



We Just Don't Communicate

How Relationships Die

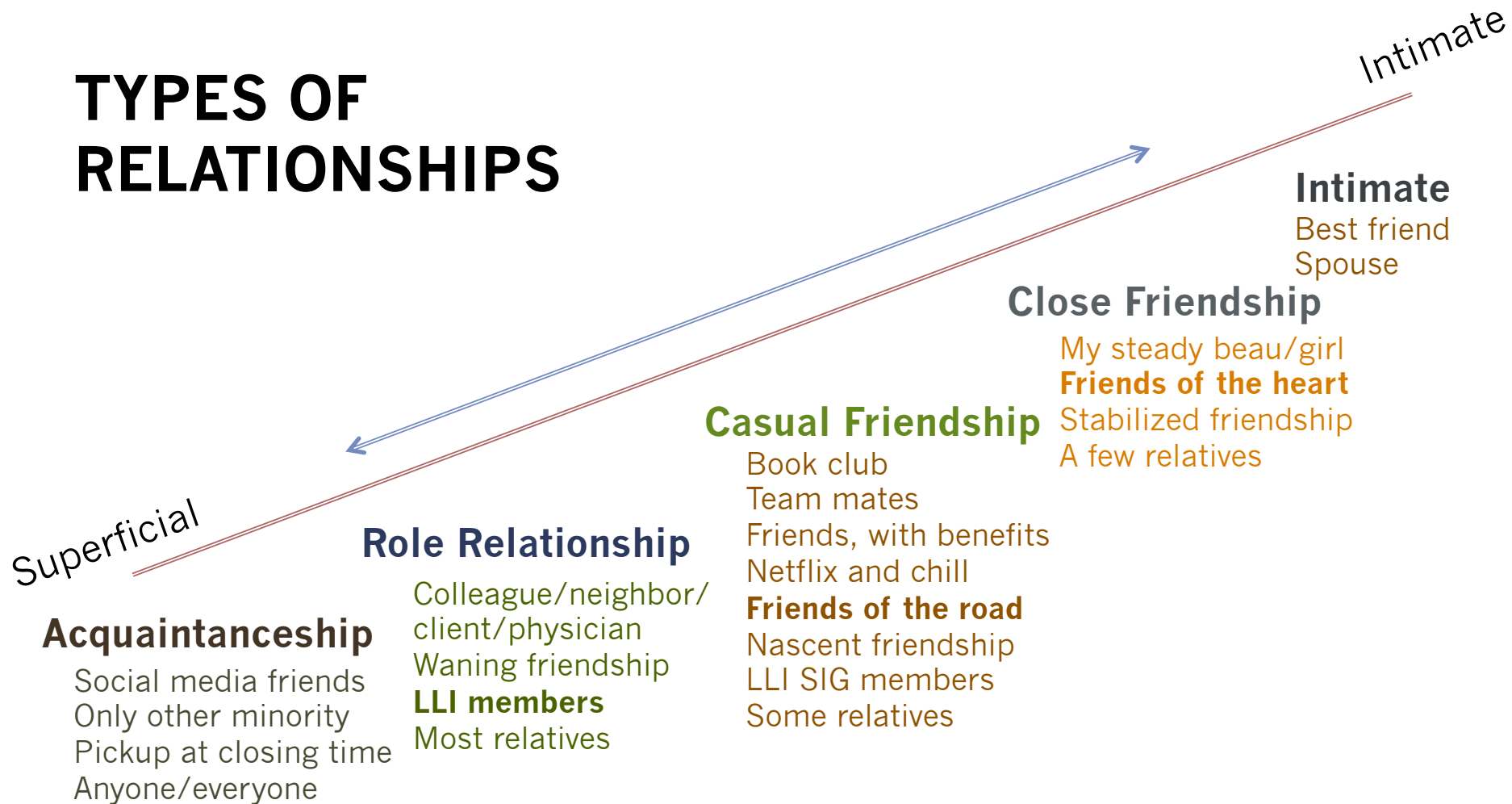
Monthly Meet-Up

Sometimes a relationship just runs its course.

- Friends of the road
- Friends of the heart

*Friends are connected heart to heart;
Distance and time can't break them apart.*

TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS



- Downgrade dissolutions
- Drifting apart – waning
- More trouble than it's worth dump
- The replacement
- The shove-out
- The betrayal

Relationships change with time and trust

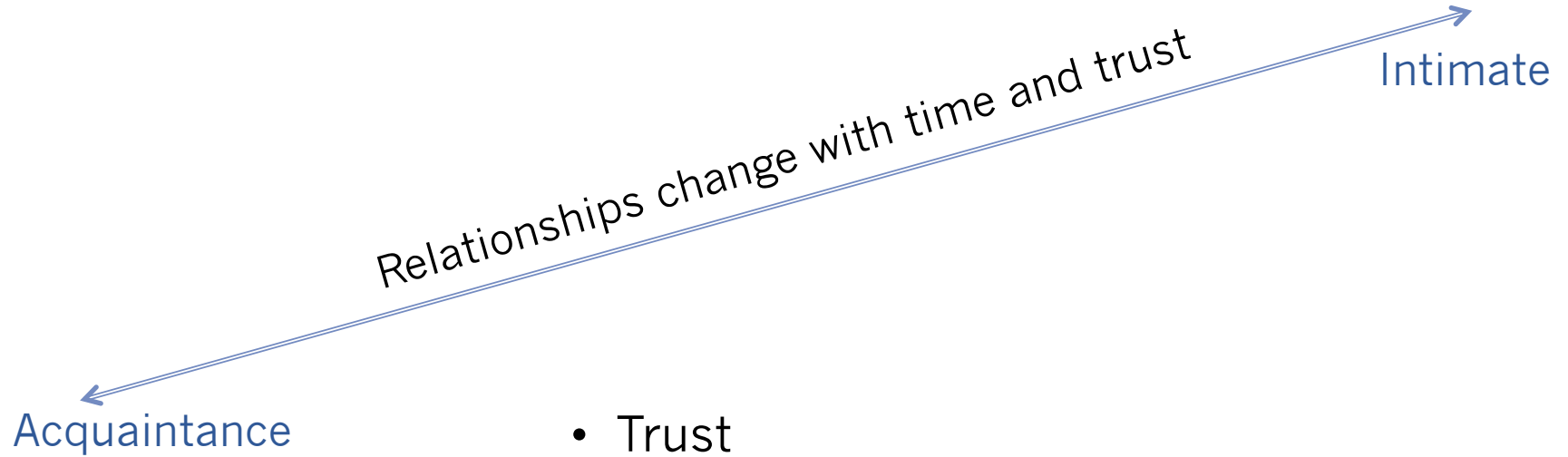
Intimate

Acquaintance



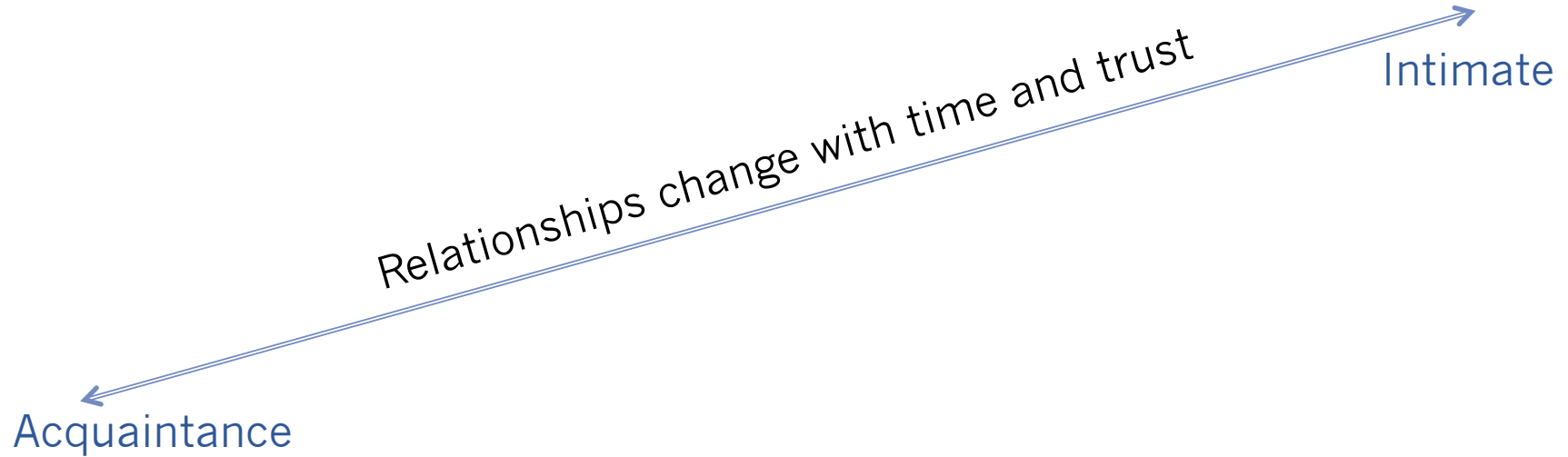
Relational Demise

- Death
 - Anticipatory grief
- Relational transgressions/violations
 - Trust – jealousy, suspicion, deception, gaslighting
 - Investment – emotional distance, ghosting
 - Commitment – infidelity, bailing
 - Relational Dialectics – all-or-nothing (e.g., closedness, novelty, autonomy)



- Trust
- Investment
- Commitment
- Comfort with Relational Dialectics

Julia Wood



- Politics, identity politics
- Religion and death
- Money
- Sex and body functions

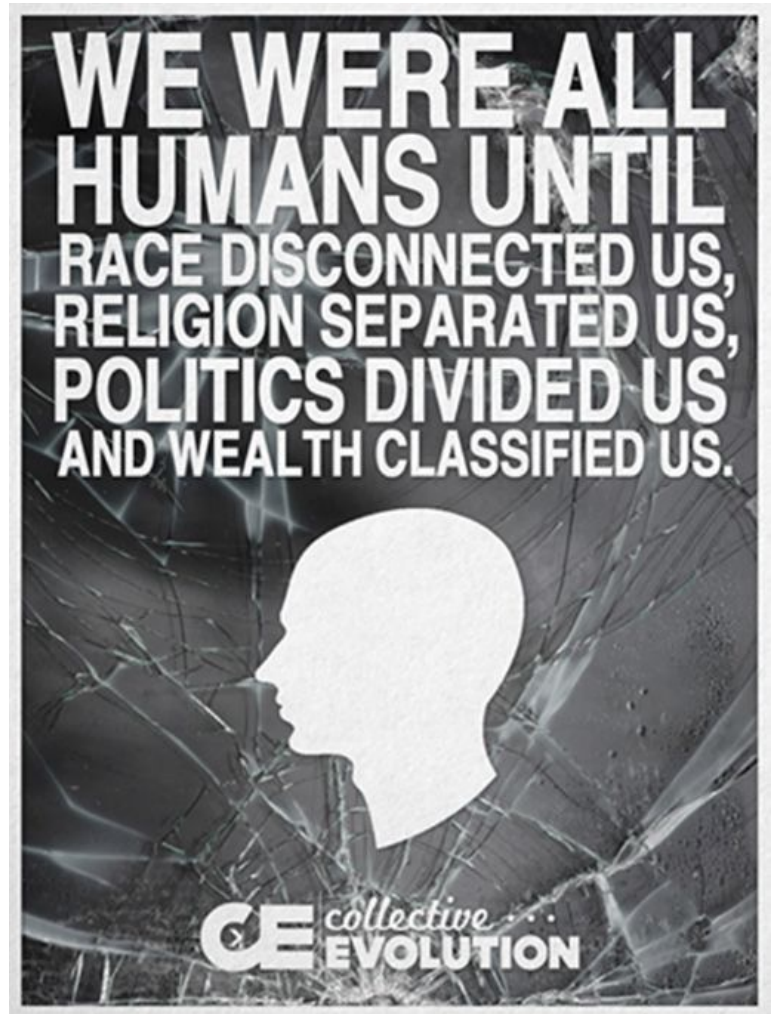
Agreement in these topics creates and promotes intimacy.

11% of Americans ended a serious relationship due to political differences.

The so-called Trump effect seems to hit millennials the hardest. Wakefield Research study found that 22% of people in their 20s and 30s report breaking up with someone over political differences. That's double the rate of the general population.



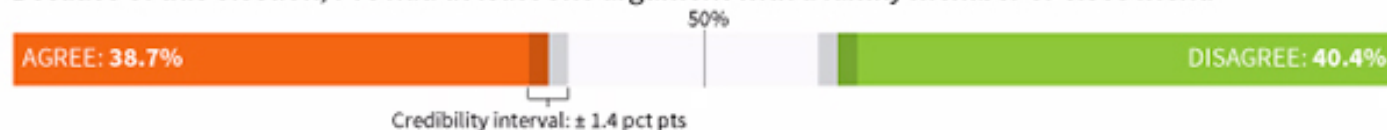
Caste/Identity
Politics
Religion
Money
Sex
Death



Party lines in the sand

According to a 2016 Reuters/Ipsos poll, the election had deep reverberations through the population, with **13 percent of respondents admitting to ending a relationship because of the election.**

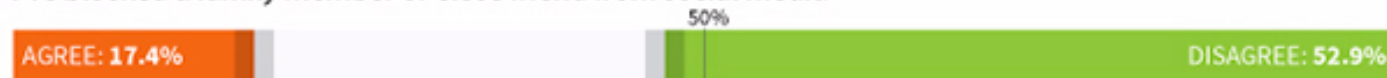
Because of this election, I've had at least one argument with a family member or close friend



I've stopped talking to a family member or close friend



I've blocked a family member or close friend from social media



I've ended a relationship with a family member or close friend



I've become friends with someone I previously didn't know



NOTE: 6,426 U.S. adults interviewed online Dec. 27, 2016 to Jan. 18, 2017

Source: Reuters/Ipsos

S. Culp, 30/01/2016

Joe*, a retired cop: “I questioned Mike on a few things, he didn’t like it, he blew up and left me a nasty message and we haven’t talked since.”

Joe said his friend Mike is gay and worries about Trump’s sometimes demeaning campaign rhetoric about minority groups including Muslims, Hispanics, immigrants and the disabled.

“I think people are getting too wound up.” Joe said.

* I changed names.

John Whitesides

From Disputes to a Breakup: Wounds Still Raw after U.S. Election

Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-relationships-insight-idUSKBN15M13L>

February, 2017

U.S. politics fractured families and upended relationships, a number of Americans say the emotional wounds are as raw as ever and show few signs of healing.

The retired California prison guard, a self-described “Democrat leaning toward socialist,” was stunned when her husband casually mentioned during a lunch with friends last year that he planned to vote for Trump – a revelation she described as a “deal breaker.”

A radio documentary producer in New Orleans, said he broke off a close relationship with an uncle who had helped him through his father’s suicide because of his uncle’s fervent support for Trump. “We had some back and forth and it just got really deep, really ugly,” Joe said. “I don’t see this ever being fixed.”

Here's a sliver of the type of conversation we've had more than once:

"Jesus used to say..." (boyfriend says)

"Please don't quote Jesus. You know it makes me uncomfortable." (me, all squirmy)

"I wish you would open your mind a bit more. You would be such a powerful Christian woman..." (him, being sincere)

"You'll never convert me! I wish you would read Dawkins!" (me, in near tears)

"Jesus's love for me is real." (him, unwavering)

"I wish you would read Hitchens!" (me, in near tears)

"Jesus sacrificed for us. All of us." (him, unwavering)

"You love him more than me." (me, in tears)

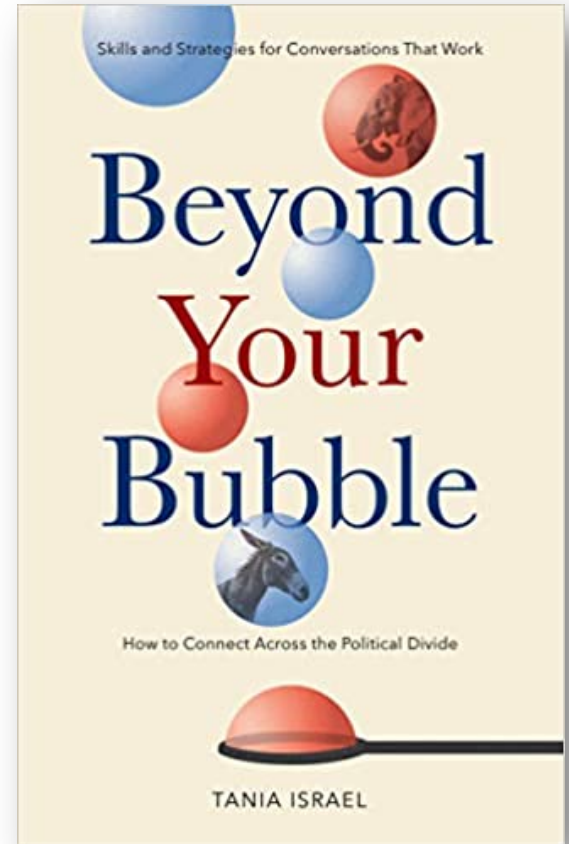
"I do. I can't help it." (him, pious)

Natasha Scripture, Jesus is Ruining My Love Life: Is Religion a Deal-Breaker? *The Atlantic*, February 2012

The rancor is rising

Conservatives and liberals both suffer from big blind spots when it comes to the morality of their own side. They tend to view themselves as eminently fair and right, and the other side as irrational.

Tania Israel
Professor Psychology
UC, Santa Barbara



What aboutism in politics

- Socialism!
- Takes away our guns
- Kill babies – partial birth abortions
- Non-whites, non-Christians destroy our way of life
- Shuts down businesses and forces us to wear masks
- Takes away our red meat

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- Shuts down businesses and forces

- Russia v IC
- Extorts favor from Ukraine
- Separates kids and asylum-seeking parents
- Puts kids in cages
- Lacks empathy for COVID-19
- Xenophobia, racism, misogyny, bigotry, homophobia

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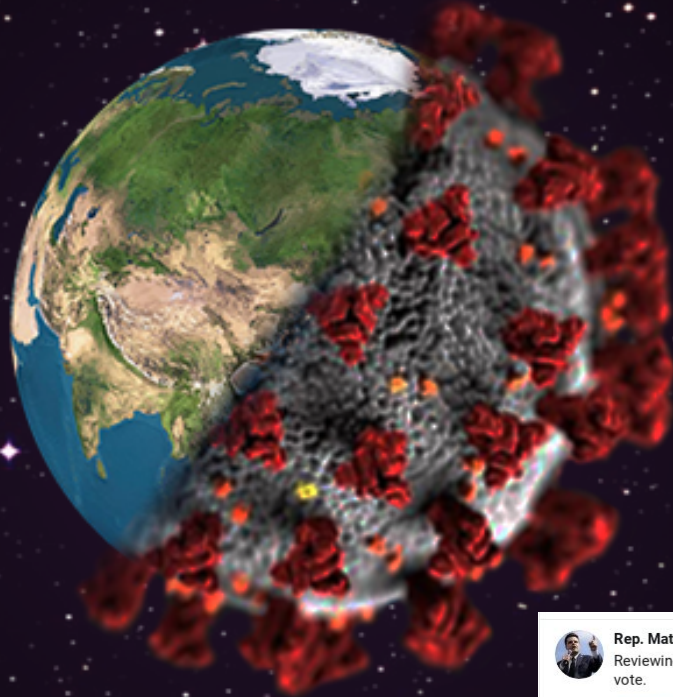
COMING APART (MARK KNAPP)

- 1. Differentiating**
2. Circumscribing
3. Stagnating
4. Avoiding
5. Terminating



Mark Knapp
Communication Studies
U.Texas at Austin

Differentiating



**politea** @politeabox · 1h

Replying to @kurteichenwald

I have a family member claiming that the whole thing is overblown and not really a thing not even half a year after his close relative almost died from COVID. This pandemic, like Trump, has been revealing very ugly things about people one thought were smarter and more empathetic.



4



10

**Jane Moore** @janeworld1 · 1h

Replying to @kurteichenwald

It is astounding what this era has done to relationships. So many people I used to consider friends now get on my very last nerve.



14

**Anna** @AnnaKhalil · 1h

Replying to @kurteichenwald

Same. Trump and Brexit weakened some friendships and Covid finished them completely. I'm really sorry for your loss 🙏



1



10

**Lauren B, M.Ed.** @lmbnapoleon · 1h

Replying to @kurteichenwald

It's a loss, for sure. There is grief.

In my situation I realized the relationship wasn't as good as I had envisioned and that helped, a little, to let it go.

We do outgrow relationships sometimes but maga and Covid and racism all at once have expedited this



1



42

**LadyL. Socially Distant Forever** @LadyLecondoliak · 1h

Replying to @kurteichenwald

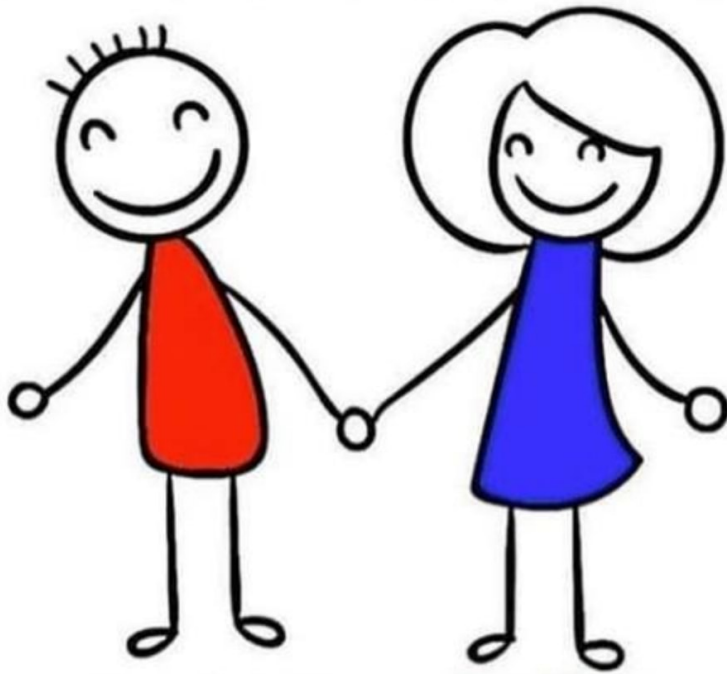
I unfriended people who said masks don't work. I said enough. I can't deal with people's dumb attitudes anymore. It is billion people

Tweet your reply



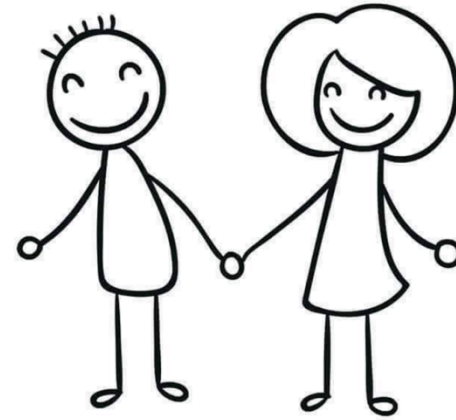
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This is Bob. He votes **Republican**.
This is Bob's friend, Sally. Sally votes **Democratic**.
Bob and Sally are still friends,
because Bob and Sally are both adults.

Be like Bob and Sally.



This is Bob. He voted for Trump. This is Bob's friend Sally. Sally voted for Clinton. ~~Bob & Sally are still friends, because Bob and Sally are both adults.~~

~~Be like Bob and Sally.~~

Sally feels betrayed by Bob because he voted for someone who: mocked the disabled, bullied the media, made racist comments, was accused by many women of sexual assault, degraded an entire religion, and was the candidate endorsed by the KKK. She thinks even if Bob isn't a racist, ableist, xenophobic, misogynistic sexual predator, he was fine voting for one. This distresses her.

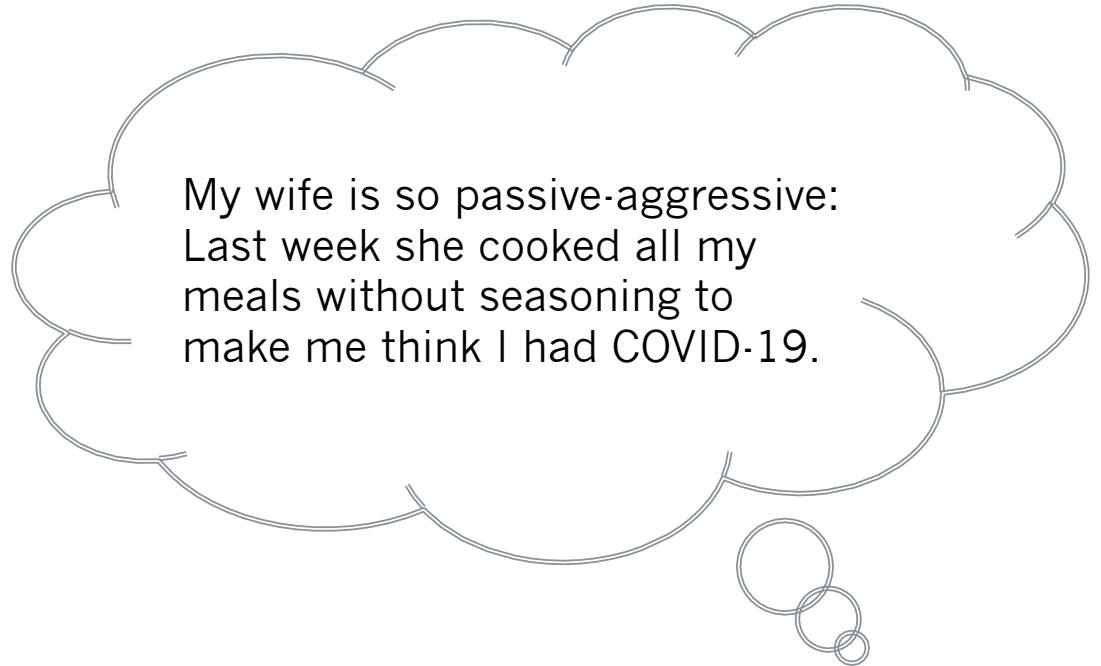
Sally realizes Bob never really shared her values. She believes her life would be better off without someone who places Trump's showmanship over common human decency.

Sally won't normalize Trump. Sally refuses to be gaslit.

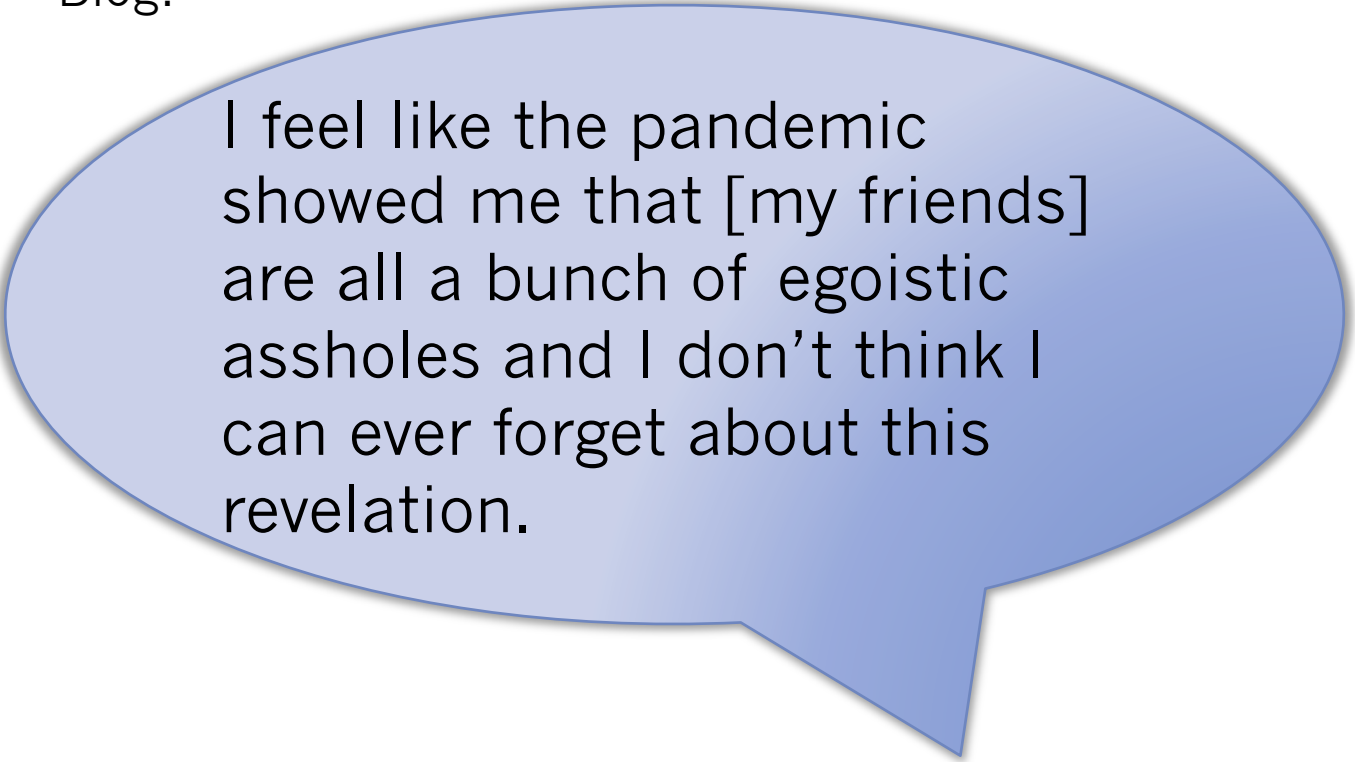
Be like Sally

Predictors of Relational Demise

- Defensiveness
- Criticism
- Stonewalling
- Contempt



Blog:

A blue speech bubble with a white drop shadow, containing the text of a blog post.

I feel like the pandemic showed me that [my friends] are all a bunch of egoistic assholes and I don't think I can ever forget about this revelation.

Empathic Listening Response:

i feel like the pandemic showed me that [my friends] are all a bunch of egoistic assholes and i dont think i can ever forget about this revelation.

You're feeling especially vulnerable by COVID-19.

And you feel disappointed and betrayed by your friends' reactions to it.

i feel like the pandemic showed me that [my friends] are all a bunch of egoistic assholes and i dont think i can ever forget about this revelation.

Trust me, those of us on the “opposing side” don’t care if we lose relationships with people who are paranoid and refuse to visit.

Enjoy your “dark winter,” watching grandma die on zoom because you’re a coward, and eventual suicide when you realize you’ve isolated yourself because a politician told you to.

COMING APART (MARK KNAPP)

1. Differentiating
- 2. Circumscribing**
3. Stagnating
4. Avoiding
5. Terminating



Circumscribing


“I’m a San Francisco 49ers fan and my (former) girlfriend sent me a picture of a Niners mask and said,

She: ‘I have to get you one of these,’”

He replied, “I’m not going to wear a mask. It’s not going to work.”

She: “Why don’t you think that?... nevermind.”

Lately it has become increasingly difficult for them to converse without discussions turning contentious.



“Frankly, I try to avoid it, because it’s gotten to the point where there is no reasonable conversation and it’s quite painful... because it’s so charged.”

Nicole Pajer, Can Love Survive this Election? New York Times, August 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/25/fashion/weddings/can-love-relationships-survive-this-election.html>

CIRCUMSCRIBING



0

**FAMILY
FEUD**

0

Seek Failure-Free Activities

TEAM 1

TEAM 2

Done



“We’re all hurting, Mom. It’s awful. I can’t make it better for us, though, by having a child. I can’t and I won’t, because I do not want to be a parent.

Please respect my decision, even if you don’t like it or understand it, and stop asking me when I’ll have kids.”

I’ve outright said I don’t want children and added a fun joke about global warming. My mother’s response was, “Well, if you adopt, they’re already here, so they’re stuck when the Earth melts anyway.”

How do I disengage and discourage this conversation? The constant questioning is making me feel guilty for not giving my parents something they expect from me, and that’s tough because “Mom wanted grandkids” is not a reason to bring a child into the world.

Letting Mom Down Easy: As wrenching as this will be, please talk to your mom without the jokes — good ones, by the way — and deflections. There’s a time for disengaging and discouraging, and in fact it’ll be that time again as soon as you get the hard conversation out of the way. But for this one time, engage fully and unequivocally in the hard conversation.

Such as: “We’re all hurting, Mom. It’s awful. I can’t make it better for us, though, by having a child. I can’t and I won’t,

Setting boundaries: “It’s not open to discussion or negotiation.”

ami-
ect my
decision, even if you don’t like it or understand it, and stop asking me when I’ll have kids.”

If she pushes back, then you’ll need to say it’s not open to discussion or negotiation. Then kindly/calmly/firmly decline to discuss it again.

Quip and repeat.

I’m sorry you have so much pain to navigate right now.

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SOCIAL ISOLATION By the Numbers

More than
6.5 MILLION Americans
65 AND OLDER
are dealing with depression
on some level.

- National Alliance on Mental Illness.

OVER A QUARTER
of the U.S. population – and
28% OF OLDER ADULTS –
now live by themselves.

- U.S. Census Bureau.

A person who reaches the
AGE OF 65
has a life expectancy of
20 additional years.

- caring.com.

2 IN 5 AMERICANS report that
they sometimes or always feel their
social relationships are not meaningful,
and **1 IN 5** say they feel lonely
or socially isolated.

- Brigham Young University.

The number of Americans
65 AND OLDER is expected to double
between **2012 AND 2050**, and the
number of isolated seniors left at risk will
increase just as dramatically.

- Census.gov.



Sometimes you just let go of people.

You stop waiting for them to reply to you. You stop allowing them to take up so much space in your life.

You move on, you go about your day without worrying about them. You stop expecting them to come back with an apology.

You accept that they are no longer a part of your life. You just let them go, simple as that.

Cathy - Cathy Guisewite



STAGNATING

- 40% couples in devitalized marriage
Marriage often strictly utilitarian
- 15% couples in conflicted marriage
Avoid or fail to settle issues
- 11% couples financially focused
- **9% couples in highly satisfactory relationship**
Personally integrated, strong internal resources, agree in most external areas

David H. Olson
Family Social Science
U of Minnesota

Blaine Flowers
Edu and Psy Studies
University of Miami

The Family Journal, 1993
Vol 1, No 3, 196-207



During COVID-19, domestic violence is rising.
If you hear violence next door, you can help. [#listeningfromhome](#)

NO MORE

nomore.org

NATIONAL
DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE
HOTLINE

thehotline.org

Economic instability, unsafe housing, neighborhood violence, and lack of stable child care and social support can worsen already tenuous situations.

The Covid-19 pandemic has put a spotlight on numerous ongoing public health crises, including violence within the home.



1. Palm to camera and tuck thumb



2. Trap thumb

Before you try to fix someone else,
make sure you're not killing yourself in the process.

You are not required to set yourself on fire
To keep other people warm.

COMING APART (MARK KNAPP)

1. Differentiating
2. Circumscribing
3. Stagnating
4. **Avoiding**
5. Terminating



Changes in loneliness and social contacts, 2018 to 2020

AMONG ADULTS AGE 50-80

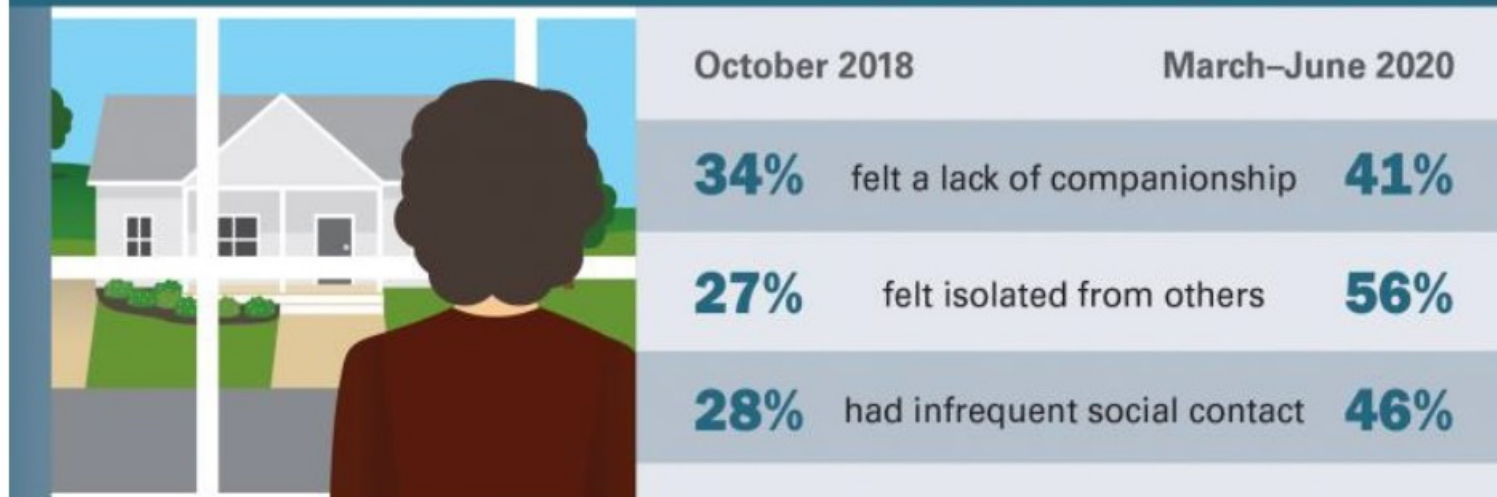


Figure 1 University of Michigan Survey June 2020 **Source:** [University of Michigan](#)

Some talk to you in their free time

Some free their time to talk to you.

Learn the difference.

If you treat me like an option,
I'll leave you like a choice.

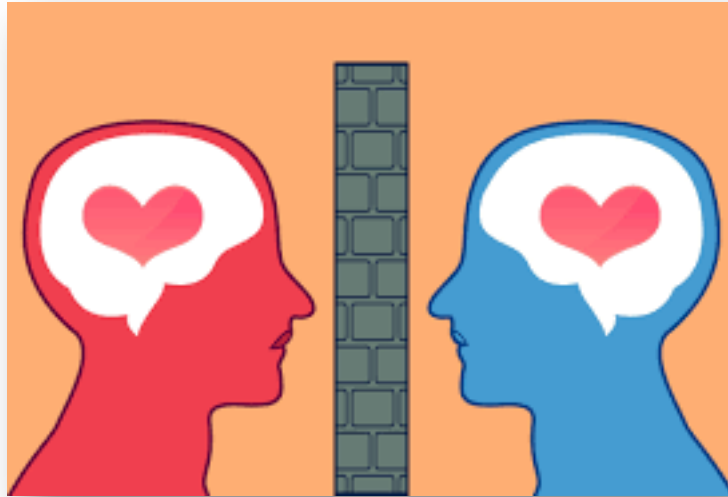
AVOIDING

Devitalized relationships
Empty love
Emotionally apathetic

Seek new investments



You gotta stop watering a dead plant.

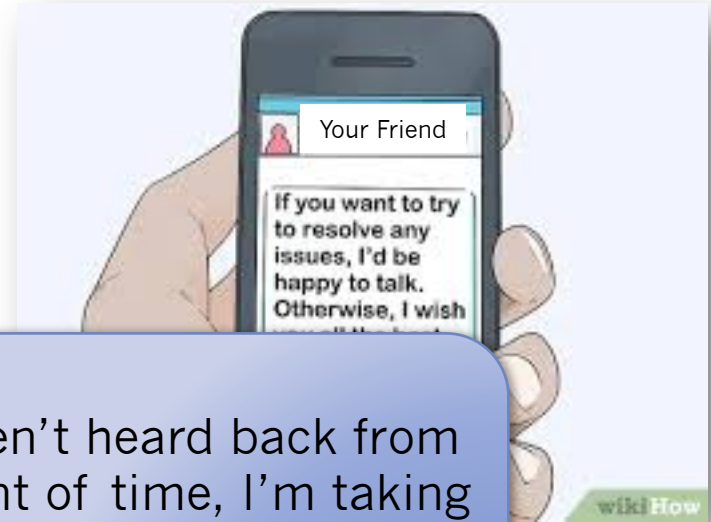


Stonewalling: Refusing to engage, or evading, especially to avoid revealing embarrassing information or to escape accountability.

Ghosting: Cutting off all communication, without explanation.

We make time for those things that matter to us.

- *Quantity*
- *Quality*



Because I haven't heard back from you in X amount of time, I'm taking that to mean that you no longer want to talk. Be well.

Sometimes the door closes on a relationship, not because we failed but because something bigger than us says this no longer fits our life.



Detaching with Grace/Dignity

- Give your expectations a reality check. Is this toxic?
- Stay in your lane. Don't obsess about others' problems.
- Focus on what you *can* control. Delete/mute/block other from your social media.
- Pause and refocus so you can respond rather than react.
- Choose not to visit your dysfunctional relative (or arrive late and leave early).
- Leave dangerous situations.

COMING APART (MARK KNAPP)



1. Differentiating
2. Circumscribing
3. Stagnating
4. Avoiding
- 5. Terminating**

5. TERMINATING

Sometimes you have to make a decision that will hurt your heart but heal your soul.



So, lock the door, shed a tear, turn around and look for the new door that's opened. It's a sign that you're not longer that person you were, it's time to change into who you are.

"I did straight up say, 'Dude, I'm done. Lose my number,' " said Xxxx, recalling when he "unfriended" a guy he'd been friends with since high school 25 years ago.

"He was going off like, 'Oh, you drank the Kool-Aid,' and 'Xxxx didn't do anything,' " she recalled. "It made me sick. If this is his core ethics, I don't want that kind of person in my life."

"I told him, 'If this is your attitude, we can't be cool anymore,' " Xxxx said. " 'I don't respect you now. I don't. Because people are really dying.' "

Stop looking at the end of a relationship as a failure.
Leaving it behind might be a courageous choice,
And an opportunity for you to be honest and authentic.

From the Desk of Chris Carr

April 16, 2021

Fellow Attorneys General:

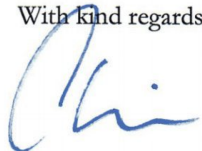
Today, I am writing to let you know I am stepping down as chairman of the Republican Attorneys General Association and as a member of its executive committee, effective immediately.

During the last several months, it has become clear that there is a significant difference of opinion among the members of RAGA's executive committee as to the direction this organization should take going forward.

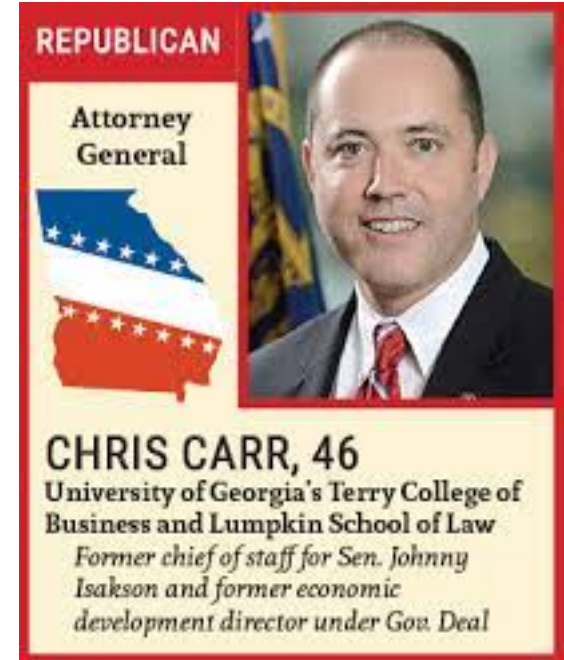
This fundamental difference of opinion began with vastly opposite views of the significance of the events of January 6 and the resistance by some to accepting the resignation of the executive director. The differences have continued as we have tried to restore RAGA's reputation internally and externally and were reflected once again during the process of choosing our next executive director.

It is because of the deep respect I hold for so many of you, for the duty we have as Attorneys General and for the belief in what this organization can and should be that I must take this action at this time.

With kind regards,



Chris Carr



Letting Go

This is hard to talk about, but when we have these calls, I can't help but think about how much has changed since we were more in each other's lives. I know you've moved in a different direction as well.

I hope you'll understand this is likely our last phone call, at least for quite a while.

I felt like I owed our friendship not to just disappear without explaining myself, as awful as it feels. I really do wish you well.

Relationships change with time and trust

Acquaintance



Intimate



RELATIONAL AUTOPSY

Make a deal with yourself. Before you decide that you can't be in a relationship again, do a structured "autopsy" on your previous relationships to take the mystery out of the train wreck.

An autopsy can help you move forward with a healthy outlook — with ownership of problems that you played a role in creating, and with an awareness of what can be different.

May 26 Monthly Meet-Up

We Need to Talk

How to Resurrect
a Dying Relationship



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Online Class Materials

Here you will find Class Materials & Information organized by the three yearly semesters (Spring, Summer and Fall). This information is available for review, printing and/or downloading.

Simply click on the "+" symbol to open the session folder for the class you are interested in.

- + Spring 2021
- + Fall 2020
- + Summer 2020

Class 21SP07 - Monthly Meet Ups

Session 1 - [I've a Bridge to Sell You - Persuasion \(1/27/2021\) - click link](#)

Session 2 - [Exploring the Gettysburg Address \(2/24/2021\) - click link](#)

Session 3 - [Chronemics - Spending Time Together \(3/24/21\) - click link](#)