

peacemaking

IN POLARIZED TIMES

tools & training to love our neighbors, families, and co-workers

WELCOME

At your tables:

- Introduce yourself.
- Where do you live?
- What faith community are you part of?
- In what part(s) of your life are you around people who have views that differ from your own?

FACILITATORS



PASTOR GARY DAWKINS

Lead Pastor at
Mercy Vineyard Church



PASTOR STEPH O'BRIEN

Lead Pastor at
Mill City Church



DR. RAMÓN PASTRANO

Founder
Third Sphere Consulting

PARTICIPATION AGREEMENTS

GOAL: To have a “**brave**” space for everyone participating

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- Be respectful.
- Be present and engaged.
- Presume and extend welcome.
- Rather than language “policing”... everyone strive to be sensitive.
- Keep an open mind with humble curiosity.
- Listen to learn.
- Grant the gift of a positive intention.
- Avoid making your experience normative for everyone.
- Avoid fixing, correcting or setting straight.
- Maintain confidentiality with what is shared.
- Expect some discomfort & take care of yourself.
- No guilt, no shame, and no blame.
- Today is about dialogue (begins with a question), not debate (begins with an answer).

TRAINING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

POLARIZATION TODAY &
THE WAY OF JESUS

STEP 1

SELF-AWARENESS

STEP 2

REFRAME GOALS

STEP 3

LISTEN

STEP 4

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

STEP 5

DIALOGUE

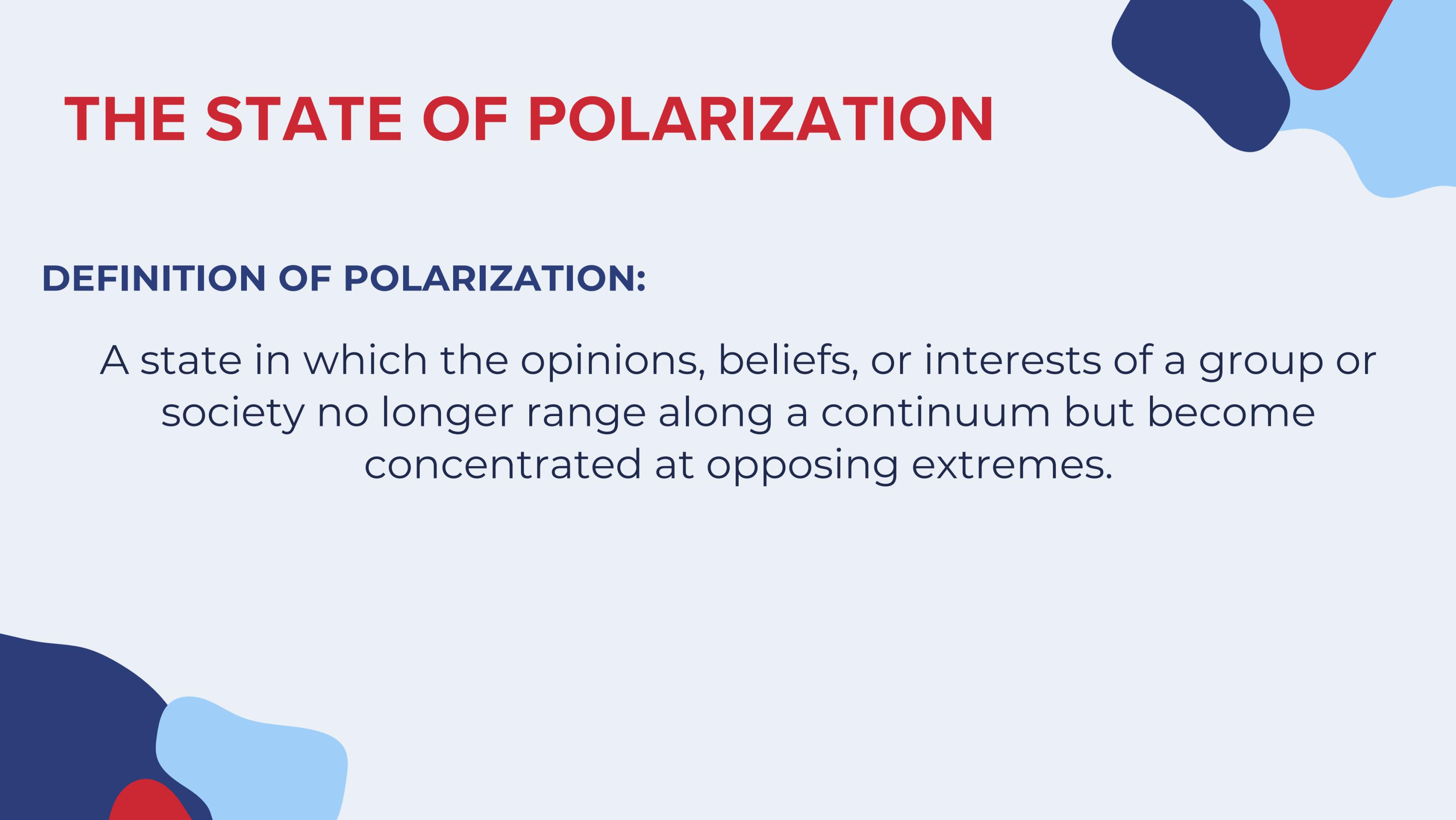
BONUS

PEACEMAKING IN AN ELECTION YEAR

FINAL THOUGHTS

RESOURCES &
COMMISSIONING

THE STATE OF POLARIZATION



DEFINITION OF POLARIZATION:

A state in which the opinions, beliefs, or interests of a group or society no longer range along a continuum but become concentrated at opposing extremes.

THE STATE OF POLARIZATION

“Across 10 measures that Pew Research Center has tracked on the same surveys since 1994, the average partisan gap has increased from 15 percentage points to 36 points.”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER 2017

“Affective polarization in the US has increased more dramatically since the late 1970s than in the eight other countries they examined — the U.K., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Switzerland, Norway and Sweden.”

NATIONAL BUREAU OF ECONOMIC RESEARCH 2020

“55% of Americans reported having no one in their immediate social circle who had opposing political views.”

**AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE’S SURVEY
CENTER ON AMERICAN LIFE 2020**

<https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2017/10/05/the-partisan-divide-on-political-values-grows-even-wider/>

<https://www.brown.edu/news/2020-01-21/polarization>

THE STATE OF POLARIZATION

PSYCHOLOGICAL DRIVERS OF POLARIZATION

- Defaulting to dualism
- Predispositions we develop in childhood & throughout our lives
- Our brains are wired to divide into groups—originally for safety in the wilderness during “hunting and gathering”
- Deep differences in “moral priorities”
- Neural differences
- Diversity of voices in society coupled with a fear of difference

Nathan Stock - International Peacebuilding Consultant

THE STATE OF POLARIZATION

5 FOUNDATIONS OF MORAL FORMATION

- Care/harm
- Fairness/cheating
- Loyalty/betrayal
- Authority/subversion
- Sanctity/degradation

**DEPENDING ON THE ORDER
OF IMPORTANCE. MORAL DECISION-
MAKING WILL DIFFER GREATLY.**

The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion
by Jonathan Haidt

THE STATE OF POLARIZATION

**GENETICS + LIFE EXPERIENCES =
SUBCONSCIOUS PATTERNS TO HOW WE RESPOND TO STIMULI**

EXAMPLE:

- People who lean “conservative” are more excited by threat & thus are motivated by protectiveness and safety.
- People who lean “liberal” are more excited by variety and newness of experience and thus are motivated towards progress.

Neither are inherently negative until taken to the extreme

The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion
by Jonathan Haidt

THE STATE OF POLARIZATION

STRUCTURAL DRIVERS OF POLARIZATION

- Changing demographics
- Closed media ecosystems
- Social media and digital tribalism
- Confirmation bias online and with media intake
- Rising income inequality
- Declining trust in institutions
- Moving to live in more ideologically homogeneous communities
- Deeper polarization of the two-party system in U.S. politics

Nathan Stock - International Peacebuilding Consultant

THE STATE OF POLARIZATION

Polarization is much larger and more powerful than any one of us. Regardless of what positions we may have and what sides we may take - polarization is a force we are *all* up against.

It is causing chasms through families, distrust between neighbors, and an inability to function in our teams at work.

**SO WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR US AS
FOLLOWERS OF JESUS?**

THE WAY OF JESUS

DEFINITION OF PEACE:

Hebrew word “shalom” - not the absence of war, stress or anxiety (that would be escapism). Shalom is wholeness, completeness, fulfillment, inner rest, living without deficiency or lack.

THE WAY OF JESUS

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

MATTHEW 5:9

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.”

MATTHEW 5:43-45

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock”.

MATTHEW 7:24-25

Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.

MATTHEW 7:24-25



OUR DISTINCT *WHY*

- We are people empowered to live the way of Jesus & we are led by the Holy Spirit.
- We believe all humans are made in the image of God.
- God created humanity with differences, and in that diversity we see more of the breadth of the image of God.
- We represent Jesus to those around us, as Jesus said, “whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”



JESUS IS SAYING, I DON'T WANT YOU TO JUST DESIRE PEACE FOR YOURSELVES. I WANT YOU TO “MAKE” PEACE!

STEP 1: SELF-AWARENESS

“Recognizing Your Inner Polarizer”
Self-Assessment

Braver Angels

STEP 1: SELF-AWARENESS

“Recognizing Your Inner Polarizer”
Self-Assessment

Discuss with a partner:
What is one insight you gained from taking this
self-assessment?

Braver Angels

STEP 1: SELF-AWARENESS

CONFRONT THE 4 AGENTS OF POLARIZATION
WITHIN YOURSELF:

Stereotyping, Dismissing, Ridiculing, and Contempt

Braver Angels

STEP 1: SELF-AWARENESS

AWARENESS OF OUR MEDIA INTAKE

STEP 1: SELF-AWARENESS

EXERCISE

- Listen to this audio track. What do you hear?

**OUR BRAINS ARE NOT WIRED TO PERCEIVE
WHAT IT DOES NOT ALREADY KNOW...**

STEP 1: SELF-AWARENESS

“Media Intake Awareness”
Self-Assessment

STEP 1: SELF-AWARENESS

“Media Intake Awareness” Self-Assessment

Discuss with a partner:

What is one insight you gained from this taking self-assessment?

STEP 1: SELF-AWARENESS



STEP 1: “WE”-AWARENESS

- Americans are actually less ideologically polarized than we think we are.
- However, our politicians *are* much more ideologically polarized than the general population - and more polarized than anytime in the last 50 years.
- Even though we are not as ideologically polarized as we believe ourselves to be, we are *emotionally* polarized (known as “affective polarization”). In other words, we do not like those who have different opinions than we do.
- This is called a “perception gap” - affective polarization causes us to feel like the divide is wider than it is.

Polarization, Democracy, and Political Violence in the United States: What the Research Says - Rachel Kleinfeld

STEP 2: REFRAME GOALS

We often approach others with a goal to change their mind or win an argument. Statistically, this goal is near impossible.

What are other goals might we have for depolarizing conversations and relationships across differences of opinion?

STEP 2: REFRAME GOALS

Humanize - Be reminded that those who have opposing opinions are humans loved by God & made in God's image. Remind others that you are also a human!

Empathize - Be able to understand the other person's viewpoint even though it's highly unlikely either person is going to change their opinion. Empathy deepens understanding and reduces unnecessary conflict. How might you imagine being in this person's shoes?

STEP 2: REFRAME GOALS

Relate with Love - Loving our neighbors is dependent on staying in relationship even if that relationship has boundaries. The healthiest relationships are not those where both agree, but rather those that have a deepened understanding of the other.

Have Compassion - Jesus choose to suffer because of his love for us. Compassion is the choice to suffer with others. When we listen to others and seek to understand, we can choose to let God break our hearts for what breaks theirs. It is one way we can carry our cross as disciples of Jesus.

What other goals do you have for depolarizing contentious conversations with people in your life with whom you may disagree?

STEP 3: LISTEN

To pursue these reframed goals, we must engage deep listening.

STEP 3: LISTEN

NON-LISTENING

- Defending
- “Me too” syndrome
- Giving advice/correcting
- Judging

“Are you really listening?” by Donoghue/Siegel

STEP 3: LISTEN

FOUR LEVELS OF LISTENING

- 1. Downloading** - Information is entering through the filter of what you already know & your view point.
- 2. Factual** - Noticing something new—something that differs from what you already knew or expected to hear.
- 3. Empathizing** - Listening from the place the other person is speaking from; experiencing/sensing an emotional connection.
- 4. Generative** - Having a mindset shift that produces life in you and in others, even if you don't agree.

STEP 3: LISTEN

Listening Exercise # 2:

- You have 90 seconds to tell one partner about a movie or book you recently found interesting.
- You can't respond except to ask more questions.

STEP 3: LISTEN

Listening Exercise # 2:

- Repeat to your partner as much as you remember about what they shared in 30 seconds.

STEP 3: LISTEN

Listening Exercise # 2:

- What are your assumptions about:
 - How they felt about the book/film?
 - How did they interpret the word “interesting”?
 - Would they recommend the book/film?
 - What impacted them about the story?
- To discover these deeper answers, you would need to ask more questions and/or listen longer.

STEP 3: LISTEN

REFLECT ON YOUR LISTENING

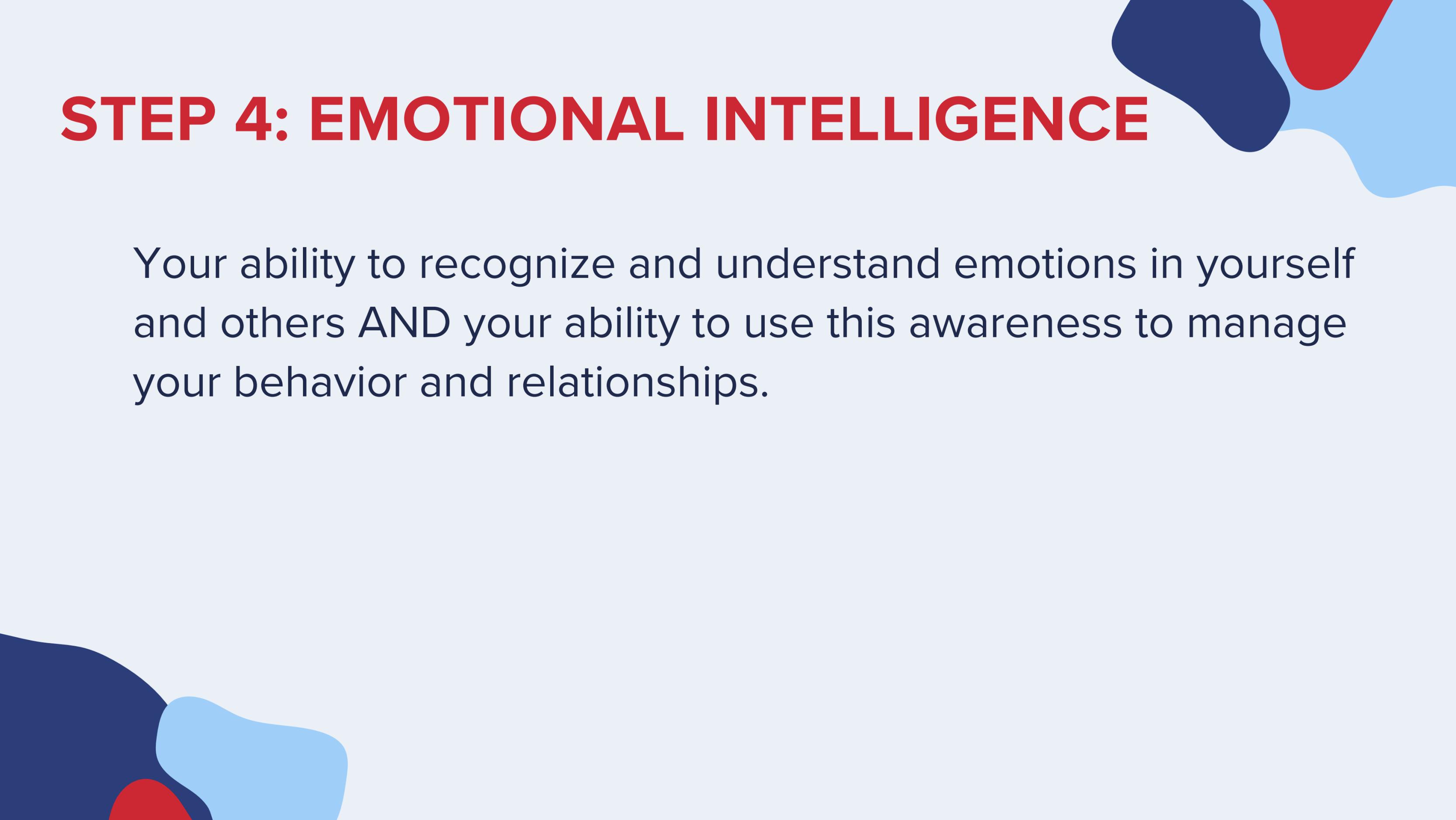
- Have you listened to yourself?
 - What do you mean by any words or phrases that may have complex meaning in our context?
 - Do you know why you hold your perspective?
 - What experiences in your life have shaped your perspective?
 - What emotions are connected to your perspective?

STEP 3: LISTEN

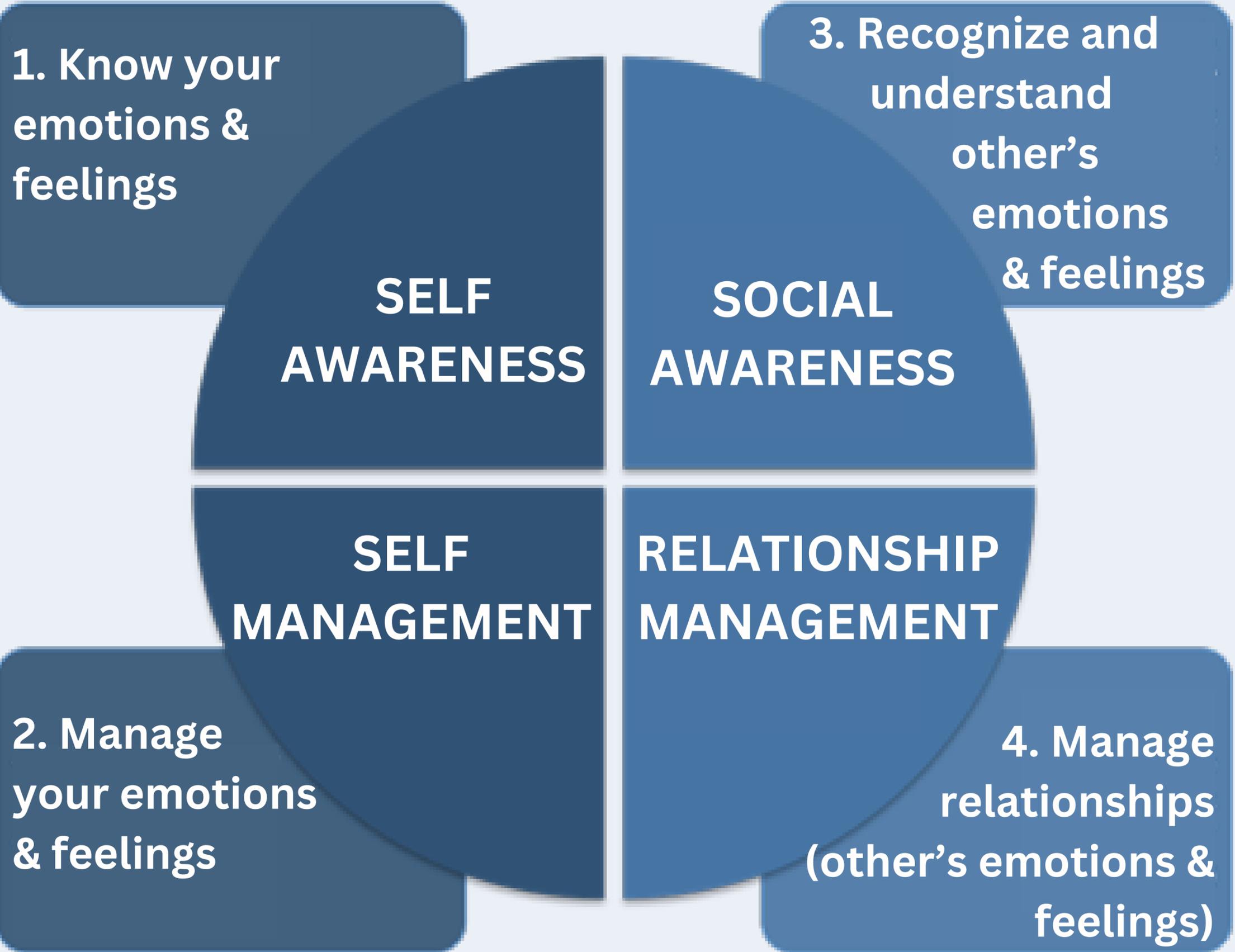
REFLECT ON YOUR LISTENING

- Have you listened to others long & deep enough to understand...
 - What they mean by any words or phrases that may have complex meaning in our context?
 - Why the person holds this perspective?
 - What experiences in their life have shaped their perspective?
 - What emotions are connected to their perspective?
- Listening builds trust—Are you earning trust?

STEP 4: EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE



Your ability to recognize and understand emotions in yourself and others AND your ability to use this awareness to manage your behavior and relationships.



STEP 4: EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

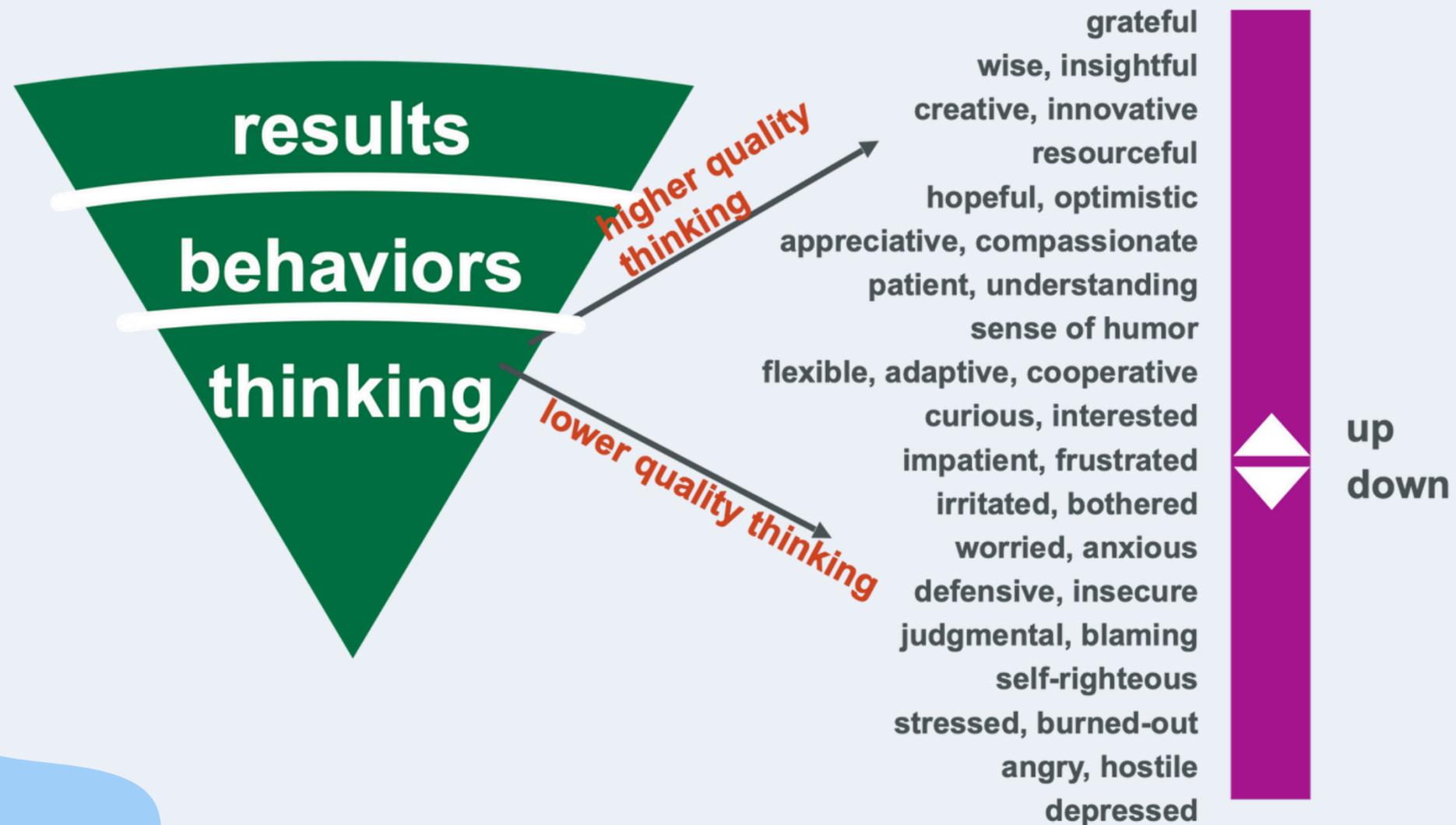
PEACEMAKER TIP: When in dialogue with someone, it is often beneficial to mention to them that you have strong emotions about the topic being discussed. Engaging as though a conversation is primarily intellectual when it is also highly emotional leads to misunderstanding and often verbal harm.

Take-Home Exercises:

Emotional Intelligence Assessment,
Feeling Wheel, Dirty Dozen, Hot Buttons

STEP 4: EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

MOOD ELEVATOR:



STEP 5: DIALOGUE

START WITH THE SPIRIT

As Jesus followers, the greatest asset we have is the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that he would send the Spirit to be our advocate, counselor and guide!

“The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

-Jesus (John 14:26-27)

STEP 5: DIALOGUE

DEBATE - Starts with answers on both sides. No one is coming to learn from the other - rather the goal is to win.

DIALOGUE - Starts with questions and curiosity.

STEP 5: DIALOGUE

L.A.P.P. skills for depolarizing dialogue:

Listen, **A**cknowledge, **P**ivot, **P**erspective

1. **L**isten to understand & empathize - Start with a question (not an answer) and engage curiosity
2. **A**cknowledge what you heard and, if possible, share any way you may agree
3. **P**ivot to signal a shift in the dialogue and wait to see if the person is willing to listen
4. **P**erspective - Offer a depolarizing viewpoint

STEP 5: DIALOGUE

L.A.P.P. skills for depolarizing dialogue:

Listen, **A**cknowledge, **P**ivot, **P**erspective

Practice with your partner!

- One person choose to be Person A and one be Person B.
- Your partner reads their assigned polarized statement out loud.
- Listen, then respond with
 - Acknowledge
 - Pivot
 - Perspective

BONUS: PEACEMAKING IN AN ELECTION YEAR

10 DISCIPLINES

We urge believers to embrace these Christian Civic Disciplines, preparing our hearts and minds for the challenges and opportunities ahead during the 2024 election.

By **The & Campaign** // andcampaign.org

PEACEMAKING IN AN ELECTION YEAR

1 SEE PEOPLE, NOT POLITICAL ABSTRACTIONS

Christian Value:
Human Dignity
JAMES 3:9-10

We must understand a person is more than whom they voted for.

2 BE AWARE OF THE FLAWS ON YOUR SIDE

Christian Value:
Self-Examination
PSALM 139:23-24

We must understand that our tribes are not perfect and be willing to challenge our side when it is out of step with our faith.

3 IDENTIFY THE VIRTUE ON THE OTHER SIDE

Christian Value:
Charity & Common Grace
ACTS 17:26-27

We must remember that our political tribe of choice is not perfect and reject the false notion that people on the other side of the political spectrum – or somewhere in between – are pure evil.

PEACEMAKING IN AN ELECTION YEAR

4 PRACTICE PUBLIC GRACE & COURTESY

Christian Values:
Kindness & Self-Control
MATTHEW 5:46-48

We must even treat strangers with civility, including when they are at odds with us politically, simply because we know that they are humans just like us.

5 EXERCISE MEDIA HYGIENE

Christian Values:
Wisdom & Understanding
JAMES 1:19

Before speaking publicly or engaging in a debate, we must learn about the issue from several credible media sources that approach the topic from various political and ideological points of view.

6 HAVE AN AFFIRMATIVE POSTURE

Christian Values:
Fruitfulness & Light
MICAHAH 6:8

We must ensure the posture of our biblical faith is not reactionary, but proactive. That fact should extend to our civic and political lives.

PEACEMAKING IN AN ELECTION YEAR

7 DISCERN PARTISAN TALKING POINTS

Christian Value:
Discernment
PROVERBS 14:15

We must not embrace or repeat the messages coming from political parties without close, prayerful examination of veracity and intent of their claims.

8 PRAY FOR YOUR POLITICAL OPPONENTS

Christian Value:
Pray for your enemies
MATTHEW 5:43-44

Nothing will break down the walls of vitriol in our own hearts and in our culture like following Christ's command to pray for our (political) enemies.

9 GET INVOLVED

Christian Values:
Self Sacrifice, Love, Stewardship
JAMES 1:22

Find a church, community organization, or political organization in your local community that is working on an issue that aligns with your values and get practically engaged.

10 COMMIT TO MOVE FORWARD CONSTRUCTIVELY

Christian Value:
Perseverance & Peacemaking
1 CORINTHIANS 15:58

We must reject political violence. Sign the pledge to become an Advocate Against Political Violence.

FINAL THOUGHTS & NEXT STEPS

- Polarization is not going to disappear. *This is a lifelong pursuit.*
- Your peacemaking influence in your relationships and social circles will *grow over time*. If you are able to be consistent and remain emotionally intelligent you can build trust!
- A good ally is able to see all perspectives even as they hold their own positions.
- Choose a *next step* of growth as a peacemaker (resources).

RESOURCES

LovingOurNeighbors.church/peacemakingresources

- Resources for loving neighbors
- Curated peacemaking & depolarization resources

COMMISSIONING PRAYER

“Lord, make me an instrument of Thy Peace.”

Teach me how to order my days that with sure touch I may say the right word at the right time and in the right way—lest I betray the spirit of peace. Let me not be deceived by my own insecurity and weakness which would make me hurt another as I try desperately to help myself. Keep watch with me, O my Father, over the days of my life, that with abiding enthusiasm I may be in such possession of myself that each day I may offer to Thee the full, unhampered use of me in all my parts as “an instrument of Thy Peace.” Amen.

DR. HOWARD THURMAN, 1961