

# **Growing Amidst the Challenges**

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# Growing healthy relationships

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## The best rule for life

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.

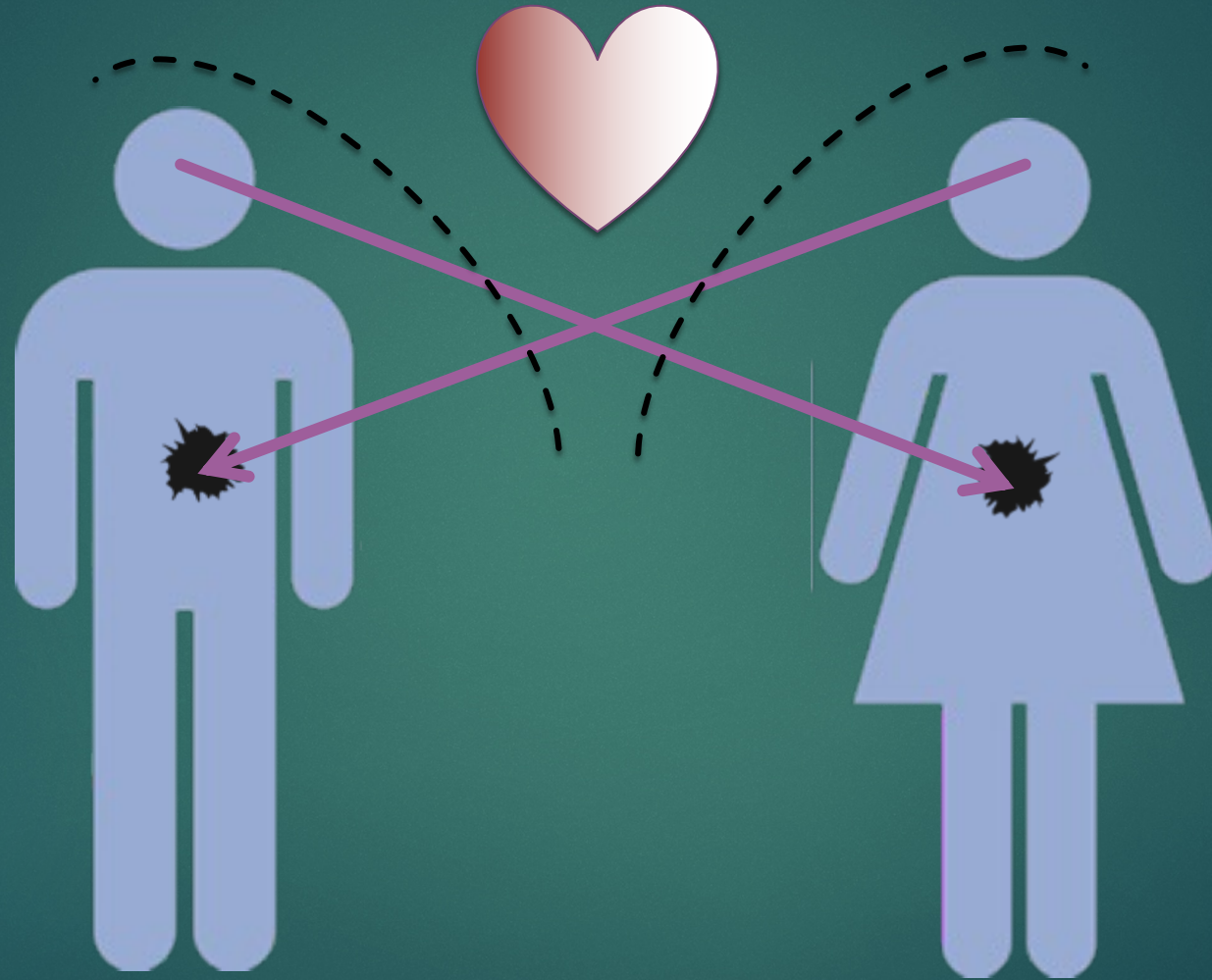
And the second is like it. Love your neighbour as yourself. All the Laws and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

Matthew 22:36-40 NIV.





When we focus on trying to fix each other's brokenness... we damage relationships.





When we focus on taking away aloneness, and let God deal with each of our brokenness, He can grow us in His own loving time and way.

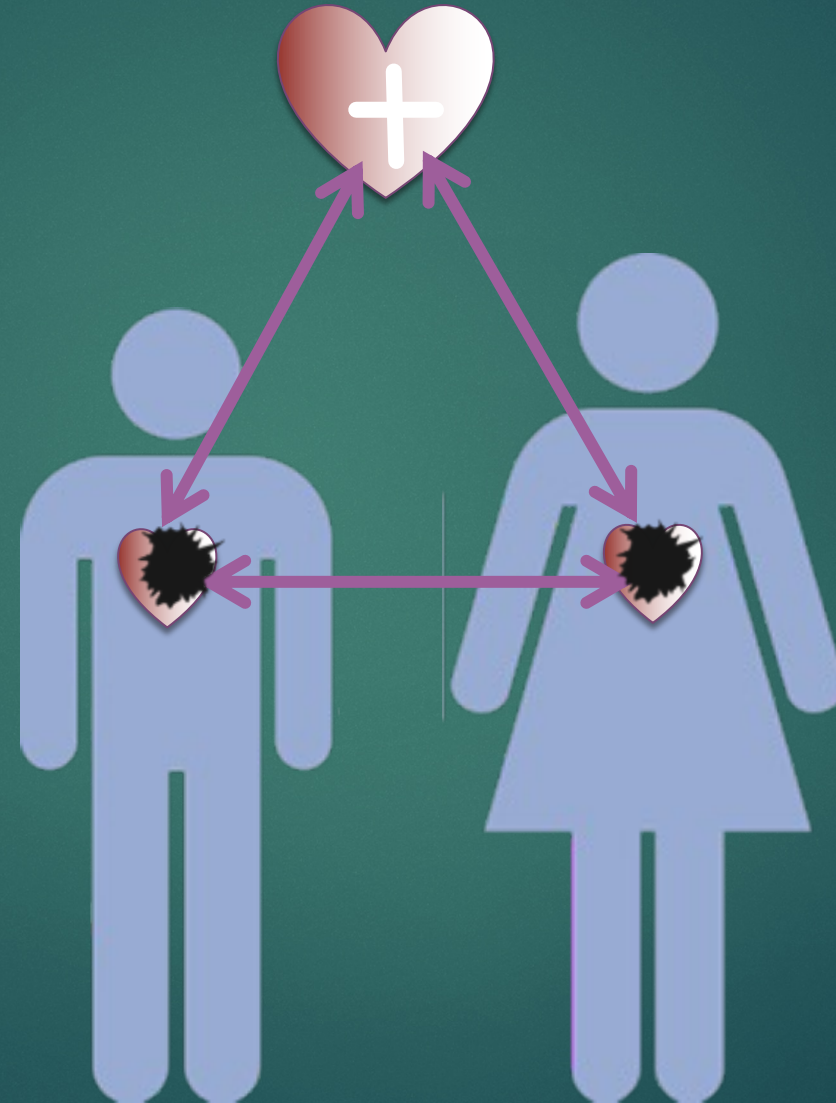




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## Being channels of God's love to our students

We can help our students learn how to love God and others through our interactions with them.





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Everything we do in a relationship  
either weakens it or strengthens it.



# When our students feel safe and cared for:

- ▶ Their brains are bathed in the hormone oxytocin.
- ▶ This enables them to access their pre-frontal cortex and make higher level decisions.
- ▶ They will feel more relaxed, and this will help them to be open to new learning.
- ▶ They learn how to listen to others and show empathy.
- ▶ They learn good relationship skills from our modelling.
- ▶ They are less likely to argue with us and with each other.

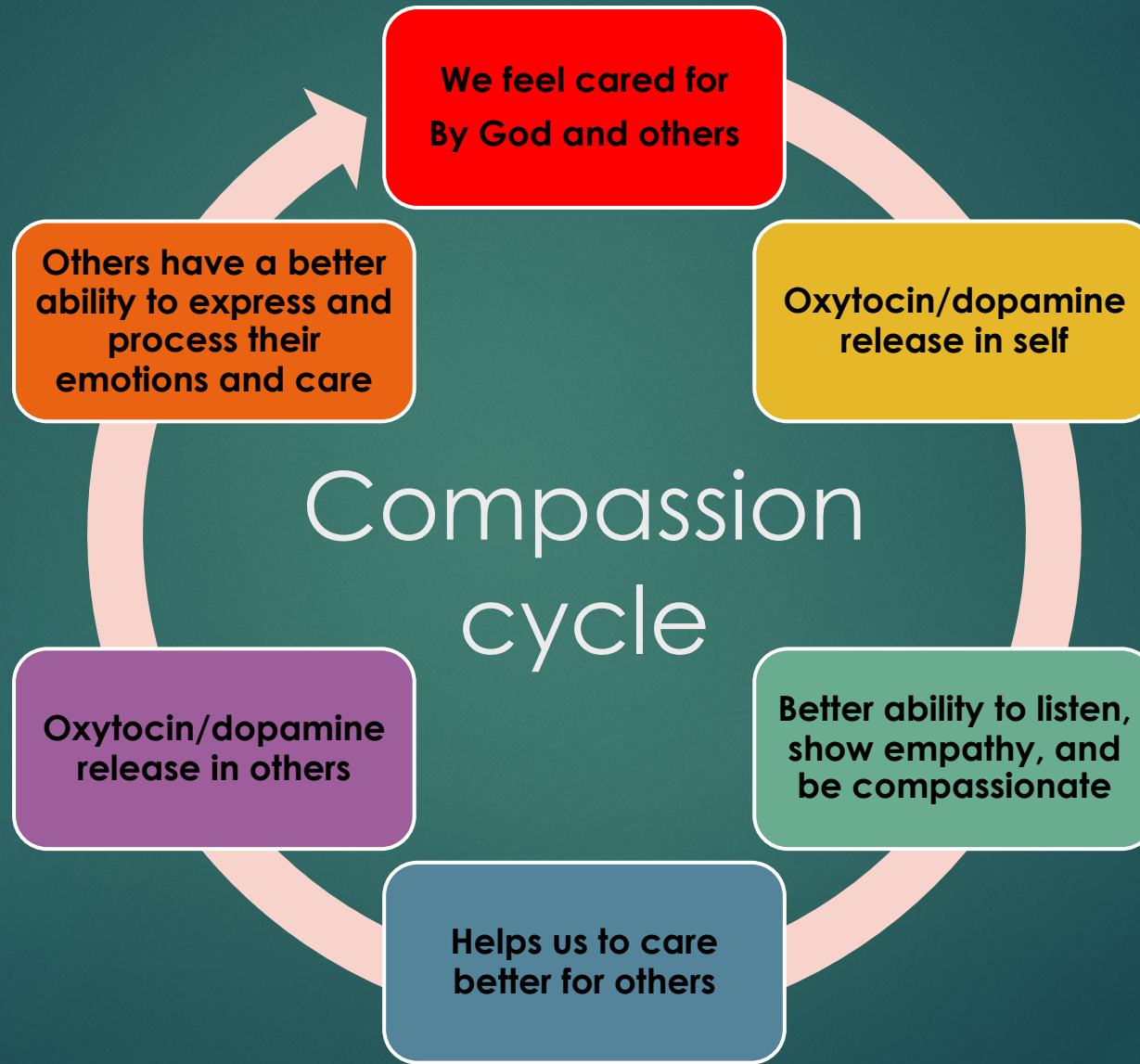


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# Care/Connection

Accepted

Seen and heard

Cared for/loved

Appreciated

Comforted

Respected

Encouraged

Protected

Valued

Supported







## Care/Connection

Accepted  
Seen and heard  
Cared for/loved  
Appreciated  
Comforted  
Respected  
Encouraged  
Protected  
Valued  
Supported

## Lonely/disconnected

Rejected  
Ignored  
Hurt  
Judged  
Criticized  
Shamed  
Discouraged  
Afraid  
Unwanted  
Abandoned







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# Acceptance

**Being welcomed  
and loved even  
we've messed up**

Accept one another  
just as Christ has  
accepted you. Romans  
15:7 NIV



# Acceptance

- Students are learning – they will make mistakes.
- How we respond to their mistakes makes a big difference to their ability to learn.
- Point out what they have done well.
- Let them know that their mistakes do not change your relationship with them.
- Opportunities to show grace and forgiveness and teach that God accepts them no matter what.
- If you struggle to accept a student – be curious about why it is difficult for you.



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# Focused Attention

Being seen and heard  
by others

...not looking to your  
own interests, but  
each of you to the  
interests of the others.

Phil. 2:4 NIV



# Focused Attention

- Give warm, smiling eye contact.
- Sum up what they say, to show you are really listening to them, rather than just nodding.
- Take time to get to know your students, and the details of their lives. What are they best at, what do they enjoy the most?
- How happy are they? What is happening in their family context? If they are sad, anxious and afraid it will be hard for them to learn.
- Take a few moments to share in an activity that they really enjoy.



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# Being cared for/loved

Be kind and  
compassionate to  
one another,  
Ephesians 4:32 NIV



# Being cared for/loved

- Greet students warmly and kindly at the beginning of the day.
- Ask how they are. Listen if they are clearly struggling with something.
- Smile often.
- Use a warm and kind/gentle voice.
- Do or say something kind to your students as often as you can manage.
- Bring simple treats occasionally.
- Encourage them to care for each other.
- Kind classrooms nurture learning.

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# Appreciation

Thanking each  
other

I thank my God  
every time I  
remember you.  
Phil. 1:3 NIV



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# Appreciation

- ▶ I really appreciated it when you...
- ▶ Thank you so much for...
- ▶ Class appreciation board.
- ▶ Make/buy fun, printed thank you notes that you can give out freely.
- ▶ Pop a surprise thank you note into their bag, book, desk, etc.
- ▶ The more appreciation in the classroom, the less conflict...





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# Comfort

**Being soothed when  
life is tough and  
painful**

Mourn with those who  
mourn.

Romans 12:15 NIV



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# Comforting students

- ▶ Listen to their story
- ▶ Know what comforts your students: hugs, prayer, talking, space to think and recover, walk, fun distraction, etc.
- ▶ Comfort menu





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# Respect

Being treated with  
dignity and  
fairness

Honour one another  
above yourselves.  
Romans 12:10 NIV





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# Respect

- ▶ Listen carefully to your students concerns.
- ▶ Avoid shaming them
- ▶ Take them seriously.
- ▶ Invite their ideas and opinions
- ▶ Asking before using other people's things or making plans that involve them.



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# Encouragement

Supporting students towards  
their personal goals

**Cheering them on**

Encourage one another  
and build each other up,  
just as in fact you are  
doing. 1 Thess. 5:11 NIV



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# Encouragement

- ▶ Know some of your students' short and long term goals. Help them to identify them.
- ▶ Affirm/encourage effort rather than achievement.
- ▶ I can see that you are taking time to get things just right.
- ▶ I really admire your persistence!
- ▶ Well done for finishing that!



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# Security

**Helping students  
to feel safe from  
risk, harm and  
shame**

Perfect love  
casts out fear.  
1 John 4:18 NIV



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# Security

- ▶ Be mindful of each student's personality, and how they are wired.
- ▶ Provide a range of ways for students to respond in class. Writing on sticky notes and placing them on a wall can help introverted students to feel safe enough to make contributions.
- ▶ Learn how to make a classroom a safe place for introverts, children with high sensitivity and neurodiversity.
- ▶ Make it OK to make mistakes and learn from them.



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# Being valued

**Showing or telling each student how special they are to you and to God**

You are my Son,  
whom I love,  
with you I am well-pleased.  
Mark 1:11 NIV



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# Being Valued

- ▶ Tell students that they are special and important to you, in simple, fun or creative ways.
- ▶ Create photos and tangible signs of being special.
- ▶ Celebrate their special moments!



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# Support

Helping students with  
challenging tasks

Bear one another's  
burdens. Galatians  
6:2 NIV



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# Support and help

- ▶ Anticipate when help might be needed and be ready and willing to be involved.
- ▶ “I have 10 minutes – what’s the most helpful thing I can do for you?”
- ▶ Ask what you can do to help them this week.
- ▶ Ask what they are most struggling with and coach them through a task.
- ▶ Invite older children/volunteers help younger students – they will learn by teaching.



# What are your top 3 relational needs?

Comfort

Respect

Acceptance

Encouragement

Affection

Security

Appreciation

Being Valued

Attention

Support



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Love often anticipates the need and meets the need before the other person realises they have it...

While we were yet sinners, Christ died for US...



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## Three danger signs:

1. Self-centredness
2. Self-reliance
3. Self-condemnation





## Self-centredness

My needs are more important than your needs.

So you can give to me, but I won't give anything back...



# Self-Reliance

I don't need any of those relational things from you – If I want them I can get them myself.



Photo by Tim Foster on Unsplash



# Self-condemnation

I would like to feel more cared for, but I don't think I really deserve it – so if you're nice to me I will just feel guilty.







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# The Prodigal Son



# Which relational needs did the father meet, and how?

Comfort

Acceptance

Affection

Appreciation

Attention

Respect

Encouragement

Security

Specialness

Support



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Being grumpy or “out of sorts” = being hungry for relational connection...

What am I most hungry for?



# How is this useful?



Recognise your own needs in a situation.



Find comfortable ways to let people know what you need.



Wonder what other people may be needing. Ask if you are not sure.



Listen for clues to their needs in what they are saying and doing.



Know that every time you meet someone's need you are strengthening the relationship.



# When babies' and children's love needs are not met:

They experience neglect, pain, distress, sadness, aloneness, abuse.

- ▶ This leads to **unhealthy thoughts** – I'm not important, what's wrong with me? Maybe if I try harder, they will love me...
- ▶ Leading to **negative emotions** – unworthy, distressed, bitter, hurt, sad, lonely...
- ▶ Leading to **unhealthy behaviours** – addictions, manipulation, bullying, perfectionism, eating disorders...
- ▶ Leading to **poorer outcomes** – less successful relationships, poor sense of self, lower achievers, more likelihood of mental illness, etc.





# When babies' and children's love needs are met...

- They have **healthy thoughts** – I am loved, I am special to others, I can do it...
- Leading to **positive emotions** – valued, confident, safe, thankful...
- Leading to **healthy behaviours** – kind, helpful, considerate, generous, striving for excellence...
- Leading to **positive lives and relationships** – happier relationships, growing character, good sense of self, caring of others, etc.





I feel like  
giving up.



**I hate maths**





I don't want to go  
to school ever  
again!





**I can't believe you  
took my pen without  
asking me!**





Do you like being  
my teacher?



**Stop asking me  
questions in front of  
the whole class...**



Lara left a mean  
message on my  
desk



**No one in the  
class likes me...**



**I'm tired of being  
the only person  
who ever tidies up!**



**No one will ever  
want to speak to  
me again.**







# Prayer



And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ - to the glory and praise of God.

Phil 1:9-11





• **Any  
Questions?**