

Guidelines for Self-Disclosure

Topic: #104 (consider using #103 first)

Category: Relationships



As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17 (NIV)

Which is easier: meeting new people, or developing a friendship? These are 2 sides to the same coin, each one equally important. Some people – we’ve all met them – give you too many details about their life too quickly. On the other hand, “If you cannot reveal yourself, you cannot become close to others, and you cannot be valued by others for who you are.” (1). So what IS appropriate disclosure? Here’s a quiz – answer by a show of hands:

How many people think it is acceptable to tell a new acquaintance...

That you are married and have 2 children? Who you voted for in the last presidential election? That you like Jazz music? That you suffer from clinical depression? That this weather makes you feel “down”?

Here are some practical guidelines for self-disclosure:

1. Disclose to those with whom you desire a deeper relationship.
2. Focus disclosures on your present feelings and reactions.
3. Be sensitive to how your disclosure affects the other person.
4. Continue only if your disclosure is reciprocated.
5. Increase disclosure when a problem develops or when disclosure may help the other person in some way.
6. Gradually move disclosures to a deeper level.
7. Discontinue disclosure if the person becomes competitive or untrustworthy.

Practicing “appropriate self disclosure” helps you build quality relationships.

1. On a scale of 1-10, how do you rate yourself on self-disclosure?
2. What concerns do you have about disclosing yourself to others?
3. What benefits could come of disclosing yourself to others?

Facilitator: write answers on poster/white board to refer to later. #2 Answers may include: fear of rejection potential gossip, awkwardness. #3 Answers may include: .deeper relationships, gaining confidence, get feedback on problems, developing stronger bonds, feeling accepted.

(Optional: choose Exercise on Self-Disclosure)

Scripture affirms God’s omniscience --His universal, divine knowledge of all things. There is nothing about you He does not already know.

1. How is your disclosure with God? What things “off-limits”? Why do you need to self-disclose to God if He already knows?
2. How will God’s response be different than man’s? (see previous answers)

Take a few moments to quietly reflect, then write down what you’ve learned.

(1) David Johnson, *Reaching Out*, Pearson, 2009.

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