

Emotionally Healthy Spirituality 8: **Learning New Skills to Love Well**

John 15: 9-12

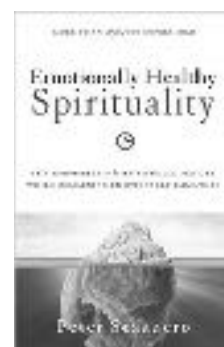
“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you”.

Emotional Behaviour at Different Stages:

<u>Emotional Infants:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for others to take care of them. • Find it difficult to enter other’s worlds. • Driven by the need for instant gratification. • Use others as objects to meet their needs. 	<u>Emotional Children:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are happy as long as they get what they want. • Unravel quickly from stress, disappointment, trials. • Often interpret disagreements as personal offences • Can be easily hurt. • When they don’t get their way, they tend to complain, withdraw, manipulate, take revenge, or become sarcastic. • Struggle to calmly discuss their needs and wants in a mature, loving way.
<u>Emotional Adolescents:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tend to be defensive. • Can feel threatened and alarmed by criticism. • Keep score of what they can give so they can ask for something in return. • Deal with conflict poorly, often blaming, appeasing, going to a 3rd party, pouting or ignoring the issue entirely. • Can become preoccupied with themselves. • Sometimes struggle to listen to another person’s pain, disappointments or needs. • Can be critical & judgemental. 	<u>Emotional Adults:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can ask for what they need, want or prefer - clearly, directly, honestly. • Recognise, manage & take responsibility for their own thoughts and feelings. • Can state their own beliefs and values when under stress, without becoming adversarial. • Respect others without having to change them. • Give people room to make mistakes and not be perfect. • Appreciate people for who they are & not just for what they contribute. • Accurately assesses their own limits, strengths & weaknesses • Deeply in tune with their own emotional world & able to enter the feelings, needs & concerns of others without losing themselves. • Have the capacity to resolve conflict maturely & negotiate solutions that consider the perspectives of others.

Signs of a Childish Adult (from Psychology Today)

1. Emotional escalations
2. Blaming
3. Lies
4. Name-calling
5. Impulsivity (or as therapists say, "poor impulse control")
6. Need to be the centre of attention
7. Bullying
8. Budding narcissism (love of self)
9. Immature defences / denial
10. No ability to see, acknowledge, and learn from mistakes.



As we spend time with God, he invites us to practice the presence of people - in other words, having an awareness of his presence in all of our daily relationships. (Peter Scazzero)

Love is to reveal the beauty of another person to themselves. (Jean Vanier)

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. (John 13:35)

1. Speaking & Listening

How we speak to one another in a conflict situation makes a massive difference on the how the conversation goes - and therefore what the outcome is.

Blessed are the merciful.. pure in heart.. peacemakers.. (Matt 5:7-9)

When speaking:

- Talk about my thoughts and feelings not accusing.
- Be brief and explain clearly with as little emotion as possible eg. "I am feeling because when you....."
- Continue speaking until you feel you've been understood - then stop.

When listening:

- Put your own agenda & feelings on hold, be quiet & still & focus on the speaker
- Allow them to speak until they have finished a thought
- Acknowledge them with body language & 'OK' or 'Thank you' but only speak to ask questions for clarity.
- When they appear to have finished ask: "Is there any more?"
- When they have finished **and before you give any response:**
- Repeat accurately back to them what you have heard them say eg. "I understand you are feeling..... because..... Have I understood that correctly ?"
- When they agree that you have really heard them, they give you the cushion and you get to respond to their point - speaking calmly & gently & concisely.

2. Making Assumptions

When we make assumptions about people without checking them out, its possible, even likely, that we are believing something about someone that isn't true. The bible is clear about the dangers of judging others. (Matt 7)

- **Permission:** Do I have permission to check out an assumption I am making?
- **Assumption:** I'm wondering if/assuming that you are thinking..... Is this correct?
- **Response:** Then give the other person a chance to respond.

3. Clarifying Expectations

One of the most common causes of conflict is in unmet or unclear expectations. When two people approach a situation with a different expected outcome.

Most expectations are:-

- **Unconscious** - we're just not aware of them until someone disappoints us (or we disappoint them)
- **Unrealistic** - based on ideas we have about others which are not true
- **Unspoken** - we may never have told our spouse, friend, or employee what we expect, but we feel angry when our expectation is not met
- **Un-agreed** - we may have our own thoughts about what was expected, but have never agreed it with the other person

To establish (or re-establish) expectations they need to be

- Conscious
- Realistic
- Spoken
- Agreed

Proactive Communication is key. Over-communication is preferable to leaving gaps.