**HOW TO BE A SAFE PERSON**

**Creating Space for Others to Grow and Heal**

*“Let no unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up”* (Eph. 4:29, NIV)**.**

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| **SAFETY KILLERS** | **SAFETY BUILDERS** |
| **1. GOSSIP.** I vent (complain) about others when they are not present, or I listen to others’ venting without redirecting them. Gossip destroys safety because if you gossip *to* me, I can assume you gossip *about* me. | **1. TALK DIRECTLY TO THOSE I HAVE AN ISSUE WITH & REFUSE TO LISTEN TO GOSSIP.** Gossip usually takes the form of complaining and uses “he/she” messages focusing on what the other person did that I disapprove of. Healthy processing of issues with a third party uses “I” messages focusing on what I can do to respond in a healthy, Christlike way. |
| **2. DEFENSIVENESS.** When I am corrected or confronted, I defend myself, minimize my mistakes, or justify what I did or did not do. | **2. TEACHABLE SPIRIT.** I surrender my need to be right. When receiving feedback, I look for what may be true and helpful. If I don’t know whether a criticism is valid, I humbly pray for God’s perspective and may seek counsel from a trusted third party. I own my mistakes and am eager to make improvements. |
| **3. BLAME.** When you and I have a problem, I feel that our problem is mostly your fault. You should make the first move to solve it. | **3. “WORK ON ME FIRST.”** I look for how I have contributed to the problem and take responsibility for my part first, no matter how small. I know that the only person I can change is me. |
| **4. JUDGING MOTIVES.** I tell ugly stories (make negative assumptions) about other people’s motives. | **4. GRACE.** When others do hurtful things, I *assume the best* about their motives. I ask the humanizing question: “Why might a decent, well-meaning person do this?” I tell at least two grace stories that could account for the person’s words or actions. |
| **5. TAKING OFFENSE.** I am quick to feel slighted, disrespected, or rejected, even when the other person has not been disrespectful. | **5. “SEEK TO UNDERSTAND BEFORE SEEKING TO BE UNDERSTOOD.”** Most misunderstandings can be cleared up by listening with genuine curiosity. If I have a pattern of feeling disrespected when others have not been disrespectful, I will seek healing for the roots of my shame. |
| **6. CONTROL.** I try to get others to change how they think, feel, and act. | **6. “WE ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS OVER OTHERS.”** I commit to becoming free of the “deadly habits of control” including criticizing, complaining, nagging, threatening, and appeasing to manage others’ feelings. I learn to set healthy boundaries and let others take responsibility for their choices and emotions. |

**Restoring broken trust**

When we practice any of the trust-killing behaviors, others feel less safe with us. To create a greater sense of safety or restore broken trust, we need to:

1. Recognize our safety-killing behaviors.
2. Begin the process of replacing each safety-killing behavior with the corresponding safety-building behavior.
3. Make amends to those we have hurt by our safety-killing behaviors, except when to do so would harm them or others.

When we engage in safety-killing behaviors, we often are unaware of it. When we begin to become aware of what we have done, it is tempting to think that it is enough to replace those behaviors with safety-building behaviors. To completely restore trust, though, often requires the third step of making amends. This requires us to revisit those past times when we have engaged in blaming, defensiveness, judging, etc., and recognize how those behaviors hurt the other person. This will often require us to ask others to tell us how our actions hurt them and damaged trust, and to listen nondefensively.