

# Positive Relationships

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# Today

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- Chapter 1: Social Relationships
- Chapter 2: Attention for Social Relationships (A)
- Chapter 3: Perceived Quality of Social Relationships (T)
- Chapter 4: Motivation for Commitment (M)
- Chapter 5: Relationship Management (A)
- Chapter 6: Summary

# 1

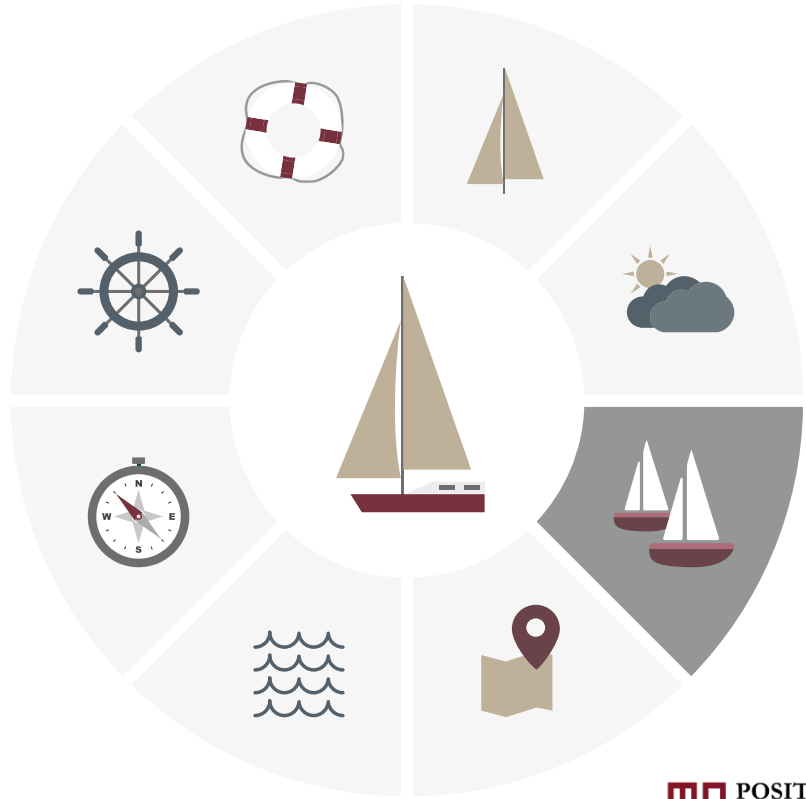


Social Relationships  
(other boats)

# Social Relationships

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- seventh element of sailboat metaphor
- other boats



## Diener & Seligman (2002, p. 83)

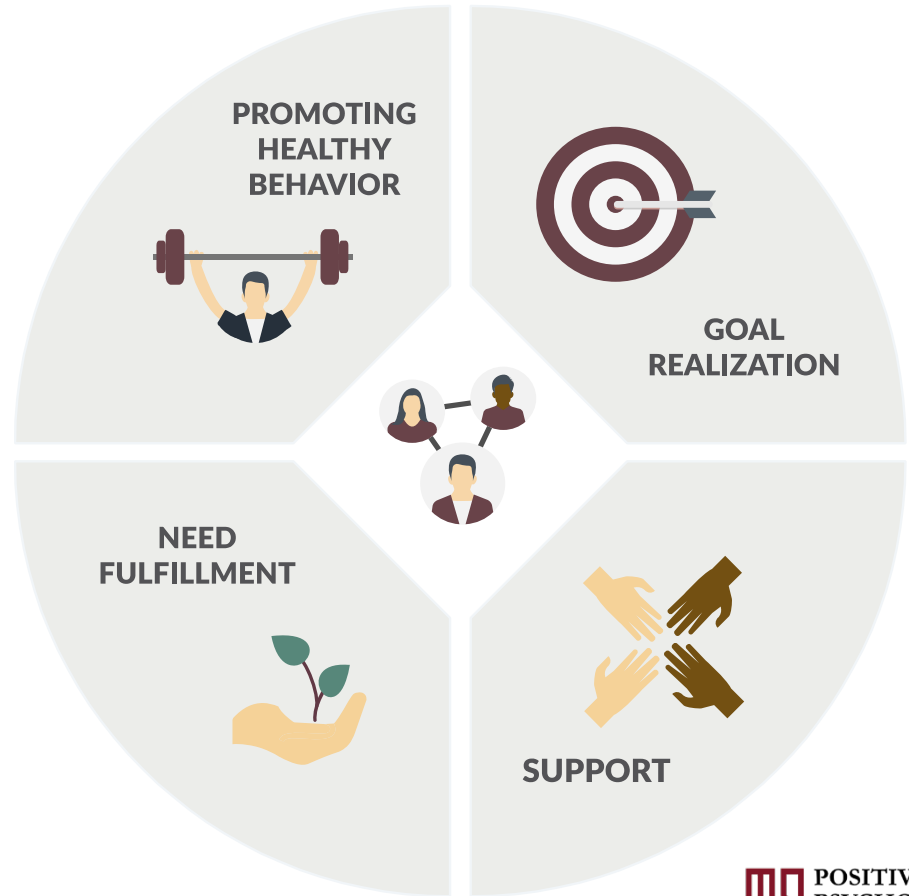
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”

“...very happy people have rich and satisfying social relationships and spend little time alone relative to average people”

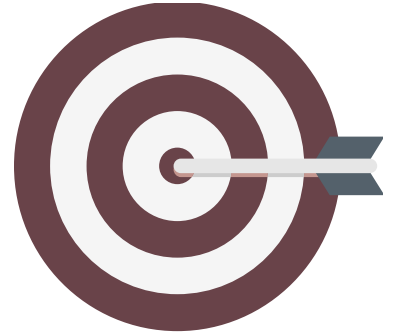
# Positive relationships

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# Goal Realization

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**others can help us realize our goals by:**

- offering assistance
- increasing motivation
- being a source of inspiration

# Need fulfillment

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**others can help us satisfy our need for:**

- autonomy (e.g. by respecting our choices)
- competence (e.g. by giving positive feedback)
- relatedness (e.g. by showing affection)

# Promoting healthy behavior

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**others can positively influence our health by:**

- encouraging us to make healthy choices
- reminding us to reduce unhealthy behavior
- inspiring us to adopt a healthy life style

# Support

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## others can offer support by:

- listening to our concerns
- helping us with difficult tasks
- giving advice

## Practical note

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Perhaps the most obvious way for clients to **increase their well-being** is by **strengthening the bond** with people in their **positive social network**. After becoming aware of the members of the positive social network, the client can use this awareness to actively seek the support of or interaction with positive network members, which may increase the perceived quality of the relationship.

## 4 types of support

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- A. emotional support
- B. informational support
- C. instrumental support
- D. companionship support

Chapter 1 – Social Relationships (other boats)

## A) Emotional support

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the people who offer empathy,  
concern, affection, love, trust,  
acceptance, intimacy,  
encouragement, or caring



Chapter 1 – Social Relationships (other boats)

## B) Informational support

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the people who provide advice, guidance, suggestions, or useful information. The information they provide can help to solve problems or reach goals

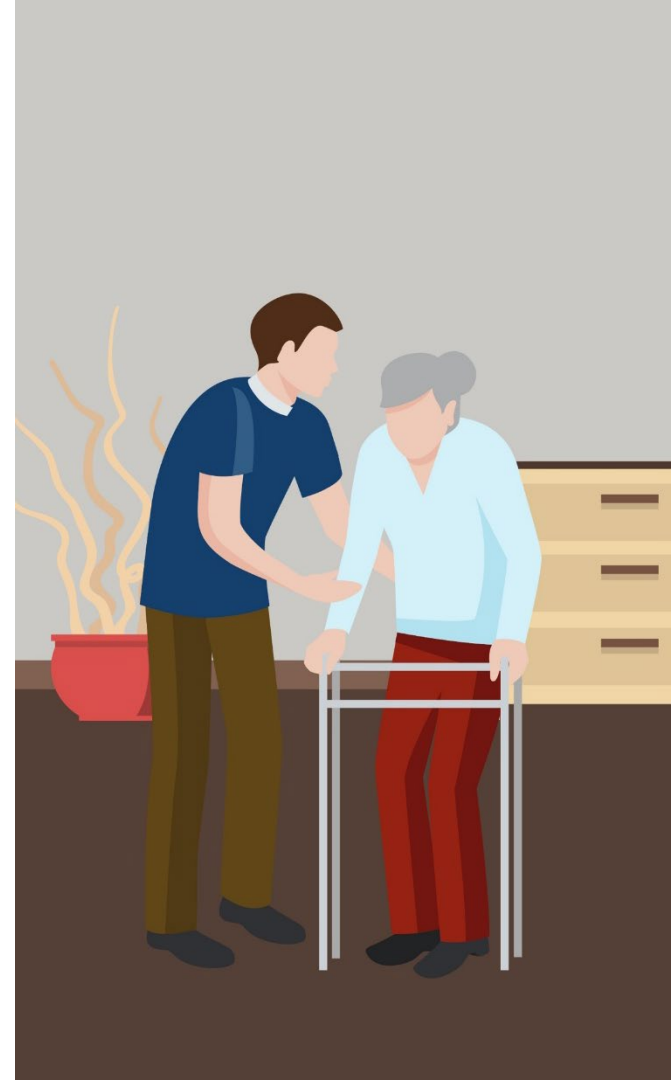


Chapter 1 – Social Relationships (other boats)

## C) Instrumental support

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the people who provide financial assistance, material goods, or services



Chapter 1 – Social Relationships (other boats)

## D) Companionship support

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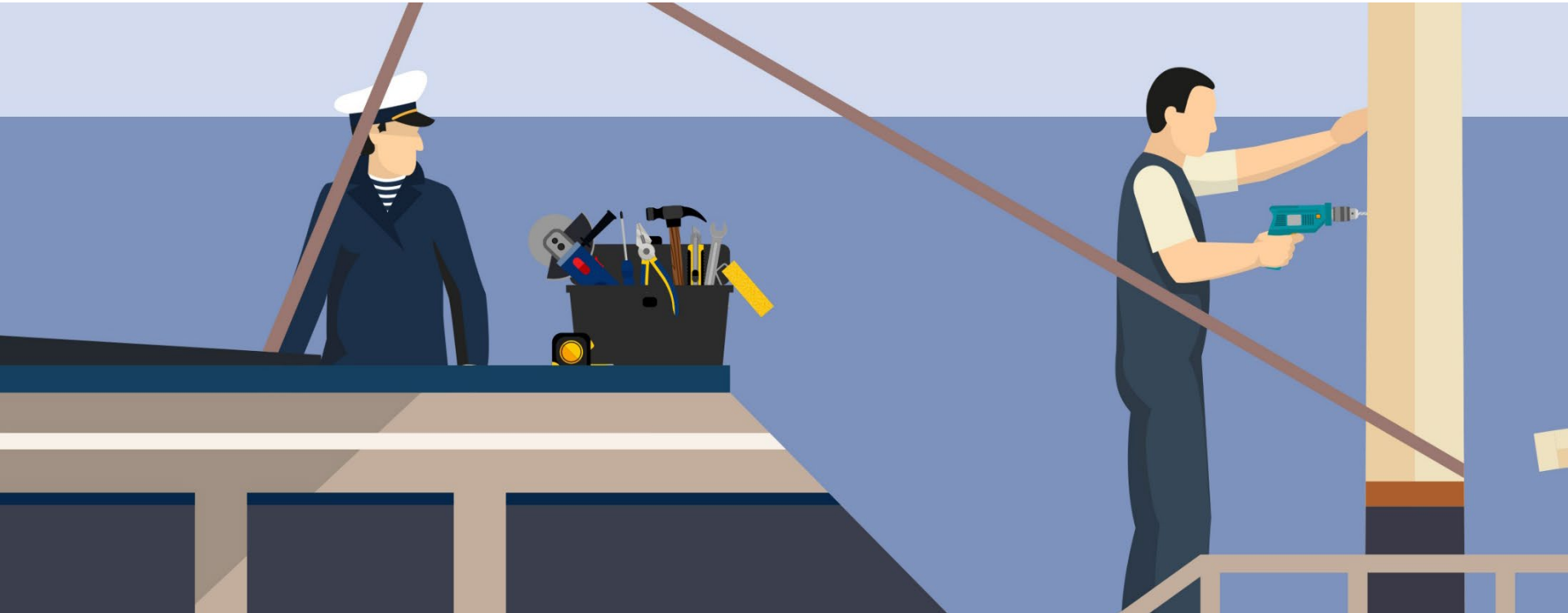
these people are companions;  
one can engage with them in  
shared social activities



Chapter 1 – Social Relationships (other boats)

# Sailboat metaphor

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# Stress-support matching hypothesis

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- each stressful situation affects the needs of the person involved in a specific way
- social support will be effective if it **matches the needs** of the individual in a stressful situation:
  - e.g., money (instrumental support) -> temporary job loss vs death of a friend
  - e.g., hugging (emotional support) -> technical problem at work vs getting turned down

## Important notes

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- there are high intercorrelations among the different kinds of support
- in reality, it may be difficult to categorize social interaction exclusively into one particular category
- people in close relationships often exchange multiple forms of social support

## Practical note

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Clients often find it **difficult to ask** for support. They may not be sure how to ask for support, do not want to be a burden to others and can be afraid of appearing helpless or vulnerable. The practitioner may **assist clients** in effectively **communicating their needs** by engaging in role-play and/or may work on **removing the barriers** that prevent the client from requesting assistance, such as accepting the fact that everybody needs help sometimes and realizing that offering help can be a rewarding activity for others.

# Positive relationships

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**a positive, supportive social network is associated with:**

- higher life satisfaction
- better functioning of the cardiovascular, endocrine, and immune systems
- more frequent experiences of positive emotions
- less frequent experiences of negative emotions

Chapter 1 – Social Relationships (other boats)

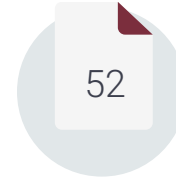
# Sailboat metaphor

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# Social support analysis

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Analyse your network. Identify the people in your life that provide the four primary types of social support.

# Negative relationships

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- provoke feelings of anger and conflict
- take advantage
- break promises
- lack understanding
- hinder goal achievement



# Negative relationships

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**a negative, unsupportive social network is associated with:**

- high levels of dissatisfaction with life
- deterioration in immune and cardiovascular function
- decreased psychological adjustment

## Practical note

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When clients start to make changes in life, it is not uncommon for them to experience resistance or unsupportive remarks from their peers. For instance, peers may **disapprove of the client's aspirations** or may even **actively try to prevent certain changes** from happening. The practitioner may help clients by informing them about this potential resistance, and by finding ways for them to effectively deal with such interpersonal hindrances.

Chapter 1 – Social Relationships (other boats)

# Negative relationships

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How can we help clients to reduce the impact of negative relationships?

# Negative relationships

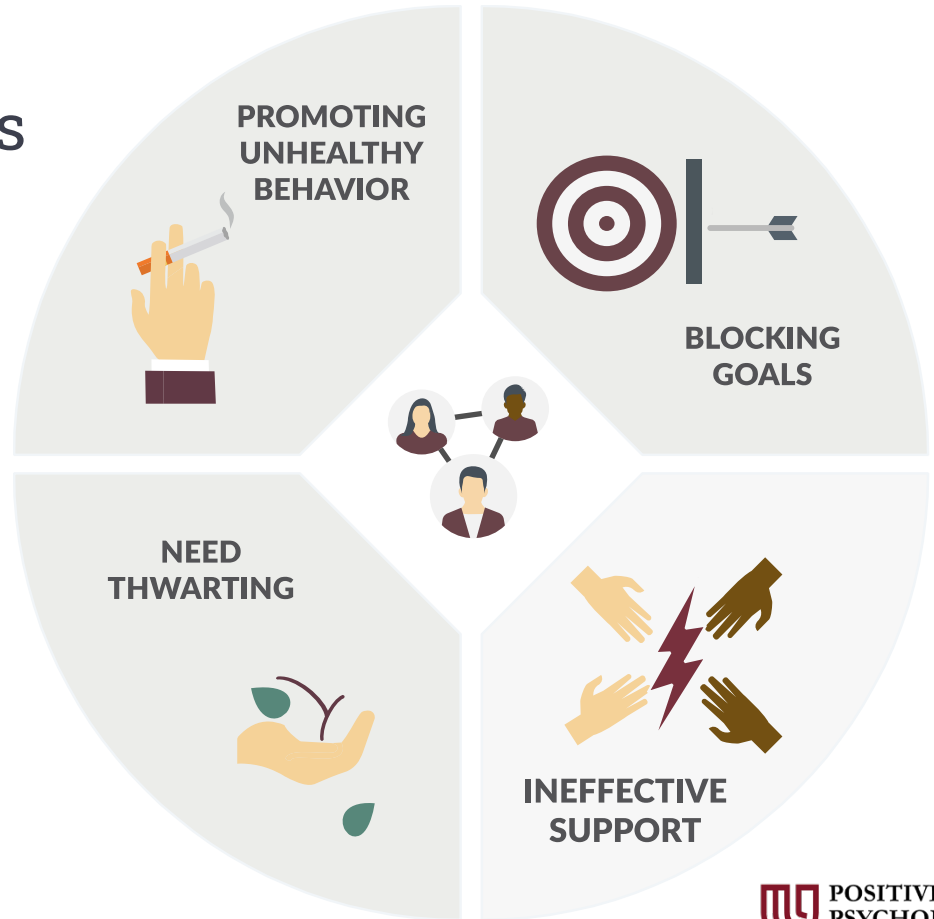
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- provoke feelings of anger and conflict
- take advantage
- break promises
- lack understanding
- hinder goal achievement



# Negative relationships

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# Blocking goals

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**others can hinder goal achievement by:**

- providing bad advice
- disapproving our aspirations
- trying to sabotage our actions

## Ineffective support

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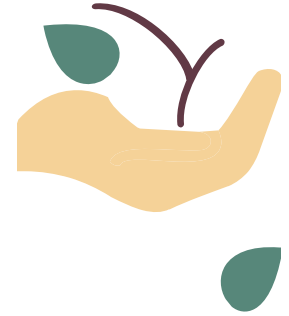


**others can provide ineffective support by:**

- not listening to concerns
- showing a lack of understanding
- causing feelings of indebtedness or guilt

# Need thwarting

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**others can prevent satisfaction of our need for:**

- autonomy (e.g. by limiting our choices)
- competence (e.g. by giving destructive feedback)
- relatedness (e.g. by excluding us)

# Promoting unhealthy behavior

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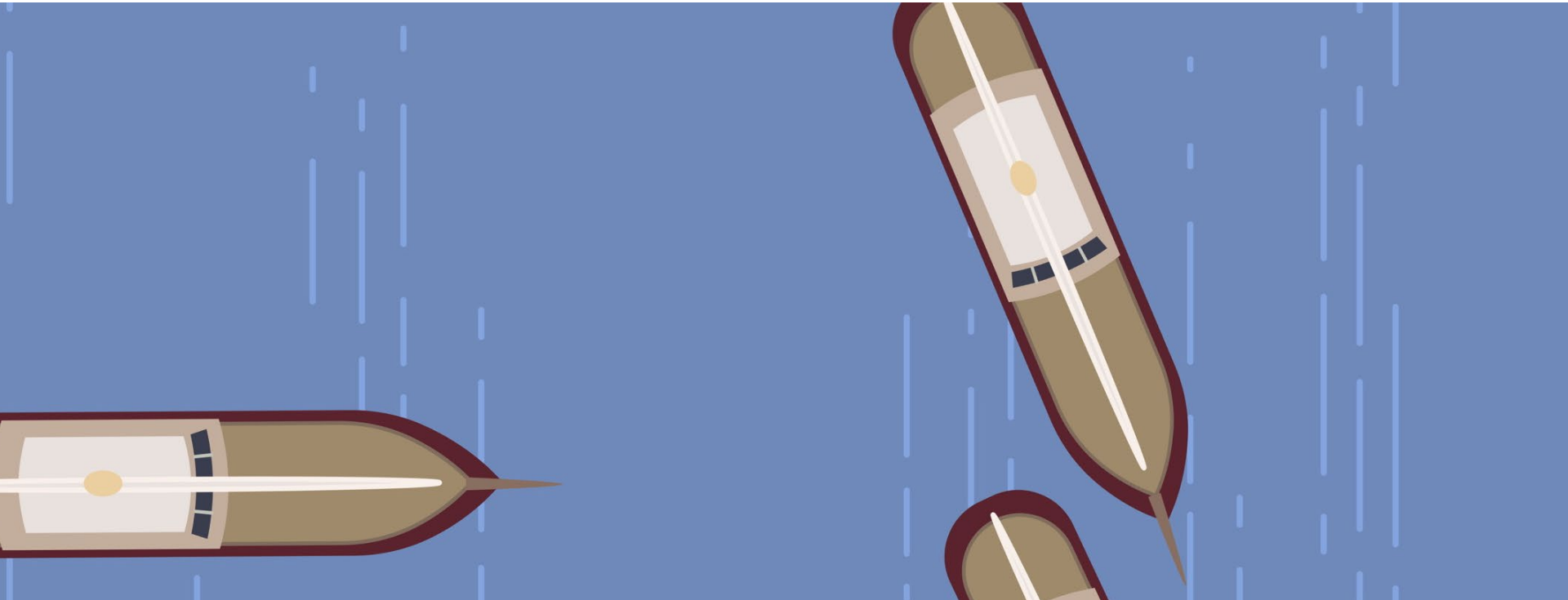
**others can negatively influence our health by:**

- encouraging us to make unhealthy choices
- setting a norm for unhealthy behaviors
- acting as a negative role-model

Chapter 1 – Social Relationships (other boats)

# Sailboat metaphor

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# Negative relationships

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## Practical note

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Chapter 1 – Social Relationships (other boats)

# Negative relationships

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How can we help clients to reduce the impact of negative relationships?

# 2

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Attention for Social Relationships  
(other boats– attention)

## Core question

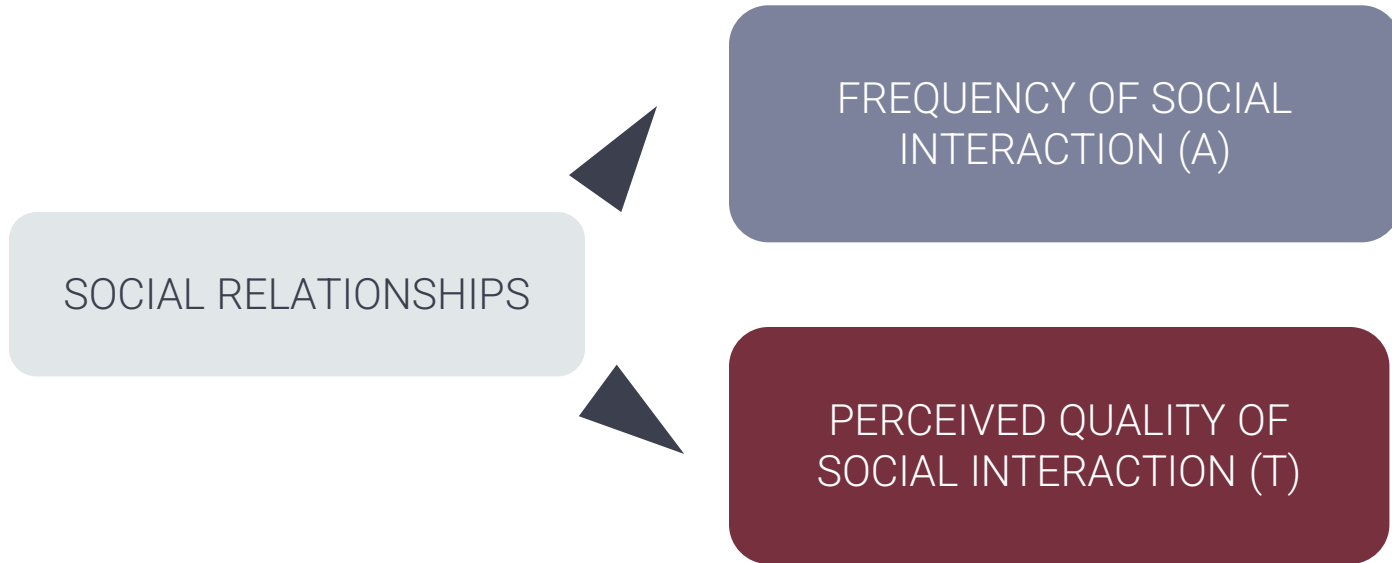
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“How much attention does the individual pay to social relationships?”

# Quantity and quality

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# The importance of attention

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## social isolation:

- living alone
- having few social ties
- having infrequent social contact



## The importance of attention

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The **risk of death** among men and women with the fewest social ties is more than twice (!) as high as the risk for adults with the most social ties (Syme, 1979).

## Chen et al. (2009, p. 306)

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Social capital “...can be defined as the sum of durable, trustworthy, reciprocal and resource-rich network connections.”

# Social capital

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possession of more social capital is associated with:

- longer life expectancy
- better physical well-being
- better psychosocial well-being

## Chen et al., 2015 (1999, p. 2)

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“to invest in one’s own social capital, an individual has to interact with others, such as talking together, working and playing together, visiting each other, joining social organisations, and participating in social events”

# Social Capital

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Quantity



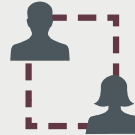
Strength



Intensity



Density



## Social capital - Quantity

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- the number of social relationships
- tends to decrease as people get older
- social isolation versus too large network

## Social capital - Quantity

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- **Socio-emotional selectivity theory:** interacting with a wide variety of social contacts -> learning about the self, others, the social world, and promotes the development of social skills
- the quantity (but not the quality) of social interactions at age 20 predicts midlife well-being
- the quality (but not the quantity) of social interactions at age 30 predicts midlife well-being

# Social capital - Strength

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## Strong relationships are characterized by:

- a high level of intimacy
- more self-disclosure
- shared activities
- emotional as well as instrumental exchanges
- long-term interaction
- the willingness and ability to provide support

# Social capital - Strength

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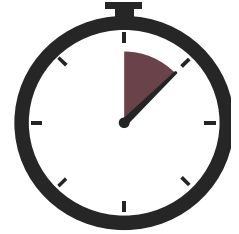


## Factors that reduce relationship strength:

- investing in too many social relationships
- investing in other things than relationships (e.g. work)
- lack of social skills (e.g. excessive self-monitoring, over-rehearsal of potential verbal communication, fear of vulnerability)

## Social capital - Intensity

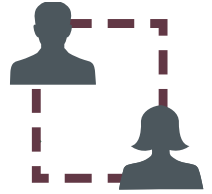
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- time devoted to social relationships
- lack of investment in the relationship with friends is a common regret at the end of life
- increases in the intensity of a relationship → not necessarily higher levels of well-being

## Social capital - Density

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- degree of interconnectedness among a person’s social contacts
- the amount of “glue” that ties the individual network members together
- people with denser networks are happier and less lonely
- dense networks have been found to provide security and stability

Chapter 2 – Attention for Social Relationships (other boats– attention)

## The importance of attention

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Among the 5 things that dying people regret the most is their lack of investment in their friendships.



# The most important people

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- List the 4 most significant people in your social network. These are the people you feel you have a close, deep and involved relationship with.
- For each person, indicate how much time you spent with him or her last month.

Chapter 2 – Attention for Social Relationships (other boats– attention)

# Sailboat metaphor

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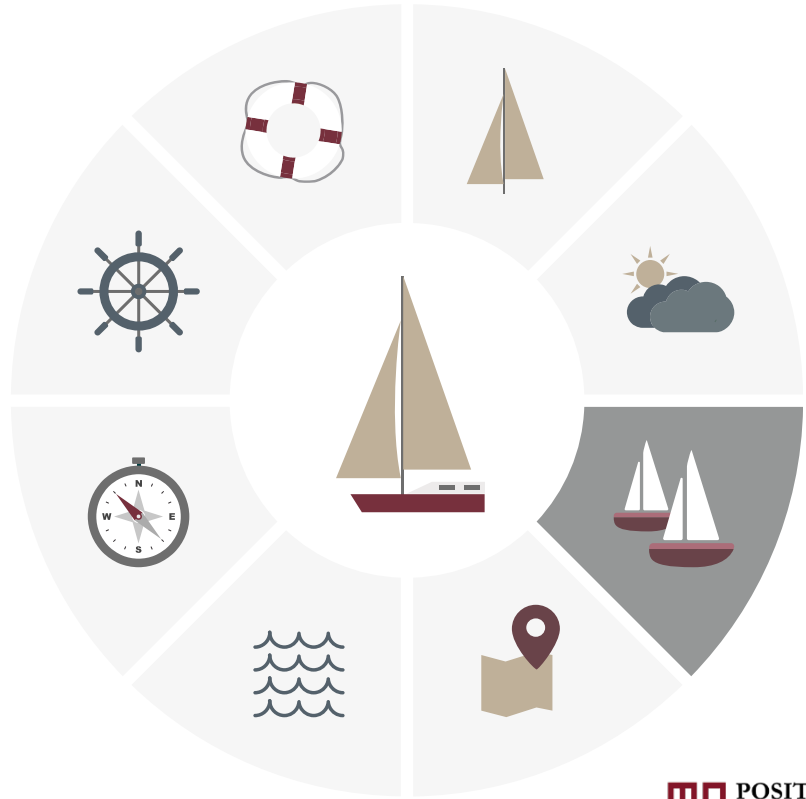
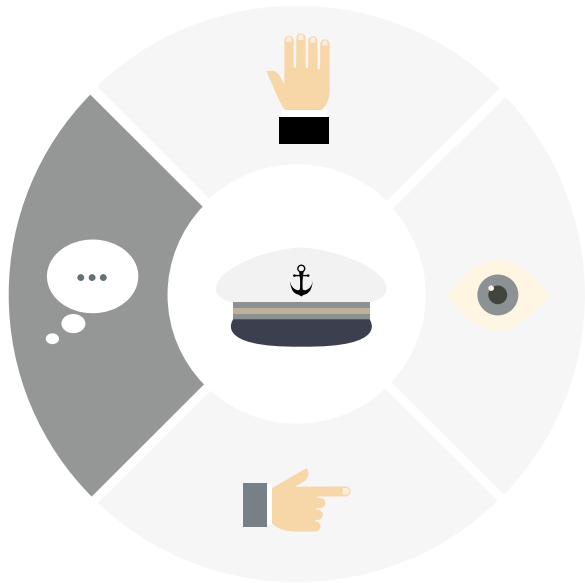
# 3



Perceived Quality of Relationships  
(other boats– thoughts)

# The captain: Thoughts

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## Core question

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“How does the individual evaluate the quality of his or her relationships?”

# Loneliness

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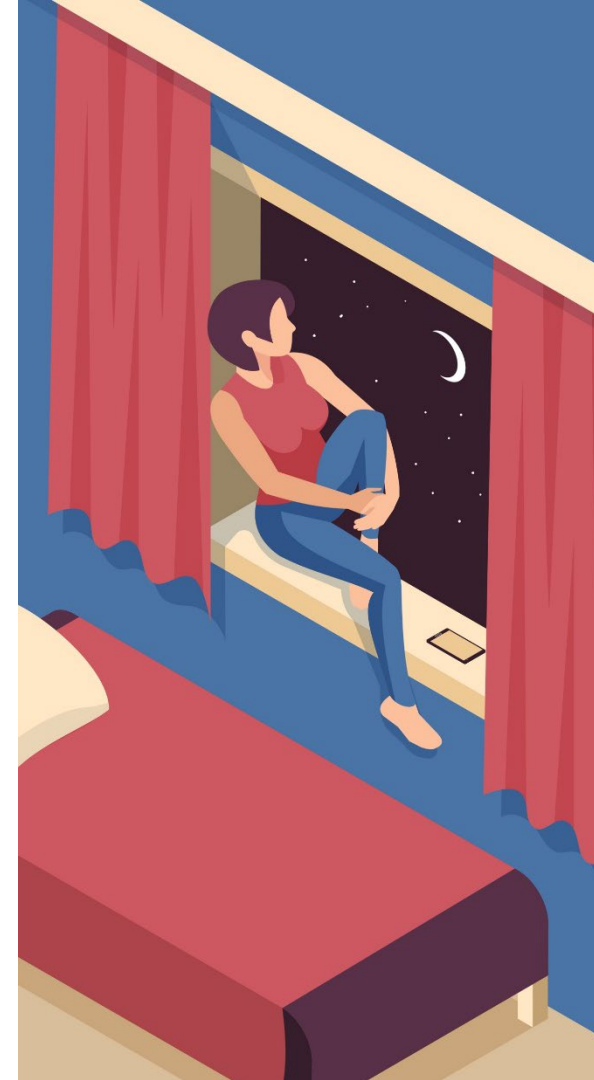
- = **perception** of social isolation
- dissatisfaction with the discrepancy between desired and actual social relationships
- a risk factor for a great diversity of mental and physical health problems

# Loneliness

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**social isolation and loneliness are often not significantly correlated:**

- even a large number of people can cause needs to be unfulfilled
- not all people feel the need for a large social network
- some people prefer solitude





## Practical note

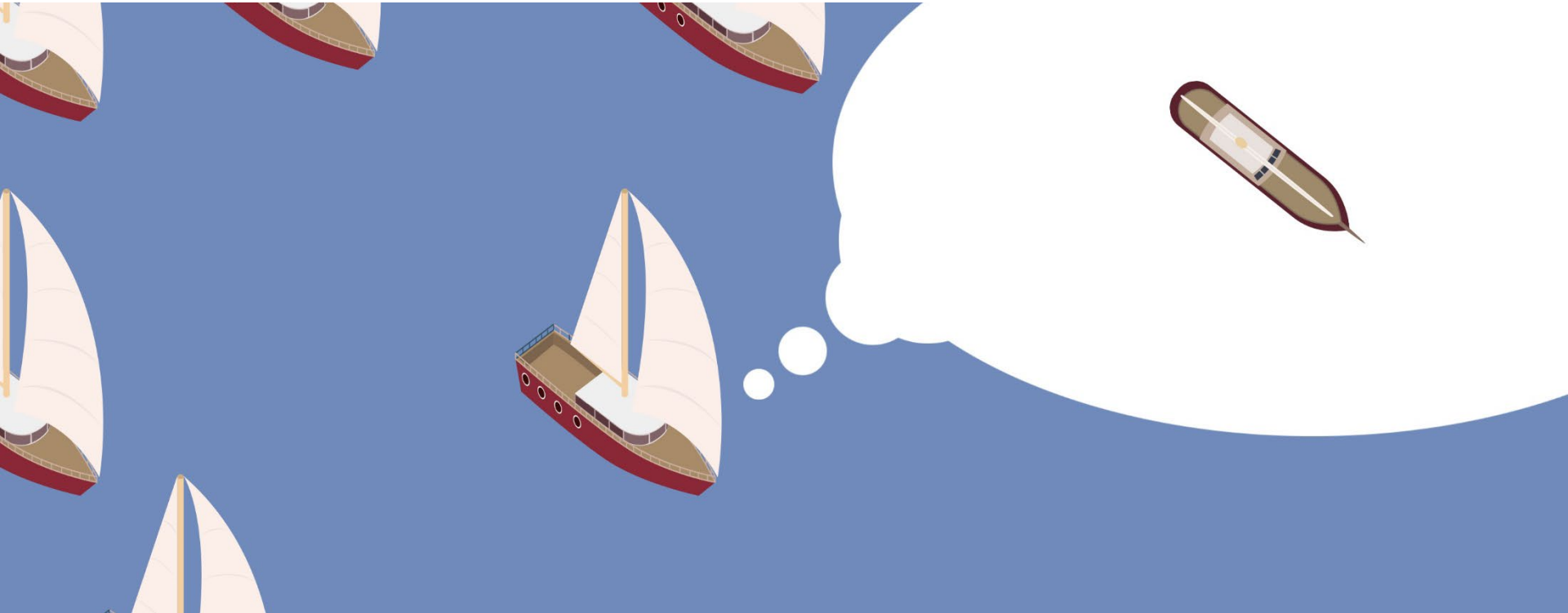
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Because a client's loneliness may result from the **low perceived quality** rather than the quantity of social ties, it is advisable to **address clients' perception of their network** first. Why and when does the client feel most alone? Have there been times when the client did not feel lonely? When? Which people were part of the client's network during those times? Are they still part of the network? Is it possible to re-connect with these people again?

Chapter 3 – Perceived Quality of Relationships (other boats - thoughts)

# Sailboat metaphor

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# Emotional vs social loneliness

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	emotional loneliness	social loneliness
cause	end of strong relationship	few engaging social ties
example causes	divorce, death	moving, new job
solution	new intimate relationship	expanding social network

## Practical note

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Many clients find it difficult to talk about loneliness because lonely people carry a **social stigma**. The practitioner is advised to **carefully use the word “lonely”** and preferably use alternative terms to investigate the client’s desire to expand his social network. For example, a practitioner may ask questions like, “Have you recently had the urge to talk to someone but felt there was no-one you could turn to?” Or “Have you recently felt left out?”

# Social connectedness

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- = **perception** of high closeness with others
- perception that one is belonging to a family, friends or a social group



# Social connectedness

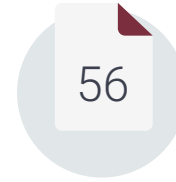
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**social connectedness is positively associated with:**

- sense of belonging
- personal meaning
- life satisfaction
- improved health status

## Social Connectedness Scale

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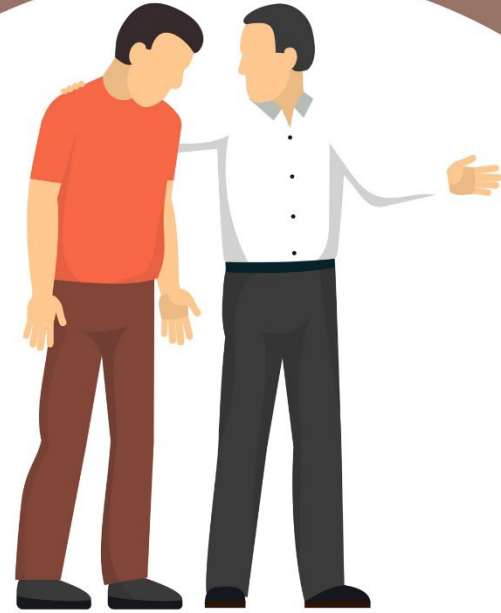


- Lee & Robbins (1995)
- eight items
- 6-point Likert scale
- Cronbach's alpha = .93

## Perceived social support

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- = **perception** that social support is available if reached out for the support of another person
- only modestly related to actual support received from others



Chapter 3 – Perceived Quality of Relationships (other boats - thoughts)

# Sailboat metaphor

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# Perceived social support

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## Low perceived support

supportive attempts of others are generally **judged** as unhelpful

more inclined to **recall** past unhelpful received support

more inclined to **forget** past helpful received support

## High perceived support

supportive attempts of others are generally judged as helpful

more inclined to recall past helpful received support

less inclined to forget past helpful received support

# Perceived social support

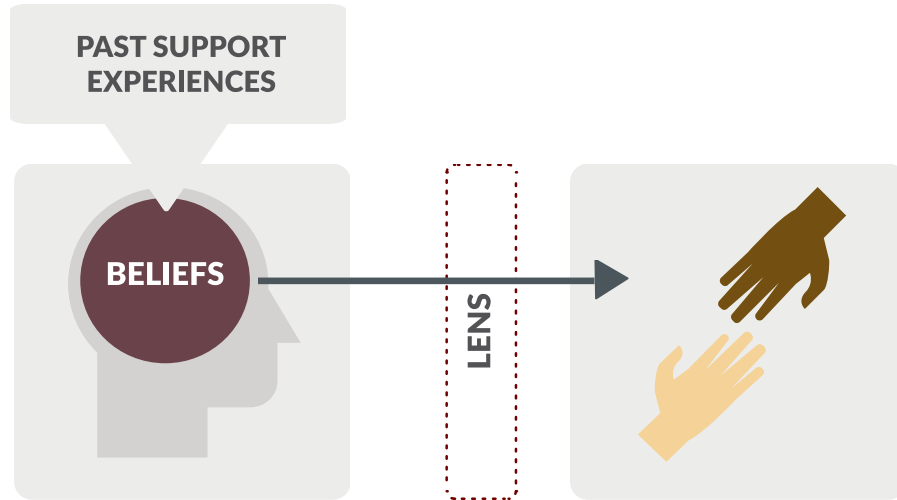
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perceived support (but not received support) predicts:

- coping effectiveness
- adjustment outcome
- psychological well-being
- physical well-being

# Perceived social support: Cognitive mechanisms

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## Practical note

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Perceived social support **may or may not accurately reflect reality**. Rather than simply helping clients to make greater use of their social support network, it is important to first **address clients' beliefs** that may help or prevent them from effectively participating in and perceiving supportive interactions.

# Perceived social support

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## Practical note

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# Perceived social support

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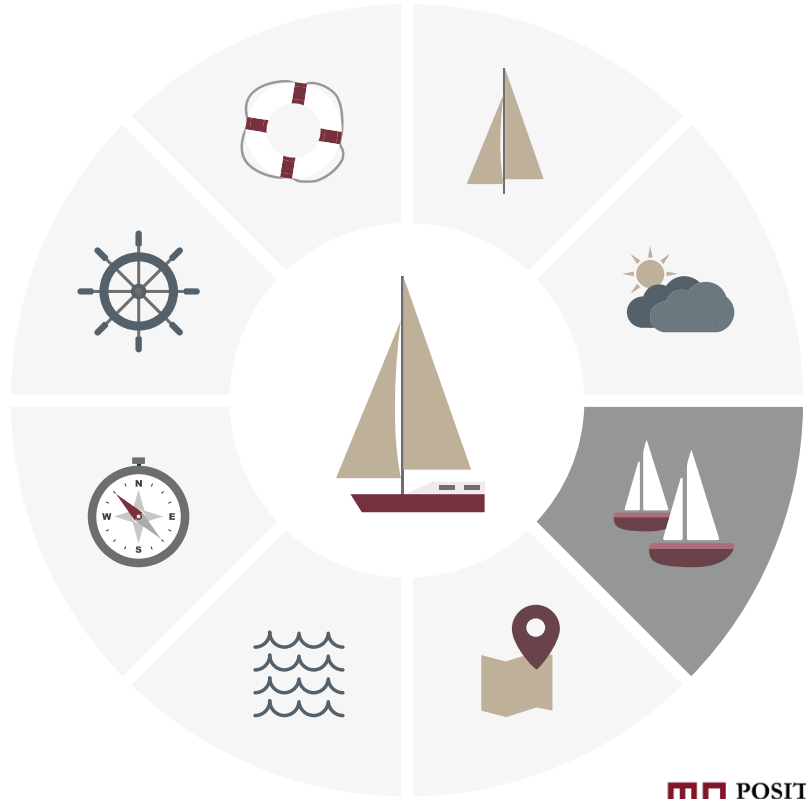
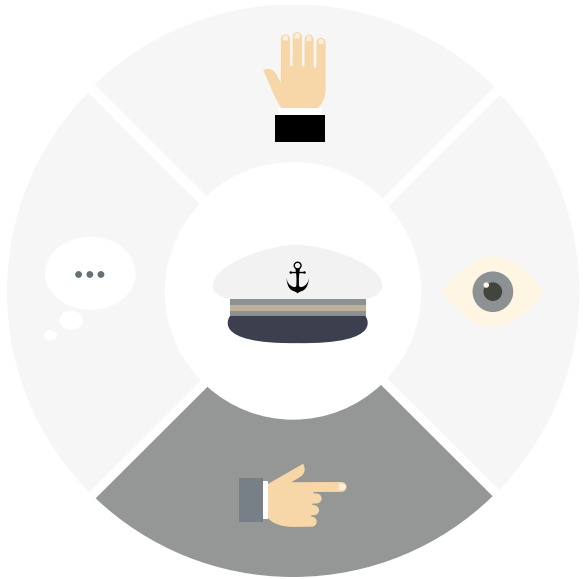
What would you do when a client believes social support is unavailable?

# 4

Motivation for Commitment  
(other boats– motivation)

# The captain: Motivation

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## Core question

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“Why is the individual committed to his relationships?”

# Investment model of commitment

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- commitment: the degree to which the individual is motivated to maintain the relationship
- commitment level = key to understanding decisions to remain in relationships

# Investment model of commitment

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3 factors determine whether an individual remains committed to a given relationship:

- a) satisfaction
- b) quality of alternatives
- c) investment

## A) Satisfaction

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- the degree to which the individual favorably evaluates the relationship
- influenced by the extent of need fulfilment
- high satisfaction = more commitment



## B) Alternative quality

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- attractiveness and availability of alternatives to the relationship
- can be affected by the self-view
- low alternative quality = stronger commitment



## C) Investment size

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- magnitude and importance of the resources attached to the relationship
- psychological investments, social connections, or physical assets
- high investment size = stronger commitment



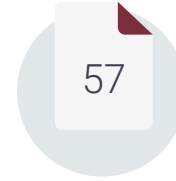
# Investment model of commitment

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# Analyzing relationship commitment

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Choose a relationship. Analyse your commitment to this relationship using the Investment model of commitment.

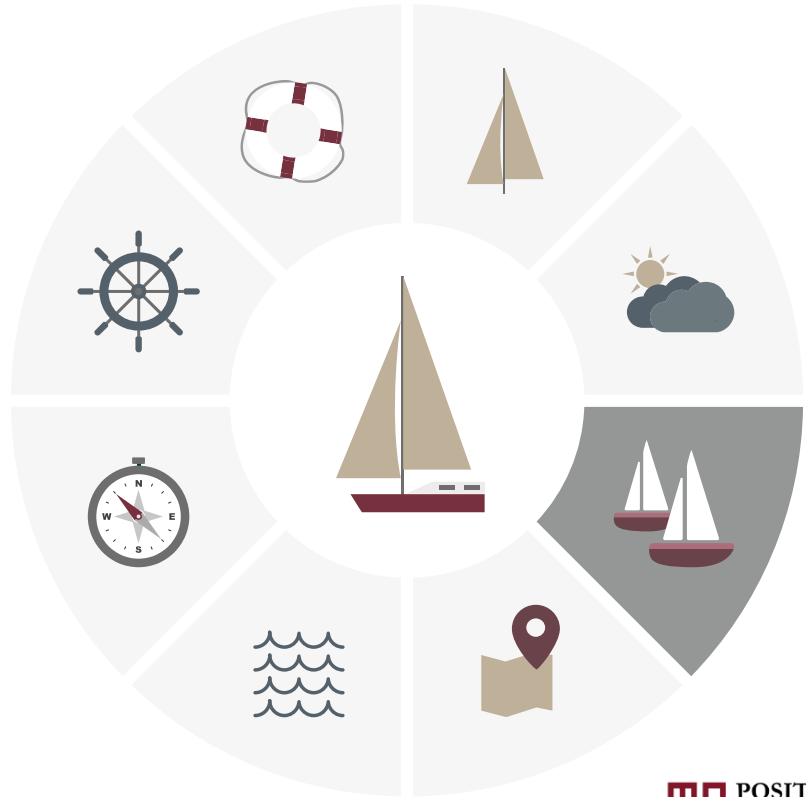
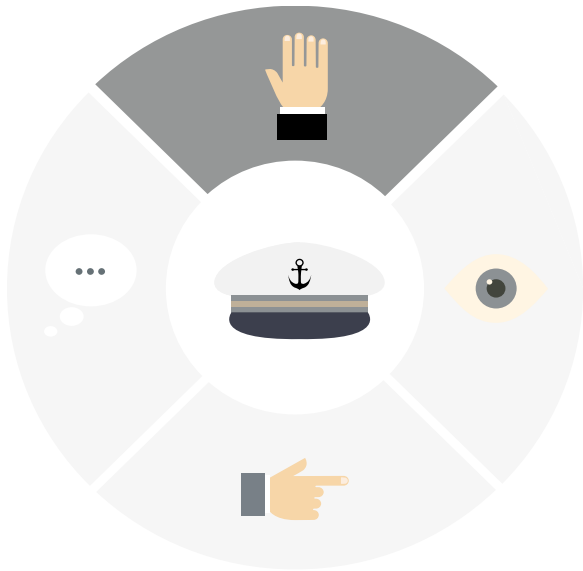
# 5

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Building Social Resources  
(other boats– action)

# The captain: Action

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## Core question

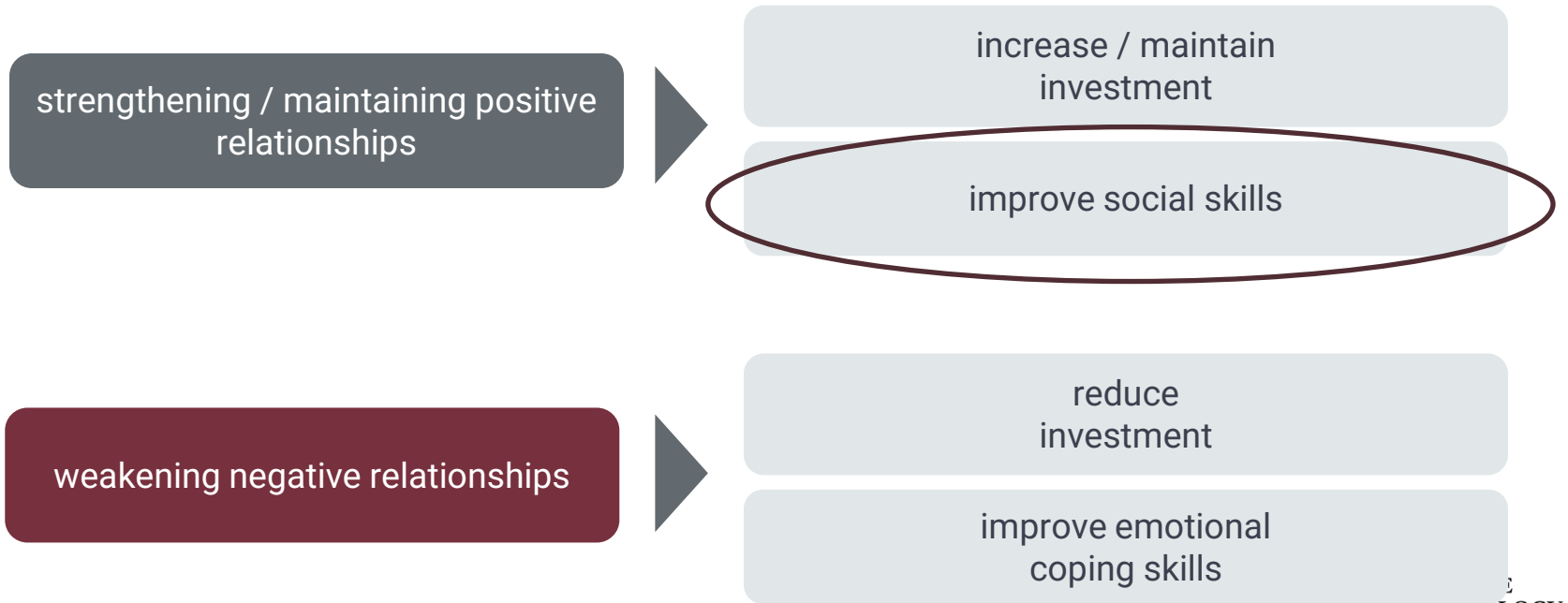
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”

“Which of the individual’s actions help to build and maintain constructive (positive) relationships?”

# Positive relationship building

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## Hughes & Terrell (2017, p.77)

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”

“Our skill in interpersonal relationships governs whether other people in our lives will feel eager to see us again or dread it.”

## Exercise

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In the following exercise, you will team up with another person; one of you will be the listener and the other will be the story-teller. The story-teller will talk about something positive, and the listener will listen to this story. Before you start engaging in these conversations, I will hand you an instruction note. This note will tell you what to do. Please keep this note to yourself and make sure that the other person does not read your instructions.

# Mindful listening

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- single focus
- present moment focus
- connect
- provide room
- no judgment
- redirect

# Exercise

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In the following exercise, you will be asked to either talk about something positive (interviewee) or listen to this story (interviewer). Before you start engaging in these conversations, I will hand you an instruction note.

# Response styles

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	constructive	destructive
active	<b>positive response</b> enthusiasm, smiling, maintaining eye contact, displaying positive emotions	<b>negative response</b> focusing on the down-side, negative non-verbal cues
passive	<b>positive response</b> happy, but lacking enthusiasm, little to no active emotional expression	<b>negative response</b> lacking interest, little to no eye contact, turning away

# Response styles

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## active–constructive response style:

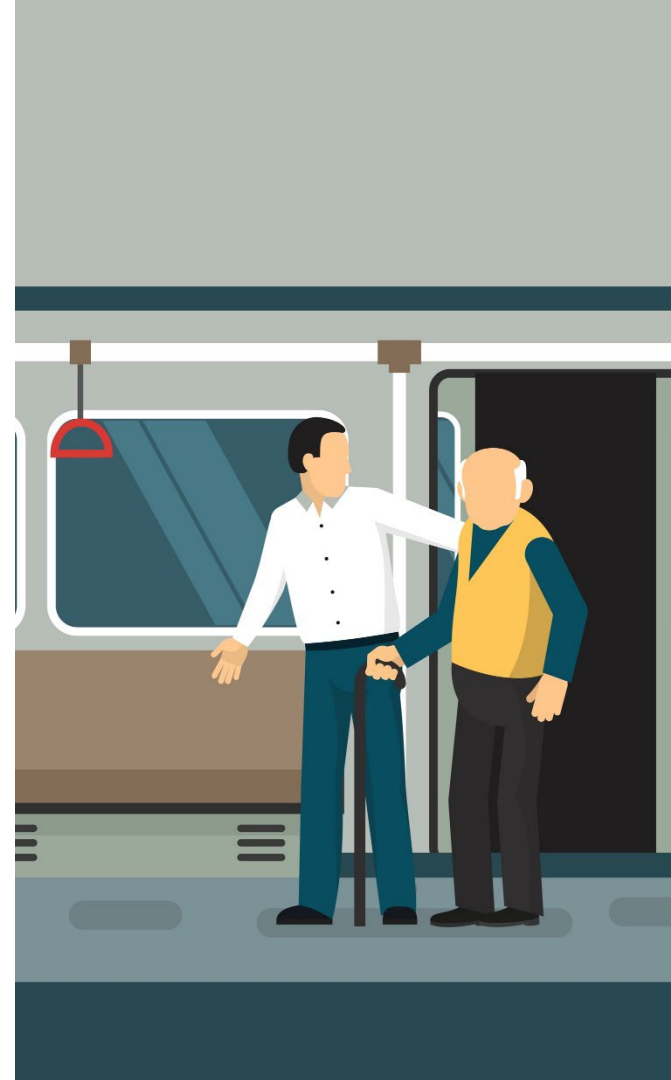
- positively correlated with relationship well-being
- results in stronger positive emotions
- results in significantly greater felt closeness, perceived responsiveness, trust, and willingness to self-disclose
- predicts future relationship quality and relationship stability

Chapter 5 – Relationship Management (other boats– action)

# Kindness

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- acting kindly towards others
- self-less giving



# Kindness

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- kind acts increase life satisfaction
- happy people score higher on their motivation to perform, and their recognition and enactment of kind behaviours
- subjective happiness can be increased by counting one's own acts of kindness for one week

# Kindness builds relationships

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- helping others increases the chance that they will like you, appreciate you, and offer gratitude
- acting kind towards others can help build relationships that are characterized by reciprocity



# Gratitude for others

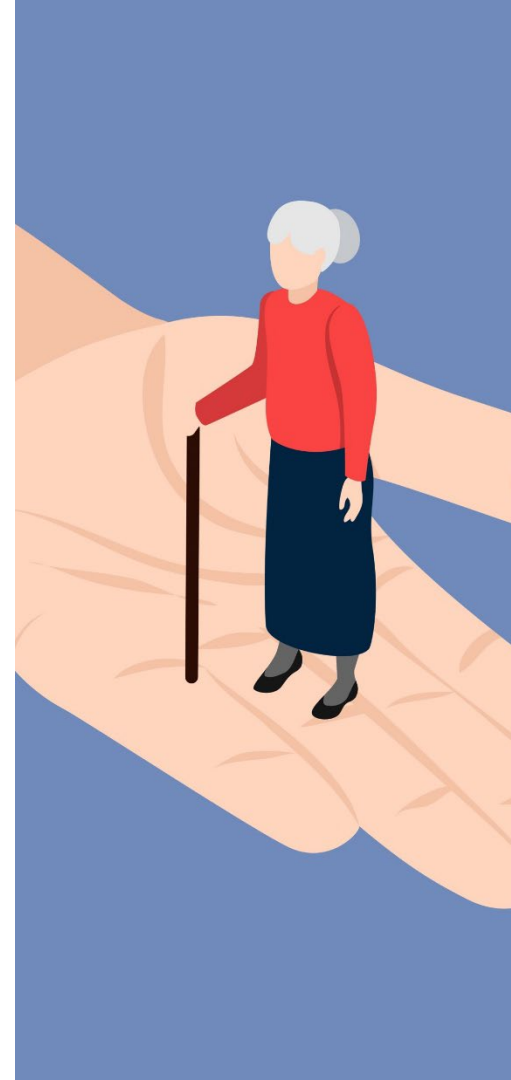
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- arises when another person provides a benefit to the self
- **noticing** and **acknowledging** the value of another person or of his/her actions
- experiencing gratitude promotes relationship-building behaviors (e.g., increased pro-social behavior, decreased aggression, and increased relationship investment)

# Find-remind-and-bind theory

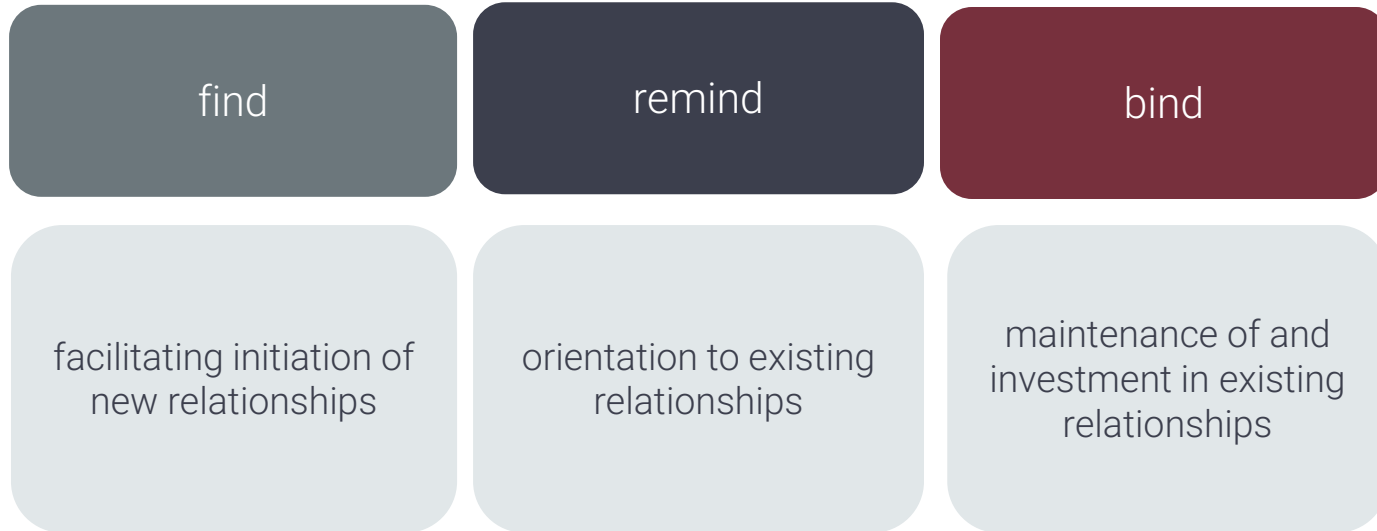
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- humans share a need to **evaluate** and know how they **relate** to others
- others' actions toward the self reveal **information** about the relationship with that person
- gratitude **draws attention** to the opportunity to connect with someone who enriches one's life and provides support



# Find-remind-and-bind theory

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# Gratitude expression

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## expression of gratitude:

- the most frequent response to the experience of gratitude
- is positively associated with the expresser's degree of responsibility he/she feels for the welfare of the other person
- increases level of comfort in voicing relationship concerns
- increases the chance that the other will behave in a pro-social manner in return

# Gratitude expression

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Take a moment to think about three people in your life who have influenced you in a positive and meaningful way. In pairs, share why you are grateful for these people. What would you like to say to each of them?

# Vulnerability

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**Carl Rogers**

loneliness can be alleviated when one feels understood, accepted, and cared about

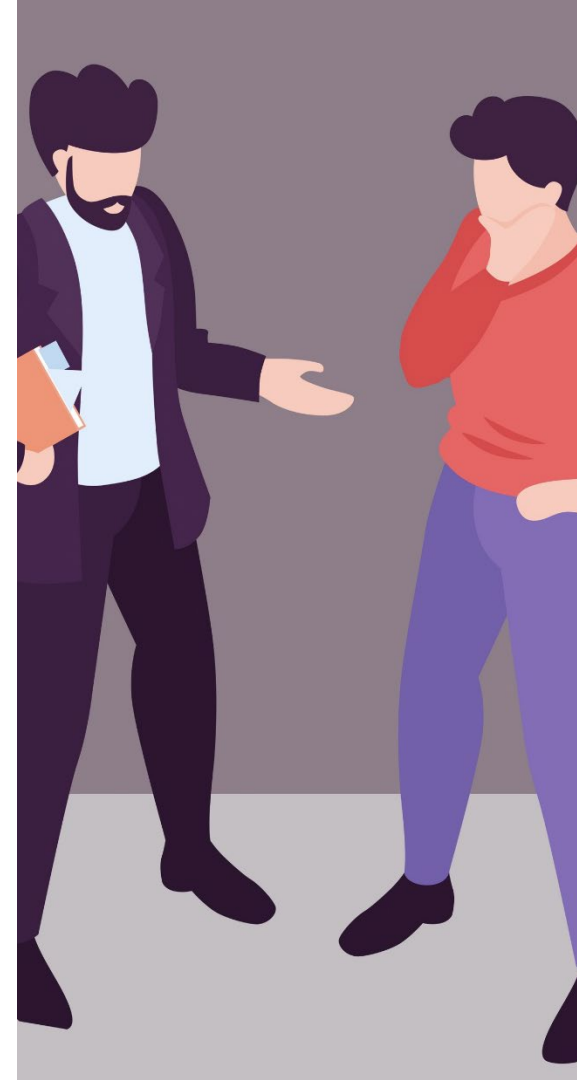


requires the willingness to expose true feelings, insecurities, and needs

## Self-disclosure

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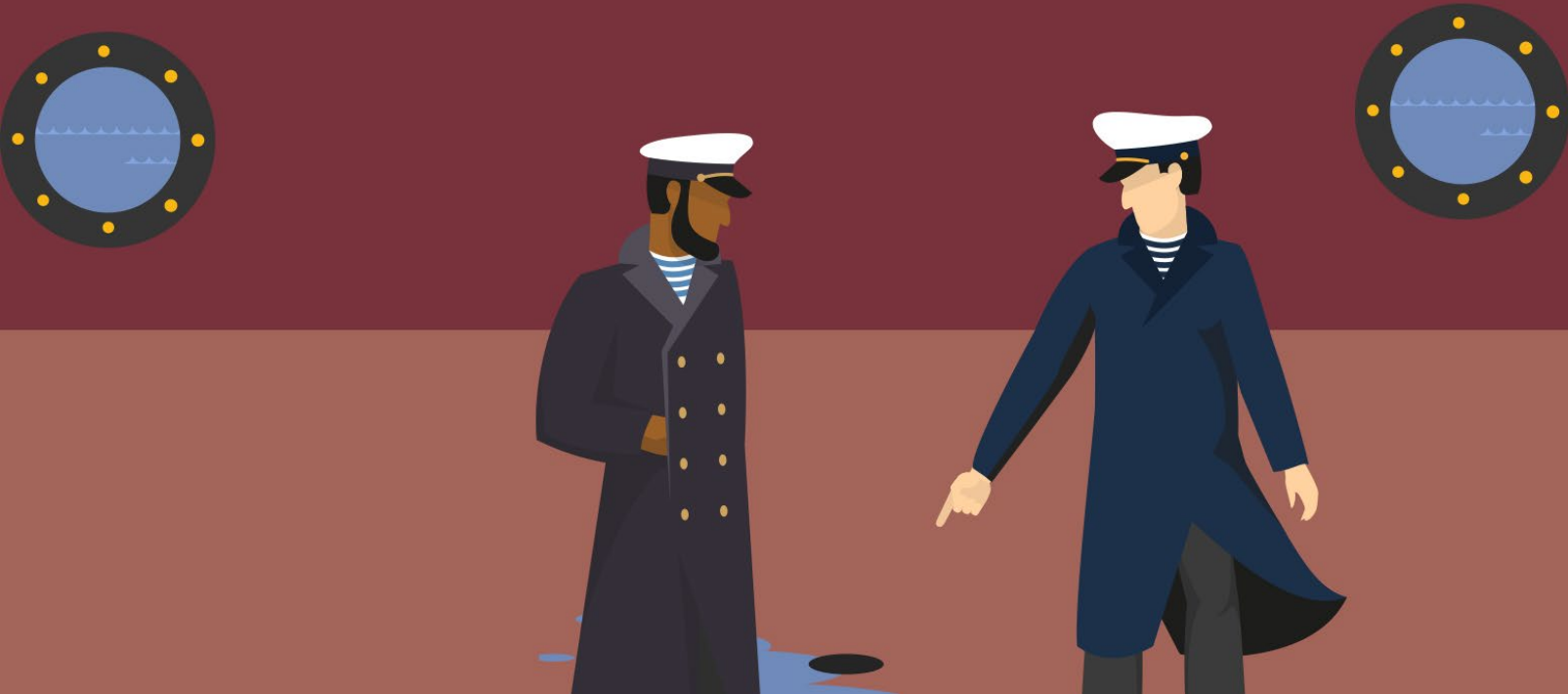
- linked to increased intimacy
- self-disclosure of emotion better predictor of intimacy than self-disclosure of fact
- greater willingness to share negative emotions  
-> more friends, more new relationships
- disclosure of vulnerabilities prompts more supportive responses



Chapter 5 – Relationship Management (other boats– action)

# Sailboat metaphor

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## Practical note

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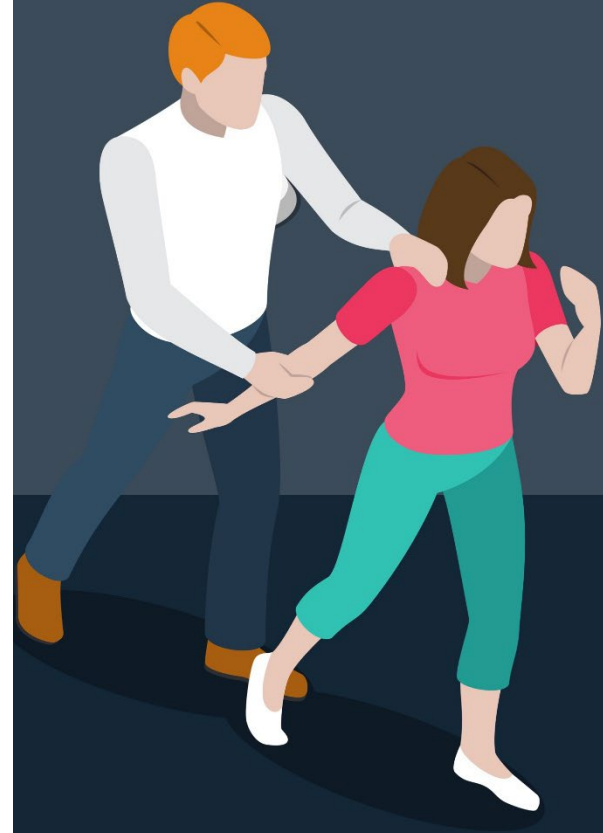


Advise clients to **express vulnerability** to those with whom they have an **actual or potential communal relationship** because these recipients are most likely to welcome and respond to the client's disclosure. Moreover, the **magnitude of vulnerability** should be in line with the **strength of the relationship** with the other person or what is desired by the other person. Expressing minor rather than major insecurities to someone the client just met is likely to be more appropriate.

# Apologizing

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- effective tool to restore possible damage to relationship
- communicates understanding of damaged trust and importance of addressing it
- increases the victim's likelihood of forgiving



# Apologizing effectively

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Effective apologies for a trust violation contain a greater number of the following components:

- an acknowledgment of responsibility
  - an offer of repair
  - an explanation of what went wrong
  - an expression of regret
  - a declaration of repentance
  - a request for forgiveness
-  most important
-  least important

# Forgiveness

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= the conscious, intentional act of releasing feelings of resentment or vengeance toward a person or group who has harmed or betrayed you, regardless of whether they actually deserve your forgiveness.

# Revenge

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betray

disappoint

let down

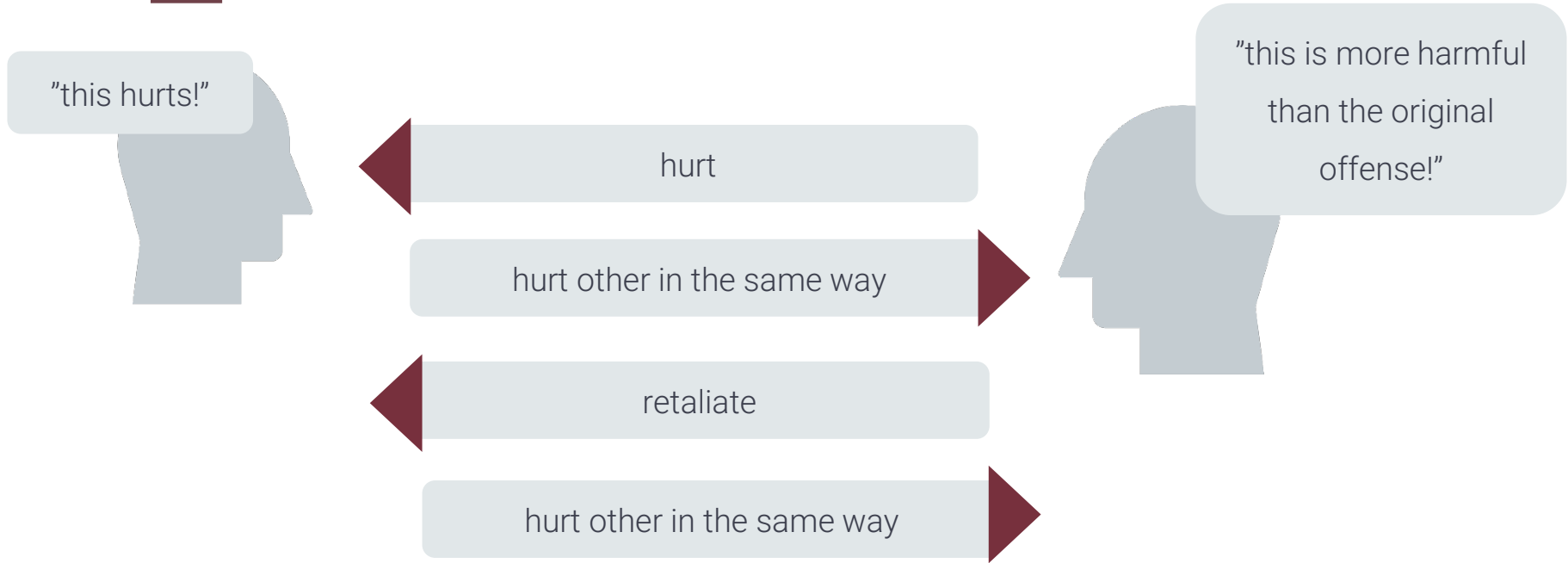


revenge

or

avoidance

# The vicious cycle of revenge



etc.

# Forgiveness

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- enhances relationship intimacy
- enhances relationship commitment
- promotes better conflict resolution
- positively influences relationship quality in the long run



## Practical note

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Correctly inform clients about forgiveness. First, to forgive is **not necessarily to forget**. Second, forgiveness does **not mean approving** of the behavior of the other person; instead, it means allowing oneself to **let go of the pain** that is caused by holding a grudge. Third, forgiveness is **different from reconciliation**. Reconciliation means being friendly again or coming to an agreement. Fourth, It may **take a considerable amount of time** to completely stop holding grudges.

# Empathy

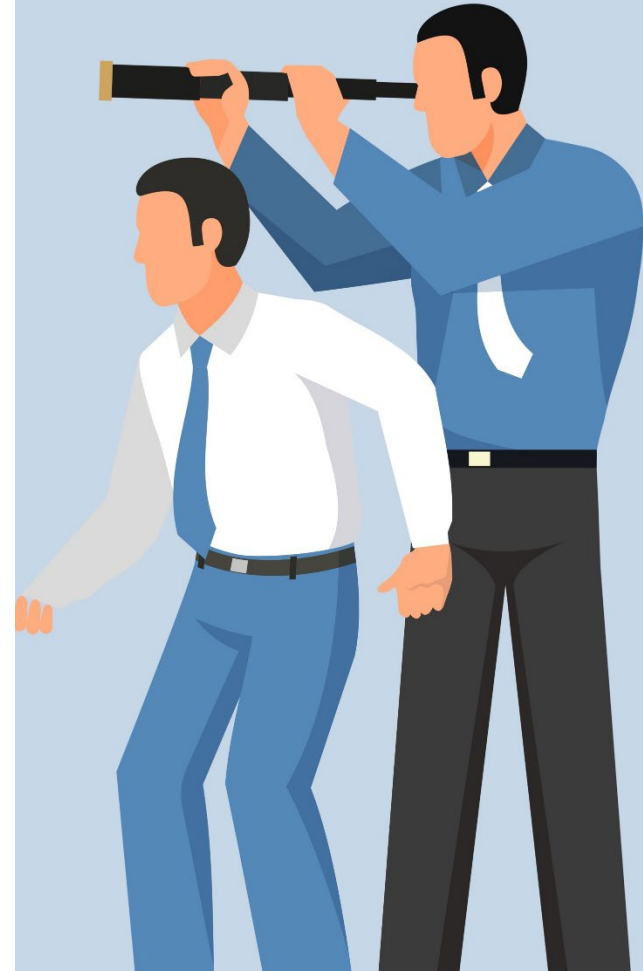
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= the ability to perceive a situation **from the other person's perspective**—to see, hear, and feel the unique world of the other.

## Four attributes of empathy

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1. to be able to see the world as others see it
2. to be non-judgmental
3. to understand another person's feelings
4. to communicate ones' understanding of that person's feelings



# Empathy

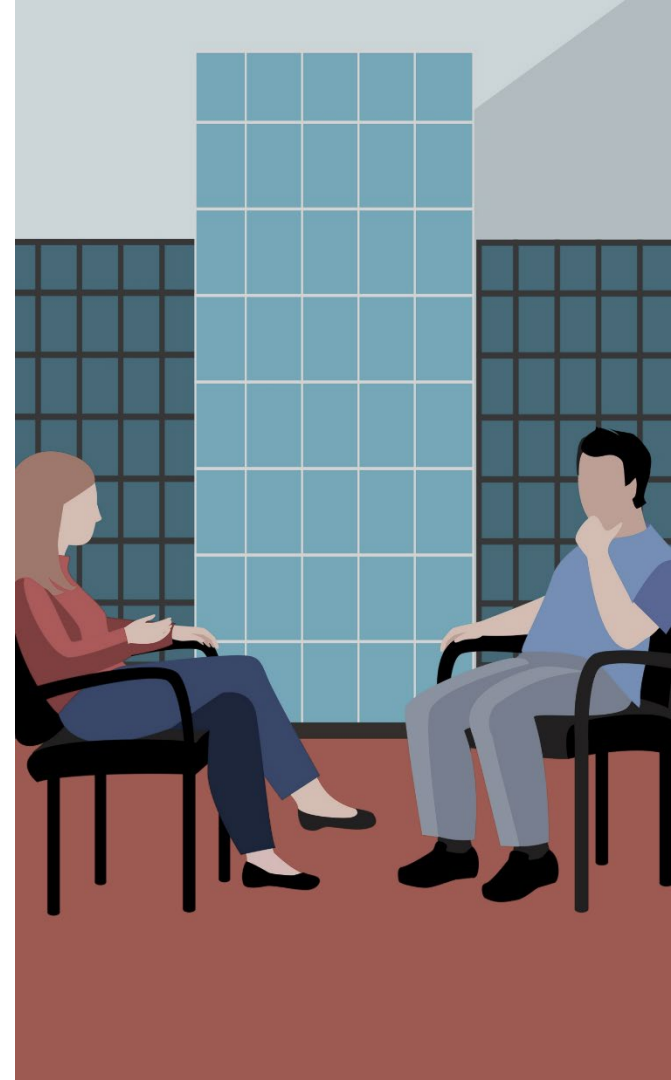
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- important motivation for prosocial and altruistic behavior
- determinant of the ability to forgive
- training empathy results in lower levels of aggression and increased levels of cooperativeness, helpfulness, trustworthiness, and kindness

# Therapeutic alliance

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a type of positive relationship where both practitioner and client establish a relationship built on trust, acceptance, and empathy and agree on shared goals, work together on tasks designed to bring a positive outcome



## Cooper & Lesser (2011, p.33)

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”

[the collaboration between practitioner and client is] “one of the keys, if not the key, to the change process”

## Orlinsky, Grave, and Parks (1994)

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the following practitioner variables and behaviours are key ingredients of positive treatment outcomes:

- empathic understanding
- affirmation of the client
- the ability to engage the client
- the ability to focus on the client's issues and emotions
- credibility
- skill

# Basic need satisfaction

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# Basic need satisfaction

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## autonomy

- Is the relationship between my client and me characterised by **independence** or am I feeling responsible for the progress of the client?
- Am I being a **facilitator** who enables the client to find answers or an expert who holds and provides the answers?
- Am I able to allow the client a sufficient level of **choice** with regard to the practical aspects of the intervention?
- Can I **tailor** the practical parts of the intervention to the specific preferences and goals of the client?
- Can I see this client as a person who is **on a journey**, or will I be bound by his past or my past?

# Basic need satisfaction

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competence

- Can I look at the client from a **strengths perspective**?
- Can I see the **strengths** of the client's **environment**?
- Can I assist the client in formulating **specific, concrete and realistic goals**?
- Can I assist the client in **taking actions** that result in valuable personal experiences?
- Do I spend sufficient time highlighting the client's **previous successes**?

# Basic need satisfaction

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relatedness

- Is the relationship between me and my client characterised by **equality**?
- Can I remember that I am working with a human being, **just like myself**?
- Am I able to be **open and honest** about my own difficult experiences?
- Can I **connect to the experience** of my clients and thus meet them “where they are”?
- Am I able to listen carefully with **non-judgmental acceptance**?

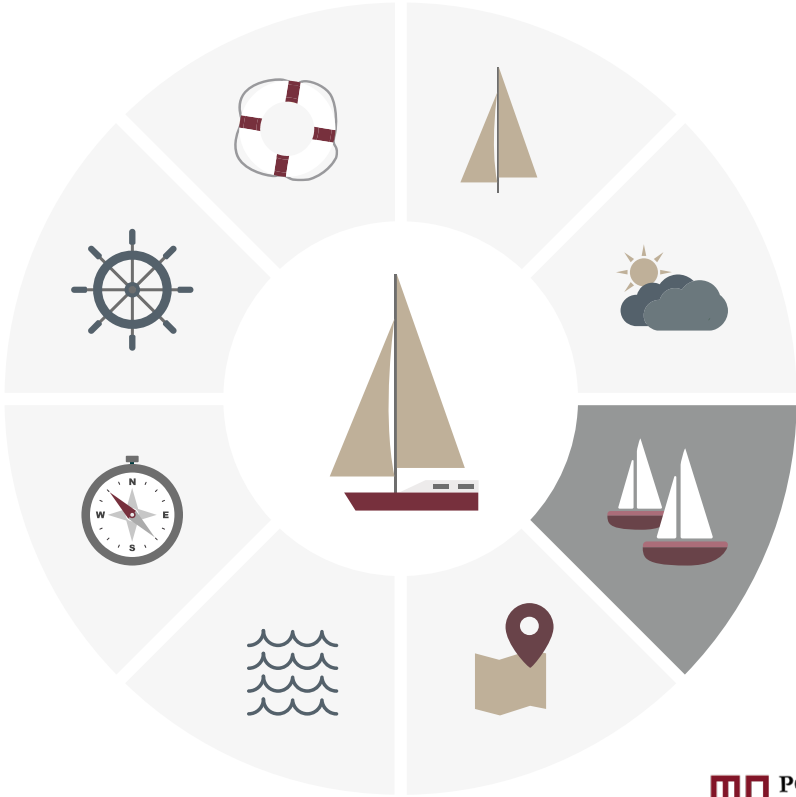
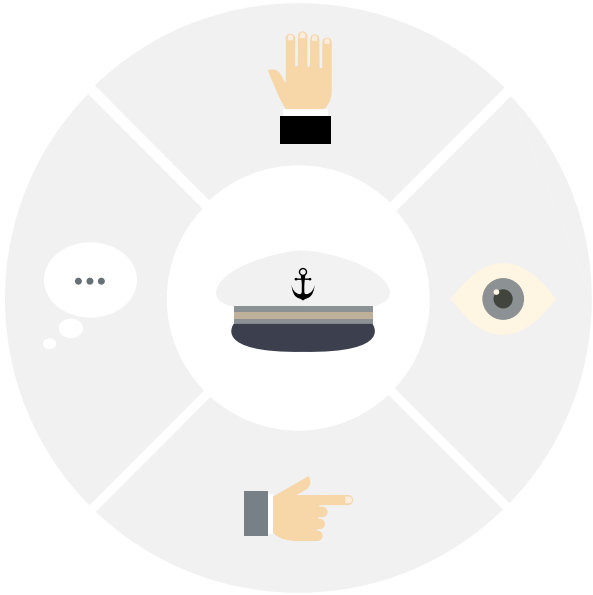
# 6



Summary

# Today

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# Thanks



for your attention