

WORKBOOK

EIGHT SESSIONS



Emotionally Healthy Relationships

DISCIPLESHIP *that* DEEPLY CHANGES
YOUR RELATIONSHIP *with* OTHERS



Peter and Geri Scazzero

Stop Mind Reading and Clarify Expectations



Session Two

GROUP MEETING

Daily Office (8 minutes)

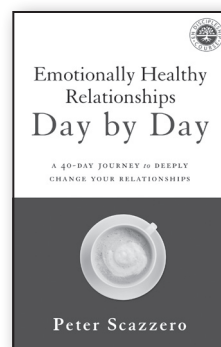
Do one of the Daily Offices from Week 2 of *Emotionally Healthy Relationships Day by Day* to begin your session. **(Leaders, please see point number two in “General Guidelines” on page 160.)**

Introduction (2 minutes)

The ninth commandment reads: “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor” (Exodus 20:16). Every time we make an assumption about someone who has hurt or disappointed us, without confirming it, we believe a lie about this person in our head. Because we have not checked it out with him or her, it is very possible that we are believing something untrue. It is also likely that we will pass that false assumption around to others.

When we leave reality for a mental creation of our own doing (hidden assumptions), we create a counterfeit world. When we do this, it can properly be said that we exclude God from our lives because God does not exist outside of reality and truth. In doing so we wreck relationships by creating endless confusion and conflict. The Bible has much to say about not taking on the role of judge to others (Matthew 7:1–5).

The application of these two simple skills—Stop Mind Reading and Clarify Expectations—holds within it the key to preventing large-scale misunderstandings in your friendships, family, workplace, and church. These skills provide practical help for loving others well by eliminating untold numbers of conflicts in our relationships.



Growing Connected (10 minutes)

1. *Day by Day* Debrief: What obstacles, difficulties, or successes did you experience in meeting with God this past week using the *EH Relationships Day by Day* devotional? Have two or three people share.

2. Turn to the person next to you and share a recent unmet expectation you had of someone (e.g., your phone call, text, or email was not returned). What story did you tell yourself?

Bible Study (10 minutes)

The book of Proverbs is filled with practical wisdom about holy restraint and not jumping to conclusions before we have all the facts. Read Proverbs 18:2, 13, 15, and 17.

“Fools find no pleasure in understanding but delight in airing their own opinions.”
(Proverbs 18:2)

“To answer before listening—that is folly and shame.” (Proverbs 18:13)

“The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge; the ears of the wise seek it out.”
(Proverbs 18:15)

“In a lawsuit the first to speak seems right, until someone comes forward and cross-examines.” (Proverbs 18:17)

3. Write down the person's name (or initials) and the assumption you have.

Partner Activity (4 minutes)

Turn to one person in the group. Ask him/her to sit in for the person whose name you wrote down, and then practice this skill.

1. First ask:
 - “May I have permission to read your mind?” or
 - “Can I check out an assumption I have?”
2. After the person answers yes, say:
 - “I think that you think . . . Is that correct?” or
 - “I am wondering . . . Is that correct?”

START
SESSION
HERE

 *Resume the Video*

 ***Video Notes***

Clarify Expectations

- Similar to the Stop Mind Reading skill, Clarify Expectations is about eliminating confusion, pain, and disappointment in relationships.
- **The purpose:** To recognize whether certain expectations are valid or not, and to clarify our expectations with others.
- Expectations come from many sources: families, cultures, TV, the internet, fairy tales, billboards, schools, etc.

The Problem with Many of Our Expectations

1. **Unconscious:** We have expectations of others that we don't even know we have. We often don't know we have the expectation until we are disappointed.
2. **Unrealistic:** We have expectations that are not reasonable.

3. **Unspoken:** We're conscious of them, and they may be realistic, but they are not spoken.
4. **Un-agreed Upon:** We have expectations of others that they did not agree to, or others have expectations of us that we did not agree to.

Confusion around expectations exists in:

- Workplaces
- Homes and families
- Neighborhoods
- Churches

The Million-Dollar Question

- What expectations do we have a right to have and what expectations do we not have a right to have? In other words, what is a valid expectation and what is an invalid expectation?
- Sometimes we don't even know we have an expectation until we become angry or disappointed.
- What makes an expectation valid? Valid expectations are:
 1. **Conscious:** I am aware of my expectation.
 2. **Realistic:** This means there is evidence to support that the expectation is reasonable. Either it has been done in the past or the person has the capacity and willingness to do it.
 3. **Spoken:** I have expressed the expectation clearly.
 4. **Agreed Upon:** The other person has agreed to the expectation by saying "yes."

Key principle: An expectation is only valid when it is mutually agreed upon. The exceptions to this key principle are expectations between a parent and child (e.g., expected chores); employer/employee contracts; and marriage vows of faithfulness.

⏸ *Pause the Video*

Workbook Activity (3 minutes)***Individual Activity (3 minutes)***

1. Think of a recent, simple expectation you had that went unmet and made you angry, disappointed, or confused. (For example: Someone didn't return your phone call; a close friend didn't send you a birthday card; your extended family holiday gathering was filled with tension; your roommate did not take out the garbage; or, as the last one home, your son did not turn off the lights.) Write it below.

2. Use the following checklist to clarify the expectation in your own mind:
 - **Conscious:** Were you aware you had this expectation?
 - **Realistic:** Is this expectation reasonable? Why? Or why not? What is the specific evidence that this person (or these people) can, or will, do this? For example: If your holiday with your family each year is always filled with tension, what has changed so that this year might be different? If your close friends do not normally send you a birthday card, what has changed this year so that you can realistically expect a different outcome?
 - **Spoken:** Have you clearly spoken the expectation, or do you just think the other person should know?
 - **Agreed Upon:** Has the other person agreed to the expectation?

REMEMBER THIS PRINCIPLE: Expectations are only valid when they have been mutually agreed upon.

As you watch the following video segment, you will see examples of expectations that are not clarified ("The Wrong Way"). In the final example, you will see what it looks like to clarify an expectation well ("The Right Way"). Note the differences as you watch.

 *Resume the Video*

Clarify Expectations: The Wrong Way

Clarify Expectations: The Right Way

Ⓜ *Pause the Video*

Workbook Activities (25 Minutes)

Partner Activity (15 minutes)

1. Find a partner. Share the expectation you wrote down in the earlier Individual Activity and whom it applies to. Your partner will role-play as that person. If you have a “live” situation with someone in the group, partner with him/her.
2. Practice clarifying your expectation and see if it is agreed upon. Here are some possible sentence stems to help you begin:
 - I’d like to clarify an expectation I have of you . . . Is this correct?
 - I expect . . . because . . . Can we agree to that?
 - I wonder . . . Are you willing?
 - I’d like to check out an assumption I’ve made . . . Is this true?
3. Take a few minutes and then switch roles.
4. Repeat the skill a second time using a different scenario.

Small Group Sharing (10 minutes)

In groups of three or four:

5. What was this experience like for you?

6. Where else in your life might you have expectations, or be making assumptions of others, that you need to clarify—in your workplace, school, family, or friendships? What is an expectation someone might have of you that needs clarification? What might your next steps be?

▶ **VIDEO: Closing Summary** (3 minutes)

Video Notes

Many issues are resolved by simply clarifying expectations around them. Others require negotiation. This will be covered in Session 7 with the Fight Cleanly (or Clean Fighting) skill.

Three Common Questions

1. What do I do when someone cannot meet my expectation?
2. What do I do if I have an agreed upon expectation with someone and they don't do it?
3. What do I do if God doesn't meet my expectations?

Optional Session Wrap-up (5 minutes)

Together with your small group, ask any questions of clarification regarding this session and then briefly close in prayer.

PERSONAL ACTION STEP

Decide when you will practice this skill before the next session. (We recommend two to three times.) Write your response below.

I plan on practicing the Stop Mind Reading and Clarify Expectations skills:

With whom? _____

When? _____