, Water, Shelter, and Bonding. When needs are unmet, life is often experienced on the **pain** side of the **Road Map**, including feelings of dis-ease (which can turn to disease), distress, distrust, **unhappiness**, pain, danger (the anticipation of pain), fear, and anger.

Bonding (the unique combination of emotional openness and physical closeness with another person), is the only biologically-based need that we can't meet by ourselves. We need another person. Meeting each other's needs for bonding is an important aspect of the work of a relationship.

When our needs are met, we are more likely to experience life on the **pleasure** side of the Road Map, including feelings of ease, eustress (healthy stress, also known as the runner's high), trust, **happiness**, pleasure, desire, and love.

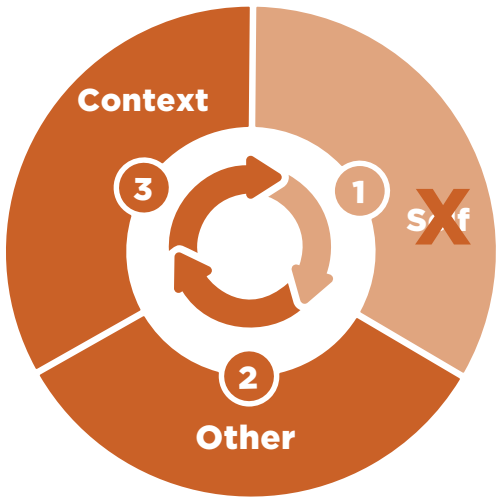
PAIRS is about skills to live life on the **pleasure** side.



Communication Stress Styles

1. Placater

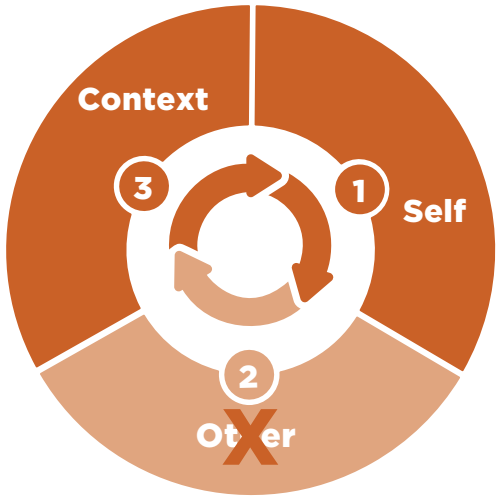
Under stress, the **Placater** cancels out their own thoughts, feelings, and needs, is eager to please, and has a hard time saying “no.” Inside, the **Placater** can feel taken for granted and build up resentment towards others.



Cancels out SELF
(Runs in fear, Appeaser)

2. Blamer

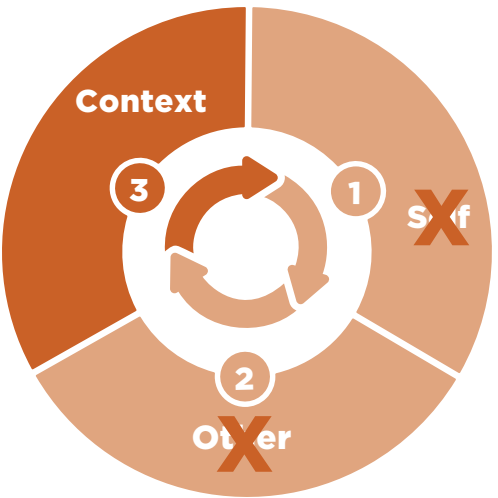
Under stress, the **Blamer** believes the best defense is a good offense. This communication style is one where the other person’s needs and feelings are not taken into account. For the **Blamer**, it is “all about me!” Inside, the **Blamer** feels lonely because often no one wants to be around him/her. **Blamers** are often angry because they anticipate not getting what they want, including approval. Passively or actively, notice how the styles push others away.



Cancels out OTHER
(Controlling, Abusive, Violent, Angers, Fights)

3. Computer

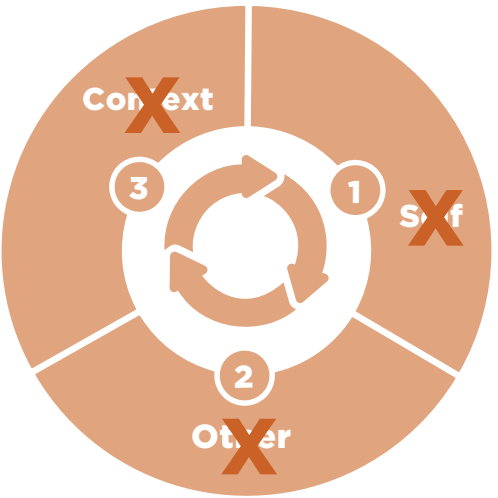
Under stress, the **Computer** is the calm, cool, and very reasonable one. The **Computer** expresses no feelings, and so it is difficult for them to get their needs met. The **Computer** is careful to choose the right words and prefers to avoid mistakes. Inside, the **Computer** decides, “I will not share my feelings, and I don’t know what to do with your feelings either.”



Cancels out SELF and OTHER
(Freezes, Super Reasonable)

4. Distracter

The **Distracter** ignores everything: the feelings and the problem. With the **Distracter**, you may notice avoidance of direct eye contact and direct answers as well as changes to the subject being talked about. Inside, the **Distracter** feels frightened, confused, distrustful, and believes “I don’t know what to do.”

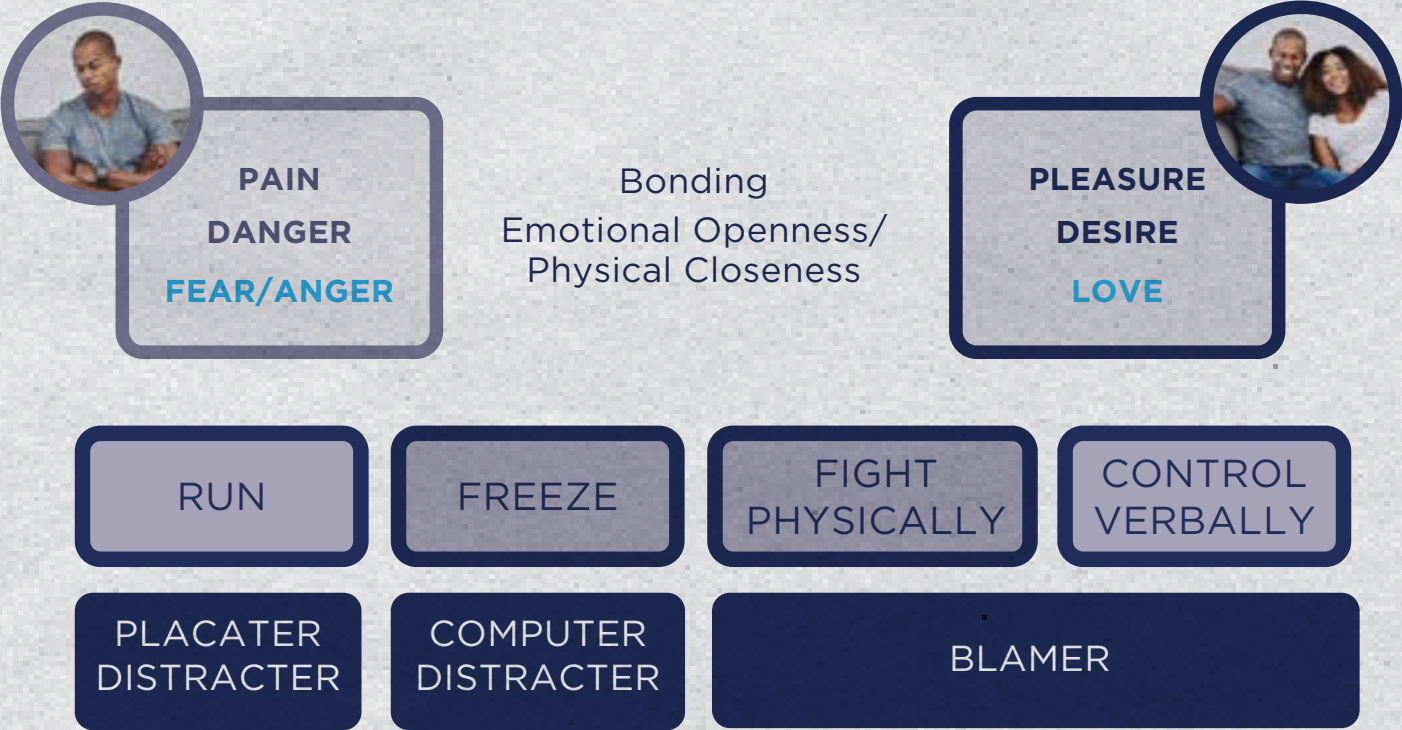


Cancels out SELF, OTHER & CONTEXT
(Irrelevant)

Stress Styles keep us stuck on pain side

How often is your “style” of communication more of an issue than the issue itself? While each of us may have a primary style, we may have different styles in different relationships and situations. It’s not uncommon to be in one style and then suddenly in another, depending on the issue or other person’s reaction. These styles create emotional distance instead of closeness and understanding and can sabotage the ability to meet each other’s needs for bonding.

Stress Styles of Communication



Become ways to Run, Freeze or Fight

The **Placater** and **Distracter** run away by canceling out their own feelings and needs. The **Distracter**, like the Computer, can also be a way of freezing -- like a deer caught in the headlights, not knowing what to do with feelings, so pretending they don't exist. Blamers fight, often needlessly escalating conflict and creating distance.

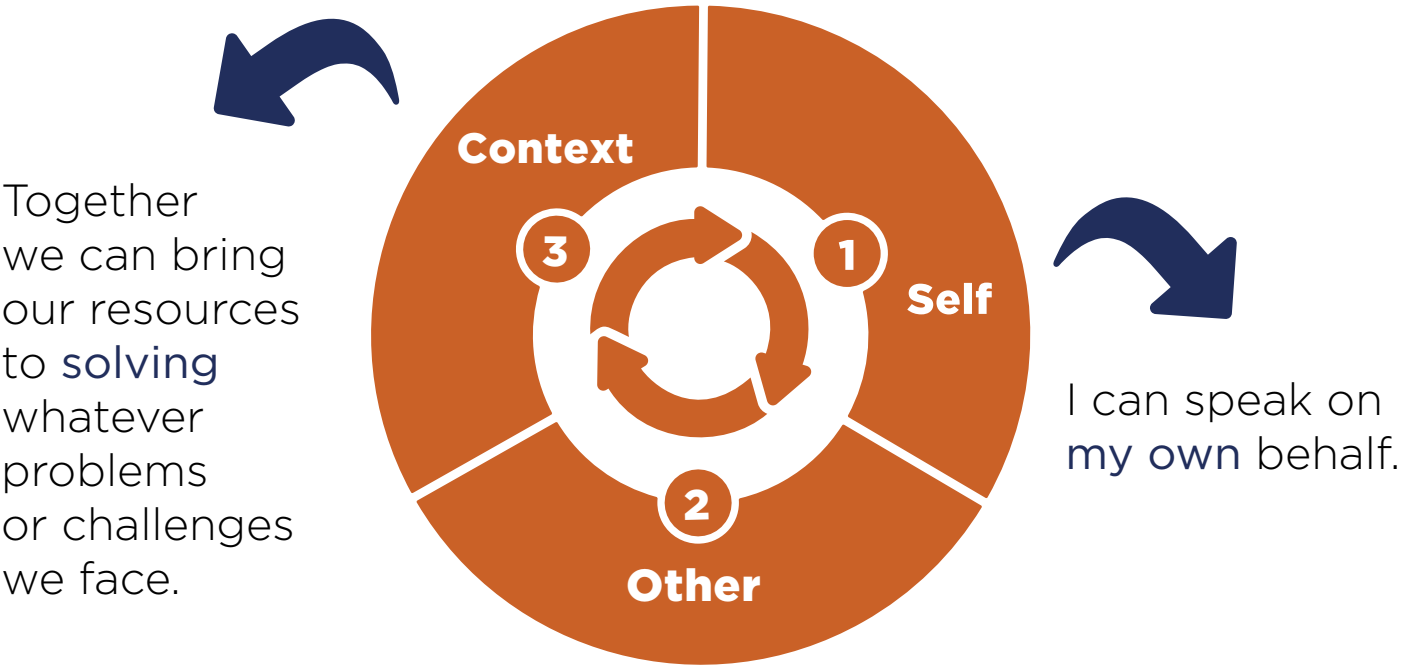
All of these styles will keep us stuck on the PAIN side of the Relationship Road Map. The "Emotional Openness" aspect of Bonding means learning to level with each other with empathy, maturity, and a desire for the relationship to win.

Each style also has some positive aspects. Can you identify them?



Leveling Style Promotes Effective Communication

The **Leveler** combines positive aspects of the stress styles. What's positive about the **Placater** style is empathy, as long as it's sincere and doesn't lead to acting one way when you're really feeling something else. The **Blamer's** positive aspect is speaking on your own behalf, but with empathy and concern for the other person. The **Computer's** positive trait is the ability to use knowledge and resources to find solutions, so long as you don't cancel out your own feelings in yourself or the other person. The **Distracter** style can bring fun and pleasure into the relationship, as long as you return to address the issues later and don't develop a habit of avoiding opportunities for growth.



PAIRS

Invitation Rule

Learning a tool does not mean another person is ready to practice it. A spouse, co-parent, or fellow participant may need a different time. Respect that choice. Children also need room to decline a conversation or affection. Ask, listen to the answer, and agree on a suitable time.

The **PAIRS Invitation Rule** recognizes that each person has the right to decide about participating in exercises at any given time. **PAIRS tools** work best when both people choose to participate with goodwill.

The **PAIRS Invitation Rule** is: always invite your partner to use or practice any of the tools; Never inflict a skill on your partner.

SOME EXAMPLES ARE:

- Would you be willing to listen to my worries about being a dad? Is this a good time for you?
- Could we make time for a Daily Temperature Reading after the children are settled?

Inviting your partner to participate in an exercise is a sign of respect. No one likes to be told what to do. No one responds well to demands for attention. By showing **respect** for your partner, **goodwill** and **trust** will grow in your relationship.

Daily Temperature Reading

The **Daily Temperature Reading**, also known as the “**DTR**,” is a tool for watering the garden of your most important relationships. With practice, the DTR becomes a habit, making it natural to look for -- and express -- appreciations to one another, keep each other up-to-date on the developments in our lives, ask questions about anything we’re wondering about so we don’t have to assume, express concerns directly along with specific recommendations for change, and talk about our individual and shared goals for the future. Many graduates have said using the DTR on a regular basis was the most important tool for intentionally creating and sustaining thriving relationships.

Fatherhood can fill a day with instructions and logistics while leaving little time for connection. A Daily Temperature Reading makes room for appreciation, news, questions, concerns with requests, and hopes. Begin with a willing adult partner.

For example, appreciate a co-parent’s help with a school routine, share a work-schedule change, or ask about plans instead of assuming. A concern can include a specific request: “When pickup plans change without a message, I feel worried. Please let me know as soon as you can.” With a child, keep the conversation brief and age-appropriate: “I enjoyed our walk. What would you like me to know about your day?” Keep adult disputes and pressures with adults. The **Daily Temperature Reading** provides the structure; choose examples that fit the relationship and the child’s age.

Think of the **Daily Temperature Reading** as a practice to build gradually. Invite participation, choose a calm moment, and listen without turning a child’s answer into a lecture. A child may want to talk later. Regular, unhurried attention can begin with a few minutes. Let care, curiosity, and follow-through guide your practice.



DAILY TEMPERATURE READING TO PRACTICE WITH YOUR PARTNER

- STEP 1** **APPRECIATIONS.** Appreciations are sincere and specific, and there can be many benefits. Create the habit of looking for what’s right and acknowledging that in others. Appreciations build goodwill.

I appreciate...

- STEP 2** **NEW INFORMATION.** New information is about keeping each other up-to-date. Share whatever is new in your life and listen to your partner share what is new in theirs.

I want to share with you...

- STEP 3** **PUZZLES.** When there’s something you’re puzzled about, ask the question. Check out anything you’re wondering about with each other.

I’m wondering...

- STEP 4** **CONCERNS WITH RECOMMENDATIONS.** It’s never against your partner, but on behalf of the relationship. Focus on one specific behavior; a behavior is not a thought or feeling, it is an action. Confide how you feel when it happens. Ask for what you want or recommend instead.

When you...I feel...what I recommend instead...

- STEP 5** **WISHES, HOPES, DREAMS.** Always end the Daily Temperature Reading by sharing wishes, hopes, and dreams with each other.

I wish...

Good Talking

Making Sure the Intended Message is Received

GOOD TALKING IS DIRECT

To send a message that other people can be sure to “catch”, you need to say what you mean. Don’t “talk around” the subject. Don’t just drop hints or make other people guess. Get to the point!

GOOD TALKING IS CLEAR

Make certain that people can understand what you’re saying and don’t just have a “snowy picture” of it. You need to describe things well. You need to make sure that you aren’t confusing your listener!

GOOD TALKING IS SPECIFIC

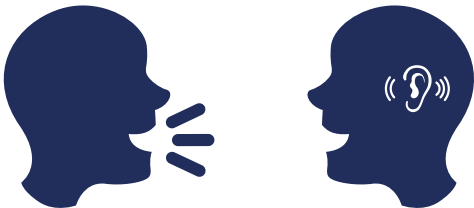
Sending a message well means giving your listener all the necessary information. Don’t be vague or general when you talk. Include details that can help the other person know exactly what you’re talking about.

GOOD TALKING IS HONEST

For your message to do the most good, it needs to be honest. Don’t say something you really don’t think or feel, or that doesn’t match the facts.

GOOD TALKING IS TACTFUL

Being tactful means being kind. You have to think about others’ feelings and rights before you speak. You do want to be direct, clear, specific, and honest with them, but you don’t want to say things -- accidentally or on purpose -- that will hurt them unnecessarily. Words can hurt.



Good Listening

Listening to Understand

GOOD LISTENING IS ACTIVE

Good listening is more than just waiting until you can talk or until the other person stops talking or truly says something that interests you. Good listening is doing your best to hear, understand, and help the person who is talking to fully express what they want you to know.

GOOD LISTENING IS ATTENTIVE

To listen well, you need to concentrate on what the other person is saying. Make sure you get the full message that they are sending. Don’t try to guess what they mean. Don’t try to do something else at the same time -- like planning what you want to say next -- you will probably miss something important!

GOOD LISTENING IS OPEN

Good listening means giving the other person the freedom to speak and giving you the freedom to learn something. To do this, you need an open mind -- one that doesn’t refuse to hear certain things. After the speaker finishes, you can decide whether you agree or you don’t agree with what was said. But while the speaker is talking, you need to agree to fully listen.

GOOD LISTENING IS RESPECTFUL

Good listeners never interrupt a speaker in the middle of a sentence. They only start speaking after the other person finishes a sentence and pauses. This way, they make certain that they hear everything the other person wants to say and that they don’t make the other person feel worthless or angry.

GOOD LISTENING IS CAREFUL

To be a good listener, you need to ask the speaker right away about anything that you didn’t hear well, that isn’t clear, or that you didn’t quite understand. Learn more at apps.pairs.com/good_listening.

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN “YOU” TALK AND “I” TALK

“YOU” TALK (-)	“I” TALK (+)
You don’t care about me. You’re just using me.	I feel as if you don’t care about me. Sometimes I think you’re just using me.
Can’t you at least try to act better?	I would appreciate it if you tried to behave better towards me by talking to me without yelling.
You forgot to pick me up after the game.	I am upset because you forgot to pick me up after the game.
You’re lying!	I find it hard to believe you.
What are you going to do about it?	It would help if I knew what you plan to do about it.
You shouldn’t have done that.	I don’t think you should have done that.
You get on my nerves.	I get really upset with you.
You keep refusing to talk about this.	I’ve noticed that you don’t want to talk about this.
You let me down when...	I was disappointed when you...
You’re wrong.	I think differently about that...

Confiding about a Complaint or Concern

- Make sure you have enough time to give your undivided attention for a minimum of 10 to 15 minutes. **Be fully present** without distractions, with goodwill and empathy for each other.
- If you are the Speaker, use short sentences your partner can repeat back easily. Be aware of the intention behind your communication.
- As the Listener, repeat what you heard your partner say without exaggerating, adding comments, distorting, or giving advice. Talking Tips is not a conversation; the Listener's role is to listen to understand and let the Speaker know that the message you are receiving is the message the Speaker intends. Listening to understand another person's perspective and feelings -- whether or not you see and feel the same way -- is a gift to the relationship.
- Use non-verbal cues such as nodding your head and making eye contact to show you are listening and that you understand. If facial expressions and **body language** communicate something different than the words, the words will not feel authentic.
- Validate the Speaker. The Listener's job is to help the speaker **feel understood**, not to agree, comment, judge, try to fix the problem, or get into a discussion.
- After completing **Talking Tips**, you can discuss the issue, reverse roles, or simply complete the exercise with appreciation for the information, awareness, perspective, and understanding apps.pairs.com/talkingtips.

EMPATHIC LISTENING EXERCISE TO PRACTICE WITH YOUR PARTNER

The listener's going to repeat back what the speaker says.

Listener's job is to try to understand and to show caring for the Speaker's feelings.

Speaker thanks Listener for listening, shows sign of appreciation.

A GIFT TO YOUR PARTNER Affirming, Validating, Empathizing

Remind yourself that how we listen to others impacts their willingness to confide.



TALKING TIPS EXERCISE TO PRACTICE WITH YOUR PARTNER

Speaker's role is to **confide** various aspects of one specific concern. Listener's role is to be sure Speaker knows they've been heard accurately and understood, regardless of agreement or disagreement.

- 1 I **notice**...
- 2 I **assume** this means...
- 3 I **think**...
- 4 I am **frustrated** by...
- 5 I am **hurt** by...
- 6 I **worry** about... (Or, "What this reminds me of from my past is...")
- 7 I **want**... (Specific request)
- 8 I **appreciate** you for...
- 9 I **realize**...
- 10 I **hope**...

The Love Bank

The Logic of Love

The logic of love and emotions says we are naturally drawn to people who are a source of pleasure in our lives. That means different things to different people and also changes over the course of a lifetime together. At one moment in our life, it may be connected to someone who helps us succeed in school or find a solution to a particular challenge; at another time, it could be about creating a home, raising children, achieving financial success, companionship, affection, having someone who brings new experiences to our lives, or anything in between. It's important to discover what's a pleasure to your partner and to recognize that many things change over time.



What makes you feel cared about?

Don't assume that what makes you feel cared about is the same for your partner. As Dr. Gary Chapman writes in **"The Five Love Languages"**, for some of us, **words of affirmation** may be most important. For others, it may be about **quality time together, affection and touch, gifts and presents, or acts of service** that help accomplish goals, assignments, or chores. It's natural to have different ways of giving and receiving love in different relationships. Actions that say "I love you!" to a spouse may be very different than what makes a teenager feel cared about. Learn more at apps.pairs.com/lovebank.



CARING BEHAVIORS WORKSHEET TO PRACTICE WITH YOUR PARTNER

	I feel cared about when...	How it makes me feel	✓
1			☐
2			☐
3			☐
4			☐
5			☐
6			☐
7			☐
8			☐

PAIRS TIPS

- Think of your relationship as a Love Bank. It's important to take time to build the balance of your account through regular deposits.
- We make deposits into our Love Bank when we do things that leave our partner feeling cared about. Often what makes others feel cared about is different than what we want for ourselves.
- The Love Bank has a five-to-one rule: we must make at least five positive deposits in the Love Bank to neutralize one withdrawal, such as criticizing, making a negative observation, not keeping a promise or commitment, etc.
- Discovering what it takes to fill your relationship Love Bank with actions that say, "I care!" will help you grow closer in love, pleasure, and connection.
- Make a commitment to keeping the balance high. A positive balance in the Love Bank helps provide important protection to our relationships.

Consider Special Circumstances

Lasting relationships involve navigating many of life’s natural passages and transitions together. How do you and your loved ones experience and express love during periods of challenge, such as facing illness, fatigue, fear, sadness, or similar circumstances?

What about in opposite situations, such as celebrating important milestones, accomplishments, or successes?

It’s important to let others know what actions leave you feeling cared about in these situations and also to know what makes others feel cared about when they are dealing with any of these special circumstances.

Being able to safely confide in each other what you want in different circumstances is vital.



When I am ill	When I am tired
When I am worried	When I am afraid
When I am unhappy	When we are celebrating

Virginia Satir’s “Five Freedoms”

1. The Freedom to see and hear what is here instead of what should be, was, or will be.
2. The Freedom to say what one feels and thinks instead of what one should.
3. The Freedom to feel what one feels, instead of what one ought to.
4. The Freedom to ask for what one wants, instead of always waiting for permission.
5. The Freedom to take risks on one’s own behalf, instead of choosing to be only “secure” and not rocking the boat.



Section One Closing

SATISFACTION SURVEY

We care about your personal experience. You may receive a brief survey or other follow-up email from **PAIRS Foundation** asking about your experience. Add **info@pairs.com** to your email whitelist, so we can reach you. Your response is important and appreciated!

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

PAIRS Essentials gives you tools to practice in everyday parenting. Notice what helps you stay present and what gets in the way. Small actions, repeated with care, can become habits your family experiences.

NEXT STEPS

1. Invite a willing adult to practice the Daily Temperature Reading. Choose a realistic time and protect it. With your child, begin with a brief appreciation and an invitation to share. Keep the focus on the child; save adult concerns for adults.
2. Concerns with Recommendations are a natural part of all human relationships. You can share them inside the DTR by simply saying, “When _____ happens, I feel _____, and what I’d like instead is _____,” or practice using Talking Tips to improve and deepen communication, understanding, and empathy.
3. Complete your Caring Behaviors Worksheet. Choose one act of care for your child and one for an adult relationship.
4. Explore the exercises with the **PAIRS Yodi app**.

LEARNING POINTS:

- Levels of Learning
- Stages of Relationship
- Three Hopes/ Three Fears
- Relationship Road Map
- Communication Stress Styles
- **The Leveler/ Congruent Style**
- Invitation Rule
- **Daily Temperature Reading**
- **Concerns with Recommendations**
- **Empathic Listening**
- **Talking Tips**
- **Love Bank**
- **Caring Behaviors**

*Bold topics are key tools in the PAIRS Essentials curriculum.

Session Two

Session Two of **PAIRS Essentials** explores how fathers can respond to strong feelings and disagreements with greater care. Learn the original Emptying the Emotional Jug and Fair Fight for Change processes with a willing adult. Then explore how the principles of hearing a concern and requesting a specific change can support parenting. Either a parent or child may raise a concern; the parent retains responsibility for safety, boundaries, and decisions that belong to adults. Parenting pressures and competing responsibilities offer practical examples. Children should not be messengers, referees, or confidants for adult disputes. Repair begins with responsibility for your behavior and follow-through.

Constructive Conflict

Key Goals

- Consider how your emotional state affects disagreements about parenting, schedules, and adult responsibilities.
- Recognize how anger, sadness, and worry influence your behavior as a father. Take responsibility for how you express them.
- Practice Emptying the Emotional Jug with a willing adult. Keep adult burdens out of children's care.
- Learn Fair Fight for Change in its original form, then explore parenting adaptations that preserve appropriate boundaries.

Topics & Tools

- Emotional Stages of Development
- The Emotional Jug
- Dirty Fighting
- Emptying the Emotional Jug
- Fair Fight for Change
- Time-Out Tip
- Fight Styles and Results Profile
- Guidelines for Coaches



Emotional Stages of Engagement



The Infant

Feels a need, but can only cry and must wait for the parents to figure out what the problem may be. Adult "stuck" in the **Emotional Infant**: Can treat others like an object to meet their needs. That person may be expressing: "I want what I want when I want it, and you are just an object to give me what I want."

The Child

Communicates, but remains dependent on others for meeting their needs; will act out feelings of hurt, fear, and resentment. Adult "stuck" in the **Emotional Child**: Will act out feelings of resentment through distance, pouting, whining, withholding, or placating. That person may say: "You have things that I want, and I will find a way to get them from you." The Emotional Child is not honest and will not negotiate openly in the relationship.

The Adolescent

Is rebellious with parents and authority figures and in effect says, "Don't tell me what to do!" Has a need to prove they are not dependent. Adult "stuck" in the **Emotional Adolescent**: Cannot give their partner what they want without feeling controlled by them and resenting it. That person may say: "I cannot listen to you with empathy because I believe you are telling me what to do. You are being critical of me, my beliefs, and my behavior." Whatever the partner asks for is experienced as control and feels as if they are being treated like a child.

The Emotional Adult

Has the capacity to demonstrate goodwill and mutual concern, is open to learning, growing, and has a willingness to change. The healthy **Emotional Adult** will say: "I can ask for what I need and want, without controlling, manipulating, or running from you; I can listen with empathy about how it is for you, without assuming it's only about me." One of the important tasks of a loving marriage is that each person functions as an **Emotional Adult**, enough of the time, to resolve problems and is able to give each other support and caring.



Emotional Jug

The Emotional Jug Concept

The Emotional Jug is a way to think about emotions/feelings. Imagine pouring all of your feelings into a big jug. The feelings would settle in different layers. At the very top may be a "cork" that tries to keep upsetting emotions from leaking out. The feelings that rise to the top are the more intense emotions, such as anger, fear, and sadness. It's not easy to think clearly when painful feelings get jumbled up together, let alone to feel happiness, love, tenderness, or desire. Guilt, jealousy, and shame are also feelings that can fill the jug. Painful feelings may eventually implode or explode. On the way, they often leak through dirty fighting.

It's really important to know that positive, uplifting feelings have different energy than upsetting feelings, Feelings like anger, fear, sadness. Those feelings have different energy than feelings like relief, happiness, pleasure, desire, and love, and if for whatever reason we are holding on to those upsetting feelings in our emotional jug that is in

each of us, they will start to smother and bury the other feelings. It's really important to know. It's not that they destroy the other feelings. It's not that they replace the other feelings. They just bury them.

That lid of indifference tends to mean we don't feel anything at all. What happens as those upsetting feelings bury, increasingly bury the uplifting feelings, is as human beings, we generally start to leak.

By leaking, we really mean ways that we weren't born to be, ways we become that are a reaction to upset. When we come into the world and laying there under the blue or pink blanket, we're not made to be sarcastic.

Those ways of leaking are what we call throwing fuel on the fire. If you imagine that you're trying to put a fire out or calm a fire, those are all ways of bringing even more fuel to the fire, and we call them dirty fighting. **Dirty Fighting** can be unbelievably damaging to human relationships.



DIRTY FIGHTING WORKSHEET TO PRACTICE WITH YOUR PARTNER

Take a few moments to review each line of the worksheet. Then, place check marks (ffl) where they belong. Later, you will share your worksheets with your partner to see how your views compare.

Dirty Fighting Tactic	Examples (for illustration only)	What I do	What my partner does	What partner will say I do
1 SARCASM	"That outfit would've looked really great on you 20 pounds ago."	☐	☐	☐
2 THREATENING	"Keep that up, and I will leave!" "Maybe we just shouldn't be together."	☐	☐	☐
3 ACCUSING	"Your eyes never left him once during dinner." "You did that on purpose to hurt me."	☐	☐	☐
4 LAUGHING AT	"That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard."	☐	☐	☐
5 EXAGGERATING	"You're always..." "You never..."	☐	☐	☐
6 IGNORING	"I really don't have time for that right now." "Can't you see I'm..."	☐	☐	☐
7 BLAMING	"This wouldn't have happened if you thought of someone else besides yourself."	☐	☐	☐
8 LYING	"I never said that." "My ringer was off." "I didn't get the message." "Who are you going to believe - me or your lying eyes?"	☐	☐	☐

EMPTYING THE EMOTIONAL JUG TO PRACTICE WITH YOUR PARTNER

This exercise offers a structure to **confide** a range of emotions.

- STEP 1** What are you **MAD**/ANGRY about?
(Ask, listen, thank.)

What else are you **MAD**/ANGRY about?
(Ask, listen, thank. Continue to ask, listen, and thank until speaker says there is nothing else.)

If you were **MAD**/ANGRY about anything else, what would it be?
(Ask, listen, thank. Continue to Step 2.)

Thank You!
- STEP 2** What are you **SAD** about?
(Ask, listen, thank.)

What else are you **SAD** about?
(Ask, listen, thank. Continue to ask, listen, and thank until speaker says there is nothing else.)

If you were **SAD** about anything else, what would it be?
(Ask, listen, thank. Continue to Step 3.)

Thank You!
- STEP 3** What are you **SCARED**/WORRIED about?
(Ask, listen, thank.)

What else are you **SCARED**/WORRIED about?
(Ask, listen, thank. Continue to ask, listen, and thank until speaker says there is nothing else.)

If you were **SCARED**/WORRIED about anything else, what would it be?
(Ask, listen, thank. Continue to Step 4.)

Thank You!
- STEP 4** What are you **GLAD** about?
(Ask, listen, thank.)

What else are you **GLAD** about?
(Ask, listen, thank. Continue to ask, listen, and thank until speaker says there is nothing else.)

If you were **GLAD** about anything else, what would it be?
(Ask, listen, thank. Conclude with a physical expression of appreciation.)

Thank You!

Fair Fight for Change Process

Fair Fight for Change Process in Ten Steps

The Fair Fight for Change is used to confide a complaint and request a change in behavior. It is a negotiation on behalf of the relationship, not against either person. Differences are a natural part of every close relationship. The fair fight process is to benefit you, your partner, and your relationship. Feeling that your partner really understands is very important. Often what lies behind a specific complaint is a request to feel heard and understood. Empathic listening is as important as sending the message. Coaching helps participants learn to stay on track, clearly focus on one specific issue (that's open to negotiation), voice their inner dialogue, and develop comfort with the process.

If Feeling Overwhelmed, Call “Time-Out”

Especially when dealing with differences, it's important to stay grounded with goodwill, empathy, openness to learning, and negotiating solutions that will help your relationship succeed. Often, the price someone pays for getting what they want may be to sabotage far more meaningful dreams. It's helpful to agree ahead of time that if you're in a Fair Fight for Change and you find yourself feeling overwhelmed, you can call “Time-Out” for 20-40 minutes to give yourself a chance to calm down, relax, and then return to each other in touch with what's most important to you, able to confide, listen with empathy, and find answers that work for your relationship.



Coaching Guidelines

Coaching Guidelines

Coaches often learn much that can help their relationships by guiding others through the Fair Fight for Change. No matter how tempting, don't get in the way of participants experiencing, and perhaps struggling, through the process of identifying and negotiating their own solutions.

As coaches, it can be tempting to offer advice or a solution during the Fair Fight for Change. Remember, the goal is for participants to learn to use the process to negotiate their own solutions. While coaches may have excellent ideas for resolving a particular issue or conflict, this process is about couples discovering they can find their own answers. Whatever the issue is today, there will be other issues in the future. The role of coaches is to help participants learn to stay in the safe structure of the Fair Fight for Change process, gently call attention to any dirty fighting (when necessary), and support the couple learning to fight for the relationship, not against each other.



- 1 All discussions are held aloud for all to hear.
- 2 Keep couple on track following the **10** Steps.
- 3 Call a momentary time out if you see dirty fighting.
- 4 Do not “side” with either person. Focus on process, not issues.
- 5 Do not give answers; help participants find their own answers.
- 6 Use Checklist as guide for feedback to the couple.
- 7 Be their mirror; reflect back to them what you are observing.
- 8 Write down the Relationship Agreement key points.
- 9 Encourage empathy and appreciations.
- 10 If couple scores five or more points on Checklist, they have demonstrated a Fair Fight.

Fight Style Profile

Style	Fair	Unfair
Facial Expression	Open, Responsive, Reflective, Interested, Real	Closed, Guarded, Impassive, Masked, Disinterested
Focus	Here and Now, Direct, Specific to the Problem, One Issue, To the Point	Past, Generalizing, Gunny sacking, Kitchen Sink
Communication	Clear & Relevant, Shared Meaning, Responsive, Accurate Feedback, Empathy	No Empathy, One Way, Inaccurate or No Feedback
Information & Reality	Realistic, Accurate, Authentic	Distorted, Exaggerated, Fantasy, Lies
Comments & Impact	Reasonable, Fair, Above the Belt	Not Open to Other Person's Perspective, Feelings & Experience
Responsibility	Willing to Recognize Own Contribution to the Problem	Justifying, Denying, Ignoring Own Role
Openness to Change	Willing and Open to Change	Rigid, Fixed, Unchanging

Adapted from “The Intimate Enemy: How to Fight Fair in Love and Marriage,” by George Bach and Peter Wyden.



Fight Results Profile

Style	Constructive	Destructive
Importance	Feel More Important to Partner	Feel Less Important to Partner
Influence & Self-Worth	Increased – Feel Heard and Understood	Decreased – Feel Misunderstood
Resentment	Relieved	Inhibited, Repressed
Hurt & Fear	Decreased	Increased
Trust	Increased	Decreased
Closeness	Feel Closer, More Affectionate	Feel More Distant
Reparation	Hurts Mended – Willing to or Did Make Up for Mistakes or Mistreatment	No Attempt to Make Up for Mistakes or Hurt Feelings
Forgiveness	Able to Forgive Partner	Desire to Withhold, Withdraw, Distance or Get Even
Progress	Progress Made Toward Solution	No Progress Made Toward Solution

THE FAIR FIGHT FOR CHANGE PROCESS

Fill in the blanks for each of the steps of the **10-Step Fair Fight for Change Process**, a structured exercise which is used to confide a complaint and request a change in behavior.

- 1

Invite partner
- 2

Reflect on a complaint
- 3

State complaint clearly (one specific behavior)
- 4

Partner repeats (listen to understand, speak with empathy)
- 5

Show appreciation (for being heard accurately)
- 6

Ask for what you want instead (specific behavior) and “will you do it”?
- 7

Partner repeats what you said including request
- 8

Show appreciation (for being heard accurately)
- 9

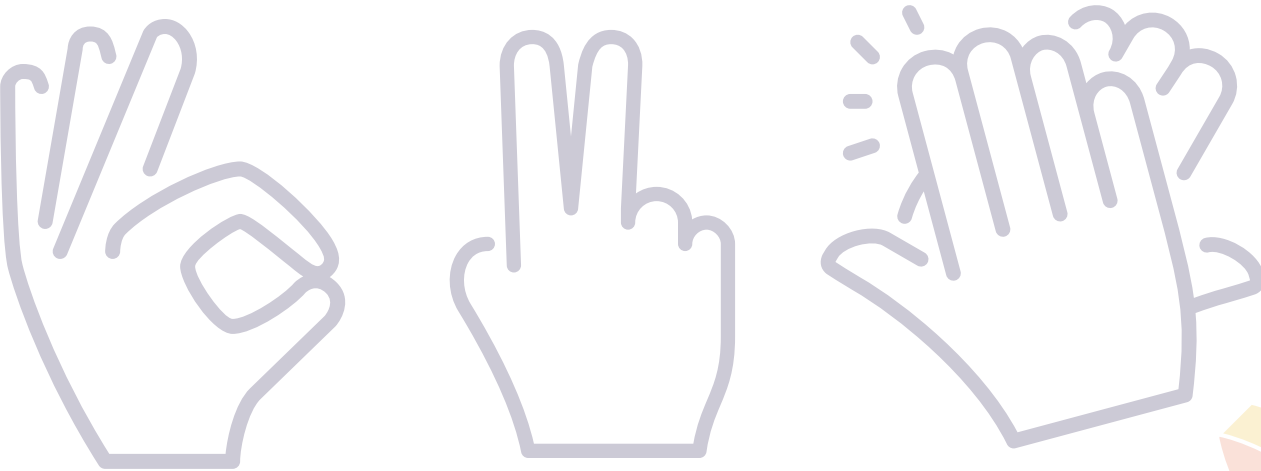
After consideration, partner responds “Yes,” “No,” or “Yes with conditions”
- 10

Continue process until you come to a solution

FAIR FIGHT CHECKLIST (SCORECARD)

After the Fair Fight for Change is completed, coaches will place a check mark (ffl) underneath the box that best scores the participants in the fair fight. Add up the number of marks in each box for a total score. A score of five or more in the “Yes” column indicates a successful **Fair Fight for Change**. If the total score is less than five, as time allows, the process should be repeated.

Fair Fight Participants	YES	NO
1 Positive facial expressions and body language?	☐	☐
2 Stayed on one complaint/concern?	☐	☐
3 Communicated their feelings?	☐	☐
4 Partner who was listening showed empathy?	☐	☐
5 Shared appreciations?	☐	☐
6 Came to a solution?	☐	☐
7 Demonstrated goodwill?	☐	☐
Total Score		



FAIR FIGHT FOR CHANGE
RELATIONSHIP AGREEMENT

RELATIONSHIP AGREEMENT

Specific, measurable behaviors:

As distinct from attitude or character changes, and wishful hopes or possibilities.

How this agreement will benefit our relationship:

Include both partner’s perspectives.

Duration of this agreement:

You can always choose to extend the agreement longer if it is working well.

Schedule times for review and tune-up:

Remember that breakdowns are learning opportunities.

Our reminders for keeping this agreement alive:

Auditory or visual reminders that inspire you to action.

Section Two Closing

EMAIL FOLLOW-UP

You may receive additional information about the materials in this section of PAIRS Essentials directly from PAIRS Foundation. Please be sure info@pairs.com is on your email white list, so you don’t miss valuable follow-up.

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

PAIRS Essentials is an intensive introduction to skills you can use under the pressures of parenting. Ask yourself: When did I become reactive? What could I do differently? Practice a calm response before you need it.

NEXT STEPS

- 1. Continue Daily Temperature Readings with a willing adult partner.
- 2. Invite a trusted adult to practice Emptying the Emotional Jug. Take turns confiding and listening. For a child’s age-appropriate practice, seek your facilitator’s guidance: the child is the speaker and you listen. Never ask a child to receive your adult distress or relationship complaints.
- 3. Notice dirty fighting. If you use it, stop and own the behavior: “I raised my voice. That was my responsibility. I will take a pause and speak respectfully.” Follow through.
- 4. Honor Fair Fight for Change agreements. In parenting adaptations, hear the child’s concern while maintaining appropriate boundaries. Keep children out of adult disputes.
- 5. Explore the exercises with the **PAIRS Yodi app**.

LEARNING POINTS:

- Emotional Stages of Engagement
- Emotional Jug and Dirty Fighting
- **Emptying the Emotional Jug**
- **Fair Fight for Change**
- Time-Out Tip
- Fight Style Profile
- Fight Results Profile
- Fair Fight Checklist
- Relationship Agreement

*Bold topics are key tools in the PAIRS Essentials curriculum.

Session Three

Session Three of **PAIRS Essentials** explores the expectations, old hurts, and assumptions that can shape fatherhood. Love Knots and Emotional Allergies help you examine your reactions without blaming your children or co-parent. Learn the original Powergram, then consider how it can clarify parenting decisions: what parents decide, where children have input, and where they can choose. Adapt expectations to each child's age, development, communication needs, and abilities. Practice moving from reactivity toward vulnerability and empathy with an adult partner. Which messages from your upbringing do you want to carry forward, and which do you want to change?

Emotional Literacy

Key Goals

- Explore Love Knots: assumptions about fatherhood, closeness, and what others should know without being told.
- Use Powergram to clarify adult responsibilities and appropriate opportunities for children's input and choice.
- Recognize old hurts that intensify present reactions with children or an adult partner.
- Practice confiding with an adult and listening with empathy. Identify one pattern you want to change as a father.

Topics & Tools

- Love Knots
- Untangling a Love Knot
- Powergram
- Emotional Allergies
- Transforming the Loop



Love Knots

Hidden Assumptions & Expectations

Hidden assumptions and expectations can create distance and misunderstanding in relationships. Love Knots are commonly held beliefs that seem to be true. However, they are not true because they are not based on logical, realistic thinking. Love Knots can be very harmful to a relationship.

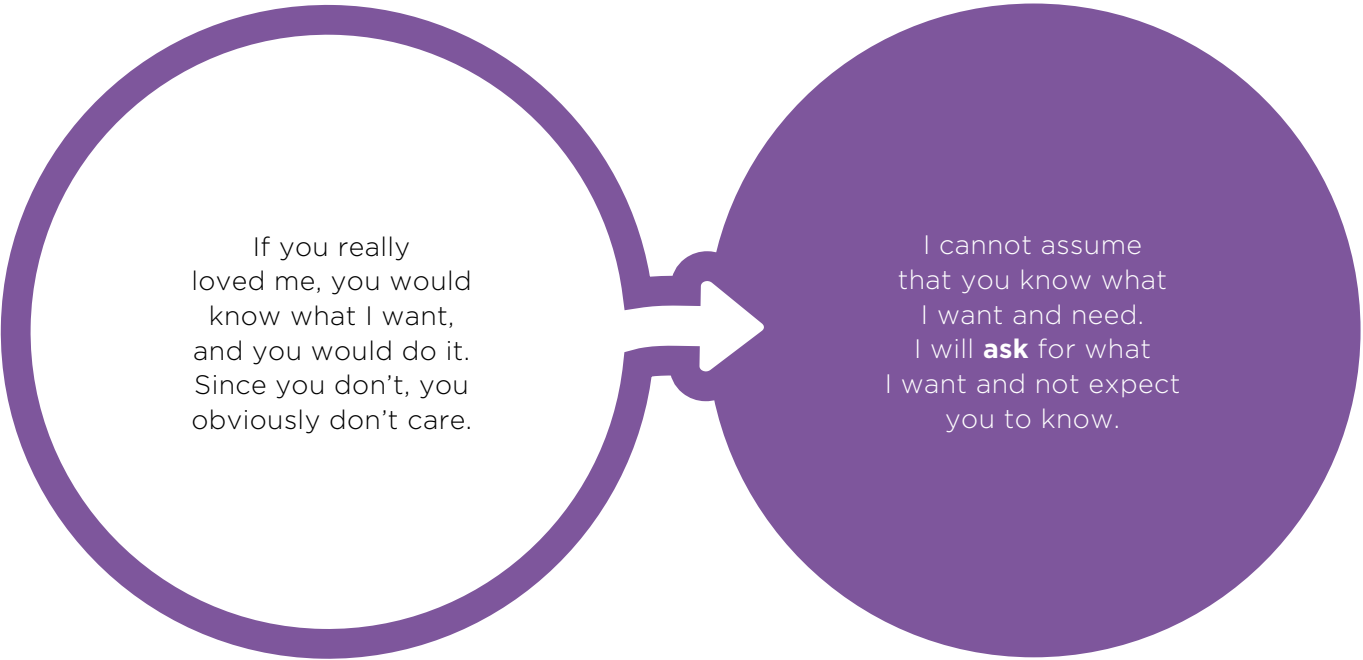
PAIRS Founder Lori Heyman Gordon identified dozens of hidden assumptions and expectations many couples have about their relationships. Consider these examples to see which may be interfering with intimacy in your life. You can also learn more at apps.pairs.com/loveknots.

Reflection
When have you waited for others to guess what you want and do it, becoming disappointed, hurt, or distant when they didn't?

What happened as a result?

LOVE KNOT #1

UNTANGLED



Untangling Love Knots

#2

When I tell you how I feel, you interrupt, disagree, give advice, judge, or dismiss my feelings. That's not what I want. I stop telling you. I distance myself from you.

Reflection

Are there people in your life who you've stopped confiding in because you didn't like their reaction? How has that affected your relationships?

What might be possible in your relationship if you could ask your partner to just listen with empathy?

If I want you to listen to me and to hear me without comment, I need to ask for that. Advice is not helpful when the person does not want it. Learning how to **listen attentively** is often more important than giving advice.

Reflection

Have there been times in your life when you couldn't make things better for someone you cared about? How did you feel about the situation? About yourself? About the other person?

How can you be supportive of someone going through a difficult time? What would you like from your partner when you are in pain?

If you are in pain, I believe I should be able to fix it. I don't know how to fix it, so I feel inadequate. I get angry with you for making me feel inadequate. I withdraw from you and blame you for being in pain.

When you are in pain, I can be supportive without believing I have to provide a solution. I can listen, **empathize**, and acknowledge what you say. I will **respect** and **honor** your feelings as well as your ability to ask for what you want.

#3

Reflection

How often have you experienced double binds in your relationships where no matter what happens, everyone loses? What happens to love in these situations?

Reflect on a time you got angry because someone didn't do something the way you wanted. Can you also remember being on the receiving end of this double bind? What would help you appreciate others for what they do, even when it's not done exactly the way you want?

If I tell you what I want and you do it, it doesn't count (because I had to tell you). If you try to guess what I want and you don't get it right, I get angry."

I cannot expect you to know what I want. Nor can I expect you to do anything exactly the way I would. I can still **appreciate** the gift of whatever you do because you believe I would like it.

#4

If we don't agree, one of us must be wrong. If it's me, that means I am bad, stupid, ignorant, or inadequate. So it can't be me. I must prove that it's you, so I won't feel like a failure.

We should be able to **disagree**. We are all unique, and disagreements are a **natural reflection** of our uniqueness.

#6

Reflection

How do you feel when a significant other disagrees with you? What price has your relationship paid for arguments about different views and perspectives?

Consider a time when you argued or distanced from someone who was important in your life because you didn't agree. What would help you embrace future differences as a natural part of all relationships and become open to hearing and considering other views without having to agree with each other?

If I let myself get close to you, I will need you. If I am too dependent and need (love) you too much, I will not be able to survive without you. I will become weak.

I can **enjoy** being close to you, yet survive on my own if I need to. As an adult I am **not helpless**. I can make a new life for myself if I have to. Meanwhile, the pleasures of intimacy are among life's most **fulfilling gifts**.

#5

Reflection

This can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Can you remember a situation where your fear of losing someone or something important to you led to exactly what you most feared? Sometimes fears about the future can be so powerful that we miss opportunities to experience love, happiness, pleasure, and fulfillment in the present.

What fears about the future are getting in the way of embracing the gift of closeness and connection with those who are most important in your life today?

Reflection

Remember a period in your life when it was natural to have open, flowing conversations together. How did that feel? What did it mean to you to know that you could talk about anything and everything with each other?

What does it mean to have a witness to your life and to be a witness to someone else's life? What would make it natural and safe for others to share their thoughts and feelings with you? What do you need from others?

If I ask what you are thinking or feeling, I believe I am intruding (as you would tell me if you wanted me to know). If I don't ask, you believe I'm not interested, so you never tell me. We live as strangers.

Confiding is the life blood of intimacy. I need to be able to ask for information, and you need to be able to volunteer it when I don't ask. If we are to nurture our relationship, it is crucial that we **speak our truths**, ask our questions, and keep each other informed.

#7

YOUR LOVE KNOTS WORKSHEET
TO PRACTICE WITH YOUR PARTNER

Place a check mark (ffl) if a given **Love Knot** fits for you.
Then place a question mark (?) in the next box if you suspect
that Love Knot fits for your partner.

Love Knot #	Love Knot Description (May Reword to Fit)	Fits for me	Suspect fits partner
1	If you really loved me, you would know what I want, and you would do it. Since you don't, you obviously don't care.	☐	☐
2	When I tell you how I feel, you interrupt, disagree, give advice, judge, or dismiss my feelings. That's not what I want. I stop telling you. I distance myself from you.	☐	☐
3	If you are in pain, I believe I should be able to fix it. I don't know how to fix it, so I feel inadequate. I get angry with you for making me feel inadequate. I withdraw from you and blame you for being in pain.	☐	☐
4	If I tell you what I want and you do it, it doesn't count (because I had to tell you). If you try to guess what I want and you don't get it right, I get angry.	☐	☐
5	If I let myself get close to you, I will need you. If I am too dependent and need (love) you too much, I will not be able to survive without you. I will become weak.	☐	☐
6	If we don't agree, one of us must be wrong. If it's me, that means I am bad, stupid, ignorant, or inadequate. So it can't be me. I must prove that it's you, so I won't feel like a failure.	☐	☐
7	If I ask what you are thinking or feeling, I believe I am intruding (as you would tell me if you wanted me to know). If I don't ask, you believe I'm not interested, so you never tell me. We live as strangers.	☐	☐



UNTANGLING A LOVE KNOT EXERCISE
TO PRACTICE WITH YOUR PARTNER

Speaker's role is to **confide** various aspects of one specific **Love Knot**.
Listener's role is to be sure Speaker knows they've been
heard accurately and understood.

- 1 The **Love Knot** I want to work on is...

- 2 My **assumption** has been...

- 3 I **think** I have this belief because...

- 4 What I needed in **my past** was...

- 5 The price **I have paid** in my life for having this Knot is...

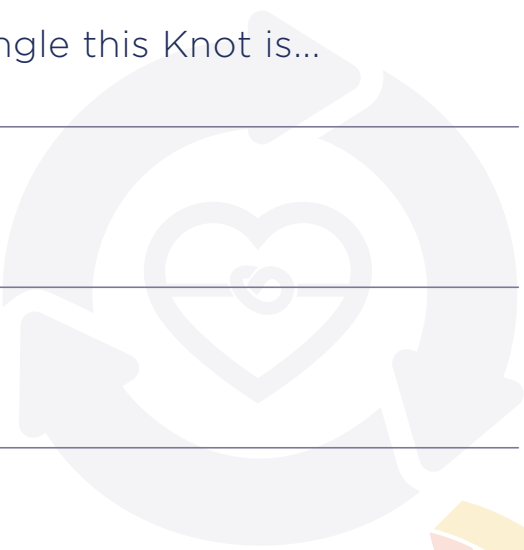
- 6 The price **you have paid** for my Knot is...

- 7 What I can do for **myself** to untangle this Knot is...

- 8 What you can do to **help me** is...

- 9 I **realize**...

- 10 I **hope**...

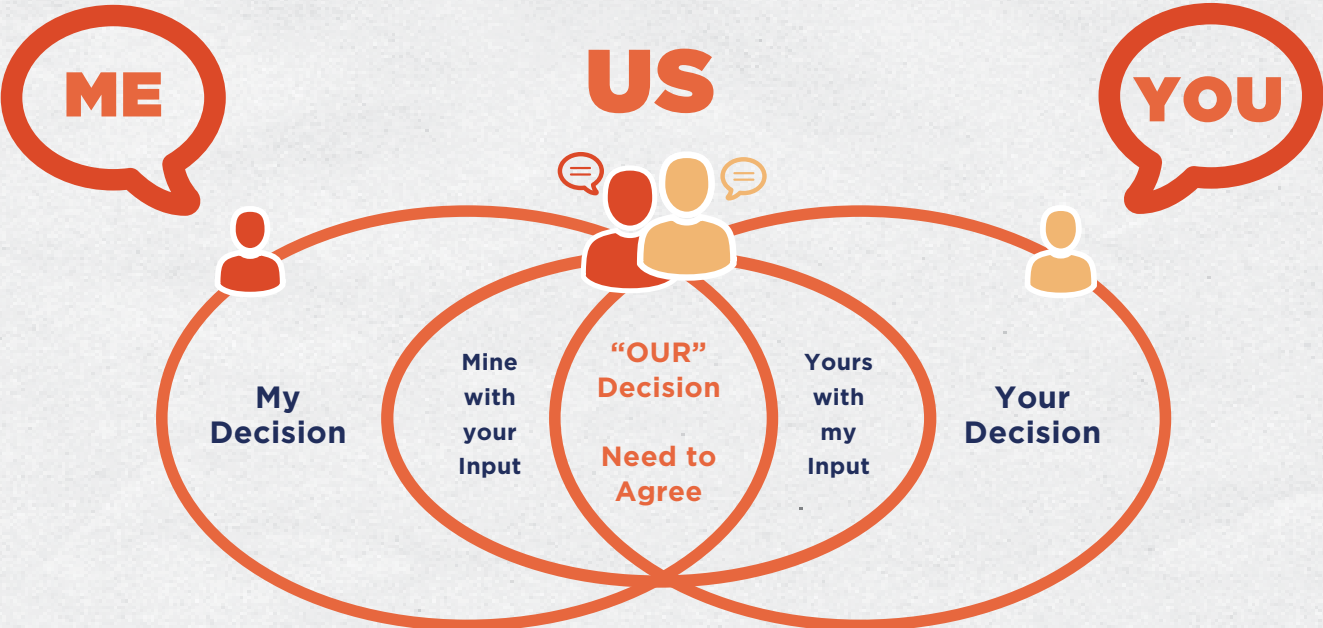


Powergram

Let's Talk

Negotiable means...

Non-negotiable means...



SAMPLE DECISION-MAKING WORKSHEET TO PRACTICE WITH YOUR PARTNER

Mark (ffl) how decisions are made now. Then mark “P” for the arrangement you prefer. First practice the original worksheet with an adult. For a parenting adaptation, identify decisions parents make, decisions children can influence, and choices children can make. Select topics that fit your family and respect existing arrangements.

Decision-Making Topic	MY Decision	Mine with your Input	OURS We Need to Agree	Yours with my Input	YOUR Decision
1 My Work Hours					
2 Children's Laundry					
3 Bedtime Routines					
4 Time Spent Together					
5 School Support					
6 Grocery Shopping					
7 Rules for the Children					
8 Infant Care					
9 Family Meals					
10 Adult Couple Time					
11 Household Budget					
12 Home Repairs					
13 Parenting Schedule					
14 Calls with Children					
15 Affection & Boundaries					
16 Family Holidays					
17 Future Family Plans					
18 Health/Life Insurance					

POWERGRAM

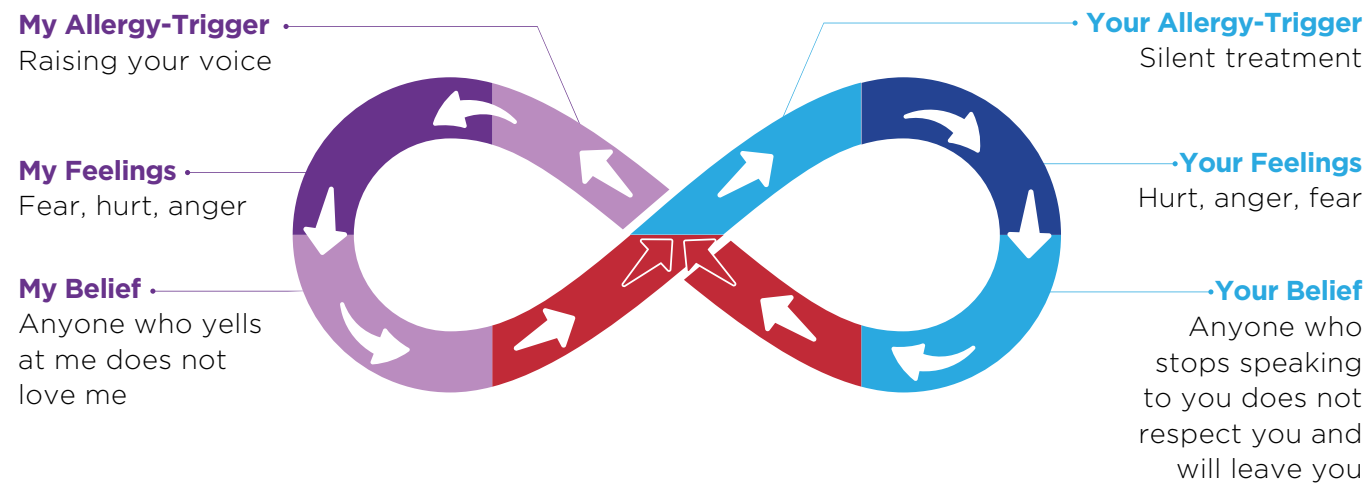
Learn the original Powergram, then explore its parenting applications with your facilitator. Identify what parents decide, where children have input, and where children can make their own choices. What is negotiable will vary across households and with the child's age, developmental needs, and abilities. A child can have a meaningful voice while parents remain responsible for care and safety. Discuss adult responsibilities with your co-parent or other appropriate adult, respecting existing arrangements and boundaries. Revisit decisions as needs change; this exercise does not change formal parenting arrangements.

Emotional Allergy

Emotional Allergy Negative Infinity Loop

Having the intensity of an Emotional Allergy makes something feel much worse than the actual current situation might be. When we have an Emotional Allergy, we feel much worse than others might feel, and we wind up reacting with more intensity than others might understand or accept. It's as if we hand the bill for something someone did to us in the past to someone in the present. We can find ourselves stuck in an Emotional Allergy Negative Infinity Loop when our intense response triggers an Emotional Allergy in the other person.

The loop represents two separate people; each on their own side, yet joined and bonded to each other. Each brings their own unique emotional allergies. One person's loop can begin with a triggering event by the other person's behavior, as shown in this example. Many couples spend years in cycles that lead to distance, disappointment, and the surrender of once cherished wishes, hopes, and dreams. Learning to transform this Negative Infinity Loop into one that makes it possible to be healing to each other is a central goal of **PAIRS Essentials**.



Dirty Fighting

My Behavior

I give you the silent treatment

Your Behavior

You raise your voice even more



IDENTIFYING AN EMOTIONAL ALLERGY TO PRACTICE WITH YOUR PARTNER

Journal an **Emotional Allergy** that you can identify for yourself and one that you suspect you trigger in your partner.

An Emotional Allergy I have for **myself** is:

- 1 When my partner behaves by... _____
- 2 I feel... _____
- 3 I think... _____
- 4 I worry about... _____
- 5 I behave by... _____

An Emotional Allergy I suspect I trigger in **my partner** is:

- 1 When I behave by... _____
- 2 My partner feels... _____
- 3 My partner remembers... _____
- 4 My partner believes... _____
- 5 My partner behaves by... _____

CONFIDING AN EMOTIONAL ALLERGY TO PRACTICE WITH YOUR PARTNER

Speaker's role is to **confide** various aspects of one specific **Emotional Allergy**.
Listener's role is to be sure Speaker knows they've been heard accurately and understood.

- 1 An **Emotional Allergy** I have is...

- 2 I **believe** I have this Allergy because...

- 3 When I have this Allergy, the **behavior** you see from me is...

- 4 The feelings I have include **frustration** because...

- 5 The feelings I have include **hurt** because...

- 6 The feelings I have include **worry** because...

- 7 I want my **new behavior** to be...

- 8 I would appreciate your **help** by...

- 9 I **realize**...

- 10 I **hope** this will help us by...



Transforming The Loop

PARTNER ONE

My Allergy: (TRIGGER)

Raising your voice in anger.

Confiding My Feelings of:

Fear, hurt, anger.

My Changed Belief:

You are not the person in my past. You do love me.

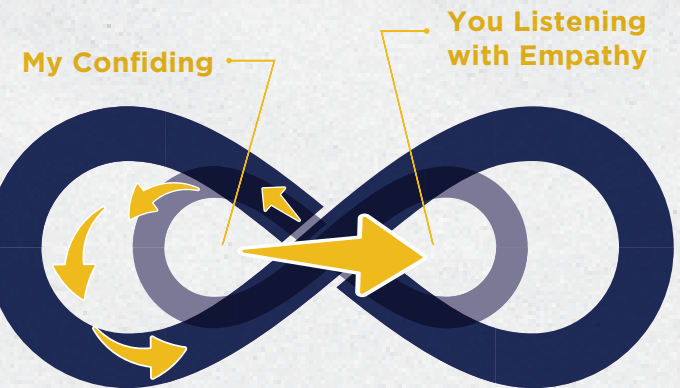
I can trust you to listen to my feelings and care.

My New Behavior (Confiding):

[You respond by listening with Empathy.]

I Say:

When you yell at me, it scares me. I am afraid you will leave me like my father did.



PARTNER TWO

Your Changed Feelings:

Sympathy.

Your Changed Belief:

It's not against me.

Your Changed Behavior:

Empathy, reassurance, affection, comfort.

Loop of Vulnerability & Empathy

When you become aware of intense feelings, you can choose to become reactive or to be vulnerable -- to allow another person to see the parts of you that are hurt, sad, afraid, or angry. If the other person responds with empathy, you can create a positive Loop of Vulnerability and Empathy, which is easy to remember by the acronym: LOVE.

Much of emotional intelligence (and success and happiness in life) is about the ability to pause when experiencing intense feelings, reflect on the possible source, and respond in ways that create closeness instead of distance.

Vulnerability:

1. Allowing another person to see the parts of you that are scared, hurt, sad, and lonely, etc.
2. Taking a risk to share your deepest thoughts and feelings with another person even when you are not sure how they will react.

Empathy:

1. Imagining what it feels like to be in the other person's shoes.
2. Imagining what that person thinks and feels.

Your Notes & Reflections

Section Three Closing

EMAIL FOLLOW-UP

You may receive additional information about the materials in this section of **PAIRS Essentials** directly from **PAIRS Foundation**. Please be sure **info@pairs.com** is on your email white list, so you don't miss valuable follow-up.

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

PAIRS Essentials offers tools for continued growth as a father. Reflect: What did I learn about closeness growing up? What do I want my children to learn from me? Choose one behavior to practice this week.

NEXT STEPS

1. Continue inviting an adult partner to practice Daily Temperature Readings.
2. Practice Powergram with a willing adult. Then map parenting decisions, children's input, and age-appropriate choices; revisit these as needs change.
3. Choose one PAIRS skill to practice when an old reaction appears. Notice what helps you respond differently.
4. Become more familiar with the online version of the PAIRS Tool Kit at pairs.com/toolkits. Choose a tool that supports your next fatherhood commitment.
5. Choose one or more of the exercises offered on the **PAIRS Yodi app** to reinforce your learning. Ask your facilitator which practice fits your situation.

LEARNING POINTS:

- Love Knots
- **Untangling Love Knots**
- Powergram
- **Emotional Allergies**
- **Transforming the Loop**

*Bold topics are key tools in the PAIRS Essentials curriculum.

Appendix

**“ It is only with the
heart that one
can see clearly.
What is essential is
invisible to the eye.”**

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry
The Little Prince



PAIRS TOOL KIT GUIDE

Review the tool kit with emphasis on when and how the skills participants learned in **PAIRS Essentials** can be useful. If time permits, use the tool kit review as an opportunity to reinforce all core skills.

PROBLEM OR FEELING	SKILL TO USE	TO DO FOR YOURSELF	TO DO WITH YOUR PARTNER	NOTES
Feeling Disconnected	LEVELING STYLE	Take time to be fully present to the treasure that is you.	Ask for intentional connection. Be fully present for a conversation that matters.	When it's important, begin by creating a safe space with each other.
Want to use a tool to strengthen relationship	INVITATION RULE	Identify which tool to use.	Invite your partner to participate.	Use this first. Invite, never inflict.
Sense of growing distance	DAILY TEMPERATURE READING	Speak up for the relationship.	DTR will help strengthen intimacy and develop the habit of confiding.	Set aside time daily. Show affection and be generous with appreciations.
Concern about another's action	CONFIDING A CONCERN	Identify the behavior, feeling, and request.	Partner listens with empathy to behavioral concern.	Confiding without blaming, judging or criticizing.
Becoming emotionally upset	EMPATHIC LISTENING	Make notes to yourself about your feelings.	Listen to understand; Ask your partner, "Is there more?"	Encourage full expression. Say, "Thank you for telling me!"

PAIRS TOOL KIT GUIDE

Become more familiar with the online version of the PAIRS Tool Kit at pairs.com/toolkits.com. Make a habit of reviewing the tools there regularly.

PROBLEM OR FEELING	SKILL TO USE	TO DO FOR YOURSELF	TO DO WITH YOUR PARTNER	NOTES
Upsetting reaction to partner's behavior	TALKING TIPS	Review Talking Tips stems for yourself first.	Partner listens with empathy for understanding.	Listener repeats back until meaning is clear. No arguing.
Wanting to feel cared about and loved	CARING BEHAVIORS LOVE BANK	Take care of you!	Add to Caring Behaviors list. Do some each day.	Regularly revisit actions that feel loving.
Feeling emotionally overwhelmed	EMPTY THE JUG	Seek comfort and understanding.	Partner listens with empathy for understanding.	Thank your partner for listening with goodwill. Show appreciation.
Attempting to resolve problems under stress	TIME-OUT TIP	Take some time apart, enjoy uplifting thoughts and/or activities.	Stop all talking immediately. State amount of time desired.	Resume talking to discuss and resolve the problems.
Wanting to develop new habits for relationship	RELATIONSHIP AGREEMENT	Think through each aspect of the agreement.	Cooperatively write down agreement and plan of support.	You are together on behalf of the relationship, not against each other.

PAIRS TOOL KIT GUIDE

Choose one or more of the online exercises at apps.pairs.com to reinforce and deepen your training experience.

PROBLEM OR FEELING	SKILL TO USE	TO DO FOR YOURSELF	TO DO WITH YOUR PARTNER	NOTES
Asking for a behavior change from partner	FAIR FIGHT FOR CHANGE	Know what behavior change you want and why.	Invite partner for a FFFC and prepare to negotiate outcome.	Stay with structure, on one subject, incorporate other helpful tools.
Feeling resentment towards partner	UNTANGLING LOVE KNOTS	Identify your underlying belief.	Clarify with partner with emphasis on what you can each do.	Reflect on what is true for partner rather than assumptions.
Who should decide; clarify the “we” of the relationship	POWERGRAM	Think through who should make the decision.	Use tools to discuss, clarify and negotiate with goodwill.	Incorporate other tools: Empathic Listening, Talking Tips, Fair Fight for Change.
Intense, upsetting feelings	EMOTIONAL ALLERGY	Reflect on why you’re so upset.	Confide in partner.	New understanding of feelings and reactions.
Tune up the relationship	PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE	Clarify thoughts and feelings about upsets.	Schedule time to review checklist.	Add steps to stay or be back on Pleasure side.

PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE
CHECKLIST EXERCISE TO PRACTICE
WITH YOUR PARTNER

Name:

Date:

Steps taken to Nurture our Relationship

Self

Partner

Added Steps to take

1

Daily Temperature Reading

☐

☐

2

Confiding

☐

☐

3

Love Bank/Caring Behaviors (specifics)

☐

☐

4

Use of Empathic Listening

☐

☐

5

Resist saying hurtful things

☐

☐

6

Fair Fight for Change - to solve problems

☐

☐

7

Respect for each other’s decision-making

☐

☐

8

Do the things I say I will do

☐

☐

9

Have fun, play, enjoy life

☐

☐

Your Notes & Reflections



PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK SURVEY

Workshop Date	Workshop Location	Name of Trainer 1	Name of Trainer 2

1. Please check your primary role/job (Please select only one).

☐ Administrator	☐ Firefighter	☐ Volunteer	☐ Police/Corrections
☐ Clergy/Pastoral	☐ Youth Worker	☐ Psychologist	☐ Military Branch
☐ Counselor	☐ Nurse	☐ Social Worker	☐ Chaplain/Assistant Military Branch
☐ Educator	☐ Physician	☐ Life Coach	☐ Other (Specify):

2. On a scale of 1 to 5, please write the rating number that best describes your response to the questions.

Rating
a) How would you rate PAIRS Essentials ? (1 = did not like at all... 5 = liked a lot)
b) How would you rate your PAIRS Essentials Trainer 1? (1 = did not like at all... 5 = liked a lot)
c) How would you rate your PAIRS Essentials Trainer 2? (1 = did not like at all... 5 = liked a lot)

3. Please place a check mark in the appropriate box.

a) Would you recommend PAIRS Essentials to others?	☐ YES	☐ NO
b) The skills I learned have practical use in my personal life.	☐ YES	☐ NO
c) The skills I learned have practical use in my work/community life.	☐ YES	☐ NO

4. Please check the number that describes your response.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
a) I now have skills to enrich my closest relationships.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b) I am now able to talk about my emotions with another person.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c) I feel I am a better listener; others will confide in me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d) I now understand how my own history impacts my reactions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e) I am better able to respond to upsetting emotions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f) I am better able to get through a relationship crisis.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g) I am now able to create and sustain a loving relationship.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h) I can be a good parent and positive relationship role model.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5. Please place a check mark in the appropriate box.

a) I attended at least eight hours of the PAIRS Essentials training.	☐ YES	☐ NO
b) Two (or more) trainers were present, supportive and helpful through the entire program.	☐ YES	☐ NO
c) I coached a Fair Fight for Change and also received coaching from another class member.	☐ YES	☐ NO

Please write any additional comments you may have about the PAIRS Essentials workshop or clarify any of your responses.

My Fatherhood Reflections

My Patterns & New Choices

My Fatherhood Commitments

Congratulations!

May your children experience your care in the ways you listen, show up, and keep learning.

CONGRATULATIONS!

May your lives be enhanced by appreciating who is here, what you have, and what can be.



