

tMLF's GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING CRITICAL RELATIONSHIPS®

Originally this tool was written to help a chief exec to understand the relationship with their chair, who, as it turned out had very similar needs and desires. I have used it over the last 10 years with all sorts of relationships, hierarchical, familial, funders, commissioners, children, so basically it can help enormously in most situations where people are in relationship. It is especially powerful with figures of authority.

This tool aims to:

- help you to manage important / critical relationships
- helps you to understand the other person, their patterns of behaviour, thinking and feeling
- develops a deeper understanding between you and the other person
- grounds you in the fact you have choice about what to do

- 1 Make a full description of the person, what they are like in as many ways as you can
- 2 Describe their patterns of behaviour (this might include some psychological patterns: driver behaviour, Negative Automatic Thoughts), simple patterns that you consistently observe.
- 3 What are their needs? Describe in as much detail as possible their needs. If for example you have unearthed patterns of control it might be that they are scared and need to be kept safe, so explore, behavioural, emotional and psychological needs not just cognitive)
- 4 How can you meet them? Think carefully what you can do to meet these needs.
- 5 What would the cost be to you of meeting their needs? List what the costs are: time, loss of face, impacting your own work
- 6 What is similar in your patterns? Ask yourself the tough questions. What do you do that they do? When do you do the same annoying behaviour? What needs do you share?
- 7 What do you choose to do? Having explored in some detail the other then really ground yourself in the fact that you have both choice and agency. There might be consequences of not meeting their needs but be present and mindful in whatever you choose.

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