

“Everyone’s Child”
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Introduction

Inside of each story lies an intertwined perspective of who we are becoming, what we want to become, and why we stand still. Growing up, things seemed so different. As a child, following a parents' directions was expected. It was respect shown or preparation for a heavy handed consequence. Parents got to know the teachers, your friend's parents, and the community you lived in. When outside, the neighbors were just as accountable and as strict as your parents, taking pride in having a hand in helping raise a child as the role of their own. The pain was relatable. There was no choice but to walk a path of understanding as each one child became everyone's child.

Communication has changed, yet I am constantly learning more about myself and others through this misguided communication of sorts. Accountability and discipline seem to be emphasized with criticism. Attitudes are growing more intense with expectations, while less respect is met at the end of each path. Critical thinking skills are more often questioned instead of prompted, and social media has created a misconceived ability to help its users find truth behind the information of someone or something other than their own reality. Adulthood overpowers mixed emotions of expectations and purpose. Written from the transformative perspective of your parents, their children, and the child who navigates today's world tomorrow; this book will help all of us discover understanding of what is important, while creating our own legacy. We are all in a race to the finish line, understood not by the journey that defines us, but instead by this very moment which has no moving parts.

None of us are lifeless. We just need a connection; a healthy perspective finding its way through the idea that each one of us is capable of finding a better place inside of ourselves. Embedded at the end of each chapter, a story, submerged behind the perspective provided before it.

Chapter 1: Eat With Me, but Don't Throw It at Me

I am trying to live in an emotional space where I tell myself that I will not get offended by anyone else. Judge me and critique me, but at the end of the day I will just keep telling myself that judging me is easy for you because you really don't want to know me. You will relay the gossip that you hear about me, but I know exactly where it's coming from. Instead of overreacting, I will continue to tell myself that no words offered my way will offend me. I may harden my emotions and perhaps at times, shut down all together. The old me would normally not react in such a quiet manner for a peaceful resolve, but I know that there is a healthier place I should live where I do not get offended, nor use that opportunity to offend you. It would be easy for me to give energy to pass judgement on things I have not gone through or people I do not know.

I understand that communicating means that I must be willing to open myself up to you in order to be vulnerable. I ask that if I am going to do this, you also allow yourself to be vulnerable. There have been many times that I have failed, but we both have weaknesses which us vulnerable. When you see the vulnerability in me, I ask that you reach into understanding me instead of constantly breaking me down. If you have mercy on me, I will conquer my judgement of you. I won't be offended by you and I promise never to seek judgement.

If we agree to disagree on things, neither of us will try to force our point. If you cannot do this, it will be hard for me to listen. I want to listen to your point of view, but at times it seems you never respect mine. By interrupting me when I am speaking, you are automatically shooting down my ideas. If you value my opinion and want me to change, trust that the transformation can take place over time. I want us to find mutual grounds to stand on, not just stand here while you continue to throw things at me.

Understanding Criticism

Criticism is inevitable and we will not avoid it. We are prideful and will become pessimistic when we are criticized. The only way to avoid criticism is to put ourselves in a shell and ignore growth. Many times we will develop a shell and become bitter when someone criticizes us. Self-pity and self-anger will hold us in the same place, but taking a chance will open opportunities. Don't be devastated by criticism. Have you ever felt like the person criticizing you was doing so because they were jealous, insecure, wanted to make you sweat the small stuff? Could they actually be criticizing us because they want to bring out the best in us? Perhaps it's not the actual critique, but the refusal on our part to accept the criticism to gain valuable insight towards our actions. How can we not retaliate and cope with criticism while being positively optimistic? Constructive criticism is what brings direction and an action plan together. It is this type of criticism that brings respect and trust between people. If we remain constructive in our criticism, positive results will most likely occur. Our tone will play a big part in our constructive criticism. When we are aggressive with our constructive criticism, it will be hard for the other person to receive it openly without being defensive.

If our tone is aggressive, consider that we may not even listen to what others have to say. If we do not approach constructive criticism with a positive tone, people may not want to work with us, or, because they will feel everything they do will be judged negatively. Everyone listens differently even with constructive criticism. It is important to feed positive outcomes into negative conversations. Not all criticism we receive is constructive.

If we are receiving deconstructive criticism, consider who the person is. Our first thought is that the other person is trying to hurt us. They have created a tense situation by trying to hurt our self-esteem or make us feel guilty. Nothing we do seems to be

right. This has pushed us into a resentful position, and our first reaction is to shut down. Does this person giving deconstructive criticism have a hidden agenda? Don't be afraid to let them talk and express their concern while looking deeper into their agenda. Whether constructive or deconstructive criticism, if we learn not to take it personal, we will always come out on top. The hardest thing to do right now when someone's tone is aggressive with us is to remove our feelings from the situation. Yes, they may be out of line, but we have the power to keep the conversation in check. When we don't react with emotions, the other person is put in a tough position. They can either back down and away, or they can continue to push us. By managing our emotions, we will actually be able to manage our stress and they won't be able to push very far. Now that we understand what type of criticism may be coming our way, we can address it with communication.

"Being understood and loved means that you have to add an ounce of accountability, a teaspoon of acceptance, all without a gallon of expectation.

Activity 1: Deal With It

The next time you are being criticized, understand what you are being told and decide if there is truth behind the criticism. If there is truth behind it, prepare to address it, but if it is deconstructive criticism, stand there and absorb it with a smile. Either way, thank the person for their criticism. Remove your feelings from the criticism and focus on the critique itself. How did you handle the criticism? Did you throw up defensive walls because you didn't want to hear what was said? Are you going to make excuses? Are you going to head towards an action plan, and if so; how?

Activity 2: Create Your Mechanisms

In this activity, you are going to choose one mechanism and focus your attention the whole day using that responsive mechanism. Choose 1 mechanism including: 1) Resisting the temptation to shut down or fight back; or 2) Practicing detachment. Whichever mechanism you choose, you should use that same mechanism as your response in every criticism whether someone criticizes you while you are driving, at work, at home, or on the phone.

Please note that you will learn all about how to verbally and non-verbally communicate effectively in the next 3 chapters. After reading those chapters, challenge yourself you revisit this activity and apply the different methods of communication to express shut down, fighting back, or committing yourself to detachment.

Maggie's Story

Maggie, a late 40's single mom, raising an 11th grade daughter, was starting a fresh new day. The weekend was busy, but Maggie was ready for a smooth start from a busy weekend. The year had been tough leading up to this point with a very messy divorce three years earlier and the loss of her parents in an automobile accident that same year. Maggie's daughter, Sara, had changed emotionally since the divorce. Sara before was an upbeat student-athlete, giving her time to help at the local community shelter and with the youth group in their church; but since the divorce, Sara wanted nothing to do with her church and helping others. Maggie didn't push Sara to get involved as she herself stopped doing many of the community activities. Sara had always questioned why her dad had left both she and her mother to fend for themselves. With no communication from her father, Sara felt as though she wasn't loved. Most of her time was spent in her room with the door closed. In the previous months, Maggie's days had revolved around her daughters' extracurricular activities, but now she felt as though she was losing her daughter.

Maggie's job as an administrative assistant for a top advertising company in Denver was stressful; but Maggie felt she had no other options. She needed the money, and knew that it was the only thing keeping both she and Sara afloat. By now Maggie was living a repetitive schedule where she didn't want to deal with many of her co-workers. She knew that her boss, George McCathy, would always have something negative to say to her at work. Maggie always felt that her boss had no respect for what she did, but in the back of her mind, she knew that her value to the company was priceless. As Maggie entered the 35 story building, she felt uneasy about the day. She had not slept well the night before and her head was throbbing. As Maggie entered the lobby of the building, she had hoped that her boss would be late to his office so that she would have some down time to decompress before the stressful week. As she waited for the elevator doors to open, all she could think about was how messy the house looked when she walked out the door this morning. The weekend had flown by and neither Maggie nor Sara did any cleaning.

As the elevator doors opened, Maggie stepped in between a crowd of people, already prepared to head up to their offices. Doors closing, a hand reached in to catch the doors. It was Maggie's boss. As he entered the elevator, he found an open spot next to Maggie. Without a hello, a slight glance and frown sent her way, the two of them stood in a small space that felt like a sea of people. Maggie wondered if her boss would even acknowledge her. Mr. McCathy was a mild mannered, mid 50's man who always seemed to be stressed. He had been divorced two times and had one child named Noah. As the two of them stood in the elevator, M. McCathy stood still with his head buried in his phone. Up 24 floors and not one motion of eye contact made with her boss; Maggie began fuming. Common decency should prevail, she thought. As the doors opened, Maggie aggressively

brushed past her boss on the 24th floor and headed towards their office.

As she entered and sat at her cubicle to begin her day, Maggie couldn't help but think about all of the things that needed to be done when she got back home. "Maggie", Mr. McCathy, the same man who had paid her no attention in the elevator. "Coming sir", she responded as she got up and briskly walked towards his office. As Maggie entered her bosses' office, she noticed the papers sprawled all over his desk. They were the same papers she had just organized the week prior with stickie notes, paper clips, and neatly placed into folders. "Why isn't this paperwork organized correctly? Don't you know how to organize and file all our projects," shouted Mr. McCathy. Before Maggie could even respond, her boss ran his arm across the table and brushed all of the papers onto the floor. "This is unacceptable. The projects are not filed correctly." Maggie, usually a calm woman, was now boiling. She knew that she had filed all of the projects correctly last week, but her boss mixed all of the files together on his desk. As she kneeled down to pick up the papers, Maggie mumbled, "if only you weren't such a jerk, I wouldn't have to clean up your mess every time." "What did you say", asked Mr. McCathy. "Nothing", Maggie responded as she stood up with the papers and carried them back to her desk.

As the day progressed, Maggie sorted through and organized the project files, just as she had done before. Though, tired, Maggie was determined to prove her boss wrong by organizing the files even better. It was almost 3pm and the day was winding down. As Maggie sat on the phone, speaking with a client, her boss came out of his office. "Maggie, these project files should have pink sticky notes instead of yellow sticky notes. You can't remember that I like pink sticky notes on the top left of the paper, not the top right? And when you use the copy machine, please make sure that you hit clear after you make copies. When I went to make copies, I had to figure out that the cue was not cleared. When you

enter the records into the computer, don't put them in the office folder. I didn't tell you that, but its common sense." Maggie had enough. She couldn't believe that her boss was speaking to her like this with such deconstructive criticism while she was on the phone with their client.

"Do we need to continue this conversation later", asked the voice on the other end of the phone. "Absolutely not", responded Maggie. "We cherish your business and I will get you the contract this afternoon". As Maggie hung up the phone, all she could think about was how rude her boss was while she was on the phone. Maggie was completing a big deal for Mr. McCathy and the company; yet he didn't think twice to interrupt her conversation while berating her. Maggie was ready to quit, but as a single mother and her daughter Sara going through so many things, she knew that leaving the company was not an option right now. Maggie had always felt a stronger calling where she was respected for her hard work at a new employer. She knew that it would be a matter of time before she would lose it as the administrative assistant at her current job; would scream at Mr. McCathy, and storm out of that office building for good. Maggie told herself that something needed to change, and that change would need to be this week.

It was nearing 3:30pm and Maggie began packing her bag to head home at 4pm. Frustrated with how the day had gone up to this point, Maggie picked up the phone and called Sara's cell phone to check on her. After 5 rings, the phone went to voicemail. Maggie, becoming annoyed, called again, and again; 5 rings and straight to voicemail. Maggie slammed the phone down and picked it back up, this time dialing the home number. As the phone rang, all Maggie could think about was how insensitive her boss had treated her all day and how she deserved so much more respect than the little bit she had been given at work.

Mr. McCathy reemerged from his office and asked Maggie to come see him. “Maggie, you are doing an excellent job with keeping this office running smoothly. I spoke to you very inappropriately earlier and I apologize.” As Maggie tried to analyze what she just heard, she replied, “Mr. McCathy, I enjoy working for this company and you are truly keeping us moving in the right direction”. With a pat on Mr. McCathy’s back, Maggie was ready to head home and attack her situation with Sara.

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Chapter 2: Between You And I

The question isn't whether I communicate; it is whether you listen. I know that we have different ways of communicating. My parents communicated with me differently; and their parents communicated differently with them. Children communicate differently than adults, and adults communicate differently with one another. All I ask is that you listen when I communicate with you. I try to communicate my feelings with you most of the time and for some reason we end up not understanding each other. I try to explain my situation but I can tell you just don't understand my perspective. I feel like I make myself clear, but something makes me feel like we are not connecting in our conversations. I feel at times that you would rather hear what I don't say instead of what I do say. Between you and me, we both have a lot of work to do communicating with one another.

When you raise your voice, it doesn't help how we communicate with each other. That causes me to shut down, and I know that it doesn't help either one of us. When I do not speak my thoughts or intentions, it's not because I am trying to withhold anything; it's because I don't feel we are connecting on the same page with our communication. It feels like you are going to dismiss what I have to say because you don't take me seriously. My actions end up speaking on my behalf which is a misrepresentation of what I truly want to say. Between you and me, the solution to our communication problems is unclear; but I do know that I am tired of holding my feelings inside. We are just in different places, in different seasons in our lives.

Progressive Verbal Communication Methods

Our thoughts are sometimes holding us back from communicating correctly. We wanted to say one particular thing to someone; a thought or even a frustration that ended up coming out completely wrong. Something held us back; possibly the thought of the repercussions of what we might say. What if we were able to attach progressive verbal communication methods to our conversations so that we felt comfortable communicating any scenario; causing more meaningful conversations without having to always communicate in a stance and defend position.

The first progressive verbal communication method to implement is influential love. This method allows us to positively change how we view our communication from a stance and defend, to a cause and effect. Communicating love directly to our friends, our family, and even our enemies will create an entrusted experience for everyone because when disagreements occur, we will be more cognitive in our response. Communicating to the other person with continuous love and kindness allows the other person to hear respect in our conversation. This understanding allows us to be heard clearly through our perspective without the other person feeling defensive.

The second progressive verbal communication method to use is productive respect. For some, it is important to have the first word all the time; while for others, having the last word is necessary. Respect is so much more than earning (being heard); it is how we provide it throughout the conversation. We shouldn't be afraid to listen first; but this means turning off our negative senses of detachment and turning on our positive senses of perspective. Provide a clear path to what the other person is saying and find a way to listen all the way through. End with respecting the other person's opinion while finding a way back to the progressive verbal communication method of love. Sometimes finding our way back to love after respect in a

conversation is the healthiest thing for the conversation. This helps everyone understand that the conversation has different points of view and that both sides see value in the others point. However, when respect cannot find its way back to love, it is important to use the third progressive communication method.

The third and final progressive verbal communication method to implement is forgiveness. When we communicate forgiveness, we are opening the idea that although in disagreement, we will find a balance of where the conversation ended, and where the other person's perspectives may be headed. We begin to understand that we don't see things the same as someone else, but within the method of communicating forgiveness, and create balance in that moment. While forgiveness can be the hardest of the three methods to demonstrate, it is the most dynamic. It shows a combination of love and respect. Forgiveness within communication raises awareness of both our personal internal views and external output reflections. Using this verbal communication method prevents us from verbally attacking the conversation.

Let's take a step back for a moment and think about how many times a conversation was not clear. Should we have placed more emphasis on getting our response in or using a progressive verbal communication method to help with both the timing and direction of the conversation? When we need to be candid with someone, or a problem needs direct communication, no matter how badly it hurts their feelings, we feel obligated to respond. It is this type of conversation which requires all 3 progressive verbal communication methods; but in order to use these methods, we have to learn how to mirror the conversation without directing interpretation or assumptions.

If we commit to waiting until the other person is finished speaking, and then mirror what they said back to them by starting with something like, "so what I hear you saying is ...", or "are you

saying”, we will be able to apply the necessary progressive verbal communication methods. Remember, communication is the tool used to redirect the journey. There is an extrinsic direction we must all take in order to reach our internal destination. While many of our thoughts are driven by interpretation and assumptions, leaning towards the most positive outcome is what defines our purpose in how we communicate. The mild dangers here are that many times there is no solid evidence to our interpretation or assumption. It may truly take a lifetime to understand how to progressively verbally communicate positive outcomes which align our interpretations and assumptions, but integrating these three progressive methods of communication with our approach of first impression will bring us a lot closer.

First Impressions & Para-Verbal Cues

In order to change the direction of your communication, we must take a look at our first impressions. Some would say that being standoffish can be taken as cold, while making too much eye contact can be considered threatening. How do we find a common ground where neither of these things reflect their non-verbal meaning? The answer is quite simple; implement para-verbal cues before beginning the progressive verbal communication methods of love, respect, and forgiveness. This cue incorporates body language, voice pitch, and talking speed. Non-verbal cues create an introduction to how the other person receives the conversation. This is generally conveyed through facial expressions, body posture, and hand gestures. “I love this”, emphasized by your body language; “I respect you”, emphasized by the tone of your voice; or “I forgive you”, emphasized by hand gestures. The destination of each conversation is continually changing because we are introducing the para-verbal cues, then steering the progressive verbal communication methods.

Expressing our needs, wants, and concerns is important when reaching those unavoidable problems that just need to be

addressed. Whether sitting with a child, discussing with a spouse, or in a heated discussion, it is important to think about the other persons “efficiency timing”. This is the timing when we look deeper at the pattern of the person’s emotions. By understanding the other person’s efficiency timing, we can actually avoid confrontations and have meaningful conversations. This takes a lot of patience as we may be used to speaking our words wherever we feel necessary. While understanding response and efficiency timing is important, how we utilize our progressive verbal communication methods is highly important.

1-1-2 Communication Rule

When it is difficult to find positive words in a negative space, we may need to apply the practice of the 1-1-2 rule. This communication involves a para-verbal introductory cue; followed by (one) positive progressive verbal communication method; followed by another para-verbal introductory cue; followed by the (one) negative problem; followed by (two) positive progressive verbal communication methods. This system flows very easily into a general conversation. Let’s say we are mad at our daughter because her room is a complete mess and we are tired of telling her over and over again to clean her room. Our para-verbal approach with her may include a smile and giving her a hug; then backing her up in a safe space where you are close enough but she has room if she wants to get in her stance and defend position. Our first positive progressive verbal communication method may be love. For example, “Emma I love you so much and you always make me smile”. The negative infraction might say, “But right now I am so frustrated with how your room looks”. We should stop there and find another para-verbal cue. Maybe we softened the tone during our negative infraction; or our body motion shifted to a sulk showing that we feel her pain of disappointment. Whatever is done, we don’t want to keep adding on to the negative infraction with other negatives (i.e. with stuff everywhere, your bed never made, your closet is a mess, etc.).

Now follow with a positive progressive verbal communication. Our method this time may be respect. For example, "I have so much respect for you because it is normally clean"; or "I respect the fact that you have so many other things going on". Finally, use the third progressive verbal communication. In this instance, we may use forgiveness. For example, "If you clean your room now and can remember to keep it clean without me asking, I promise to stop nagging you."

"Love, respect, and forgiveness are only a word until you make a conscious effort to communicate dynamic change through your actions."

Activity 1: Progressive Verbal Communication

As human beings, we always seem to be on the go. For 30 minutes, take some time with someone to look at them, without any distractions, and practice progressive verbal communication. This means find something positive in your communication as it relates to something about the other person. Make sure it includes the word love (i.e. I love how you take the initiative to stay on top of things), respect (i.e. I respect how you reminded me not to text and drive), and forgive (i.e. I hope that you can forgive me for yelling the other day when I got upset with you). Practice this activity for a full 30 minutes. This means have a lengthy conversation using each progressive verbal communication method.

"Random moments of your communication today can shape your whole life tomorrow."

Activity 2: The 1-1-2 Communication Rule

Pick something that you have always had to bring up and really frustrates you. Figure out your 2 para-verbal cues, how to address the negative point, and your 3 best progressive verbal communication methods. Pick a time to sit down face to face during the other persons "efficiency timing". This activity cannot be done via text or over the phone call. Try to implement all of your 1-1-2 communication along with the para-verbal cues, before the other person interjects. When you are finished, look them directly in the eye and do not say anything. Keep in mind that the way you put the other person in a stance-defend position is to make a comment like, "do you understand". Do not pry for a response. If nothing is said at the end, give them another para-verbal cue.

Sara's Story

Sara had just walked into the house from school when the phone rang. It was her mom, Maggie. "Sara, did you clean up the downstairs living room like I asked you to?" Yes mom, Sara replied with a small attitude. "Well, I just got an email from your teacher saying that your science project was incomplete. I am so tired of this Sara." said Sara's mom. Sara huffed with a stern sigh, and hung up the phone abruptly on her mom. Later on that evening, when Sara's mom got home, Sara was surprised to find out that her mom didn't want to talk about her failures. Instead, the two sat down for dinner and ate quietly. Sara did her best not to make eye contact with her mom as she thought about their last conversation. She wondered why her mom wouldn't say anything about her hanging up the phone.

For the longest time, Sara felt as though nothing she did was good enough. As they sat quietly at the table, Sara began to ponder the idea that her mom really just didn't care anymore about her daughter. Communicating any problems from this point moving

forward seemed irrelevant towards their relationship. The next day at school, Sara went and spoke with her science teacher about her grades and together they came to a mutual agreement that if Sara could complete her project then she would get 80% of the credit. Sara agreed and spent the rest of the day working on her unfinished science projects. Still steaming from her mom's attitude the day before, Sara decided not to tell her mom anything.

As the week came to an end, Sara's mom mentioned to her that they were going to a mother & daughter event. Mom, I have plans this weekend with my friends. Well you are going to have to cancel those plans, replied Sara's mom with a stern voice. Now Sara was fuming. She stormed off to her room and slammed the door. Sara retreated to her bed and began to sob uncontrollably. Why do I have to live here with her; why does she make my life so miserable? Tears continued to stream down Sara's face. After about 25 minutes of crying, Sara fell asleep. When she woke up, she went downstairs to get something to drink. As she got to the bottom of the stairs, Sara could not help but notice that there was someone else in the living room talking with her mom. Sara peaked around the corner but could not see who was talking to her mom without being seen; so she sat on the stairs and listened.

I love my daughter so much. I don't know why she treats me as badly. Sara doesn't respect me. Where am I going wrong? As the room fell silent, a voice replied, Sara needs you just as much as you need her. You are both transitioning through 3 dynamic levels of communication. Let her know that you applaud her efforts and that you see she is giving her all. Sara had heard that voice before; but where? As Sara sat there and continued to listen, she realized she began to think about her mom and how hard her mom wanted to be a better parent. Sara went back up to her room and closed her door. For the entire day, Sara had no interaction with her mom; and as day turned to night, they occasionally passed by each other. While Sara's mom said hello, Sara,

stubborn in anger, walked right past her mom without acknowledging her.

The next morning, Sara was awakened by the shaking of her moms' hands on her shoulders. Sara, get up, it's time to go, replied her mom. I don't want to go replied Sara. Get up and get dressed Sara, we are going. Sara continue to sulk as she climbed in the car with her mother. What seemed like the longest car ride only turned out to be a 10 minute ride to the local community center. As they got out of the car, Sara's mom walked ahead and opened the door to the building. Sara followed behind, just knowing that she was going to have a miserable time. As the two entered the building, Sara could not help but notice all of her friends and their parents there. Sara's face began to beam with joy even though she had no clue what was happening. Sara's friends ran over to her and gave her a big hug. Your mom is so cool, replied one girl. I cannot believe your mom did all of this for you considering the circumstances, replied another friend. Sara nodded in agreement with a hint of confusion. I know right, she said. .

Sara was now dumbfounded as she looked around her friends, through the crowd, to try and locate her mom. What is all of this, Sara asked a friend. You don't know, replied the friend. Your mom organized all of this for you because she knew that next year was not guaranteed. Huh, what are you talking about, asked Sara? Her friends stood there, stunned. Sara, you aren't funny. Your mom already told our parents, so you don't have to pretend. Sara was still confused by what was being said. Sara stormed off looking for her mom. As she made her way through the crowd, she began to hear the voice she heard at the house. It was her church pastor. Sara stopped and tugged on the pastors' shirt. Were you at my house yesterday, asked Sara? Yes I was said the pastor. Why, asked Sara. The pastor looking heartbroken told Sara that she would have to ask her mom. Sara walked briskly looking for her mother. Sitting on the bench with some of the

other parents, Sara walked up to her mom and asked if she could speak with her. Sure, said Sara's mom. They found a quiet area in the building and began to talk.

What's going on mom, asked Sara. Her mom began to weep. Sara, I have had cancer for the last 5 months, and they said that it is terminal. I only have another couple of months to live. Sara's face dropped with disbelief as she began crying hysterically. Don't cry Sara, we are here now. I know mom, but if I would have known, I would not have said all of those mean things to you. I would have communicated with you. I would not have treated you the way I have been. Her mom interjected; but Sara, why is it only now that we communicate when things are at their worst. I have failed you because I didn't communicate with you when things were good. We are both at fault. They both began sobbing as they held each other tight.

As the days passed, Sara became a new person and communicated in depth with her mom. As the months went on their communication grew. And as the months turned to years, their communication became inseparable. As Sara went on to college, she called her mom every day. And after college, Sara's mom, Maggie, had the opportunity to witness her daughter get married and give birth to a beautiful baby boy. Sara's mom was now a grandmother. Over the next 20 years, Sara and her mother would talk about everything, would spend invaluable moments with the little one, explaining to her the importance of communication and love. Sara was blessed with 20 wonderful before her mom's passing of cancer. And to this day, Sara learned to communicate every day, every moment, as if tomorrow is never guaranteed.

Chapter 3: Who's To Blame?

Now that I have established that I do not communicate, it's obvious that someone is to blame. I know that I am capable of hearing you, but now there are so many other things on my mind and I really don't have the energy or time to listen anymore. I am not angry, but I know we don't communicate well and my opinions are different than yours.

There are clear reasons why I don't hear you. I spend too much time in a space that we both agree, you just don't understand. I have tried to use the progressive verbal communication methods, but things are still being miscommunicated with no respect finding a resolve. I have been automatically putting up my defensive mechanism to protect myself because it feels like you are verbally beating me down. You don't even consider my point of view or respect my opinions.

I know that I state my expectations clearly. I feel like I have earned respect and no longer need to go out of my way to prove my conversation. Every day I text my friends and get on social media to connect photos and verbiage to communicate. I even email to respond to things or explain myself. I am doing everything in my power to communicate but the thought of not having to hear your voice means when I text or email, we don't have to disagree and get in an argument. My feelings get to move at their own pace without feeling pressure from our verbal conversation. It's easier for me to text you; that way if you or I get upset, we don't have to hurt each other's feelings. You keep telling me that I don't care, but I express emoji's such as a hug via brackets, and a frown with an upside down face in my text messages and emails.

Mindfulness – Hearing, Listening, & Breathing

Perhaps something earlier just hit home and we are beginning to understand that changing our thinking of how we communicate will change our actions. Did you know that practicing mindfulness has a tremendous positive effect on who's to blame? The question is not who's to blame, but instead who understands how to listen the best. Along this exploration of self, we may find the energy to redefine ourselves by creating balance, support, and openness needed for inner personal growth.

Our easiest skill is hearing someone because we don't have to focus on the person speaking in order to truly hear bits and pieces of what is being said. By not making eye contact, we effectively have the ability to tune out whatever we want to. Our ears are observational tools, facing the same direction on our head for the very purpose of listening and not just hearing. Our ears align to listen where our eyes (also observational tools) align.

In order for us to listen, consider the perspective that being the last to speak can also be an incredible observation tool. Letting someone finish what they have to say gives us the ability to fully process what is being said, allows us to make a formative analysis of the content, and gives us time to absorb ways to transform the way that we can progressively communicate verbal love, respect, or forgiveness. Along these lines is our awareness that hearing instead of listening can cause us to shut down socially and emotionally. When this happens, we may find that one of the best tools to combat these shut down mechanisms is the art of breathing.

Breathing is more than just an action. It can help keep us calm and focused in a moment where frustration is bound to set in. Many times the interpretation of how we reach our destination is based on how we breathe and the time in between each breath. A great conversational example is to ask ourselves, do we have the ability

to breathe internally (and quietly) when we don't agree with someone; or do you instantaneously huff? Letting our actions speak louder than our words means that we live in the "an" action, and not the "i" idea. Breathing through tough conversations doesn't mean that we have to see the good in everything and everyone, but it does mean that we need to listen, and breathe the idea without escalating verbally by breathing the action. When we don't breathe properly during and after listening, we allow ourselves to build frustration in our response, and possibly our tone. This eventually causes us to build a stance and defend position where we don't want to listen to anything, holding our emotions hostage. Once this happens, we have a high risk to miscommunicate what we truly want to say. Understand that a good fight comes from listening all the way through, breathing, using para-verbal cues, and applying the progressive verbal communication methods of love, respect, and forgiveness.

So who's to blame if we continue to disconnect from listening; climb into a negative non-verbal social cue, and get upset? Ultimately both are to blame if neither of us applied the para-verbal cues and progressive verbal communication methods in our conversation. Remember, in our text messages, emails, social media, and even computer gaming, we are hiding all of these socio-emotional skills. We do not have to identify with anything or anyone in particular, and if we do, we do not have to place emotion into our content. Just maybe a phone call will not work. Try communicating face to face, where we can bring forward a stronger platform of discussion.

"Practicing mindfulness helps you breathe; how you breathe helps you understand why we are listening, and why you are listening helps you understand what you hear. "

Activity 1: Self-Invest Through Action

Are you aware that there are common identifiers which causes you to lose self-investment through action? At some point this week, self-invest through action and do not text that someone in your life that makes you happy. Call them and set aside at least half an hour to get together with them to have a discussion. First try having a 5 minute discussion, only via text, while sitting next to each other. Don't ramble, because you would not ramble in a text message. Don't be physically emotional, because your words in a text are not physically emotional. Do not exhibit body language or eye contact during your texting experience back and forth. Instead of laughing with them, just say Lol. Remain conscious of how your conversation shifted. Use this as an experiment to see if there is a difference in how you communicated in the 5 minutes of texting verses the remaining time you spent together.

Once you have completed this activity with someone that you enjoy being around, try the same experiment with someone that you do not enjoy being around.

Activity 2: Change Your Thinking

As adults and kids, we all have a tendency to hear without truly listening to what is being said to us. We are quick to react instead of breathing and gaining clarity in our responses. Think of a similar situation you have had where you heard one thing, when in fact something else was being said to you. Did you mirror and discuss it with them or just assume that you listened and heard them correctly? If not, in your next discussion, practice mirroring the discussion. The next phase is to have a discussion with a family member you feel hears you, but never listens. Remember to use the model of communication from chapter 1 to point out ways that you are going to become more adherent to listening to one another, breathing through the response phases; reflecting on

compromises, and building trust in your communication. Try to do this with para-verbal cues, and a mindfulness towards the activity.

Matthew's Story

"Matthew, did you take out the trash?" asked Sara, Matthews's mom, as she yelled upstairs to her son who was sitting on his bed playing computer games. It was Saturday morning, 8:00a.m., the sun was out, and the birds were chirping. Sara, a lawyer, decided to make the most of her weekend and get some house work done while her husband was at an early Saturday meeting. Yes ma'am, replied Matthew. Minutes later, a banging sound was heard on Matthews's door. Come in, replied Matthew. It was his mom with a strong scowl on her face. "Why didn't you do what I asked you to do?" As Matthew turned and saw the scowl on his moms face, he went straight into defensive mode. "I heard you yelling upstairs. You asked me if I could take the trash out and I said yes. You didn't say do it right this minute. I was going to do it in a few minutes, geesh". Matthews's aggressive voice resonated throughout the house. "What did you just say", shouted Sara with a large vibrating voice. "Don't you ever geesh, me. I will take everything in this room and you can sit in an empty room." As Matthew sat there and listened, all he could think about was why she was coming down on him so hard. He knew his mom was always so up and down with her emotions.

As Sara walked off, she listened for any snide remarks from Matthew as she just knew he would have something smart to say. Matthew began mumbling things under his breath, still audible, but not clear. This warranted every reason for Sara to go back into his room and go off. As she turned and reached for the door, ready to scream, she bumped into Matthew who was heading out. "Where are you going", Sara asked. I am going to empty the garbage replied Matthew. Well, I don't appreciate you talking about me behind my back Matthew, and if you have something to

say, say it to my face.” Mom, what are you talking about, replied Matthew as he turned down his headphones. I put my headphones on and started singing music while I got my shoes on to go downstairs and take the trash out.” Matthew continued walking, shaking his head in disbelief as to such a big misunderstanding. Matthews’s communication with his mother had always seemed to be a big misunderstanding. The only time either of them really talked was when they had criticism or judgement. Not hearing one word started another downhill spiral of communication. After taking out the trash, Matthew went right back to his room and laid on his bed.

After a few minutes, there was a knock on his door. Come in mom”, said Matthew in a much softer demeanor than earlier. As Sara entered the room, she did so with a grin on her face. “What did I do now”, replied Matthew. “Nothing”, said Sara as she took a seat on the edge of the bed. “You know I love you, but when I asked you if you had taken the trash out, you said yes. But then when I looked at the trash, it was still sitting there”. Matthew sat there with a confused look on his face. “Mom, you asked me if I could take the trash out, not if I did”, replied Matthew. Sara took a second to think about what her son had just said. Without an ounce of hesitation, she leaned forward and hugged Matthew, seemingly until he was out of breath. With a sigh of relief, Sara took a deep breath and then explained where there was miscommunication. “Matthew, you heard me say, can you take the trash out; but what I said was did you take the trash out”. Matthew sat up and turned off the music. Matthew rose from his bed to fully embrace his mom. “I’m sorry for not listening to you. I thought I heard you”, said Matthew.

“I never knew that you were actually singing a song, but in a defensive moment I anticipated that you had something smart to say back to me”, Sara said with a soft tone of expression. “I am so sorry son for getting upset”, said Sara. The two of them realized they were in the wrong. As Sara got up from Matthews bed to

leave the room, she turned and with a grin on her face replied, your dad is home and wants to talk to you. Matthew always felt that his parents took sides, so he just knew that since mom had been so tough on him, that dad was about to give him good news. As Matthew walked downstairs, his father was just entering the house. "Hey dad", replied Matthew with a huge smile. Matthew's father was not smiling. "Matthew, I got an email today from your math teacher saying that you have three missed homework assignments and currently have an F in the class", Matthews's dad had already had a long day and now had to bring this news home. "Matthew, you are grounded for your missed school assignments", replied his father. Matthew couldn't believe it. He had just worked out miscommunication with his mom, but he was still getting in trouble. "You are grounded for the weekend Matthew", replied his father. "For what? I will make it up and turn it in for a grade.", replied Matthew. "For that bad attitude and smart mouth", replied Matthews' father as he placed his briefcase down and headed upstairs. As Matthew stood there, he couldn't help but think that his dad was being unfair to him. Matthew knew he was struggling in math and had asked his math teacher, Mr. Devin, if he could tutor him that next Tuesday. Although Matthew wanted to tell his dad and mom that, he instead shut down and expressed nothing.

Matthew always took sides and tried to pit his parents against one another. But dad was home and it just seemed as though both parents were unleashing on him. Matthew sulked as he knew that this weekend was a big party and he was going to have to tell his girlfriend Christina that he couldn't go. He figured he better let her know now not to go to the party since he was not going to be there and that she should just stay home and they text all weekend.

Chapter 4: An Empty Glass of Trust

Refilling this broken glass of my soul is hard, especially when my trust in you has been leaking from the side. There is a disconnected balance of hope that floats between the possibility of the unknown and its emotions. I have worked hard to keep the glass filled. I always felt I was able to trust you, but the more I travel this journey in my life, the more I began to question if my trust has been gained. For me to trust someone who doesn't trust me; a quarter of this glass becomes emptied. How do I trust you when I can't see the trust in our communication? Another quarter of my glass becomes emptied. I am at that point where I even ask myself if you deserve my trust. There is only half-truth left to fill the broken glass of my soul. Where do we go from here? You have broken my trust, but you are asking me to trust the new you; the better you.

You tell me to have faith in my ability to judge; secure my feelings, but also honor my promises to you. I am beginning to realize that I need to be able to say "No" without being questioned every time. When I say "no", that does not mean there is always a problem; it just means that I cannot commit at that exact moment. I know that when I tell you "yes", I expect it will usually heal a "no". I need to start standing true to my own values, not feeling pressured to trust you or even myself.

My feelings have a lot to do with my values. I thought I had a clear sense of my direction, but lately I have been experiencing hesitation. This hesitation I am having causes uncertainty, doubt, and big questions while you are asking me to make important decisions. Perhaps this is what causes me to shut down and not communicate with you. There are certain things that are not as important to me; and while you can't accept that this is a value I cherish, I try not to beat myself down, developing low self-esteem, hoping to be able to cope while not being accepted. I keep telling myself that we are capable of achieving something greater, with a

purpose; but lately I question myself. I am stuck looking at a broken glass, only half filled. I am learning quickly that doubt is pushing me further out of my comfort space. I am tired of you expecting me to be more mature than the learning experience. I am constantly being given lectures on trust; trust over acceptance, and trust over doubt. I am constantly being challenged to trust, but haven't been given a playbook. You are challenging me to trust you, but you haven't even taught me the definition.

The truth is, there are areas I know that I can't trust you and myself, but lately it's been easier to focus on the next disappointment. While I work on the process of communicating forgiveness, something tells me another let down is right around the corner.

3 P's To Fill a Broken Glass

There are 3 P's used to rebuild a glass and fill it with trust. The first of the 3 P's is positivity. Positivity will help us gain internal trust as well as trust from others while impacting perceived trust. This begins with trusting that we are creating positive results for others and for ourselves. When only trusting ourselves, we place our positivity and reality into an inflated sense of our own importance; also identified as a narcissistic personality. Be mindful that we should never spend more time trusting negative thoughts such as bad outcomes in others, the need to be defensive, or being verbally abusive in a situation. Creating such a negative energy will only crack the glass more and trust will be very difficult to repair. Positivity can help change two or more of our outcomes at the same time, making our relationship between two elements become constant. Such elements include hope, resiliency, optimism, and efficacy.

One of the biggest fears in our positivity is our willingness to be vulnerable based on another person's behavior. Yes, we are taking a chance by using positivity to rebuild trust, but we are also taking a chance in so many other areas of your life. The

easiest thing to do is to shut down and be negative, but the more time we spend there, the easier it is to shut down, overthink, and not communicate. The phrase “speak it into existence” is so relevant in the topic of trust. The same person may disappoint us more than once. Being positive in that scenario is the only thing that can rebuild trust; that a different outcome can occur.

The second of the 3 P’s is peace. Peace creates a safe space for dialogue; a respectful relationship and is usually important to find when we cannot trust yourself. It is important that we trust peace will give us a better outcome than the fight. Peace is an acquired information that outweighs the dissonant beliefs and usually occurs best through meditation. It is important that we push a peaceful energy from our mind, through our heart, towards our actions. This begins with looking within the affirmation that we can trust ourselves and love ourselves no matter what. Things are going to happen which rattle our peace. Remember that peacefulness lends a hand to positivity which can often be expressed through our words.

Finally, the third of the 3 P’s is placement. Trust that we will remain in the right mental space. This means live life and go to sleep with a peaceful purpose. Trust that our placement is not triggering our brain to overload with negative thinking. Wrap our head around our own thoughts for a moment, and ask ourselves if confusion has ever guided our trust. Did it weaken our stance for better communication? The calm lies within how we perceive trust. If we sit in a place of calm, answers are usually shown over time. For some, trust implies not knowing what is around the next corner; while for others aligning trust and faith make each day easier to navigate. Trust that which challenges us to change while not always feeling the need to justify our purpose. It is our values that we should live by, not others; and most of the time it is important to trust our instincts.

With a firm belief, reliability finds its course, self-esteem finds personal contentment, and creativity finds a passion for life.

We know that in order for others to trust us, there are many things that we must do. When things are going wrong, instead of being in attack mode, we need to keep our attitude in neutral and use non-judgmental language. We need to listen instead of only hearing the words spoken. We need to understand another's point of view while still trusting your own expressions. The idea that we should volunteer information so it is not viewed as omission of guilt is an important value to place on our early emotions. This prevents us from being in a position where we may feel overly defensive and argumentative. Instead, try to be loyal, standing side by side while keeping secrets shared in confidence. We know deep down that we need to avoid abusive behavior and use assertive communication to address needs.

Keep in mind that building trust goes back to first impressions and para-verbal communication. Gain trust by shaking the other person's hand or giving a hug, making eye contact with them, and smiling. When we communicate trust, make a promise and do everything we can to keep the promise. Never promise something that we cannot deliver on; and finally be respectful of someone else's opinions.

"A cracked glass can take time to fill, so be patient through positivity, peace, and placement as you understand the attempt that is made."

Activity 1: Create Your Strategies for Building Trust

What does it take for you to trust people, someone you just met, your family members, or a potential relationship? Build a routine for how you are going to earn and keep someone else's trust. Challenge yourself to keep the routine and see if you can trust yourself to follow through. Mean everything that you say and share how you really feel. Practice saying "No". Trust your reasoning but give a volunteer explanation after you have said "No". Remember to think about their perspective and not to be verbally aggressive. Work on this for a week and reflect on your experiences.

What did you learn about yourself from the trust routine experiment? Do you trust yourself to be able to maintain these standards? Do you see a difference in response from those whom you committed this routine? Remember, if you cannot trust yourself, then do not ask someone else to trust you.

"The sand does not question the seashell; nor does the water question the wave. And so as the water believes in the wave, you too must see yourself pushing forward towards the beauty of the shore, where the sand trusts the water and the seashell trusts the waves."

Activity 2: Follow Your Actions

At some point, you lost trust in a situation or someone. When this trust was lost, did it take a long time to rebuild? Have you ever really gotten over it? If you have feelings that are still holding you down, how can you redirect your actions through the 3 P's? Use this activity to attack a problem where you have lost trust. Implement the 3 P's in each part of the problem and determine how that particular "P" can steer you towards a different outcome.

David's Story

Today is Monday, and David has forever feared this day; the day when he knew a lie would come back to haunt him. He had lied to Matthew about a lot of things, but knew that his friendship could potentially end all because of a girl. Matthew had already been in a bad mood from getting chewed out by his mom, and grounded by his dad on Friday. It was Monday, and the two boys would have a chance to see one another to discuss the weekend. The bell rang and it was break. As Matthew approached David with a moderate smile, David felt very tense. How long could he hold the secret? Would Matthew ever be able to trust him again? As Matthew reached out and gave David a high five, he could tell something was off with David. "What's up man", asked Matthew. With an innocent tone, David said "Nothing". As their conversation continued, David became even tenser about the direction the conversation could potentially go. "What did you do this weekend? Did you go to the party", asked Matthew. "Yeah, I was at Noah's house party. It was off the chain. Everyone was there", explained David. "Man, my dad grounded me for the whole weekend because of math", replied Matthew.

As the two of them stood there, David knew that he had to say something. "Hey Matthew. I need to tell you something." David took a deep breath and continued. "At the party, I saw Noah making out with your girl." Matthew stood there in complete numbness as if he had lost his breath. "Man, what are you talking about? Christina stayed home this weekend because she knew that I was grounded. We text all night. She said that she wasn't going to the party since I wasn't going. Are we talking about my girlfriend Christina?" replied Matthew in utter disbelief. As the conversation continued, Matthew began thinking that there was more to the story. "What do you mean you saw her making out with Noah", asked Matthew. As David continued with the details, Matthew's shoulder shrunk. "When I was at the party, I walked into the kitchen and I saw Christina kissing Noah. They were lip locked in the corner of the kitchen and were making out

for a while”, explained David. “I don’t believe you David”, replied Matthew with a stern voice and little empathy for the situation. “Your just jealous man. I don’t trust you. You would say anything to get under my skin.” Matthew continued with his voice raising. “We had this issue before, and I didn’t trust you then. Remember when you gave that note to Christina last year talking about how she should date you because then she would be dating a real man? You told Christina that she deserved better than me because I was dating other girls at school. Now you want me to trust you with this?” As Matthew finished explaining his point, David took a step back. David never thought that Christina was going to mention that note to David. She promised him.

“Man, you don’t even know your girl. You trust her right now? She is completely playing you. Get over it man”, replied David. Matthew had reached his boiling point. As he leaned forward to shove David, the bell rang. It was time for class. “I’ll get with you after class David. I am sick of you”, replied Matthew. As David walked off, he shouted, “Man you never trust your friends. You’re going to trust some girl over me. I have been your friend since we were in elementary school, and you have only known Christina for a year.” As the two went their separate ways, David headed past the cafeteria towards his math class; the same teacher that Matthew had gotten grounded because of. David’s math teacher, Mr. Devin, was one of the tougher teachers. Mr. Devin was a former marine who had given his life to making things better.

As David entered the classroom and sat down, Mr. Devin approached him. “Why were you and Matthew arguing a few minutes ago”, asked David’s teacher. “Matthew doesn’t trust me, but I think he realizes that his girl doesn’t trust him. A complete mess in their relationship.” Mr. Devin began shaking his head with a broad smile and said, “Trust is a powerful word, and when it’s broken, it can mess up everything.”