

Three things happen in a relationship (see publication entitled **Where do you Turn?**)

- 1) We *turn towards* each other and see each other as A FRIEND
- 2) We *turn away* from each other and see each other as A STRANGER
- 3) We *turn against* each other and see each other as AN ADVERSARY

ONLY ONE OF THESE IS COMPATIBLE WITH LONG-TERM SATISFYING RELATIONSHIP AND THE SKILLS FOR CULTIVATING A FRIENDSHIP RELATIONSHIP CAN BE LEARNED AND PRACTICED.

Think about 3 or 4 important relationships that you have with certain individuals (in both your professional and personal life). Choose individuals with whom you have daily or numerous weekly interactions. For each one, ask yourself:

1. What is the predominant nature of my relationship with this person *at this time*?*
 - Do I feel seen, heard, understood and valued by this person? Do I feel soothed and secure in their presence? Do I trust that this person genuinely cares about me and what happens to me? Does this person experience these same things from me? (*friendship relationship*)
 - Do I feel that my needs or opinions are dismissed, devalued or misunderstood by this person? Do I feel that they don't genuinely care about me or what I bring to the relationship? Do I sometimes feel "invisible" to this person, or that they avoid any real opportunities to have serious and important conversations with me—that they may be just fine having a distant relationship with me or not having any relationship at all? Does this person experience these same things from me? (*stranger relationship*)
 - Do I feel that this person is as an adversary who gets in the way of my getting my needs met? Do I feel activated and unsafe around this person? Do I feel that they take a contrary position to almost any idea of mine, often outwardly exhibiting contempt, judging or criticism? Does this person experience these same things from me? (*adversarial relationship*)

**It should be noted that these descriptions are fluid—they can change as relationships evolve over time and may be different with different people. It is just worth having awareness of these three basic relationship patterns. Depending on the relationship, we all exhibit any of the above patterns, and the most important thing is to repair ruptures or misunderstandings / hurts when they happen. Unfortunately, many of us didn't learn effective tools for repair in our healthcare training. We will be discussing this with you when we are there.*

In general, relationships that we experience as friendly or collegial include curiosity to know more about each other's beliefs and opinions, and even

when we disagree with one another. We feel seen, heard, understood and valued by each other. We exhibit more inquiry than advocacy and more willingness to be oriented towards the needs of each other as opposed to our own. In avoidant relationships, which we term stranger relationships, we are less curious, have an inquiry : advocacy ratio that is more neutral and are less oriented to considering the effects of decisions on each other. In relationships where there is discord or acrimony, which we have termed as adversarial relationships, we are more likely to interrogate, criticize and judge each other and the effect of decisions on the other is not important—only that the task at hand is accomplished. The I : A ratio in these relationships is very low and adversarial relationships may exhibit open (and potentially destructive) conflict.

All relationships (including our relationship with ourselves) are vulnerable to these patterns and in all cases, they can evolve over time to a different pattern as skills are learned and intra and interpersonal relationship resources expand. This is why we always remind people that we are “verbs”—constantly in the action of evolving; and not “nouns”—labels or categories that define us forever. That is why learning and applying the skills for repair create greater security and permits relationships to grow.