



Solving Conflicts™: One Good Choice at a Time! Fresh New Look at Relationships

**Featuring an online Character Assessment –
A Relationship Tool – Measuring both Genuine and Counterfeit Character
Strengths that affect all of our relationships... marriage, family, friends, work
relationships, etc.**

**By John S Miller
www.SolvingConflicts.com**

"Character building is the most important work ever entrusted to human beings; and never before was its diligent study so important as now. Never was any previous generation called to meet issues so momentous; never before were young men and young women confronted by perils so; great as confront them today."

E.G. White, Education, p 225.

I am careful not to confuse excellence [of character] with perfection [of character]. Excellence [of character, I can reach for; perfection [of character] is God's business.

Michael J. Fox

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Character Qualities are the Tools of Life!

What's In Your Tool Belt?

Every choice you have ever made comes from the use of one or more character qualities. Character qualities are the basis of each choice that we make, whether the choice is right or wrong. Indeed, you cannot make a choice without drawing upon one or more character qualities. Think of your character qualities as if they were tools in a tool belt. You already have all the tools in your tool belt.

- You have used some of them correctly.
- You have used others incorrectly.
- You may not have learned to use some of them at all.

Solving Conflicts™ will show you what your tool belt looks like...and how to use your tools correctly.

It is an eye-opening adventure!

We Teach People about People

Through Character Strength Identification

We will identify for you which of your character strengths are responsible for your greatest successes in life. We will also identify for you which of your character strengths you misuse ... and we will teach you how to avoid misusing them. We do not focus upon what you lack or what you do not have... we focus on your Strength of Character; that is to say... what you already have in abundant supply. The question is not IF you have Character Strength... the question is 'what are your Character Strengths'?

There is no other system available that identifies Strength of Character for you in terms of both genuine and counterfeit use (or misuse) of Character Strength. If you want to see where you are in terms of Character Strength, you will not be disappointed. But that's not all. We will also teach you how to identify the Character Strength of other people... and how to communicate to them about what you discover about their Character Strengths.

Automated Relationship and Character Coaching

(Age 16 & Older)

For Business Use Or Personal Use

Solving Conflicts – One Good Choice at a Time!

Table of Contents

Introduction	Page 4
Chapter One, “ Do You Want to Fight? ”	Page 10
Chapter Two, “ Diamonds or Rocks ”	Page 14
Chapter Three, “ A Little Out of Balance ” (Character Symmetry)	Page 18
Chapter Four, “ Counterfeiting! ”	Page 22
Chapter Five, “ Wet Sand Bricks & Blindfolds ”	Page 25
Chapter Six, “ The Worlds Greatest Battle (Part One) ”	Page 28
Chapter Seven, “ The World’s Greatest Battle (Part Two) ”	Page 31
Chapter Eight, “ Solving Conflicts 101 (The ABCs) ”	Page 35
Chapter Nine, “ Solving Conflicts 102 (The Basics) ”	Page 39
Chapter Ten, “ Before You Accuse Me! ”	Page 42
Chapter Eleven, “ Titanic Failure (It Could Never Happen to Me!) ”	Page 44
Chapter Twelve, “ Score Chart ”	Page 47
Chapter Thirteen, “ Diagnosis Tool ”	Page 50
Chapter Fourteen, “ Fast Look-Up ”	Page 52
Chapter Fifteen, “ Knowing Yourself ”	Page 53
Chapter Sixteen, “ Knowing Others ”	Page 64
Chapter Seventeen, “ Lucky in Marriage ”	Page 79
Chapter Eighteen, “ Tips for Single ”	Page 90
Chapter Nineteen, “ Questions & Answers ”	Page 101

Solving Conflicts™

Introduction

One can be positively certain that all people everywhere need help with personal Conflict Resolution & Character Education!

Yet, we live in a fast-paced, fun-filled, high-tech world.

News, Politics, Entertainment, Sports, Music, Concerts, Theater, TV, Computer Games, Movies and life in general all try to capture our attention.

There are so many things to command our attention that it gets hard to tune some things out...even when we try.

At first glance, the words Character and Education are boring enough to cause most people to fall asleep as soon as they see or hear the words. After all, what in the world does Character have to do with the success of our relationships to other people and to Conflict Resolution? Everything!

Solving Conflicts™ is an open door for you. If you are looking for a way to learn more about yourself, you will not find anything more complete and informative.

If you are looking to discover information on compatibility, you will not find a more comprehensive approach.

If you are looking to discover what the basis of your choices both past and present are, in every area of your life (including sexuality), Solving Conflicts™ is what you are looking for. If you are in a conflict, you will not find a better method available which will help you find the root cause of your conflict.

If you want to learn to avoid conflict, this will specifically diagnose your character qualities that have gotten you into conflict in the past.

You will also discover your safest qualities to use when you are under pressure or short of temper.

You will discover effective ways to communicate with those closest to you so that they do not feel like you are criticizing them or attacking their character.

If it is your goal to become better at getting to know other people before you make an unwise commitment to them, (as in dating or selecting a mate), Solving Conflicts™ is the right place to find those answers.

If you are tired of unwelcome surprises in your relationships and are looking for insight to avoid those surprises later in your relationships, you have come to the right place.

Solving Conflicts™ has no equal in Character Coaching and Assessment. Why is that? Because we go way past simple Character Strength Identification into the world of Character Strength Misuse and the diagnosis of key areas of your character that produce your greatest success as well as your worst conflicts.

- It is Relationship and Character Coaching for all people;
- It is for every occupation;
- It is for every lifestyle;
- It is for every belief system;
- It is for singles and couples.
- It is for the married and the unmarried;
- It is for the young and for the old;
- It is for the young & inexperienced;
- It is for the old & wise.

Solving Conflicts™ is about the solving of conflicts...but so much more!

It is a fresh new look at relationships, character, and conflict resolution.

It is education to learn how to spot character traits in others.

It is Automated Relationship and Character Coaching made easy for all ages 16 and older.

It is for those who either want help or need help to focus on their own character growth.

Solving Conflicts™ is not just for you ...it is about you!

Whether you are alone or part of a group or family,

Solving Conflicts™ is for you!

Solving Conflicts™ is the most realistic, down-to-earth, and basic first step of character education that you can take.

Whether your life is presently uneventful, calm, and controlled; or whether it is full of stress, trouble, and conflict, Solving Conflicts™ is the place for you.

It's a place for you to take a close look at your own self, to find out what is going on, and to find out what you can do about it.

Whether you live with a family or alone;

Whether you live in a monastery or a prison;

Whether you are rich or poor;

Whether you are happy or angry;

Whether you are wise or not so wise;

Whether you are liberal or conservative;

Whether you are starting your first step... finishing your last step... or stuck on your fourth step... Solving Conflicts™ is the best next-step you can take!

Character is not just part of the issue of life; It is the whole issue of life.

Character determines whether you are a success or a failure!

Character determines whether people love you, like you, or fear you.

Character determines whether you have true friends or true enemies.

Character determines if you are at peace with your own self and with other people.

**On the day you die,
your character is the determining factor
of whether people are glad to see you go
or wish you could have stayed longer!**

When it comes to your own character, it is the only thing in the entire world that you alone rule over ...your own self!

You are the king or the queen of your own character.

No one can steel your character, and no one else can control it ...only you can!

Your character is your self.

Solving Conflicts™ is practical Relationship and Character Coaching ... with a focus upon Conflict Resolution at its very best.

You will not simply learn about character.

You will learn specifically about your character!

You will take a clean-cut look at your own self!

**Solving Conflicts™ is a state-of-the-art
Character Coaching Tool like no other!**

Is this a Personality Test?

Is this a Character Test?

What Is It?

Make no mistake about it! Solving Conflicts™ is *much more* than a basic personality profile test.

A personality test is like a cruise ship. It tells you what the ship looks like; what the rooms look like; what the buffet table looks like; what the sun deck looks like, etc.

Solving Conflicts™, on the other hand, is so much more!

It is like a cruise ship as well. Yet, we will not simply tell you what the ship looks like, we will tell you where the ship has been.

We will help you decide where the ship is going.

In essence, we will place you at the helm of your ship so you can choose to steer it in any direction that you choose...

...one good choice at a time!

Is this a character test or a character profile test? The word test gives the wrong impression. You will not take a quiz with questions to test what you know about the topic of character.

Solving Conflicts™ is not a test of your knowledge to see if you remember the facts about character or the facts about conflict resolution.

All the assessment questions are clearly defined thought questions about your own self. You simply mark the answers on a scale of 1 through 10.

You will not need to know the meaning of words like obstreperousness and whether it describes you.

You will discover all of your character strengths not just your personality likes and dislikes, and you will see them as they relate to issues of conflict resolution!

We are very sure you already know your likes and dislikes. Most people know that by the time they are 13 years old.

This is a unique system of education; it is one-of-kind!

It is self-discovery, self-help, and self-education in its very best and most practical form.

Solving Conflicts™ will provide you with Character Profiles so you can see all your character strengths ...with easy look-up tools!

In your Personal Profile, you will clearly see the color-coded areas of your character that are trouble spots for you... those would be in the Red Zone.

You will have an in-depth look at each specific aspect of your character. We will tell you what it all means in real life.

You will find ample and clear words of wisdom and sound advice.

Solving Conflicts™ will help you better understand your own self (and the character of others too...like family members, friends, co-workers.)

You will become more capable to identify potential conflicts, prevent conflicts, and solve conflicts.

You will learn to make better choices, one at a time, armed with the correct facts about your character strengths.

Diagnosis: Specialists

Solving Conflicts™ is similar to your first trip to the doctor.

You first go to a doctor to get a diagnosis.

Once you finish with your diagnosis, then you can look for the solutions.

Solving Conflicts™ Part Two will provide your own personal character diagnosis.

It is based on the facts -- just the basic facts!

The Solving Conflicts™ Diagnosis Tool is for the sole purpose of character self-assessment.

Some may refer to it befittingly as a fearless moral inventory ...the deluxe version!

Others will find it to be a breath of fresh air!

Solving Conflicts™ is not the end! It is *just the beginning* of your adventure. There are many other specialists that you can turn to for more information on a wide variety of issues.

Who are the specialists?

- They are your School Counselors;
- your Marriage Counselors;

- your Family Counselors;
- your Teachers;
- your Educators;
- your Pastors, etc.
- They may be your mother or father,
- a close relative,
- or perhaps your very best friend!
- There are books and magazines; classes and seminars to attend.
- There are web sites to visit with material of all types for all ages, waiting to help you build a happy, successful, and content life ...one good choice at time!

You can access some of them through our Specialist Links section.

By taking this first step at Solving Conflicts™, you will unlock your true power of choice and your character potential.

The goal of Solving Conflicts™ is to empower you.

It is to help you shape, form, and mold your own character to the highest degree possible.

You are entitled to set your own destiny in terms of your character growth.

No one can stop you from making the right choices.

It does not matter who you are; it does not matter what you have done right; or what you have done wrong, we are inviting you to step inside and explore what Solving Conflicts™ has to offer.

Please note: Solving Conflicts™ does not diagnose your physical health; or your mental health; or your psychiatric health. If you feel that is what you need help with, consult your own Health Care Professional.

Chapter One

Do You Want To Fight?

Is fighting a bad thing for relationships? Maybe it is! Maybe it is not! It depends on whether you are fighting for or against your relationship. If you are in a relationship (with Mom, Dad, Husband, Wife, Son, Daughter, Girlfriend, Boyfriend, Boss, etc. You get the picture), and if you are fighting against that relationship... of course, that is a counterproductive way to establishing a good relationship.

On the other hand, if you are not fighting for your relationship, there is a very good chance the other person senses that you are in some way fighting against them as an adversary or perhaps simply a source of stress or discouragement for them.

Are you fighting for your relationships? Are you being a team player and being cooperative to fight for it so that there is unity and harmony in your relationship? Or have you been fighting against them?

Imagine this please. You have never met another person ever in your life. You have grown up for 23 years some place all by yourself. It was a beautiful place. All your needs were met. You had all the food to eat that you wanted. The weather was perfect. There were beautiful tame animals all over that would play with you. You had every luxury imaginable, and no reason to wear clothes because everything was perfect. Everything, that is, except that one little detail. You were the only human there. As far as you knew, you were a one-of-a-kind species.

Then one day, seemingly out of the thin blue air, you saw someone from the opposite sex standing there naked before your eyes for the very first time. That person you saw was perfect down to the last detail. It was the most incredibly shocking and delightful experience of your life.

Now quickly, what would be the very first thing you would say? Have you thought about it yet? What would it be? Maybe, "Wow!" Maybe, "Whoa!" Maybe, "Man-oh-man!" Maybe, "Whoa-man!" Well, I suppose there would be many possible answers. However, there is one thing I can absolutely guarantee you would not say to that person the very first time you met. That would be, "Do you want to fight?"

What nice thing can you say about conflict? It is not nice to have conflict. Conflicts are not fun. Conflicts do not make us feel happy. Conflicts do not bring joy to our hearts. Conflicts do not make us feel at ease with the person whom we are in conflict. What could ever cause the two people in our imaginary tale to choose conflict over happiness? If you are past the age of two, the chance is certain you have had some conflict in your life. Where does conflict come from?

Now, let's fast forward to present day Earth with an estimated population of 6.4 billion people and growing faster by the second. Let's imagine any two people on Earth meeting for the very first time ...umm ...this time with their clothes on. What do you suppose would be the very first thing they would say to each other? "Well", you may say, "It depends!" Of course, they may say most anything. Yet, it is not too hard to imagine them saying to each other, "Do you want to fight?" Why is that? What is going on with us to cause so much conflict between us?

Our First Premise!

Let's establish our first premise.

Our premise is this: in all relationships of two or more people, we prefer there is no conflict. Nobody with a sane mind prefers conflict to harmony.

We all prefer things to go smoothly in our relationships. It does not matter whom the relationship is with; we prefer harmony. We prefer our relationships be beneficial to both parties involved. It does not matter who the person is; we prefer there is no conflict in the relationship. It may be a two-minute relationship with a sales clerk in a store; we still do not want conflict. It may be a lifetime relationship with friends, family or loved ones; we certain do not want to have conflict with anyone.

Our Second Premise!

Now, if premise number one is true, that no sane person desires conflict. (You might want to be sitting down as you read this.) Then let us establish our second premise.

Our second premise is this: since we all know we have the power to choose; since we all have a free will; since we all have had conflict in our lives; and since we all did at least something to choose the conflict; then we are "all" insane!

Ouch! You don't like the sound of that either?

Well, thanks to Merriam-Webster's dictionary, we can shed a little light on what "insane" actually means. They have a list of synonyms. Synonyms are words that are similar in meaning.

Here is the complete list: bananas, batty, bedlamite, bonkers, brainsick, buggy, bughouse, bugs, crackbrained, cracked, crackers, cracky, cranky, crazed, crazy, cuckoo, daffy, daft, demented, deranged, disordered, distraught, fruity, loco, looney, lunatic, mad, maniac, mental, mindless, non compos mentis, nuts, nutsy, nutty, reasonless, screwy, teched, unbalanced, insane, unsound, wacky, witless, and last but not the least ...just plain old wrong!

Now be honest. The last time you were in a conflict, which one of those items on the list was your affliction? Were you wacky? Were you witless? Were you mad? Perhaps like me, you scored a perfect 100 on all of the above. Perhaps you would at least be willing to admit that you were just plain wrong!

You understand; at least, would you be willing to admit there is the outside chance you did something that was wrong? Perhaps you are not even sure what it is you did wrong. All you knew is that all of the sudden you were involved in a conflict, and you have no idea where the conflict came from.

Conflicts come in all shapes and sizes. My Grandfather held his fork in his left hand, upside down. He was right handed. We all thought he was wrong for doing it. Nobody bothered to ask him about it. It wasn't until many years after his death we found out Grandpa was not wrong; he was from Denmark. That is how they hold their forks in Denmark.

So, what was the conflict? It was the fact nobody bothered to ask Grandpa why he held his fork upside down in his left hand. We just thought Grandpa had bad manners. You could say it was a small conflict. The rest of us were wrong for simply not being more open with Grandpa and asking him about it. I am sure he would have been glad to tell us why.

Other conflicts are much bigger. On Thanksgiving Day, 2004, a family gathered for the traditional turkey dinner. According to the Associated Press, "A man was charged with stabbing two relatives who allegedly criticized his table manners during Thanksgiving dinner."

Apparently, Uncle Frank was unhappy his nephew and brother-in-law criticized him for picking at the turkey with his fingers instead of a knife. Now the Police charged him with assault with attempt to murder. That is what you would call a serious family conflict!

Solving Conflicts™ is going to take you on a learning adventure. Sometimes, it seems as though many of us are clueless when it comes to understanding the nature of conflict. We don't see it coming. We don't see what we are doing to start it. If we do not know that we are doing something to start it, then how could we possibly find a way to stop it? Moreover, we seldom, if ever, have the ability to predict when the other person is going to start a conflict with us.

This adventure is one where you will learn more about your own character strengths in ways you never thought were possible. It is also one of learning how to spot the character of other people and how to communicate with them about it in productive, non-offensive ways.

In this adventure, you will learn a brand new language. That language is the Language of Character. It is an easy language to learn. Anyone can learn it. The first two phases are "genuine strengths " and "counterfeit strengths ".

You will learn a lot about the difference between genuine character strengths and counterfeit character strengths. Both are dominant character strengths. As you proceed through the material, you will learn how important it is to see the difference between the two. You will learn more about the effective use of genuine character strengths.

You will also learn how genuine character strengths change into counterfeit character strengths. Our dominant counterfeit character strengths are at the very root of our conflicts. The better you become at understanding the genuine character strengths, the easier it will be for you to spot the counterfeits.

The more you avoid the counterfeits in your own life, the more you will avoid being the source of conflict to other people. Learning about your own self is the first thing you will accomplish. Once you accomplish that, you will be better prepared to be helpful to other willing people who desire to improve.

So are we suggesting that your life will be trouble free?

By no means!

We are suggesting:

That awareness of your own character strengths will prepare you to make better choices ...one good choice at a time!

That learning the language of character will prepare you to address others in helpful ways.

That you will learn how to spot people's positive character potential based on the counterfeit qualities they are using.

That you will learn which character strengths you may want to either avoid or pursue in your relationships.

That you will learn which of your own character strengths are best to avoid when you are short of temper.

Chapter Two

Diamonds or Rocks?

Learning to see the Value of Other People's Character Qualities

Many years ago, a slave in India came into possession of a stone he thought could fetch him a fair price. It was an intriguing steel blue stone, which at first glance looked to be a very large sapphire. He looked for a naïve outsider who he could swindle into paying far too much for the beautiful stone. A French traveler happened to pass by. He approached him with the intention of swindling the man out of his money.

However, the French traveler soon discovered the slave was asking too low of price for his sapphire. You see, the stone was not a sapphire at all. The French traveler quickly purchased the stone. That very stone later became known as the Hope Diamond. It is the most treasured diamond in the entire world!

Could you imagine having a diamond of such value in your hand and not know its value? Imagine how you would feel upon learning that you sold the stone for a tiny fraction of its true value.

However, the truth is many of us have done this. We have done this repeatedly in our relationships. It may have been with those who have been the closest to us! We mistakenly identified the other person as though they were only sapphire, when in fact, they were actually a diamond. We merely did not have the proper tools to indentify them as the diamond they really were.

In the last chapter, we discussed identifying character strengths as a method to help solve conflicts. We are going to look more at that as we go; however, we are first going to take a look at something that does not help to solve conflicts at all. It is a very common problem. We will refer to this as the identifying opposites method. The opposite of a strength is a weakness.

This method occurs when we learn that a quality in someone else is missing. We know it is missing, because we have seen exactly the opposite of what is missing. For instance, instead of finding courage, we find cowardice. Instead of finding decisiveness, we find indecisiveness. Instead of finding honesty, we find dishonesty. Okay, you get the picture!

In effect, this method is like saying, "I know you are one way, but I would like you to be the opposite of that!" Imagine how you would feel if somebody came up to you and said, "You know ...I see that you have blonde hair! I hate blonde hair! If you would die your

hair black, then I would be your friend." That would not be a good way to make friends, would it?

However, in terms of how we speak to each other about character, that is what we tend to do. For example, we may see cowardice in someone we know. Then, it would seem logical to go up to the person to say, "I would like to see you become more courageous!" It sounds good on paper. It seems to make sense. Yet in real life, it nearly always comes across offensively to the person. It is like asking them to be the total opposite of what they truly are.

Now, think about it. Imagine this! Someone says this to you, "If you become completely opposite of what you are, then I will be your friend and like you." How would you respond to them? Of course, not very well. Simply put, the "identifying opposites" method does not work well at all. It nearly always causes conflict to occur. It nearly always comes across to the other person as "fault-finding". It nearly always results in either hurt feelings or arguments about who is right and who is wrong.

So then, is there another, better method?

The answer is a resounding,

"Yes, there is!"

The method is the one that we talked about in chapter one. It is the method of identifying character strengths ...not character weaknesses. However, character strengths come in two varieties. There are both genuine and counterfeit character strengths. The only thing you need to know for now is that counterfeit character strengths are not opposite of the genuine. A counterfeit can only be a counterfeit if there is a genuine to model it after.

Using a counterfeit character strength always results in harm, injury, or insult to another and/or to ones' own self.

Try to recall something that you know that you did wrong recently. It may be difficult, but try it! Now try to remember what it was that you were thinking and feeling as you began to speak or act a certain way. There is a very good chance that at least for the moment you thought you were "in the right"...and not "in the wrong". There is a moment in time where we, at least briefly, feel like we are "in the right". It is because we instinctively believe that we are using a genuine trait of some kind.

Perhaps we had a momentary lapse of good judgment, and we failed to see that we were using a counterfeit trait. In the middle of a lapse in good judgment, using a counterfeit trait often will feel just like the use of a genuine trait.

For most of us, it is not until we have calmed down a bit that we begin to realize we spoke or acted poorly. Often, we have no clue why we did what we did or said what we said. We only know we did something that was wrong. Sometimes we are sorry; sometimes we are too proud to admit it. However, we rarely know which of the genuine qualities we misused as a counterfeit. It is impossible to improve what we do not know is need of improvement.

If everyone had a perfect character, there would be no conflicts. Love and respect for others are at the heart of all genuine character traits. It is hard to imagine a world that would be free of conflict. In our world, conflicts occur every day.

In all the many ways that we relate to other people, our first choice is for there to be no conflict. Some choose to handle their conflicts by avoiding the issues completely. Yet their silence can make the conflict worse for the other person. The conflict then remains unsolved.

Others handle their conflicts in the other extreme. Their conflicts may then grow into explosive conflicts. You may fall between these two extremes. Yet, it is certain that you are doing something that adds to the conflicts that you face.

At Solving Conflicts™, the primary goal is to help you identify your dominant character strengths.

In this process, you will learn what your genuine and counterfeit strengths are. You may be shocked to learn you have genuine character strengths you never knew you had. The more you know about your own self, the better prepared you will be to make better choices. You may be surprised to find out your true character potential.

At Solving Conflicts™, the secondary goal is to help you identify the dominant character strengths of others.

In this process, you will learn what others' genuine and counterfeit strengths are. You may also be shocked to learn someone has genuine character strengths you never knew he/she had. The more you learn about others, the better prepared you will be to help them make better choices. You may also be surprised to find out the true character potential of others that you never knew before.

Uncover the true diamond sparkle in yourself and in others!

Avoid conflict through wise interaction with others.

Solve conflict through wise interaction with others.

Then learn about yourself from the conflict so that you do not repeat it.

Also, learn about the person with whom you had the conflict so you can interact better with them next time.

Truly, some people have lived through bad situations. People in their lives have given them poor messages about their self-worth. Whether that accounts for your life experience or not, it is like a breath of fresh air to discover character strengths you never knew you had. It can be like discovering a new roadmap for your life.

Solving Conflicts™ not only tells where you have been, where you are right now, but also helps you get where you want to go in the future.

At times, we give poor messages to those around us, to those who are closest to us, and even to ourselves. It may be for reasons we do not even understand. However, it is possible to grow past that one good choice at time.

Solving Conflicts™ will help you to discover the true diamond sparkle in your character and in the character of others. This is a worthy goal for everyone in every relationship.

Chapter Three

A Little Out of Balance

(Character Symmetry)

Developing Fair & Balanced Character Qualities

What in the world is character symmetry? Let's focus on just the word symmetry. What does symmetry mean? It means this: "Balanced proportions; also: beauty of form arising from balanced proportions". So then, character symmetry would mean having a character that is balanced. It's as simple as that!

Have you ever heard the expression used where it was said a person was, "a little out of balance"? Being a little out of balance is not a good thing. An employer would not say, "Hmm, that person is a little bit out of balance, I think I will hire him." A person in search of mate would not say, "I have found a person who is a little out of balance. I think I will marry that person." When we vote, we would not say, "I have found the right candidate because he seems to be a little out of balance." When it comes to character, it is important not to be a little out of balance.

Does character matter any more or not?

If you are an actor; if you are an artist; if you are an entertainer; or if you are a rock & roll musician, there is a good chance your adoring public does not care if you are a little out of balance or not.

However, if you are politician; if you are an employer; if you are a teacher; if you are a leader in the community; a mother, a father, a sister, a brother, a husband, a wife; or someone's best friend, there is a good chance we prefer you are not a little out of balance.

The fundamental question to ask is not whether we are little out of balance, but rather, "what areas are we a little out of balance?" If you are making new friends, choosing a life partner, or in anyway involved in assessing your relationship to some other person, having the tools handy to help you discover the area they are a little out of balance are of tremendous value. It is wise and helpful to know about the character of other people before you make a commitment to them. Anything short of that can lead to disaster.

Having a balanced character does in fact matter a great deal.

In today's world, people who are a little out of balance will be open targets for character assassination.

What does this mean? It is when one assaults another's character in order to destroy that person. Whether the accusations are true or false, this can ruin a person's reputation for life. Many potential candidates for public office have refused to run because of their fear of this. Perhaps the very same ones are aware of areas of their life where they have been a little out of balance. Perhaps they fear being exposed!

The fear of being exposed can enter into all of our relationships. At times, we may hunt for a close friend to trust for years before we find one. We look until we find one that we believe will not betray us. We look for a friend who will be a loyal friend. If we reveal to them the areas of our life where we have been a little out of balance, we do not want them to expose us, judge us, or condemn us.

What is the goal of a true intimate friendship? It is to establish trust and acceptance. It is to establish the mutual up-building of each other's character. It is to help each other become all that you can become. It is when there are no fears of being exposed or rejected if we reveal to them our flaws. We want to know that our true friends will not expose our weaknesses to harm us, ridicule us, judge us, or embarrass us. If we confide in them areas where we were a little out of balance, we desire confidentiality and trust.

Most people have a keen sense for whether they are a little out of balance or not. Yet few could actually put it into words. Few could actually tell you specifically in what ways they are a little out of balance. Moreover, we tend to show people our best face. We do not like other people to know what our character flaws are. We do not like revealing our flaws to others unless we are sure they can be trusted.

Have you ever had an encounter with some person only to find out they could not be trusted at all? Perhaps it was a small issue. Perhaps it was a very large issue. Perhaps you confided in them about yourself or your own problems, and they betrayed that trust you placed in them.

Perhaps you needed some compassion, and you confided in them with a certain level of trust. Then you were shocked when they gave you no compassion at all ...but only scorn and ridicule. Perhaps you trusted in them for help, leadership, and guidance. Then they stabbed you in the back through deceit and betrayal of trust. Perhaps you trusted in their loyal friendship to you. Perhaps it was a close friend or family member. Then you found out they had no loyalty for you at all. Then they denied doing anything at all.

Every conflict is due to both sides being a little out of balance.

There are no exceptions!

If you can think of an exception, it is something other than conflict. If you have found yourself in a conflict, if you have concluded that it must be the other person's fault entirely, guess again! It does not take much for us to start or add to a conflict. You did at least one thing to contribute to the conflict.

When two are involved, and they both are only a little out of balance, conflict can easily happen. It is always so easy to see what it is that the other person did wrong. It seems much harder for us to admit that we did something to contribute to the conflict.

The question is not if you are little out of balance and partly responsible for the conflict. The question is which area are you a little out of balance? Was it your creativity? Was it your fair-mindedness? Was it your forgiveness or discretion? Perhaps it was your discernment, your discipline, or your objectivity!

Suppose that you have an encounter with someone. Suppose that the other person is being a little out of balance in their character. Suppose that what they are saying or doing is causing you harm, injury, or insult. Has that ever happened to you? Well, your next choice will be the deciding factor of whether or not you are in a conflict. Your next choice will decide if you are preventing a conflict or engaging in one. The choice is up to you.

Presently, the human race is made up of those who range from being a little to a lot out of balance. Wouldn't it be nice if everyone had a tag on their wrist that we could read when we meet them? You understand, on their tag would be the resume' of their character. It would tell of what areas that they were a little out of balance. It would tell whether they were a lot out of balance.

So then, the rule of etiquette would be that each time you meet someone new you could read their tag first. Once you saw their tag, you could then decide whether they were worth getting to know or not worth the risk. The tags could even be color-coded by the people who knew them before you did. That way, warnings about them could be passed on to those who are next in line to meet them. If they were mean or rude to you, you could simply give them a red tag to wear as a warning to the next person. Have you ever met someone you wish would have come with a warning tag?

Okay, here is the good news!

You see; each one already has color-coded tags on them. The issue is not if they come with tags or not. The real issue is how do we learn how to read those tags? You see, the tags are written in the language of character. In order to read the tags, you first have to learn how to read the language of character. Solving Conflicts™ is about learning how to read the language of character.

Now then, some people are very clever about keeping their tags hidden. Those types should have a "buyers beware" sticker on their forehead! Those people can be very hard to read even if you know the language of character.

However, most people do not know how to keep their tags hidden. That is a good thing. Most people wear their tags on their wrist for everyone to read. In a very brief encounter, you might not have the time to read their tags before they try to start a conflict with you. That is why it is always a good idea to take some time to learn about people first. Take some time to read their tags first. You will avoid many troubles for yourself if you do. Choose your friends wisely! Get to know them first before you make unwise commitments to them.

News flash!

You have some tags of your own. Before you go around reading other people's tags, you need to learn how to read your own tags first. Knowing your own character is the first step to becoming balanced. Then you can become the person that others would like to meet for the very first time. One good choice at a time you can begin to be more balanced in your character. Then you can become the person with a balanced character who would make a great best friend.

First, Solving Conflicts™ is devoted to helping you learn how to read your own character tags. It is devoted to help you see areas that are a little or a lot out of balance. It is devoted to helping you see new ways that you can get your character in balance. The goal is to help you develop a balanced character one good choice at a time.

Second, our goal is to help you read the character tags of others. The purpose of this is not so that you can be the judge of others. The purpose of this is to enable you to find helpful ways to assist other willing people in their character growth.

Character Diagnosis Tool

In fact, as you proceed through Solving Conflicts™ Part Two, you will be able to see all of your own color-coded tags. You will actually be able to see your character strengths in the automated, interactive, color-coded chart.

Chapter Four

Counterfeiting!

What are Counterfeit Character Qualities?

What Goes Around Comes Around!

Did you know that counterfeiting money is one of the oldest crimes in history? That is a fact according to the United States Secret Service. Truthfully, I could not tell you whether I have ever passed counterfeit money or not. I have no idea how to spot counterfeit money from genuine money. I have never had that type of training.

The United States had a big problem in the 19th century. There were over 1600 banks. Each bank designed and printed its own money. At that time, there were 7000 types of genuine money. The bad news was that there were also 4000 types of counterfeit money. People could no longer tell the real money from the fake money. Who could possibly keep track of all those different types of money?

During the Civil War, one third of all money was not genuine money. It was counterfeit. In order to stop this, in 1863, the United States changed over to just one type of money. However, having just one type of money did not stop the counterfeiting. By 1865, the Secret Service was founded to crack down on the counterfeiters.

The Secret Service tells us how to spot counterfeit money. On their web site, they show pictures of the real money. They show the genuine money, and then they show the counterfeit. In order to spot the counterfeit money, you first have to know what genuine money looks like. The better you know what genuine money looks like; the better you can see the differences between the two types.

No one would be very happy to find out they had been given counterfeit money. Imagine if you went to the bank to take out some of your money. Then you found out later they had given you counterfeit money. Conflict would be the result. We trust that when we accept cash from someone it is genuine.

Counterfeit money is to genuine money...

...What counterfeit traits are to genuine traits.

Will you image for a moment that the genuine character traits are just like genuine money? Imagine that you can spend character traits just as you spend money. When you spend your genuine character traits, you are spending the real thing. As you pay your way with your genuine traits, people will grow to trust you that you only spend genuine traits. They will feel confident that you would never pay them with a counterfeit

character trait. Genuine traits adhere to the rule of not causing harm, injury, or insult to others or yourself.

Spending counterfeit money will get you into trouble. It will also cause conflict for others. The people you spend it on will feel cheated. Spending counterfeit traits also will get you into trouble. It will also cause conflict. The people that you spend your counterfeit traits on will feel cheated.

In fact, just like with counterfeit money, the more and more you spend counterfeit traits, the greater will be your risk. The more you spend, the more you will get into trouble and cause conflict for yourself and other people.

The best way to spot a counterfeit trait is to become familiar with the genuine trait. The more you know about the genuine traits, the better you will become at spotting the counterfeit traits. The more you know about the genuine traits, the easier it will become to use them.

Once you learn to spot which of the counterfeit traits you have been spending, it will be easier for you to stop spending them. The less you spend counterfeit traits, the less you will have conflict in your life.

Solving Conflicts™ addresses 42 genuine character traits.

Right now, you already have all 42 of them in your bank. You can call that your character savings account. They are deposited there on the day of your birth. For your whole life, you have been taking out withdrawals from your character bank. Each day of your life, when you wake up in the morning, you have some of these traits with you to spend. You probably have become very good at spending some of them wisely.

However, you may have left some of the genuine traits in your character savings account. You may have never made a withdrawal of them, and you may have never learned to use them. It is like having money in the bank, but never spending it. At any time, you could withdraw your genuine character traits to spend. It would be a benefit to you and to others. You are always just one choice away from doing the right thing.

Which character traits have you been spending?

Which ones have you left in the bank?

Now, there is a bit of a problem. The bad news is that there are large amounts of counterfeit character traits floating around. Some of it has ended up in your character savings account. That is bad enough. However, some of it may have ended up in your wallet to spend every day. How it got there is less important than the simple fact that it is there right now.

Some people have been spending counterfeit traits their whole life. It is as though they have never known the genuine traits. For them it is as common as the counterfeit money was during the Civil War ...or worse! They have seen so many counterfeit traits they no longer even know what the genuine traits are like. When others pay them only in counterfeit traits, they may not have a clue that they are not getting the genuine.

Part 2 of Solving Conflicts™ (i.e. post assessment information) will...

- ... help you to identify your genuine character traits. It will help you to see which you have been spending and which you have left in your character savings account.
- ...will also help you to identify which counterfeit traits you have been using. Each genuine trait has its own set of counterfeit traits. (There is a good chance you have been spending a counterfeit trait that you never knew had a genuine counterpart.)
- ...will also help you to learn how to exchange the counterfeit trait into the genuine. That is very good news.

One very important thing to consider:

The Secret Service tells us what to do if we are ever passed counterfeit money. The first thing on the list is do not return it to the passer. That is great advice!

Consider this as well. If you are ever passed a counterfeit character trait by someone, do not pass it back to the passer either! That is how you can avoid becoming part of the conflict. If a friend or foe passes you a counterfeit trait, pass them back a genuine trait instead.

Chapter Five

Wet Sand Bricks & Blindfolds

What Are Character Qualities?

And How Do You Develop a Good Character?

Every time we think a thought; every time we speak a word; every time we perform an action; every time we interact with another person, we are forming our own character.

Building our character is like building a home. Every choice that we make determines what kind of brick we are going to use next in the building up of our character. The power of choice is the most powerful thing on all the earth. No force of any kind known to humanity can force people to choose contrary to their own will. As we build our own character, the choices we made in the past begin to influence what we are likely to choose next.

Imagine that you are building a home out of bricks. In addition, each brick that you lay for the foundation of your house represents either a genuine or a counterfeit character trait. You can choose to lay either type of brick that you wish.

Imagine that the genuine character traits were made out of solid granite. Now imagine that the counterfeit traits were made out of wet sand bricks. As you build the foundation of your house, if you use too many of the wet sand bricks and not enough of the granite bricks, your house would be in danger of collapsing. It is just like that with the building of your own character.

We have the choice whether we use genuine character traits or counterfeit character traits. The more genuine character traits that we build our character with, the more solid will be the foundation of our lives.

At times, it almost seems that we are on autopilot, but we are not. However, old habits can be hard to break. If you have been reaching for a cup of coffee every day for the last 30 years, it is a safe bet that tomorrow will be no different. Yet, reaching for that cup of coffee is still a choice. No matter what, you can choose it or not choose it tomorrow morning.

At times, it almost seems that we are like computer robots, but we do not have to be that way. We have a free will. We have the power of choice. A 30-year habit of grabbing for a cup of coffee might seem impossible to change tomorrow. Yet the pattern of our choice can change as easily as we can say the words, "no thank-you!"

Sometimes we play a game with our own self. We get up in the morning, and we pretend that we do not really have any choices to make. We pretend that the entire day

is pre-set for us. Then we pretend that we are too weak to do anything about it. We pretend that we cannot change our habits or our routine. We pretend that we cannot change the way that we react when people irritate us or annoy us. We pretend that we cannot be nice in response to rude people. We pretend that we must continue the way that we do, indulging when we choose, abstaining if we like. It seems as though we love to pretend how weak we are. Sometimes we go so far to pretend that we are not pretending. Nevertheless, we are not robots. We can make new choices next time.

On the other hand, when it comes to matters that make us want to rise up and be the boss, we pretend how powerful we are. We pretend that we can do what we want; that we can say what we want; and that we can get away with most anything we want to get away with because we are the boss! Being the boss of any given situation can really test our character. It can truly reveal who we really are and what our traits are.

How we act around other people vs. how we act when no one is looking is a good way to judge our own character. Yet, few of us ever look closely at our own self to determine what our own character traits are. In fact, most people probably could not even tell you what type of character traits they have.

Much less, we tend to have no clue as to what the character traits are of those who are closest to us. A person's character traits will show how they may or may not act in any given situation.

- Would you ever drive a car blindfolded?
- Would you ever go climbing up a mountain blindfolded?
- Would you ever drive a boat blindfolded?
- Would you ever ride a bike blindfolded?

Of course, you would not! Disaster would be the results. Yet, many have started out in their adult life with blind-folders on their eyes. Why is that? It happens when people lack the basic ABCs of character traits.

As a result, too many have been blind-sided in their relationships. Conflict is the result. They find it upsetting when their friend or partner is too bossy, or too talkative, or not good with money, or disorganized, etc. They find it shocking and surprising as though they had no forewarning signs to read at all.

In reality, the signs were written clearly for them to read. They could have read those signs in advance to see the warnings. Why did they not read them? The answer is simple. They were written in a language that was unknown to them. That language is the language of character. Have you learned that language yet?

The lack of knowing the language of character is the cause of many conflicts. By learning this language, you can identify the genuine traits, the counterfeit traits, and the traits that are most likely to cause problems. By learning this language, you can reduce the amount of bad surprises that you will find with yourself and the people in your life.

Too many have seen those problems creeping into their relationships. So many conflicts occur that we have coined a cute little expression to tell each other about it. We call those conflicts irreconcilable differences.

Imagine if you could know what character strengths cause the most conflict in your life.

Imagine if you could know which counterfeits you were using when you lost your temper or act poorly.

Imagine if you could help others to see which character strengths they are using or misusing.

Imagine if you could find which character qualities are part of your Blue Zone or Safe Zone qualities, which never cause harm, insult, or injury to yourself or others. Solving Conflicts™ Diagnosis Tool in Part Two will help you find the ones in your most Safe Zone.

Imagine having a better plan than trying to change an unwilling partner.

Chapter Six

The World's Greatest Battle!

The Battle With Self-Conflict

(Part One)

The word conflict implies there are two opposing sides set against each other. War is conflict. In truth, each conflict that we have with another is like a mini-war. At times, a conflict may grow into a major battle. Other times, it stays in the realm of an ongoing minor skirmish.

So then, what is personal conflict? Personal conflict is when one is at war with their own self. That sounds a bit severe, does it not? It is to be at war with your own self! To be in a war against your own self is not necessarily a bad thing. However, the worst loss in the war against your own self is suicide. Yet, self-conflict often results in victories ...not defeats!

Every human being has at least some level of self-conflict. E G White, a 19th century author, once wrote:

The warfare against self is the greatest battle ever fought.

Moreover, Aristotle, who is considered to be the world's greatest thinker said:

I count him braver who overcomes his desires than him who conquers his enemies; for the hardest victory is over self.

Have you ever heard it said, "A person conforms to the dictates of their own conscience?" It is sort of fancy way of saying that a person is simply following his or her own conscience.

So then, what is a conscience? Officially, it is "the sense or consciousness of the moral goodness or blameworthiness of one's own conduct, intentions, or character together with a feeling of obligation to do right or be good." Having said that, let's simply say that our conscience is the little voice inside our head telling us to do right and not to do wrong. So then, self-conflict is when we are struggling to do the right things and not to do the wrong things.

If suicide is the worst loss in the war of self-conflict, then what is the best victory?

That is a good question! The best victory in the war of self-conflict is when we make our next choice correctly. We win our best victories just one good choice at a time. When

one good choice is followed by another ...and then another, we are forming our own character. The best time to begin this pattern of character growth is now!

For now, the choices that we are talking about are those things that involve just our own selves. These choices are what we choose for ourselves when no one else is looking. They are the things we choose for ourselves when we do not think we have to be accountable for our actions. They are all those things that we choose for ourselves when we think it is nobody's business but our own!

What do you do when nobody is looking? What do you do when you do not think anybody important in your life will find out? In private, do you act the same as your friends and family think you do? Perhaps you have some secrets that no one knows about except you. Or, perhaps you have become bold and do not care anymore who is watching you or what they think about it.

It would be very easy to come up with a list of examples of many types of self-conflict. However, a problem may occur if you did not see your particular self-conflict on the list. You might talk yourself into thinking you are off the hook.

We all like to justify our actions as not being as bad as others.

We talk ourselves into thinking we are much better than we really are because we imagine that other people are so much worse!

Of course, your own self-conflicts and self-justifications are not nearly as bad as the following examples ...ah, or perhaps yours are even worse!

- The one who over-eats may be thankful that they are not as bad as a smoker is.
- The one who is a smoker may be thankful they are not as bad as an alcoholic is.
- The alcoholic may be thankful they are not as bad as a marijuana user is.
- The marijuana user may be thankful they are not as bad as an amphetamine user.
- The amphetamine user may be thankful they are not as bad as a heroin addict is.
- The heroin addict may be thankful they are not as bad as one who would betray a friend is ...and so on!

At Solving Conflicts™, self-justifying does not fit into our system. It does not matter if someone else has worse self-conflicts than you do. It does not matter who else shares the blame.

This is a place where you will learn about you. This is a place where you will discover your need for mercy is far greater than your need to be merciful. This is a place where you will see what character traits influence you in the choices you make.

The good news for you is that no one else will ever know your self-conflicts. They will never know specifically what they are or whether you are making progress in overcoming them.

The bad news for you is that no one else will ever know your self-conflicts. They will never know specifically what they are or whether you are making progress in overcoming them.

That is both the good news and the bad news!

You see, you can fool most everyone in your life if you really want to. You can isolate yourself, and no one will ever know. The issue is not whether others know or not. The issue is the fact that you already know! You already know what those self-conflicts are. The fact that you already know means you have already been caught!

Are you ready to be honest with your own self about them? Are you ready to win the war of self-conflict? The choice is yours to make. Remember, the only choice you need to worry about is the choice you make next. So far, your next choice is the only one you have.

Solving Conflicts™ is a system for you to keep track of your own self in a very private way. You will be able to take a close look at yourself. We will help you to uncover your true character strengths. We will provide suggestions concerning how to make improvements ...one good choice at a time!

Chapter Seven

The World's Greatest Battle!

"R-E-S-P-E-C-T: Find Out What It Means To ME!"

(Part Two)

"Or you might walk in and find out I'm gone!" Dear Aretha Franklin... You sang the song so clearly, and we all loved it so much. Isn't it true? Isn't that about as simple as it gets? A little respect when I come home!

Of course, it helps an awful lot to get some 9 to 5, or driving in traffic, right? It makes life so much easier when even our enemies give us some, but when we don't get any from the ones who are supposed to love us the most... ouch! There is nothing quite as frustrating, is there?

At the very heart of conflict arises the issue of dominant character strengths. Then, at the heart of dominant character strengths arises the issue of genuine and counterfeit strengths.

In this chapter, we are going to look more closely at these two to find out what is at the heart of them.

We have seen that the best way to identify a counterfeit is to compare it to the genuine. So then, in terms of genuine character traits, what is at the heart of them? It is true that love is at the very heart of genuine character traits. Love in all its many varieties is a very complex thing to define. So then, for simplicity, we will identify respectfulness as the specific aspect of love that we will discuss.

Respectfulness is at the heart of a well-balanced character.

The first thing to look at is the idea of self-respect. Learning to have proper respect toward your own self is the first step in character growth. We need to have self-respect first before we can show true respect to others consistently. Without it, it is impossible to have a well-balanced character.

Self-respect is not the same thing as pride or self-importance. Self-respect is having a proper regard for your own self as a human being. Self-respect develops as a result of learning to take proper care of each part of your own life. It will continue to grow as victories are won in the battles of self-conflict. As it grows, respectfulness toward others will also grow. This is the foremost way to avoiding conflict with others.

So then, we must become more focused on respectfulness to others. This way, our genuine traits will become more active and useful. People get to know us by our

character traits. They desire to see our genuine traits in action. As they see us using our genuine traits, they will see us as trustworthy and honorable people. They will see us as people who have a conscious dignity.

**If respectfulness is at the heart of genuine traits,
what is at the heart of counterfeit traits?**

It is the lack of respectfulness. It includes both the lack of self-respect and the lack of respectfulness to others. Harm, injury, or insult occurs when respectfulness is absent. Conflict is the result.

Conflict is certain to occur when there is a lack of respectfulness between two or more people. A lack of respect is called disrespect. No one likes to be disrespected. Conflict occurs when two or more people disrespect each other. When only one shows disrespect and the other shows true respect, conflict does not occur.

Let's look at that closer. If Joe shows disrespect to Suzie, if she responds with true respect, then a conflict has been avoided. Now, it is possible that Suzie's feelings were deeply hurt. It is possible that Joe's disrespect of her was the beginning of her long and hard day. However, if she shows true respect in response to Joe, a conflict has been avoided. The moment that she chooses to give disrespect to Joe, a conflict has begun.

Does that mean that Suzie cannot address Joe's disrespect? Certainly, it does not mean that! However, it does mean that if she wants to avoid a conflict, she should address him in a respectful way. Perhaps it would be better for them both to address his disrespect when Joe is not already short of temper.

Once again, giving respect in response to disrespect is a certain way to avoid conflict. However, let us admit one thing! When someone disrespects us, it hurts!

Disrespect can come in all shapes and sizes. It does not make us happy when we are disrespected. It does not bring joy to our hearts when we are disrespected. It does not feel good. It makes us feel bad. It makes us feel uneasy ...or worse.

For this reason, it is very easy to pay back disrespect with disrespect. At times, it seems to be effortless to do so. Once we do it, it is easy to blame the other for the conflict. It is so easy to say, "He started it, or it wasn't my fault!" At last, in every conflict, both are at fault because both were disrespectful. It does not matter who started it.

So then, the foremost way to solve conflict is to avoid conflict in the first place. As long as you treat others with respect, even in response to disrespect, you will avoid a conflict. You may have not been a success in the past at avoiding conflict. However,

your entire future is based upon making a better choice next time. You only have to make one good choice at a time.

Are you already in the middle of a conflict?

No matter what the conflict is, it is the same solution as for avoiding conflict in the first place. Why is that? It is because there is nothing you can do to undue what you have already done. You cannot change what you have done. Neither can you change what has already been done to you.

However, there is one thing that you can do. You can change what your next choice is going to be. If you are in the middle of a conflict that you wish to solve, everything depends on your next choice. Perhaps the other person is not ready to stop being disrespectful to you. Perhaps someone is an ongoing source of irritation and conflict for you. You cannot change them. You cannot make their next choice for them. However, you can make a better choice for your own self. You can choose not to return disrespect for disrespect.

The key to making better choices is to accept full responsibility for your own past choices. No one forced you to make the choices that you did. We love to accept all of the credit for our good choices and none of the blame for our bad choices.

- **Accept the full responsibility for all the choices that you have made.**
- **Be fearlessly honest with yourself. This is the first step for you to take.**

The next step is to learn. Learn about your character strengths. Learn which character strengths you use in a genuine way and which you use in a counterfeit way.

- **Become willing to take a close look at your own self.**
- **Become willing to see the big picture of your dominant character traits.**
- **Then become willing to make positive changes ...one good choice at a time!**

Solving Conflicts™ Part Two is a vital and unprecedented tool to help you take a closer look at your own self. It will be an adventure of learning and of self-discovery. You can choose your outcome of the journey.

You cannot choose the way other people treat you. You cannot choose whether they treat you with respect or disrespect. However, you can choose the way you treat other people.

You can choose to be the one who treats other people with respectfulness. Your own confidence will grow. You can make better choices in your own character growth so that people will learn to have confidence in you.

Awareness of your character strengths is at the heart of making better choices for yourself. You can write your own future, one good choice at a time.

Are you willing to begin the journey?

When you try to change people, it always leads them to feel like they are not being accepted for whom they are. That one thing causes many conflicts. Learning how to speak with others in the language of character is the answer.

Solving Conflicts™ is a system to learn about yourself and others.

Solving Conflicts™ Part Two will teach you to understand better the genuine traits. It will also teach you how the counterfeit traits cause conflict. You will get sage advice on how to improve your genuine traits and how to stop using counterfeit traits in order to avoid and solve conflict. With a little bit of regular practice, you will learn how to use the language of character.

Chapter Eight

Finish the Race Strong - One Good Choice at a Time!

Solving Conflicts™ 101: The ABC's!

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to win an Olympic Gold medal? Imagine what it would be like to be standing just a little bit above your opponents as you receive the Gold medal for being the greatest champion in the entire world! Or imagine what it would feel like to be seated somewhere towards the front of the audience at the Academy Awards, where the best of the best is singled out and given an award to honor their artistry as actors or actresses, directors or producers, etc. Image how it would feel to hear your name read in front of millions of people across the world as they read who the nominees were for the Best Actor or Actress. Then with a slight pause that seems like an eternity of waiting, you hear them say that the Academy Award goes to YOU!

For every single first place winner, there are 1000's of folks who did not win, and perhaps they never will win either, at least not in such a way that they will be honored in front of millions of people.

Perhaps nearly everyone goes through a stage in their teens when they begin to wonder what it is that they would be good at. Often times, teens or even those who are well into adulthood will ponder that question of what they may be good at, you understand, not just good, but actually better at than anyone else in the world.

People do not aspire to be average. People do not form their hopes and dreams upon the idea of coming in second or third place. We would all like to be winners at something. But the truth seems to be that most of us never become the winners that we would have liked to have become, and far too often those who are closest to us seem to actually discourage us from even trying to step out of our comfort zone to achieve something unique or different from the status quo of what their expectations are for us.

At a particular High School in Lincoln, Nebraska, cross-country running was popular thing to do. The kids had an excellent coach that kept them motivated. There were plenty of races to run throughout the fall semester that kept the kids in state of readiness. They trained hard... sometimes in the blistering heat of late summer; sometimes in cold, windy, and rainy days of early fall. Every kid dreamed of becoming the fastest runner and winning the State Championship, and among them was a student in his senior year named Steven.

The desire to win was strong for Steven, and the fact that his older brother had won the State Championship just two years earlier put even more pressure upon Steven to win the big race. At last the day of the final race came, and there were runners present from

High Schools all across the State of Nebraska. Also present at the race was Scott, Steven's older brother... with his digital video camera in hand... with the eager anticipation of seeing his younger brother win the race.

Ready! Set! "BANG"! The gun went off and the runners started off for the five mile race to see who would win the State Championship. Scott knew the course well, since he had run there many times. His plan was to video record Steven and cheer for his brother as loudly as he could. Each time Steven and the other runners past Scott, he would make a mad dash across the country fields to intercept the runners on another stretch of the track. Once there he would record Steven every time he past by ...cheering wildly for him to encourage him to run his fastest and offering tips about how many runners he needed to pass to get the front of the pack.

Little by little, Steven began to fall back farther and farther from the lead runner, yet not willing to admit to the defeat of his younger brother, Scott continued to cheer wildly for Steven every time he passed in front of Scott. At last, when Steven got to the final stretch of the race, 30 runners had already crossed the finish line in front of him, but Scott's enthusiasm and cheer for his brother continued unabated. The last 300 yards of the race is where all the Moms and Dads, Grandmas and Grandpas, and brothers and sisters all line up to cheer the runners as they run their fastest in the final stretch.

Steven appeared very much exhausted as he came into the final stretch; however, Scott was there for his brother. His camera was running, and he was determined to cheer for his brother all the way to the end of the bitter defeat. Finally, Scott had to dodge through the crowd of spectators...with camera running ...with his own legs running ...and his voice screaming out at the top of his lungs with enthusiasm and cheer for his brother, "Finish strong, Steven! Finish Strong!"

Sometimes, life seems to be an awful lot like a cross-country race. There are days that go by where we encounter one setback after another, and we find that half way through the day we are exhausted, out of breath, and the finish line is nowhere in sight. On days like that, wouldn't it be nice to have someone right there running just behind us, cheering wildly for us, "Finish Strong!" You understand, the finish line is just ahead. Don't give up now, "Finish Strong!"

In the race of life, the measure of a man is his character. It is our character that produces both our greatest successes and our worst failures. In the real world, people only cheer for the winners... not the losers. And too often the losers get laughed at or jeered... or perhaps at the best, they are simply ignored altogether.

If everyone in the world was lined up together and given the choice of being in one of two groups, where one group was for people who thought that life was very easy, and the other group was for all those folks who thought that life was very hard, which group

do you think would be biggest of the two groups. It's easy to assume that the group for those who thought that life was very difficult would be much bigger of the two groups.

If you already think that life is very easy, Solving Conflicts™ is not for you. Our focus is for those who think that sometimes life can be very hard and very challenging... and who also would be the type of people that could appreciate someone cheering for them, "Finish Strong!"

Making a better choice next time is often the only solution that is available to us for the last time we made a mistake or were involved in a conflict. This is the entire purpose of Solving Conflicts™. That is to say -- it is our entire purpose to help people identify what the issues are in their life in terms of the foundation of their character, and to help them see things in plain black and white.

You can have a clear idea of what Solving Conflicts™ Part Two is by comparing it to this easy child's fairy-tale. However, we have changed the story just a little bit to illustrate an idea.

Will you imagine for a moment that Santa Claus was working on his famous Naughty or Nice list? He is checking to see who would get gifts and who would not. Are you okay with that so far?

Now, imagine Santa was getting a bit upset with the job of keeping track of so many people. There were too many people to tally up and be finished in time. Moreover, there was too many that were nearly as naughty as they were nice. It was getting very hard to choose. In fact, he discovered that his nice list was shrinking every year, and he was starting to get worried.

Then one day, one of his Elves came up to him with a grand idea. The Elf said, "Hey, Santa Claus, I have a grand idea for you to cheer you up. Why don't you help people out a little bit more? Why don't you just help people to learn to be nicer instead of not giving them any presents when they are naughty? That way, if everybody learns to be nice, you can just throw away that whole Naughty or Nice list. Then you can simply bring gifts to everybody in the whole world!"

Santa thought aloud and scratched his head, "Hmm!" He said to the Elf, "I'm guessing you have such a plan all worked out. How we can teach all the people of the world to be nice instead of naughty?"

The Elf said, "Yes, Santa, I do ...ah, err ...that is to say, the Elves and I have worked out a plan. Every person in the whole world can learn to be nice instead of naughty. In fact, Santa, we put it on the internet so that everyone in the world can start learning right away!"

Learning to be nice instead of naughty!

Therein is the essence of Solving Conflicts™. You will be making a list & checking it twice (or more) to find out whether you have been naughty or nice. However, if there are things that you find out you have been naughty in, you will be able to learn about it. You will learn how to know yourself better. You will learn about alternatives that you can choose to improve your life and relationships...one good choice at a time!

Please Note: We would like to offer you just a brief word of encouragement here before you continue on with Chapter Nine. As it is true of nearly all new things that we learn, sometimes the new things seem hard at first.

However, after we spend just a little bit more time with them, we look back and realize that it was not nearly as hard as we first imagined it would be.

We can assure you that Solving Conflicts™ will be no different. It all becomes clear with a little time and a little effort.

Chapter Nine
Solving Conflicts™ 102:
The Basics of Genuine VS Counterfeit Qualities
(A mini-course!)

First, think about the genuine trait of Honesty:

IF you score high on Honesty, that is a good thing.

IF you score low on Honesty, that could mean that you lack Honesty.

IF you lack in Honesty, you may have the opposite of that or Dishonesty.

You will be graded on 42 different genuine traits to see if you have these ...or lack these traits.

Second, you may be thinking that scoring high on a trait is always a good thing. You may be thinking that scoring low on a trait is always a bad thing. Neither is true in every case, as you will see:

Solving Conflicts™ does not only measure whether you have or lack a genuine trait.

The Solving Conflicts™ system is based upon the concept that we often misuse our genuine traits regardless of our scores on them.

When we misuse our genuine traits, they become counterfeit traits.

Each of the 42 genuine traits has an average of three counterfeit traits.

These occur when we misuse, over-use, improperly use, or ineffectively use the genuine traits.

If you ever forget what turns a genuine trait into a counterfeit trait, remember these two rules:

- Rule #1: Counterfeit traits always cause harm, injury, or insult to others and conflict will be the result.
- Rule #2: (See rule #1)

Example A: When we misuse Honesty to a fault, it does not become Dishonesty.

When Honesty is used to a fault, people get hurt. Honesty, when used to a fault, turns into Outspokenness, Bluntness, Brutality, or Indiscretion. Do not worry; the meanings will become clear as you continue.

Example B: When you use Fair-mindedness to a fault, it does not become Unfair-mindedness.

When fair-mindedness is used to a fault, people get hurt. Fair-mindedness, when used to a fault, turns into Indecisive, Indiscriminate, and Undiscerning. Again, do not worry! The words and the meanings will become clear as you continue. Each will be explained in detail.

All 42 genuine traits can be misused to a fault.

Solving Conflicts™ will measure you for genuine traits that you misuse as counterfeit traits.

Please Note: If all of this seems a bit unclear to you right now, please, do not be too concerned about it at this stage. Little by little, it will all become crystal clear to you as you continue.

Why is it a good thing to measure for counterfeit traits?

Well, sad as it is, most people lean towards the misuse of their genuine traits at least part of time. Often, we do not even know what genuine traits we have. Most people would not have even a clue which of their genuine traits they are misusing. We cannot change or improve what we do not understand. Solving Conflicts™ will make it easy for you to see your genuine and counterfeit traits.

So then, measuring your traits in this way will reveal to you two very important things:

You will see what genuine traits you have (and whether you lack in them.)

You will also see what genuine traits you are misusing as counterfeit traits.

What can you gain from seeing your counterfeit trait scores in comparison to your genuine trait scores? Consider this example:

Example: Joe learned this about Courage as it related to him:

He found out that his score for Courage was only 60. That is low. The highest score possible would have been 100. As he continued looking at his scores, he saw something that got his attention. He saw that he scored unusually high in counterfeit Courage. His scores for counterfeit Courage were:

Recklessness he scored 90

Brashness he scored 70

Brazenness he scored 100

As Joe read the Character Profiles in Part Two, he could see his own self clearly. He could see how his high scores for counterfeit Courage had caused big problems for him in his life. However, in the past he did not understand what caused some of his troubles. Finally, it was all starting to make sense to him.

However, one thing was really puzzling Joe. Although Joe scored low on the genuine use of Courage, he scored very high on the counterfeit use of Courage. Joe had never seen himself as a man of Courage. The high scores for counterfeit Courage told Joe that he had good potential to learn how to use genuine Courage. Joe found out that he possessed a great deal of Courage that he could use in a proper way.

The bad news was this: All through his life, Joe had been misusing the abundant genuine Courage that he never knew he had!

It was great news for Joe to learn how to use true Courage. It helped him to avoid some of his bad troubles that had become so familiar. His family and friends were happy to see the positive change as well.

In addition, the Solving Conflicts™ system will help you to help other willing people. You will learn how to identify their character strengths and share it with them in a positive manner.

Chapter Ten

Judging Others:

"Before You Accuse Me, Take a Look at Your Self"

Why has it become so hard for people to get along with other people?

How can things go so wrong between two people? How can two lovers end up in a silent standoff? How can a marriage of professed love end in a divorce that sometimes produces bitter conflict for a lifetime?

The issue is much broader than marriage and divorce alone.

The issue is people, character, and conflict resolution!

How can we be so very blind to the character of other people? How can we misjudge them so completely? How can we at first think that they are perfect for us ...only to find out later that they were perfectly wrong for us? Are we that bad at judging the character of others and Solving Conflicts™?

Simply put, yes we are!

The pioneer broadcaster and man of wisdom, HMS Richards, once met with a 21-year-old man who had come to his wits end. His two-year marriage had become riddled full of conflict. This led him on a desperate 2000-mile journey.

At last, he ended up at the home of Richard's seeking for advice. The young fellow unloaded to the wise old man his laundry list of troubles that his young bride was causing him. When he finished, Richards said, "Son, you can't change your wife ...you can only change yourself!" The young fellow was nearly speechless. He felt certain that the wise old man must have misunderstood part of the story. He spoke up again to try to clarify himself. The old sage listened carefully as he let the young fellow continue to unload. Then he spoke again, "Son, you can't change your wife ...you can only change yourself!"

Have you ever tried to change someone who simply was not willing to listen ...much less actually change? It did not work, did it? Have you uncovered only a deep mystery concerning why people act the way they act?

The young fellow that Richards had been counseling was the third generation in a row of divorce. His single parent mother raised him in a fatherless home. The odds for personal fault were against that young fellow. Whatever problems he would have liked to change in his young wife, most likely he had far more important personal concerns. His own character and problem solving skills needed changing first.

Legendary rock & roll guitarist/singer, Eric Clapton, popularized the 1957 song lyrics written by fellow legend, Bo Diddley, called, "Before You Accuse Me". The lyrics continued on: "Before you accuse me, take a look at yourself!"

Have you taken a close look at your own character lately?

Before you accuse others, why not take a close look at your own character and problem solving skills first! Oh, and by the way, after you are done, do not accuse anyone of his or her faults.

Solving Conflicts™ offers a much more productive method for conflict resolution.

Chapter Eleven

Titanic Failure - Oops! or Big OOPS!

(It Could Never Happen to Me!)

Perhaps more than any other disaster in modern history, the sinking of the RMS Titanic has sparked more sorrow and shock; more debate and speculation; more books and movies; and more metaphorical lessons to learn than has any other tragedy.

Shortly after that great tragedy, the designer of the Titanic said, "Everything that could reasonably be thought of was done ... in order to minimize the risk of ordinary accident."

Have you ever felt like that? Perhaps you got up in the morning feeling confident and prepared. In your best judgment, you believed that you had done everything you could reasonably think of to do in order to minimize the risk of ordinary accident. Your ship was sailing along confidently. All the passengers were well cared for and comfortable.

Then unexpectedly, out of nowhere, opposition arose ...an adversary was in your midst. You never practiced a situation like that in a drill. Then before you could blink your eyes, you realized that you had a gapping hole in your starboard side, water was gushing in, your ship was sinking, passengers were fleeing into the darkness of night in their lifeboats and you were all alone in your Captain's Chamber sinking with your ship.

Perhaps you have never personally had a day like that, but I would venture to guess with a fair degree of certainty that at least you know somebody who has.

While on the one hand, days like that can certainly reveal our character, you understand ...the stuff we are made of; on the other hand, our character may well determine the likelihood of having days like that.

Are you confident that you currently have whatever it takes to avoid disaster? Captain Edward Smith of the Titanic apparently felt that way. That fateful day started out like any other day. Upon his expected arrival in New York, Captain Smith would retire from a long and uneventful career.

Before that fateful day happened, Captain Smith said, "When anyone asks me how I can best describe my experience in nearly forty years at sea, I merely say, 'uneventful.' Of course, there have been winter gales, and storms and fog and the like. But in all my experience, I have never been in any accident ... or any sort worth speaking about. I have seen but one vessel in distress in all my years at sea. I never saw a wreck and never have been wrecked nor was I ever in any predicament that threatened to end in disaster of any sort."

Is it possible ...dare we even think it ...that if Captain Smith had been using Solving Conflicts™ to work on his own character issues that the entire Titanic disaster could have been avoided?

On that fateful night, Captain Smith was merely one good choice away from making a correct decision that would have relegated his ship, his crew, and his passengers a place in history that would have been uneventful and unknown. He was but one good choice away from delivering his passengers to safety and a history far different than the one we watch at the movies. Have you ever been just one good choice away from a day that would have been uneventful, smooth-sailing, and trouble-free?

One thing that Captain Smith apparently lacked was the character quality of alertness. He had been warned seven times that very day of icebergs ...including a direct warning just 49 minutes earlier from the ship Californian just 19 miles away telling him that they were stopped and surrounded by ice. A man who was in possession of the character quality of alertness would have readily heeded those warnings and either stopped or changed course to avert potential disaster.

In advance of that day, if Captain Smith had learned that he lacked in the quality of alertness, he might have seen a radically better outcome that historical day. Focusing on alertness might have been enough to inspire him with a greater sense of caution that fateful night.

Simply put, are you truly doing all you can to avert disaster in your own life by focusing on the matters of your own character growth?

Are you learning, little by little, to be helpful to the character growth of those people who are closest to you?

Consider these statistics. Do they seem altogether too familiar? Perhaps you have seen this in your own family history. The chances are good that you have seen it ...maybe up close and personal.

Are you ready to say,

"The buck stops here?"

Is it time for you to begin making some changes for yourself by making better choices? If not now, when?

If you have not been to a really scary movie lately, and if you are really in the mood to be shocked beyond belief, do an internet search on divorce statistics or men who pay child support or fatherless homes ...you get the picture! Consider yourself warned. It is not a pretty sight. It's enough to make you cry!

Is sorrow, divorce, broken relationships our destiny in life? Do we have any better choices to make? We must find better choices to make! The alternative is too grim to say the least.

The following statistics are some of the least frightening statistics that we could find. Grab a box of tissues. Get a bowl of chocolate ice cream -- and cry! Because statistically speaking, this has either already happened to your grand-parents, your parents, you, your children, or it's going to happen to you or your children if you don't intentionally do something to prevent it from happening.

Divorce Magazine reported these statistics:

- In 1997, there were nearly 1.7 million divorces.
 - In 1998, there were 19.4 million divorced adults.
 - A marriage lasts 7.2 years on average before divorce occurs.
 - In 1995, 43% of all marriages will result in divorce within the first 15 years.
 - In 1997, 50% of all first marriages end in divorce.
 - 60 percent of all remarriages end in divorce.
 - 50% of all women cohabit before they turn age 30.
 - 70% of the couples that cohabit longer than five years eventually get married.
 - Since 1997, 2.5 million people get a divorce annually.
 - In 1996, children of divorce were 50% more likely than their counterparts from intact families to divorce.
 - 4.1 million single mothers never married.
 - In 1997, 32% of all babies born were to unmarried women.
 - Since 1997, 1 million children became the victims of divorce annually.
 - In 1998, 27% of family households with children had only one parent.
 - In 1998, 20 million children were living with only one parent.
 - In 1998, 84% of children living in single-parent homes were living with their mother.
 - Fatherless homes account for 63% of youth suicides, 90% of homeless/runaway children, 85% of children with behavior problems, 71% of high school dropouts, 85% of youths in prison, and well over 50% of teen mothers.
 - In 1997, 80% of the divorces were due to irreconcilable differences.
 - On average, the length of divorce proceedings takes 1 year.
- ✓ **Access to Solving Conflicts™ is for your lifetime!**
- ✓ **Plus, it costs less than 1 month of cable TV!**

Chapter Twelve

Score Chart

What To Do Next?

Read Chapters 12, 13, and 14 before you click on the three tool buttons associated with each one.

[Note: If you have looked at the website www.solvingconflicts.com, chapter 12 and onward begins what is referred to as Part Two. You can follow along with the remainder of these chapters by using the guest credentials that you will see clearly identified on the Home Page or else you can begin your own personal assessment by clicking on the “Start My Profile” button that you can also find on the Home Page.]

These Chapters are to help you become familiar with the 3 tool buttons that you see on your right that contain your scores. [You will need to log in as guest or take the assessment and the continue with the Part Two pages to see these buttons]

Each of the three chapter links is separate from the tool button that is next to it.

All 3 buttons lead you to your scores and to the Character Profiles that define each character strength.

You will not need to memorize each detail of this information.

Repeated use will easily help you to become familiar.

Give yourself a reasonable time to learn how to use these tools.

It is not intended for you to get through all of Part Two in one day!

Don't worry if it all does not register in your mind on the very first time you use the tool buttons.

There will be tips and reminders throughout Part Two.

Score Chart Preview

(Genuine Qualities VS. Counterfeit Qualities List)

You will see all of your Genuine Qualities listed on the left.

You will see all of your Counterfeit Qualities listed on the right.

The scores are listed in a descending order in either column.

The Genuine Scores start with the qualities that you use the best.

The Counterfeit Scores start with the qualities that you are most inclined to use in a negative way.

The Counterfeit Qualities are each labeled with the Genuine Quality that they come from.

Clicking on the name of any quality will take you to see the Character Profile for that quality.

On each Character Profile page you will see the Genuine quality and the Counterfeit qualities that go together.

The Genuine Quality List

These are your scores for each of the 42 genuine character qualities. You will see each genuine character quality listed with your score. The range of scoring is zero to 100. A score of 100 is the highest score possible. A score of 100 on a particular quality indicates that you have a likely potential to use that quality in positive ways. A score of zero indicates that it is not likely that you are presently using that quality.

Obviously, a score of 100 is very good. A score of zero indicates the possibility that you may need to begin to implement that quality into your life choices to help you develop a stronger and more balanced character. The lower the score is on a particular quality, the less that quality applies to you, and the higher your score is on a particular quality, the more that quality applies to you.

Examples: (These two examples assume that you have a score of zero on the corresponding Counterfeit misuses.)

A score of zero on patience indicates that it is very likely that you lack patience in your life. You may have a problem with being impatient. You can improve your relationships by making better choices to develop patience.

A score of zero on honesty indicates that it is very likely that you lack honesty in your life. You may have a problem with being dishonest. You can improve your relationships by making better choices to develop honesty.

Any score higher than zero on a genuine quality is to your advantage.

It is obviously better to have some honesty than none at all.

Any score that is less than 100 can be improved upon.

You can get a clearer picture of how to improve each quality by referring to it in the Character Profile section simply by clicking on the quality.

The Counterfeit Quality List

These are your scores for each of the 140 counterfeit qualities. Clicking on the name of a counterfeit will take you to the Character Profile. Each genuine character quality has 2, 3 or 4 counterfeits. You will see the genuine character quality that the counterfeit quality comes from .along with the other counterfeits that are part of the same genuine quality.

A score of zero on each of the counterfeits is the best score possible. Zero indicates that it is not likely that you are misusing that counterfeit quality. Any score higher than zero indicates that to some degree you are misusing that trait. A score of 100 is a virtual certainty that you are misusing that trait in at least one area of your life or more.

Examples:

A score of 100 on outspokenness under the genuine quality of honesty would indicate that you are extremely likely to misuse the genuine quality of honesty in such a way that you are outspoken. Your issue is not with dishonesty. Your issue is with being honest to a fault.

A score of 100 on indifferent under the genuine quality of patience would indicate that you are extremely likely to misuse the genuine quality of patience in such a way that you are indifferent. Your problem is not with impatience. Your problem is with being patient to a fault.

Any score higher than zero on a counterfeit quality is to your disadvantage.

It is obviously better to avoid misusing a quality entirely than it is to misuse it even a little bit.

You can get a clearer picture of your counterfeit qualities by referring to them in the Character Profile section simply by clicking on the quality.

Chapter Thirteen

Diagnosis Tool

What To Do Next?

4 Easy Steps!

1. Once on the Diagnosis Tool page, read what each color of the color chart means.
2. Then, notice the color chart and the square matrix at the bottom of the page.
3. Click the number on any color of the matrix that you wish to go to the Strength Indicator page.
4. On the Strength Indicator page, observe the Character Strength categories that you see for that color ...and click on the name of any quality.

(Note: Clicking on the name of any quality will take you to the Character Profile for that category.)

In the Score Chart, (Chapter Twelve) you see each of the qualities listed separate from each other.

However, the Diagnosis Tool combines the qualities together as a category and gives you a color designation for each category according to your scores.

(1 category = 1 genuine plus it's counterfeits)

Since there are 42 genuine qualities, that means there are 42 categories.

On your assessment you became familiar with scoring yourself on a scale from 1-10.

This tool uses a different scale! Instead of 1-10, where 10 is the highest, this scale is blue through red.

(Don't worry about memorizing the colors, a color chart is provided so you will know what each color means.)

All 42 categories are assigned to a color.

Just two examples for now:

(This will become easy with a little practice.)

- **The Color Red:** For example, if you see a 2 or 3 in the color red, it means that you have 2 or 3 categories that are in the red category.
- Red means that you use the genuine quality and the combined counterfeits both in the strongest way.

- This means that you are most likely to use both the genuine quality and the counterfeits of this category. You can use the genuine quality of this category easily. When you do, things go smoothly. However, it also means that you just as easily use the counterfeits. When you use the counterfeits, conflict is typically the result. Any counterfeit qualities that you have in the color red need the most attention from you...and the sooner the better. These are the ones most likely to be the cause of your troubles. If you are not able to take some time to think, don't use the ones in red ...especially if you are short of temper or under stress and likely to over-react about something.
- **The Color Blue:** For example, if you see a 2 in the color blue, it means that you have 2 categories that are in the blue category.
- Blue means that you use the genuine quality the strongest; however, you do not use the counterfeits in this category at all.
- This means that under stress; when you are angry; when you are tired, etc., that if you focus yourself strongly toward using these qualities, your chance of causing a conflict is virtually zero. You may find that regular use of this quality in times of stress will not only keep you from conflict, but it will also be a productive way to build your character and your relationships to others. Instead of using the qualities that are in the color red when you are short of temper, think strongly about resorting to the use of these qualities in blue instead. This is a very safe color.

You will find this tool to be extremely useful in helping you to discover qualities that are safest for you, ones that are not so safe..and others that you simply need to avoid under certain circumstances.

Chapter Fourteen

Fast Look-Up

What To Do Next?

1. Look up the name of any one of the 42 genuine qualities or any one of the 140 counterfeits fast and easy.
2. Use either of the two drop-down lists, and you will be taken directly to that Character Profile.
3. The Character Profile will have your scores posted.
4. This is extremely useful to look things up quickly.
5. We provide you with more "What To Do Next?" items and a number of examples of circumstances of when you will want to look up a quality.

As you can see, all three buttons are designed for you to be able to see exactly what your scores are in relation to the Character Profiles.

The Character Profiles are urgent information for you to be able to learn more about your Character.

Chapter Fifteen

Knowing Yourself

By now, you have finished taking your assessment. By now, you have looked at the Score Chart, the Diagnosis Tool, and the Fast Look-Up buttons to see your scores. By now, you have read chapters 12, 13, and 14, which discuss how to use those buttons (or tools), yes?

What To Do Next?

Assignment: If you have not yet practiced finding your way around those three buttons, it would be a good idea to do that before you continue reading. Your goal is to know how to navigate with those buttons. For beginners, it may be a little tricky. If you have no problem navigating, continue reading.

Your next choice may become the most important choice of your lifetime. Your next choice may unlock the doors to your true power of choice. Every one of us has the power to choose. We can choose the right when we want to choose the right, and we can choose the wrong when we want to choose the wrong. You have read about that battle in Chapter 6 & 7.

So often, the messages we get from society (or perhaps even from those who claim to know us the best) seem to tell us that we are stuck being the way that others tell us we are. So often people evaluate us as though we are only the sum total of the mistakes we made in the past. Sometimes, we even make the mistake of believing that ourselves.

Yet, we do not have to be the sum total of our mistakes. We do not have to repeat the bad choices we made yesterday. Nor do we have to blame the other person. Nor do we have to excuse our behavior because we think someone victimized us. Nor do we have to live in denial of our own contributions to the conflicts have involved us.

We can make a new plan! We can choose to clean up our own side of the street. We can do that one good choice at a time, and we can do it with such intense determination that we will string those good choices together until they become brand-new habits.

We can pursue our new plan so passionately that those who would rather remember us as the sum total of our mistakes will not recognize us the next time they encounter us.

Moreover, we can claim it as our fundamental right as a human being to be able to make a better choice next time. And, we can choose to start right now!

Solving Conflicts™ is not based simply on some type of imaginary positive thinking. It is not based upon a quick fix and "poof" all your troubles and sorrows will disappear. It

is not based upon a silly dream that if you could only win the lottery then all your troubles would be over. It is not based upon trying to figure out what your Daddy could have done differently to help you become a better person. And it is not based upon what your second grade teacher really did wrong to mess you up.

Solving Conflicts™ is based upon you and you alone. It is based upon reality. It is based upon who you are right now, who you have been in the past, who you want to be next, and what you choose to do about it.

It is based upon the premise that it does not matter where you have been or what you have done in the past; that you can start right now all over again with a clean slate; no matter what your circumstances are; no matter whether anyone else will let you forget your past!

Whether you are locked-up in a prison or living life in a palace, only you can determine what kind of person that you want to be from now on. This does not mean that there are not consequences for your past words or actions. It does not mean that suddenly you will be accepted as a brand new person with a brand new reputation. There are personal battles to be fought and won. Persistence, determination, and resoluteness will help you toward your goals.

Perhaps when you looked at your scores, you were shocked to see how good you did on some qualities that you never even knew you had. Perhaps you were also shocked to see too many high scores on the counterfeits that you were simply not expecting to see.

Now, as in right now, what are you going to do about it? Now that you have seen a snapshot of your character qualities, both the genuine and the counterfeits, what are you going to do different from what you were doing before? Are you ready to own your own choices and take control of what you determine to do next?

If you decide to do nothing about growing wiser, growing stronger, becoming more balanced, and making better choices, you have gloriously wasted this much of your time. The only way you can anticipate better results next time is if you do something different from what you did last time. And it is in your own power of choice to do something different next time.

All good things we learn to do take practice and persistence.

It is our sincere desire that you take matters into your own hands to learn as much about yourself as it is possible to learn by being honest with yourself.

Many people could name more parts of their car than they could name parts of their own character. It does not have to be that way any longer. You can become a character expert about your own character.

When you first looked at the Score Chart, were you surprised to see which qualities are at the top of your genuine character qualities? Those are your best genuine strengths.

Did you happen to notice which ones are at the bottom of the genuine qualities list? Were you happy about what you saw? Those are the qualities that you lack the most. Did you see some things that you lack that you would like to have? You can have it by choosing it, and by practicing it.

Did you notice which counterfeit qualities are at the top of the Score Chart? Remember, the ones at the top of that list are the counterfeit qualities that you use in a strong way. Were you happy about what you saw on the top of the list? Would you like to make a better plan for next time not to use those qualities? Who was harmed by it? Who was insulted by it? Who was injured by it? Was it your own self? Or was it some other person? Was it a friend or stranger? Was it your boss or your employee or your co-worker? Was it your father? Was it your mother? Your sister or brother? Your husband or wife? Your son or daughter? Perhaps it was your neighbor!

There is an extremely high chance that whatever counterfeits are at the top of your Score Chart are the ones causing the most conflict for you in your life. The ones at the top of this list are a good place to start. Learning about them is where you begin. You will learn about them by clicking on the name of the quality on the Score Chart page and following it to the character profiles to read the definitions.

On the Diagnosis Tool, there are two things of concern for you to identify. The color chart has 19 colors that range from red on the top, to blue on the bottom.

Okay, please pay attention! Stand up and stretch! Go get a drink of water. Do ten toe touches to get the blood circulating in your brain, then sit back down and read the following sentence at least three times.

Not this sentence, the next one... but are you alert? Because you need not to miss this next sentence:

- **One:** The most important qualities to first identify are the highest and the lowest on the color chart.
- **Two:** The most important qualities to first identify are the highest and the lowest on the color chart.
- **Three:** The most important qualities to first identify are the highest and the lowest on the color chart.

Okay, now this is your first quiz question:

1. Which of your qualities are the most important ones for you to first identify?

If your answer was the character qualities on the top and bottom of the color chart are the most important ones for you to identify first, then you have a perfect score on your first quiz!

The Red Zone: If you do not have any of them at the very top in red, give yourself a pat on the back. That is a good thing; however, locate the ones closest to red. Now remember two things: First, the red zone is not a good zone. Second, do not fear the red zone. Take a fearless look at the truth. This is not intended for you to start beating yourself up or putting yourself down over it. Let the facts be the facts without getting your emotions mixed in with them. Be courageous! There is no shame in choosing to do address the issues of your life to become a better person.

The Blue Zone: If you had one or more at very bottom in blue, also give yourself a pat on the back. That also is a very good thing! While the ones in the red zone are the ones that are causing you the most trouble, the ones in the blue zone at the bottom of your list are your safest character qualities. Be humble about them. Be real about them, and be sincere as you learn more about them.

We will come back to the red zone in a moment; however, for now we are going to discuss the ones that are in the blue zone. If you do not have any that are in blue, one of your first goals is to find the ones that are closest to blue. You will benefit in countless ways by discovering how you can make better choices to get them into the blue. The closer they are to the blue zone, the easier they will be to work with them to get them into the blue zone.

Why is blue so important?

In order to get into the blue zone, two things have to be true:

- **First**, you have to have the highest score on the genuine use of a quality.
- **Second**, you also have to have a score of zero on the counterfeit uses of that quality.

Why is that important?

What it means is this:

- ...any quality in the blue zone is a safe quality for you to use.
- ...you only use qualities in the blue zone in a positive way.
- ...since you do not lack this quality, it does not cause conflict for you.

- ...since you do not misuse the counterfeits of this quality, it does not cause conflict for you.

Celebrate that quality. Throw a party in your honor for that quality. Etch that quality in the forefront of your conscience mind. Never forget that is your safe quality! You already own that quality, and it is your best tool in your toolbox.

The next time you look eye-to-eye with potential conflict, take this tool out of your toolbox. Filter what is happening in that potential conflict through that quality. Do not use any other quality to evaluate the situation until you are 100% certain that you are calm and even-tempered. Let this quality serve as the basis for your immediate response to the potential conflict.

- If somebody cuts in line at the grocery store, filter it through the eyes of this quality.
- If somebody cuts you off when you are driving down the road, filter it through the eyes of this quality.
- If the server spills food all over you, filter it through the eyes of this quality.
- If the neighbor's dog bites you, filter it through the eyes of this quality.
- If your bank forgets to credit your next deposit into your checking account and 15 checks bounce, filter it through the eyes of this quality.
- If you are starved, overworked, late for supper, and it is served cold and burnt, filter it through the eyes of this quality.
- If your favorite TV program is interrupted by a weather report concerning emergency weather from three counties away and it is heading in the opposite direction from your home, filter it through the eyes of this quality.
- If someone in the family forgets to fill up your car with gas and you run out on the way to work in the middle of a rainstorm, filter it through the eyes of this quality.

Okay, do you get the picture? Fill in the blanks. What happened the last time you were in a conflict?

What To Do Next?

Assignment: In your mind, recall one or more of the last instances where you reacted poorly to someone you thought was causing you harm, injury, or insult. Do some serious and self-honest thinking.

The purpose of this is not for you to beat yourself up over it. The purpose of this is not to rewrite history and live in fantasyland. The purpose is to take a little bit of time to think about what actually happened and what you did or said that escalated the situation into a conflict.

After that, think about the same thing; only this time, imagine that you are filtering that event through your safe quality. No matter what that other person said or did, now, this time, you simply hang onto that one single safe quality and refuse to make any choice other than a response based upon that one safe quality.

Remember, that is your quality. You own it. It is who you already are. You can use that quality whenever you need to. It is the quality that you are least likely to misuse. When you are confronted with a potential conflict, turning to this one quality will help you stay in a safe zone to avoid escalating the conflict. You are entitled to use it, and you are entitled to make a better choice next time. You can do this because you already know how to use this quality. Staying with this quality will help you to find positive outcomes.

Now back to the red zone qualities or as close to red as you have on the Diagnosis Tool page.

The practice you just had with the blue zone qualities will come in handy at this stage.

Simply put, there have been times for you when you were faced with a potential conflict that instead of turning to your skillful use of a blue zone quality, you turned to your not-so-skillful use of your red zone qualities. Oops! Or was it a BIG OOPS?

You probably did not even realize it at the time, but you were setting your own self up for the conflict that resulted. How could that be?

Look at it this way. Have you ever had a course in the effective use of courage, honesty, objectivity, resoluteness, loyalty, or any of the rest of them? Did you have an instruction manual? It's not likely that you did.

Consider this comparison: The first time a heart surgeon doctor practices, you can be sure that he or she does not practice on a real person in need of heart surgery. The practice stage occurs with non-humans, you understand, something that if they say, "Oops!", it does not become a human tragedy.

Sadly enough, because most all of us were never given a manual on how to use character qualities, we simply made up our own rules and practiced on each other. Oops, again!

We probably should stop practicing on each other with character qualities that we just don't quite have the hang of yet. Don't you think?

Well, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure this one out, but if you are going to be practicing your character qualities on someone, you should be certain in advance that they know you are practicing and that they are ready, willing, and able to grant you a "do-over!" ...you understand, just in case of another, "Oops!"

With some thoughtfulness and practice, you will become proficient in knowing more about your character strengths, both genuine and counterfeit.

Come up with a decisive plan that you can put into action the next time a situation occurs. Know in advance which character strengths you can draw upon to minimize the chances for conflict to occur.

Understand this; each one of us develops our own unique set of character strengths. We all tend to use the qualities that are the strongest or most dominant. Most people in the world have moments when they are a bit short of temper. We all have our weak moments when we are just not thinking as sharply as normal.

Perhaps we are tired, hungry, over-worked, unappreciated (or whatever the case may be), and all of the sudden nothing is going right. Something happens unexpectedly, and we have never practiced for it. Typically, we are left with little if any time whatsoever to think about what our best response will be. During times like this, we draw upon our strengths. We turn to the qualities that we have -- not the ones that we lack!

Unfortunately for us, some of the qualities we choose to use we are simply no good at in times of stress or weakness. Most of us have a combination of several qualities that we use together when we react poorly to any particular situation. On a good day; when we are well rested; when we are well fed; when our needs are met; when our bills are paid; when stress is low; we would never misuse those qualities. But when we are under pressure, those are the ones we draw upon to use, and then, "oops!"

What To Do Next?

Assignment: On the top of the color chart, in the red zone, you will find your top character strengths that you use both positively and negatively. The goal of this assignment is to learn which qualities are on the top of your red zone. Once you have identified them and read about them in the character profile, you need to have an honest talk with yourself.

First question: "When I have a conflict (with either myself or some other person), which of the character qualities am I misusing?"

Remember this definition!

What is Conflict: Conflict is the outcome of the improper use of Genuine Character Strength to the extent that harm, injury, or insult occurs.

That "harm, injury, or insult" can occur to either your own self or to other people.

It is necessary that you correctly identify those traits. Think of the times where you were in a conflict. Not just the conflicts that involve others, but also the conflicts you fight with your own self.

Here are some useful tips:

- Go to the Diagnosis Tool page
- Click on the number that is the highest on the color chart
- That will bring up the category of the one or more qualities from that color.
- Read the list carefully to identify your highest scores
- Click on each of the qualities, both genuine and counterfeit to read about them in the character profile.
- Then, ask yourself the second question below.

Second question: "In what type of circumstances do I use these qualities?"

You must begin to understand what part of your character qualities are getting you into trouble in your interpersonal or professional relationship. You must also begin to understand what type of situations and circumstances you are in when you begin to use these traits. For some people, this may come easy. For other people, this may take weeks of observation, thought and reflection.

Example #1: Dean has a problem when he gets angry. It does not matter who, what, when or where, but every time Dean gets into a situation where he is becoming angry with someone, he tells them off in a brutal fashion. Dean happened to have a score of 90 on the honesty counterfeit known as brutality. Dean also scored very high on how he positively uses honesty in his every day life. Dean is an honest person. The problem is when he gets angry; he misuses that honesty through brutal honesty. People's feelings get hurt, and he makes a spectacle of himself in so doing.

Dean's solution is this: He must stop thinking in terms of honesty when he is angry. There is a time and place for honesty; however, for Dean, when he is angry, that is not the time for honesty! He must supplant the quality of honesty with some other quality. A good one would be any quality that is in the blue zone or the one's closest to the blue zone. Dean, it would seem, only has a capable and appropriate use of honesty when he is calm and rational.

Example #2: Jana also has a problem when she gets angry. When Dean comes home and does or says something to offend her, she reacts in a poor fashion. She begins to act as though she is disinterested in the relationship, yet she very deliberately acts out in a melodramatic way. Drawers and cupboards sound a little louder when she closes them. She paces through the house criticizing every little detail that she thinks is out of place or wrong. Yet, she says that nothing is wrong and that she does not want to talk.

Jana scored very high on patience, expressiveness, and neatness. She also scored very high on the corresponding counterfeits of disinterested, melodramatic, and over-meticulousness. When she gets angry with Dean, she misuses all three of those qualities. When Jana acts this way, Dean leaves the house for the evening, and that makes her even angrier.

Jana's solution is this: she must stop thinking in terms of patience, expressiveness, and neatness when she is angry with Dean. When she does, she misuses them. These are perfectly good qualities for Jana to use when she is calm and rational, but when she is angry, she misuses them in a dissatisfying and destructive manner. She would benefit greatly by supplanting those qualities with the qualities in her blue zone (or the ones closest to the blue zone) when she is feeling angry with Dean. After she calms down, she can resume the other qualities in a positive manner.

Remember, there is no greater tool to assist you in making good choices than to know yourself well. No matter what you do, where you go, where you live, where you work; whether you live alone or together with others, every single choice that you make is governed by character qualities. Each character quality is yours already to practice and use. You have a right as a human being to use those genuine qualities to assist you at every turn and in every relationship.

In our modern age, we seem to have nearly forgotten about character. We seemed to have nearly forgotten that we are entitled to make better choices if we want to.

What kind of choices do you want to be remembered for making during the years of your life?

In Lincoln, Nebraska, there is a cemetery in the middle of town. It's been there since 1869. Most of us will never be the subject of a book or a movie. Most of the people who are buried in that cemetery have long since been forgotten. As the years continue to fade into the past, less and less will be known about the people who are buried there.

I took a walk around that cemetery to see what I could learn about the people who were buried there. I took some paper with me to keep track of what I would find. I did not record everything, but I randomly observed about 400 graves to see what I could learn about those people.

What I found was very revealing. I found that the biggest share of the graves were only marked with a name and date of when the person was born and when they died. That's it!

The next largest category simply indicated that they were a husband, a wife, or mother, or father, a son, or a daughter.

Far fewer still, were the people who were actually remembered by cute little sayings like, "gone but not forgotten!"

About the same number as those were remembered for what they believed.

Almost none of the men and none of the women were remembered for what they did? If a man was remembered at all for what he did, typically it was his military service, unless he was a very important person like governor, general, founder of a large business or bank, that type of thing. However, by far, the biggest share of men were not even remembered for what they did for a living.

I saw just one man who was noted for knowing somebody important, and that was because he was a friend of Charles Lindbergh, the first man to fly across the Atlantic Ocean alone.

I found no one who was noted for what they said.

I found no one who was noted for owning a big fancy house, a ranch, a farm, a boat, a horse, or a car ... not even a really nice car!

Almost everyone who was noted and remembered for anything at all was remembered for being a husband, a wife, a mom, a dad, a son, or a daughter.

There are over 50,000 people buried in this cemetery, but only two are widely known for what they did. Both of these men did something that was extra-ordinary. Charlie was known for what he did wrong, and Gordon was known for what he did right. Both men started out like all the rest of us. Both men began making choices as children. Both of them had very solid character strengths. Both of them were actually gifted in the character strength of expressiveness.

However, Charlie was not interested in making good choices with his expressiveness like Gordon was. Charlie was willing to settle for counterfeit expressiveness and Gordon wanted to make choices to pursue genuine expressiveness.

Charlie and Gordon both had media fame.

Charlie and Gordon both caught the attention of the President of the United States.

Charlie became so famous that his life was the inspiration of several movies.

Gordon became famous because he was an actor in the Movies.

Charlie's life was chaotic, and filled with selfish choices!

Gordon's life was honored by President Ronald Reagan. You see, Gordon MacRae, was famous for his role in the musical Oklahoma for singing, "Oh, What A Beautiful Morning." He lived a long life and he retired in Lincoln. He passed away in 1986.

Charlie's life has been studied by the FBI, and criminal psychologists for many years now. You see, Charlie Starkweather, made some really big mistakes by the time he was just 19 years old. He went on killing spree in Lincoln which shocked and horrified the entire nation back in 1959. His life abruptly ended in punishment in the electric chair before he turned 21 years old.

Everyone of us have choices to make. Most of us will never make the bad choices that Charlie made. Most of us will never be known for being a famous actor and singer. If we are lucky, we will be remembered as husband, as wife, as mom, as dad, as son, or as daughter. The memory of us will be what we earned, day by day ...just one good choice at a time.

Chapter Sixteen

Knowing Others

In Chapter 3, you first read about character tags. Now, we are going to learn more about what that means. Just how do you read someone's character tags? How do you assess someone else's character?

Character is the underlying motivation (or cause) of the words or actions of other people. Understanding their character is the key to knowing others better.

First, we are going to categorize people into two types. Most of us have met these two types of people. In any given moment in time, any of us could be in one or the other of these two categories. Let's name them:

- **Selfish people**
- **Selfless (or unselfish) people**

Have you ever met a selfish person?

It is certain that you have .perhaps many of them!

When we interact with selfish people, we find that they put their own interests ahead of other's interests. Unfortunately, most all of us do this at least occasionally. We may not intend it to happen that way. It just happens effortlessly.

No one needs special training on how to be selfish. As babies, we knew about that before we learned to talk or walk.

Commonly, one of the first words we learn is "mine". It appears to be important for us to learn from the very start what is mine vs. what is yours. If it is mine, then keep your hands off it! Right? Don't we all learn this clearly in the first year of our life?

As soon as we begin to play with other children, our parents or teachers tell us we must learn to share. Every culture teaches that sharing has been taught as a virtue.

If someone has too much, and we don't have enough, we like them to share it with us. However, when we have too much, and someone wants us to share with him or her, we may think it is best to save some for ourselves for later.

Now, technology has increased into this wonderful age of the internet. As never before in the history of humanity, sharing has become easy. In fact, it has become so easy that now we are told, "Do not share!"

The three most common things to put on the short list of what constitutes a selfish person are:

1. lying
2. stealing
3. cheating

It seems as though most all of us love to disagree. Think about it!

- We cannot agree on what language everyone should speak. Should it be Chinese, Spanish, or English?
- We cannot agree on what food everyone should eat. Should it be cows and pigs, or no pigs, but just cows, or now cows, no pigs, and only vegetables, fruit, nuts, and grains?
- We cannot agree on what the wedding customs should be or the age to get married.
- We certainly cannot agree on the things people should believe in.
- We even cannot agree on what types of things are entertaining.

However, no matter where you live; no matter what language you speak, we all agree that we do not like it when someone tells us a lie, steals from us, or cheats us.

Our first premise is:

"Whenever a person puts their own interests ahead of others in a manner that causes harm, injury, or insult to others, that is what constitutes being selfish."

Therefore, it would be easy enough to say that being selfless or unselfish is the opposite of being selfish. So, when we speak or act, if we do not cause harm, insult, or injury to another, are we being selfless? Perhaps not.

It may take a bit more than simply not causing harm, injury, or insult to another before you could call the action selfless.

When we drive on the correct side of the street, we are not causing harm, injury, or insult to another. Are we then being selfless? Not hardly! That may be nothing more than self-preservation.

Our second premise is:

"If being selfish in when a person puts their own interest above the interests of another to the point that harm, injury, or insult occurs, then being selfless would be putting the interests of another ahead of our own interests no matter what the consequence to our own self becomes."

A firefighter rescuing a baby from a burning building is a selfless act. It does not matter what language you speak to recognize that is true.

In order to be good at knowing others, the first thing of importance is know the difference between selfish and selfless.

- A selfish person will use their counterfeit character qualities to pursue their selfish needs.
- A selfless person will use their genuine character qualities to pursue the interests of other people.

Solving Conflicts™ is extremely useful to help you evaluate the character of others. As a basis for doing that, remember that selfish people will misuse their character qualities by using counterfeits instead of genuine. The more frequently a person misuses their character qualities, the greater will be their level of selfishness.

Also, remember that each one of us is prone to the accidental misuse of our character qualities. Each one of us is prone to allow our selfishness to rise up. The result is that we end up using a counterfeit quality rather than a genuine.

The purpose of this chapter is to help you develop better tools to assess other people. Knowledge is the key to be able to assess the character of other people fairly and accurately.

In assessing the character of other people, it will allow you to have insight into their abilities, their sincerity, their integrity, and their trustworthiness.

In order to assess fairly the character of another person, you have to have some direct information about that person, the choices he or she has made in the past, the way they act, and the way that they speak. The more you know about them through first-hand experience, the easier it will be to assess them.

A word of caution:

If a person's words or actions do not involve you,

if you are neither part of the problem

...nor part of the solution,

...you may have to accept that their life is none of your business!

We want to be clear about this. We are not advocating that you go out to pry into other people's business so you can assess their character.

Moreover, we are certainly not advocating that in assessing the character of another person that you can now go out to gossip about that person.

Assessing another person's character is not so you will be armed for slandering him or her, gossiping about him or her, backbiting him or her, backstabbing him or her, or whatever else you may wish to call it.

However, there are legitimate situations when you may have a need to assess a person's character. They are all centered upon actual relationships that we have with other people.

Here are some of them to consider:

- You are getting a new job, and you would like to know about the person who will be your boss.
- You are already working for someone, and you want to know more about him or her.
- You are hiring someone, and you would like to know about the person you are hiring.
- You are dating someone, and you would like to know about that person.
- You are married to someone, and you would like to know about him or her.
- A friend or family member is dating someone, and you would like to help him or her to know the character of the person he or she is dating.
- You have made a new friend, and you would like to know more about their character.
- You are in the process of doing business with someone in a binding way, and you want to know more about their character first.

What is the purpose of knowing about someone else's character?

That's a great question!

1. A person's character will determine what choices they will make.
2. When that person's choices involve you, you have a responsibility to yourself to be informed.
3. When the choices you make are dependent upon the choices of another person, it is reasonable to conclude that you should become aware of what character qualities drives that person's choices.

The more you have at risk due to the choices of another person, the more you should seek to know about their character.

- If you are about to risk your time, your heart, your affections, your love, it is wise to know about that person's character before you take that risk.
- If you are about to risk your money by purchasing a new house or a new car, it is wise to know about the character of the person who is selling it to you.
- If you are about to risk your reputation by associating with a new acquaintance, it is wise to know about that person's character.
- If you are about to risk your life and health into the hands of Physician, it is wise to know about the character of the Physician.
- If you are about to risk your education, your job prospects, and your future, it is wise to know about the character of those who will be your instructors.
- If you are going to risk your life by following a leader, it is wise to know about the character of that leader.

The greatest reason of all to understand the character of another person is so that you can make better choices in dealing with the person.

However, remember that your choices are based upon your character not the character of some other person.

Is it your own goal to be a selfless person and to do no harm, injury, or insult to another person? You can achieve that best by knowing the person and interacting with them based upon who they are rather than who they are not!

We all like people to acknowledge us for who we really are. We like people to think of us in a true light. If we are good at something, it makes us feel good when somebody acknowledges it to us.

Conversely, no one likes to be told all the time that they are no good, that they are bad, or to have their faults pointed out to them as though they are worthless. We do not want people to view us as though we are only the sum total of the mistakes we have made. Nobody likes that, not even your worst enemy or adversary.

Now, when a relationship is going smoothly, when it is not broken, there is no need to fix it. When we are in a work environment where everyone is polite and courteous, we don't need much help with that. When someone treats us well, it is easy to deal with.

If you come home from work and you are tired, hungry, under a lot of stress; if your family is waiting for you with a hot bath, your slippers, and a bathrobe; if there is a hot meal, kind words of cheer and compassion, sympathy and understanding; then your dog brings in the evening paper from outside and drops it at your feet; that is not what you would call a difficult situation to handle, is it?

Now, maybe you have those types of days nearly all the time, and you have merely ended up at a website called Solving Conflicts™ because you had nothing better to fill up your day, and if that happens to be the case, congratulations!

However, maybe the reason you happen to be at a website named Solving Conflicts™ is that at least sometimes, things seem to go completely the opposite way.

Usually, when things go wrong for us, it is because we think someone is causing us harm, injury, or insult. It may be due to a misunderstanding, or it may be due to a deliberate action against us.

If harm, injury, or insult has been directed toward us, it is because someone is being selfish. He or she is using a counterfeit quality rather than a genuine quality.

The entire purpose of understanding the other person's character is this:

- so that we can appropriately interact with them as the situation occurs,
- so that, if possible, we can offer to them support and encouragement of the genuine quality that they may be misusing as a counterfeit.

The goal, then, is to learn how not to be part of the problem by entering into conflict with them, but rather to avoid conflict with them by turning them into an ally.

The more frequently we come into contact with any person, the greater the chance that we will end up seeing them use a counterfeit quality and the greater the chance that he or she will cause us harm, injury, or insult. The more that we are treated this way, the more difficult it becomes for us to use our genuine qualities to respond to them. In time, our entire opinion and attitude toward them may become one of dread, fear, or disgust.

- **When we can, we try to avoid these types of people.**
- **When we cannot avoid them, we have a problem.**
- **To say nothing, may be inviting more of the same.**
- **To say the wrong thing, may be inviting a full conflict.**

Let's call the person who would do this to us our adversary. Perhaps they are only a temporary adversary; or perhaps they have become our full-time adversary.

Now, we simply cannot change our adversary. We cannot make them change by waving a magic wand. When we cannot avoid them, we need to know best how to communicate with them.

In addition, we cannot know best how to communicate with them unless we have assessed their character. Moreover, we will not know best how to assess their character until we have assessed our own.

There are two methods for assessing another person's character.

You can do so either forward or backward. By that we mean, from genuine to counterfeit (that is forward) or from counterfeit to genuine (that is backward). Either can be good methods to get a better picture of whom you are dealing with. We will look at both methods.

In both methods you are going to be looking for match-ups between the qualities and the person that you are assessing.

There are three basic categories to identify. They are:

- 1. Genuine quality - Strong match
Counterfeit qualities - Strong match**
- 2. Genuine quality - Strong match
Counterfeit qualities - Weak match**
- 3. Genuine quality - Weak match
Counterfeit qualities - Strong match**

The definitions are as follows:

Strong - Strong: means that the individual is typically strong with the genuine use and the counterfeit uses of this quality. Anything in this category is most likely the source of trouble and conflict for this person. They use the genuine quality in a strong way for successful decisions; however, since they use this quality a lot, they also tend to draw upon the counterfeits of this when they resort to selfish behavior.

Strong - Weak: means that the individual is typically strong in the proper use of this quality; however, they do not resort to using the counterfeits. This is a good thing. This individual typically is getting along with other people when they are using this quality. If you identify this quality in your adversary, it would be a good quality to help your adversary focus upon when you have dealings with him or her.

Weak - Strong: means that the individual is typically weak in the genuine use of this quality; however, they are strong at using the counterfeits. This is unfortunate for the person you are assessing, and it is unfortunate for the people he or she interacts with when they are using these counterfeits. This person may not even be aware that they have a propensity to use the genuine quality. It may be like music to their ears to learn from you that you see in them a great potential for whatever genuine quality is in view.

The forward method:

The forward method requires us to start out by identifying something good about the person that we are assessing. That is a difficult thing to do if the person is your adversary.

Have you heard the saying, "If you don't have something good to say about someone, don't say anything at all"? This is how you put that into practice.

The **Easy Look-Up** tool is the one you will use for this. On that page, you will see the genuine and the counterfeit qualities have a drop down box where all of the qualities are listed in alphabetic order.

By now, you have already become familiar with the character profiles because of reading them in reference to your own character assessment. The more familiar you become with your own character (and the tools) the easier it will be for you to assess the character of others. The more you practice, the easier it will become.

Therefore, the forward method is when you start with the genuine qualities in the drop down list. For each quality in the list, ask yourself if that genuine quality describes the other person.

If you believe a quality may be their quality, click on that quality, and read about the quality in the character profile to see if it is a match. As you read the character profile, ask yourself if the quality seems to be describing the other person.

Next, when you have established a reasonable degree of certainty the quality is a match, read the corresponding counterfeit qualities. Do you see a corresponding match between one or more of the counterfeits and the other person?

Here are two examples of how accessing another person's character can be very helpful to you and the other person. The first example is to a non-adversary. The second is to an adversary.

Example One: (A non-adversary) Alex was involved in a relationship with Martha. Alex had a college education. He was working as business accountant for a large firm. Martha had not been to college. She had trouble finding a satisfying job that either fit or challenged her abilities. She seem to lack the knowledge of her own self to know what she might be good at or qualified to do. However, Martha was a qualified person. Alex knew that she was a talented person, perhaps even more than she did herself.

Alex put his assessment skills to work on Martha's behalf. By using the forward method of assessment, Alex was able to identify eight excellent genuine qualities in Martha that

were a match. Unfortunately for Martha, Alex could see clearly that she was a Strong -- Strong match in each of the eight qualities. Martha was willing, and Alex gladly helped her to better understand both the genuine and the counterfeits.

Alex looked at Martha's job resume' and could see that it came nowhere close to selling her skills according to her true self.

Alex took her resume' and without a shred of dishonesty, he was able to rewrite her resume' and add better representation of her true skills. He included those eight qualities, which were alertness, courage, amiability, decisiveness, honesty, frankness, flexibility, and cooperativeness.

With two weeks, Martha landed a job that she never thought she would be qualified to do. However, Alex had assessed her character correctly. The job was a management job that involved hiring, interviewing, and managing five co-workers. She had never done that before, and it took all the courage Martha had. It also required her to manage and provide care to an extremely challenging group of clients. That not only took courage, but it also required great flexibility and cooperation with her upper management.

Looking back, Martha could see that she was selling herself short of her true qualities, and she was grateful to Alex for his assistance.

Example Two: (An adversary) Rebecca was both the office manager and accountant for a movie distribution company. She loved her job, but she hated her boss. You see, Rebecca was very frugal. At times, she used the counterfeits of those, which are stingy and miserly. Her boss was anything but stingy and miserly. She knew because she counted the money every day, and she could see it disappearing faster than it was coming in. If her boss did not stop doing that, it would leave 30 employees out of work, including her.

To make matters worse, the boss happened to be married to her sister, and her sister was a stay at home mom with three small children. If the boss did not curtail his spending, her sister would be out on the street with no money and no home.

It got to the point where every time he would spend a nickel she would argue with him about the money problems they had. The more she nagged at him; the more he would spend. The ship was sinking, she needed a new plan, and she finally found one.

She assessed her boss's character. She had no clue what to look for, so she started with the forward method. The only thing she could find on the list that seemed to resemble the problem was generosity, yet she knew that his behavior went far beyond generosity. However, it was the closest match she could find.

Then she looked at the counterfeits of generosity. They are extravagance, spend-thriftiness, wastefulness, and squandering. Never before had she understood what was really happening.

You see, her boss was a Weak -- Strong in generosity. He was weak in the genuine use of generosity; however, he was strong in all of the counterfeits.

She assumed correctly that her boss likely perceived of himself as simply being generous, when in fact genuine generosity had nothing to do with his spending habits. She learned that due to his propensity for genuine generosity, that if she addressed him through the topic of generosity it would not create conflict with him.

She came to work one day with a plan that actually appealed to the use of genuine generosity. Her plan acknowledged his generosity with encouragement toward using it in genuine ways.

She learned that by acknowledging his generosity she could earn his trust. The more she earned his trust in the area of generosity; she found him to be willing to listen to her advice about wise generosity. By changing her attitude toward her boss from a view that he was all-bad, to a view that he had great potential for true generosity, she was able to redefine him from being an adversary to being a friend and ally.

The backward method:

The backward method is an extremely useful method in conflict resolution. The reason why is because whenever we are in a conflict or a potential conflict it is due to our involvement with someone who is using counterfeit qualities. Due to the other person's words or actions, we experience harm, insult, or injury. This can range from minor to major concerns.

Simply put, there are times when we have nothing good to say about the actions of another person, and we are left with only having knowledge of what they are doing wrong rather than what they are doing right.

It is in circumstances like this when the backward method becomes the best and perhaps the only method available to assess the character of another.

It is similar to the forward method in that you start by trying to make a match between the person and the character quality; however, with the backward method you start by looking in the counterfeit qualities list.

Over the course of time, with some practice, you will discover that your skills to assess another person will improve.

The following example illustrates two things.

First, it illustrates how a person can make personal improvements by assessing and addressing their own character needs.

Second, it illustrates that in so doing, a person develops the skill to assess another person's character as well. It is done in a way disarms the conflict with the person who was viewed as an adversary.

Example: Crosby was the man-about-campus! He was extremely talented, a hard worker, and a great student. He was an in-charge type of person. He was the fellow that everyone would have voted the most likely to succeed. Crosby was an enterprising person! He was extremely decisive, objective, and very efficient. He was employed in an on campus management job as a recruiter for the college.

Two amazing things happened to Crosby.

First, because of his own self-assessment, he was able to see that those three incredible qualities that were driving his success were also the ones he was most likely to use as counterfeits.

He had been blind to his own faults. He had always felt self-justified if he was too dominant, too inflexible, too rigid, or too much a perfectionist with his co-workers. He knew how things should be according to his qualities, and he incorrectly assumed that everyone should meet his imposing standards.

Nobody got in Crosby's way. It was either rise-up to meet his erroneous expectations, or in cold-calculation, he would eliminate you with no love lost!

Second, just at the time Crosby assessed his own character, he realized that he had been scheming to overthrow a co-worker that he perceived as a threat.

The co-worker, Tony, was keenly perceptive of Crosby's shortcomings. He was known to be vocal about standing up against injustice no matter what it cost him personally.

At his worst, Crosby feared being exposed by Tony; at his best, he patronized Tony to bring him on board as an ally until he could be eliminated.

No sooner than Crosby had re-evaluated his own character to see his own shortcomings, he realized what a huge character error it would be to continue to react against Tony.

Crosby needed a new plan. He decided to assess Tony's character to find the underlying cause of what it was about Tony that was really bothering him. He knew if it were possible, his best choice would be to turn his negative view of Tony into a positive one and in a way that could reinforce and establish a true friendship with Tony.

This is what transpired: Tony, after missing several days of work, came into the office one day merely to use the copy machine. Crosby observed this, and his initial reaction in his own mind was to fire Tony on the spot.

Then, he stopped himself to collect his wits. He engaged his new character plan. He asked Tony if he needed some help with the copy machine.

Tony acknowledged that he would need Crosby's help as the copier was locked. Tony made his copy.

He was about to leave when Crosby said, "Tony, wait a minute, before you go, can I have a talk with you?"

Tony responded, "I am in a bit of hurry, can it wait?"

Crosby replied, "No, Tony, it really cannot wait, I really need to talk with you."

Tony sat down in a chair across from where Crosby was seated.

Crosby continued, "Tony, I have been doing a lot of thinking lately and a lot of assessing of my own self, and .well, some of which involves you."

"I'm listening," Tony responded.

"You see Tony, I have learned some things about myself, and I don't really like what I see. I've been too harsh, too dominating, too rigid in the way I deal with people around here. Maybe you've noticed that."

Tony responded, "Well, that's typically the way you are, Crosby."

Crosby continued, "Tony, not anymore! I really am going to try to make some positive changes in the way I have been acting."

Tony reached into his pocket, pulled out a pack of cigarettes, took one out, lit it up, and belligerently blew smoke right into Crosby 's face. He knew that if Crosby were the same old Crosby , he would be thrown out of the non-smoking building.

Instead, Crosby smiled, and invited Tony to chat with him outside on the balcony where it would be more private.

Crosby continued, "Tony, in the process of learning some things about myself, I also discovered some things about you that I had not taken the time to notice before."

"Like what?" Tony responded.

"Well, I have observed that you seem to have a strong propensity for enthusiasm, frankness, and honesty."

Tony was suddenly disarmed and all ears because he liked hearing what Crosby was saying.

Crosby continued, "I also know you are very analytical, because I have seen that in how you approach your job. Well, Tony, I know you are busy with your family and classes, but could you do me a personal favor?"

Tony responded sharply, "Crosby, what in the world could you possibly need from me? You are one of the most self-sufficient people I have ever met in my life!"

Tony new there was something different about Crosby, because typically his neck would turn red whenever he was provoked. This time, that did not happen.

Crosby continued, "As I mentioned to you, I am trying to make some positive changes in my life, and I was wondering if you could help me be accountable to follow through appropriately with these changes?"

Tony asked, "How do you expect I can do that, Crosby?"

"Well, Tony, I know you are analytical, and I believe you would be able to use that to evaluate the changes that I am planning to make. You are enthusiastic and frank. If you agree to help me out, I know I could count on your enthusiastic input to tell me exactly what you are observing in a completely honest way."

On the spot, Tony began re-evaluating the changes he was seeing in Crosby, and he liked what he was seeing. In hearing Crosby admit that he was not perfect and desired some honest input from Tony, it gave Tony a brand new view that perhaps Crosby was a bit more sincere than he had thought he was. Tony had always seen in Crosby great qualities for leadership, but he feared the destruction to people's lives that he saw Crosby was capable of just to advance his own agenda. Tony determined that Crosby was worth the effort to give feedback to on his leadership skills, and Crosby learned to look at Tony in a brand new light as a fellow desirable to have as a true ally.

Conversely, as a result of Crosby's own self-assessment and the positive changes that he was willing to make in his own character growth, and as a result of turning to Tony in a way that was both honest and affirming to Tony's character, Crosby and Tony became life-long friends.

What made the difference?

You see, in Crosby 's assessment of Tony, he identified that Tony was using some counterfeits that he did not like one bit. Tony was at times brutally honest, undiplomatic

and disrespectful, over-wrought and aggressive, and paid too much attention to details. These things about Tony were things that Crosby could not tolerate.

However, Crosby traced these counterfeits back to the genuine qualities of honesty, frankness, enthusiasm, and analytical. Crosby knew if he were truly going to be held accountable for positive changes in his own life, he really could use someone with Tony's credentials.

The more Tony learned that Crosby valued his character qualities, the more Tony was willing to listen to him offer words of encouragement on how to best use those qualities in an effective manner.

Over the course of some months, Crosby was able to have a frank talk with Tony about some of the counterfeits that Tony was known for misusing. He listened intently because by then he knew that Crosby was looking at him as more than the sum total of his mistakes.

Ironically, it was Tony who become Crosby's boss. He hired Crosby to be an Administrator for his company because he knew Crosby had grown from simply being an able leader to being an able and selfless leader.

What To Do Next?

The Personal Challenge:

1. Assess your own character first.
2. Identify your genuine strengths.
3. Identify you counterfeit strengths and determine to avoid them.
4. Try to improve the genuine strengths that you lack.
5. Look for the genuine strengths in others even if you have to identify them through the backwards method.
6. Whenever it is possible, encourage others in the positive use of their genuine strengths.
7. Earn the confidence of your adversary by acknowledging to them the genuine qualities that you believe they have.
8. Inspire the willing others in your life to learn the most effective ways to use their strengths.
9. Determine not to criticize others based upon what they lack.
10. Determine not to address others by telling them you wish they had a quality that they now lack.

Remember these rules!

- 1. Never try to solve a conflict with another by pointing out their faults, their weakness, or what they lack that you wish they had instead.**
- 2. Always address your conflicts with others by identifying their strengths and learning to view them as being capable to rise-up to use their strengths in a genuine manner.**
- 3. Always avoid looking at the other person with whom you are in a conflict as only being the sum total of their mistakes or the sum total of their counterfeit strengths.**
- 4. Always determine to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem.**

Chapter Seventeen

Lucky In Marriage

Have you been lucky in love? Have you ever heard the expression before, "Lucky in love!", or, "lucky in marriage!"?

A grumpy old curmudgeon was asked on the day that he buried his wife what was the secret of his long marriage. He replied too loudly in his gravelly voice, "I never complained about her cooking all the years we were married. She was such a good cook! And I never complained for all these years for not getting lucky the night before. We only tried it one time on our wedding night, and I figured I had it coming to me on that night!"

Apparently, the grumpy old man just wasn't lucky! However, that seems a bit odd. You see, everyone in the community knew his wife to be a wonderful woman ...friendly, kind, generous, and hard working!

Perhaps the same reason why he was unlucky in love had something to do with the same reason why he had not one friend in the world who could tolerate him long enough to even give him a funeral at his passing. Maybe luck just didn't have anything to do with it.

Men, you are about to discover the secret kept hidden by women for decades, perhaps centuries, or even millennia. We have been fooled by a gender-wide female conspiracy. Okay, I know, this conspiracy is nothing new! We have known this much all along.

Furthermore, we know where they have planned this conspiracy ...the ladies restroom, of course! We know that's where they have their meetings to talk about this secret. But what is the big secret? Until now, we have never been able to figure it out. This is all about to change.

Now, women, please do not pick up stones and stone me for divulging this to my fellow males. It was only a matter of time until we discovered the truth. And the truth is out!

Fellows, all the cobwebs are about to be cleared from your head, and the light of truth is about to dawn.

Now, we males have also had a pact going on for centuries. It has been our pact all along that whichever male among us was the first to figure out the mystery of women, he would reveal the secret to all males near and far.

A thing that is so secretive, so hidden, and so full of wiliness will take no small amount of explanation!

First, there is a reason why we men are forbidden to see our brides in their wedding dress before the big day. They tell us it has something to do with bad luck. If we see them in the wedding dress before the big day, we will have bad luck. If we wait until the big day, we'll get lucky!

We are led to believe the reason is so we will be breathless -- delightfully surprised to see our lady in white walk down the isle sparkling like the stars. Yeah, right!

Men of the world! I beseech you! What is the first goal of every bride concerning her husband? Is it to slowly and erotically unbutton his tuxedo one button at a time?

No! It is to fatten him up!

This is true; we all know that this is true!

Fattening us up is the very first objective of the brand new wife. It starts within minutes after the "I DOs" are said with the traditional wedding cake. Before we have time to think about what just happened, they're stuffing cake down our mouths to fatten us up.

Now, men, we all know that the wedding cake is not about us. We all know that the wedding cake is not what we are thinking about for so many long and lonely nights after we reach puberty. We're thinking about our wedding night, not our wedding cake!

You see, the wedding cake is merely the first element of this cover-up.

Now, men, please understand this. Women freely admit that they want to fatten us up! We've thought all along that is merely so we will not go back home to eat Mom's cooking. However, there is more to the story than just not wanting us to go back home to eat Mom's cooking. They try to fatten us up merely to conceal the truth. There is a hidden motive, as you shall see.

Now, we men know what the wedding day would actually be like if we planned the day. In fact, in the ages gone past, men were very much in control of the wedding day. Did you know that? It's true! In those days gone by, the wedding would start with the man taking his bride into the tent all by himself.

When the bride and groom came out of the tent with a smile on their face, it was no mystery to the family, friends, and neighbors what they had been doing in that tent. It was the thrill of a lifetime for the young couple to leave the tent to be cheered with applause as they tried not to blush.

You see, in those days when men planned the entire wedding, they really knew how to plan a wedding feast. The feast would last for the entire week. Go figure! There was no chance that the new groom was going to wait for an entire week to get to the grand finale' of his first wedding night. They knew how to start the celebration off right.

Okay, well ...now that we know just how backwards we've grown over the ages, we also now know why men are in such a hurry to finish the wedding and move on to the grand finale'.

Now, men, it may be a little bit difficult for you to remember this part of the ceremonious wedding night after the last good-byes were said to your family and friends and the last doors were shut ...but just give it try. It will all come back to you.

Try and think back about that beautiful wedding dress your bride was wearing as she stood before your very eyes ...you understand, the very last time on the night you actually saw her standing in that wedding dress all alone. There she was standing before your eyes ...like a goddess!

Now, this is where it all gets blurry and your memory fades, I understand that. However, she got out of that dress somehow!

Think man! It did not simply vanish from off her body into thin air. How did that dress come off?

Aha! The subtlety of women! The cleverness! Without a word ...without a request ...somehow they magically get us to take that dress off them.

All the while, they have us thinking how lucky we are to be able to remove their dress.

We know what's coming. This is it! This is going to be the luckiest night of our life. Then, of all the luck; of all the good fortune; she lets us remove her dress.

Our confidence begins to soar as we take one last look at that picture of perfection.

Then, we stop, and we begin to gaze at her hardware. ...Ahem! Not *that* hardware! the dress itself ...as in the buttons and zippers!

Suddenly, we begin to think about just how easy it was the first time we took off our bicycle tire or changed the oil in our car for the very first time. We stand there for a moment puzzling as to just what part of her wiggle to set free from that dress first!

Oh! Now do you get it? That's why we're not allowed to see her in the dress before the wedding. We're supposed to figure this out on the spot as if our bride needs one last assurance that we'll be good at fixing whatever it is that needs fixing in the future.

We can quickly see that it is going to become a challenge no less difficult than learning to play baseball for the very first time.

However, unlike playing baseball, in removing the dress successfully, on that night, we are guaranteed a home run!

Therein lies the monumental moment in time where it is born in the hearts of every male that we have no need of a manual; we have no need for directions; and no need to confess that we haven't a clue whatever it is we're trying to do!

Now, there is a reason why our brides so quickly try to fatten us up. You see, the reason why they try to fatten us up so quickly is so they can put on a few extra pounds too. Why, you ask? Because they need to cover their tracks. They do not want to put that dress on ever again! They know they can bluff us the first time ...but to bluff us two times in a row is unlikely and may reveal their mysterious secret.

Now, fellows, do not let your wife kid you even for a minute. Those last 10 pounds that she says she "can't lose"...well, it's not that she can't lose them. No way! It's that she won't lose them!

You see, if she doesn't lose the last ten pounds, then she has a good excuse not to try her wedding dress on for you ever again.

So there we were, husband and wife, for nearly 12 years in our ignorant bliss. My wife had never learned the lesson about not losing the last ten pounds.

If only the experienced women of the world had known, they would have been screaming from the rooftops to her, "Don't do it, girl! Don't lose the last ten pounds!"

Neither of us suspected that fateful day would come and change the world forever. We had been lulled to sleep with a false sense of security by our chocolate-chip cookie-dough ice cream. In ignorant bliss, day-by-day, she began to take notice that very likely she would fit into that twelve-year-old wedding dress.

Suddenly, the day comes when the last ten pounds are gone.

She goes into the bedroom and carefully takes out the dress from its special hiding place where no man would ever look! She double-checks to make certain her estimate was correct, and she determines that it is definite possibility. She wiggles into the dress, and it seems to fit perfectly.

She calls me in to have a look. Wow! She looks as beautiful as the very first time I saw her in it. She is beaming from ear to ear about her accomplishment of fitting into the dress. Then she makes her first big mistake!

The dress is not yet zipped-up in the back, nor is the little bows snapped-up into place either. This would be the final test to see whether the dress really fits.

She turns around. The last time I saw her in that dress with the zipper down was but a mere 11 years, 3 months, 8 days, 13 hours, and 50 minutes earlier. But, who's counting?

The vague memory comes to my mind of having done something like this once before.

However, something is not right. Something is very perplexing about this. Hmm! Oh yes, previously, my job had been to unzip not zip-up the dress.

With a little coaching from my wife, I zip-up her beautiful dress. I fasten the hook, and I attach the little bows.

There we stand ...in a moment of time that few couples have dared to share before. In ignorant bliss, we delight together, how wonderful the dress fits! How beautiful it looks upon her!

I carefully take hold of the veil. It is draped over the back of her hair where I had left it many years before when I had proudly lifted it to kiss my wife for the very first time in front of family, friends, and loved ones.

I gently bring it back to its original place as a covering veil adorning my bride. The memory that it recalls for us both is delightful.

Many days had come and gone between that first day I saw her standing in the dress and this day. Some days were memorable; some days were forgotten in the blur of passing time.

However, this new day, like the first day, is a day that I will never forget. My wife is standing before my very eyes in her beautiful wedding dress ...like a bride adorned for her husband.

While upon that very first night twelve years earlier, in my eagerness to ...well, let's say, to hit a home run, what was about to happen on this new day would be the revealing truth that would shock the world.

On our wedding night, let's face it fellows, we have the confident expectation that we are going to get lucky. Perhaps like no other night in our lifetime, on that night, we pretty much figure we have it coming to us. Whatever we've done wrong is not remembered. Whatever we've done right is about to be rewarded.

In our eagerness to get lucky, therein lies the secret of our vulnerability.

After a wonderful shared moment together with my wife, the moment of truth has arrived. As my wife turns around for me to remove her dress as she had done so many years before, in my noble attempt to keep the record book even at 2 for 2, my noble advance is quickly met with the reminder of the late hour of the morning, and our work schedules would soon have demands upon us.

As the horrific realization dawns upon me that there had been no implied guarantee or assurance of scoring a home run on this second attempt to remove her dress, I humorously state my case that no self-respecting male would fail to attempt to keep the record books looking good at 2 for 2.

I take a step back away from the zipper to add some melodrama to my protest.

Then it happens. The truth dawns upon me as though it were the very first sunrise.

No groom upon his first night of marriage hesitates to take off his brides dress. Only a groom with eleven years experience would hesitate. Only a bride who has to rush off to work when the dress comes off would have a reason to resist.

Then it I hear her speak the fateful words, "Hurry up, John, I'll be late for work!"

The words echo between my ears back and forth a million times as I try to understand the meaning of what is transpiring.

"Come on, John; help me out of this dress!"

Then it dawns on me.

The gig is up!

I take a step back even farther, and I ponder aloud, "Hey ...wait a minute! You're stuck in that dress ...aren't you?"

In an instant, it all comes clear to me, and I feel no less important than if I had just discovered the wheel for the very first time.

I summed up the circumstances of this unusual twist of fate, "You actually need my help to get out of that dress ...don't you? You didn't just let me take the dress off you on our wedding night; you actually needed me to help you get out of it!"

You see, it was not luck after all. It was teamwork! The very same teamwork that it takes to complete a successful wedding night is the very same teamwork that it takes to keep a marriage going strong into the future.

The truth is this. On the days when either the husband or the wife forgets their spouse is their teammate, they certainly will need good luck to get any affection or have a lasting marriage.

However, you do not need to leave it up to chance in order to have a successful marriage.

Some may be tempted to think that it should be completely natural for them to get along in order to have a successful marriage. You may be tempted to believe that if you are truly meant to be together, you should not have to work on your marriage just to be happy. There is nothing further from the truth. All good marriages take effort to develop the friendship into something that is balanced and something that will last a lifetime.

In our attempt to rewrite the marriage book from one of true love, lasting commitment, and respectful teamwork to one based upon Hollywood's romanticism, we have allowed ourselves to accept a cheap imitation that quickly ends in unsolvable conflicts, irreconcilable differences, and bitter divorces more often than not.

A marriage grounded upon respectfulness and teamwork; a marriage in which the roles of husband and wife are an equal partnership; this is a marriage that will last a lifetime!

The husband is not above his wife nor is the wife above her husband. If the husband treats the wife in a way that causes her to feel like a loser, then in reality, the husband and the wife are both losers. One cannot win while the other loses. A team either wins or loses together.

Conversely, if the wife treats the husband in a way that causes him to feel like a loser, then in reality, the husband and the wife are both losers. One cannot win while the other loses. Both must win in order for either to win.

If sexuality is the only thing in common you share holding the marriage together, a rope of sand is holding you together.

In order to have a marriage built upon a solid foundation, you must grow together toward a mutual purpose. Once a married couple establishes a common purpose in their lives, then as they grow toward their shared purpose, they will also be growing closer toward each other.

Choosing to work together to achieve a noble and honorable character is the type of purpose that can help a marriage last forever. A marriage based upon genuine character qualities is a marriage that will endure trials, hardships, and adversity.

A marriage based upon genuine character qualities is a marriage of teamwork and friendship. It is not about luck or good fortune. Character qualities have nothing to do with luck or good fortune. No one is born with a noble character. Yet each of us can have one so long as we choose it one good choice at a time.

When it comes to our own character, we are the ones that are responsible for it. Our spouse is not responsible for our character. Our parents are not responsible for our character. We alone make the choices that form our character. We alone are the ones that can make better choices next time to improve our character.

When a husband and wife come together as teammates; when they hold hands together as friends in support of each other's success and happiness; when they are honest as individuals about how the choices they make affect their own character and each other; and when they start making better choices based upon genuine character qualities, then they will be able to overcome the obstacles that beset them.

Misunderstanding in relationships lead to differences. When the differences get large enough, we often come to believe that they are irreconcilable differences.

It is true that every choice we make is grounded in character qualities. Even if you do not know which qualities you have been using, your choices still have been grounded in character qualities.

When we cannot even identify what quality we are using as a basis for the choices we make, how could it be possible to understand why we make the choices that we make?

When we cannot identify what qualities our spouse is using as a basis for their choices, how can we possibly be accurate in the feedback or advice that we may desire to give them? How can we possibly be helpful to them when we have not so much as learned which character qualities are their character qualities?

This lack of knowledge about character qualities is often the foremost cause of character attacks, miscommunication, and the so-called irreconcilable differences in marriage.

Each of us has an inner desire to be known accurately and understood accurately for who we truly are as a person. When that does not happen, we even call it a misunderstanding.

Therefore, since character is the basis for our choices, learning to speak in the language of character is essential. Without it, we are left trying to communicate with each other in a language that is foreign to us both. Then we feel misunderstood. Eventually, harm, injury, or insult is the result.

The truth is that no differences are irreconcilable for two willing-hearts whose passion is to remain successfully in a committed relationship.

When both people make adjustments in their character to use genuine qualities and work together in a supportive manner, no problems are insurmountable or beyond the reach of a solution.

For many couples, it may take some time to learn how to work together as a unified team. It may take some time to learn how to be a rock-solid source of encouragement to each other on both the good days and the bad days.

Therefore, it is wise to have a start-up plan on how to bring the benefits of Solving Conflicts™ into your marriage even if your spouse has not yet agreed to participate with you as a teammate.

What happens when you are the only one in your relationship that seems to care about its success? How can you benefit from applying the Solving Conflicts™ system to a spouse who has not taken the character assessment?

Whether or not your spouse has taken the assessment, whether or not you are working together in your character growth, the method of communication toward your spouse is the same as if they have not taken the assessment.

Take a very close look at the following examples:

Example #1: Ryan and Sarah are married. They are very close to getting a divorce. Something is bothering Ryan about the relationship. This is making him have second thoughts about continuing the relationship. He loves Sarah with all of his heart.

The problem is that it seems like he can never go for more than one day before Sarah accuses him of saying something that hurts her feelings. She is so easily offended that he is becoming anxious around her. Whenever Ryan tries to tell Sarah to stop being so easily offended, she seems to have no clue how to relate to what he is saying. The more Ryan tries to get her to stop, the more Sarah begins to resist. She starts saying things to Ryan like, "Stop trying to change me!"

What Ryan is attempting makes Sarah feel as if he is trying to take something that is part of her and destroy it. Ryan begins to see that every time he tries to put a stop to her 'easily offended' ways it is slowly killing her spirit.

Ryan knows instinctively that he has to stop trying to change that part of her, and he feels like the only other alternative is to get a divorce.

Then, Ryan learns something that he has not known before. He learns that being easily offended is a counterfeit misuse of the genuine character quality of sensitivity. Ryan sees in Sarah plenty of the genuine use of sensitivity, and he enjoys that part of Sarah's character. Once Ryan realizes this, it begins to take the pressure off his anxiousness being around Sarah.

Ryan comes up with a new plan. He begins to take notice of all the instances when Sarah uses her sensitivity in a proper way and complements her for those instances. This opens up the discussion of how Ryan admires the genuine sensitivity quality in Sarah. These words are like music to Sarah's ears.

The more Ryan focuses on the genuine use of sensitivity (something Sarah has an inclination towards) the more she becomes open to discussions with Ryan about how she is occasionally misusing her sensitivity. When she becomes aware that Ryan enjoys the proper use of sensitivity ...but not the counterfeit misuse of it, she no longer feels like Ryan is trying to change her and destroy her spirit.

Example #2: Jacob and Emily are at their wits end. Emily is a very insensitive person. People are often taken back and offended by the things she says, and Jacob very nearly crawls under his chair to hide when she acts like this around other people. After they leave, they always argue about how insensitive she is.

This has been going on for years. It seems as though Jacob has asked Emily 1000 times to be more sensitive toward the feelings of other people. She never gives the slightest indication that she understands his point of view. This problem is driving them to the brink of divorce.

However, Jacob learns something that completely changes his approach in how he communicates with Emily. First, he learns that insensitivity is not the counterfeit of sensitivity. He learns that insensitivity is the counterfeit of objectivity.

Jacob is able to deduct from Emily's behavior that she has a large tendency to misuse objectivity. The more he learns about the proper use of objectivity, the more he can see that while Emily frequently misuses objectivity, she seems to have no sense at all of the proper use of it.

Jacob comes up with a plan. He decides that he will never bring up the subject of Emily's insensitivity again. Instead, he begins to discuss with her the positive quality of objectivity. When he does this, he discovers that she has an aptitude and an interest to understand objectivity. She seems to be able to handle the discussion of it without any argument.

Oddly enough, the more Emily begins to learn about the proper use of objectivity from Jacob, the less she misuses it as insensitivity. Jacob discovers that it never seems to offend Emily as they go out to a social gathering if he says to her, "Now please remember, Honey, be strong with your quality of objectivity, and use it wisely."

Remember this! Do not ever forget it! Tie a string around your finger if that is what it takes for you to remember this. Luck has nothing to do with a happy and successful marriage.

So, you married your spouse because at that moment in time you were in love with the person who you thought would make a wonderful lifelong marriage partner. Perhaps you thought that he or she was just two wings short of perfection. However, since then,

you discovered he or she was a mere mortal with more flaws than you considered possible at the very beginning of your relationship.

You cannot determine nor dictate to him or her what his or her next choice is going to be concerning how he or she treats you or whether he or she gives you the respect that you deserve; however, you can determine and dictate to your own self what your next choice is going to be concerning how you treat them and how you respond to the way they treat you. You can choose the right thing or the wrong thing, and no one in the entire world can stop you.

Whether your marriage is successful or not so successful, the only thing you can do is make your next choice the best possible character choice that you can make ...followed by the next ..and the next ...one good choice at a time!

What To Do Next?

1. This one you are going to have to choose for yourself.
2. It may be very helpful to review your best strengths.
3. It may be very helpful to identify and avoid the strengths that have gotten you in trouble in the past.
4. It may be very helpful to spend some quiet time reflecting on what your next choice needs to be.
5. It may be necessary to seek for help from a trusted family member, a trusted friend, or a professional counselor.
6. It may be necessary tell your spouse that you are sorry and that you need a "do-over".
7. It may also be necessary to offer your spouse forgiveness and allow them to have a "do-over".

There is a strange irony at work here. When you once conclude that getting lucky has nothing to do with the success of your marriage, you will quickly discover that getting lucky is the result.

Chapter Eighteen

Tips for Singles

How can young people, or singles of any age, benefit from Solving Conflicts™ in the selection of their friends, whom they date, or whom they choose for a life partner?

If you look to those who have already traveled the marriage road and failed, you may not like what you see. You may be so shocked and horrified that you decide never to get married.

In 1850, the great poet, Alfred Lord Tennyson, first penned these famous words:

'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all

There is no question about it ...marriage is a high-risk adventure.

Has the risk of marriage become too great?

Indeed, some may argue the risk has become a burden far too great to carry. They may argue the benefits simply do not outweigh the risks.

Can the risk be reduced to only a financial risk involving alimony, child support payments, and lost property?

It is our contention the financial risks pale in comparison to the emotional devastation that rips entire families and entire generations apart when divorce occurs.

Yet it is also our contention that marriage, the timeless institution known for as long as people beget people, is an institution that is alive and well. It is not the institution of marriage that has failed people; it is people that have failed to honor the institution of marriage.

Solving Conflicts™ also respects the rights of those who would choose to remain single for whatever reason they may wish. We do not want to appear for even a moment that we are saying in order to find happiness you must be married.

Indeed, if you do not find happiness as an individual person, it would be our contention that you would have nothing to bring with you of value into a marriage relationship.

One miserable person plus one miserable person does not equal two happy people.

Certainly, there is a great deal to be said about the benefits of remaining single. The simple fact that a single person does not have to be cumbered down with the cares of

navigating in a relationship is a valid argument. A single person also can devote their time to a great many worthwhile causes without burdening a marriage partner.

However, the rest of this chapter has the view that eventually most of us tend to want a marriage/life partner. As we anticipate who that person might be, we desire it to be someone who respects us, who loves us, who we can share with, who we can be faithful and loyal to, who will also be faithful and loyal to us, who we can respect and appreciate, and who we can enjoy life with together in happiness.

Perhaps you have never been married. Perhaps you have been married and are now single. Perhaps you have abandoned the thought of getting married; however, a spark yet remains in your heart if only you could find the right person. If only!

One thing is certain. You have the choice to become the right person. You can do that by building your character to be well balanced and genuine. If you want to find the best friend in the whole world, you start by becoming the best friend in the world. You do it one good choice at a time. You can learn to be the type of person you would like to have for a best friend.

Dr. Tony Campolo, professor emeritus of Sociology at Eastern University, in Pennsylvania, and notable media commentator on religious, social, and political matters, in a talk he gave entitled, "If I Had It to Live Over Again", offers some valuable insight into the risk involved in relationships.

The talk was based upon a study of 50 people over the age of 95 years old. One of the things learned from this study was that looking back on their life, these seniors believed that if they could live life all over again, they would take more risks.

Among the things Campolo states in his talk was "you cannot have friends if you don't take risks."

He goes on to point out "if you are afraid of rejection, you will never have friends."

To the roar of audience laughter, Campolo quipped to his audience this following scenario about how a young son or daughter will know whether they are in love with the right person:

You say [to your Mom], "Mom, how will I know when I am in love with the right one?"

And every mother ...when you ask [her this question:] "How will I know I'm in love with the right one?"

...will [respond back to you with this answer:]

"...When you're in love with the right one..."

(Campolo abruptly paused and the entire audience chimed in unison this response.)

"...You'll know!"

Campolo's major point was no matter how sure or unsure you may be going into the marriage, getting married is a risk. Getting married is only the beginning. Getting married only holds for you the potential to build a marriage.

Every time we begin any new relationship, whether it relates to finding friends, whether it relates to employment, or whether it relates to the quest for a marriage partner, we place ourselves at risk. Not only do we risk rejection, but we also place ourselves at risk for other things as well.

We can summarize those other risks by saying in all relationships, we expose ourselves to the risk of harm, injury, or insult due to the potential of others directing their counterfeit qualities against us.

The two big questions, then, are this:

- 1. Can we reduce the risk?**
- 2. If so, how can we reduce the risk?**

The answer is, "yes!" We can reduce the risk. We can do it by becoming more familiar with the character of others before we make unwise commitments to them.

Please, consider this story of Gavin and Paige:

Gavin was just sixteen years old. He never knew his father. He got bad grades in school. His two favorite things were playing his guitar while he dreamed about becoming a rock star and getting high on drugs ...any drugs, but marijuana was his favorite.

Paige was also sixteen. Her mother divorced her father after he nearly blew his head off with a shotgun in front of the family when she was a little girl. Her mother made sure she was on "the pill" just in case. She was mostly a follower and always hung closely by the in-group. Gavin was part of the in-group.

Gavin was typically too stoned to notice his own potential or the worthwhile friends he could have made. He was popular enough that the girls who graded homework for some of his teachers would change his grades from failing to just barely passing to help him out.

The first time Gavin and Paige hooked-up together as friends was at a party where they were both drunk. They felt comfortable around each other because neither of them grew up with a father.

Paige soon took over the job of getting Gavin's homework finished. She would hand him the homework to copy in his hand writing five minutes before class would start.

Gavin stayed away from the pretty girls who had two parents and who did well in school. He wasn't willing to take the risk of rejection ...not then, not so close to the time when his father abandoned the family.

Paige had a reputation for sneaking into dark closets with most any boy that she thought was cool. She thought Gavin was cool.

Gavin never considered Paige too seriously until the day Paige invited him over to her house. Her mother was never home, and she hinted to Gavin that they could take a shower together.

Gavin and Paige finally worked out the details for him to stay with her for the weekend. Just as they arrived together, Paige's mother was on her way out the door for the entire weekend. She handed them twenty dollars, told them what to eat while she was gone, and told them to help themselves to the whiskey bottle in the cabinet.

Gavin was devastated in a matter of weeks when he discovered that Paige thought it was only good clean fun to let other boys kiss her in public ...even with him standing right there. Gavin nearly ended their relationship, but hung on in a desperate attempt to avoid being like his father.

By High School graduation, most of their time was spent in private. They really felt close to each other. They thought they were just alike. They liked all the same things. They had a lot in common ...well, maybe not a lot in common. But they both liked sex. They both liked drugs, and they both liked going to movies. What more could any two teenagers want?

The summer after they graduated together from High School, somewhere between the shower and the sheets, Gavin asked Paige if she would marry him. The only certain thing Gavin knew about his future is he thought it would be too lonely without Paige.

The only certain thing Paige knew about Gavin was ...well, actually Paige didn't know anything for certain about Gavin ...other than he always came back for more.

Plus, they both knew they were just alike because neither of them grew up with a father. So of course, she said, "yes!"

It's not surprising that their marriage ended up in divorce. What is surprising is it lasted ten years before they parted in a bitter child custody battle.

It's so easy to look at Gavin and Paige and see they were making a huge mistake. They had good intentions. They thought they were in love. At least, what they were doing in private sure felt a lot like love.

Are Gavin and Paige unlike so many other young couples? If you look at the divorce statistics, you may have to conclude there must be some strong similarities.

We need to take a close look and have a mini-lesson in neurobiology and human sexuality to understand what happened with Gavin and Paige and with so many other couples.

Question: What happens when people touch people?

Answer: Well, if the touch is good-touch, meaning you are participating of your own free will, then being touched feels nice. In addition, touching another willing person also feels good.

Okay, this may not yet sound like rocket science; however, there are some scientific reasons why it feels good. Since this is only a mini-lesson, we are going to skip all the big words such as neurotransmitters and serotonin, which is a phenolic amine neurotransmitter found in your brain. You don't need to know all the scientific names to understand this.

What you need to know is this. When two people are actually in love, you understand ...real love, and when they are engaged in intimate touching, the emotional feelings they experience are caused by chemical reactions going on inside their brains. It is all related to the neurotransmitters we are not going to discuss.

Okay, let's pretend you could make a love pill that did exactly the same thing inside your brain like what happens when two people are in love and they engage in intimate sexual touching ...not the physical pleasure, but the emotional feelings of falling in love. So, this love pill would make you feel like you were emotionally in love.

Now, imagine that you were at Disneyland on some fabulous ride. That ride has nothing to do with being in love. The ride may well be the thrill of a lifetime, but it is not like being in love with a real person.

Imagine, just before you got onto the ride at Disneyland, you took this love pill that felt just like real emotional love. Okay, imagine that as you get on the ride, you begin to feel the love pill taking affect. You begin to feel like you are falling in love with the ride as if it

was a living, breathing person. But you know it is only due to the love pill that you took. That is why you feel that way.

Now, if something strange happened to the ride and they closed the ride permanently, you may feel like you lost a real loved one. You may cry and mourn just as if you lost a husband or a wife. But it was all because of the love pill that you took.

The truth is this. Whenever two people engage in intimate touching, those brain chemicals start pumping inside our heads. Those brain chemicals make us feel emotionally like we are in love. It makes us feel just like we would feel if we had taken a magic love pill. That is what sexual touching does inside our brains. Our brains don't know how to separate the emotional feeling of being in love from having a sexual relationship.

Okay, please, pay attention; scientists have actually studied this stuff.

If a man goes to a prostitute, especially if he goes to the same prostitute repeatedly, there is a strong chance that he is going to end up feeling as if he is in love with the prostitute. However, common sense would tell us that it is absurd for a man to fall in love with the prostitute he just hired.

Now, you may remember the movie named Pretty Woman with Julia Roberts. The movie was about a prostitute and a rich man that fall in love. In this movie, they told us about the rule that prostitutes are never supposed to break. The rule for prostitutes is that they are never supposed to kiss their customers.

Why, you ask? Why is it against the rules for prostitutes to kiss their customers? Because they have learned from years of experience that if they kiss their customers, it only increases the chance they will fall in love with a customer they don't even know. It becomes a liability in their business to fall in love with a customer. It's bad for business because it causes them to become emotionally involved!

Therefore, we can determine there is a rule of science here at work. Be aware! This rule is not a moral rule. This rule is not a religious rule. It is not based upon dos and don'ts. It is based upon scientific reality. Here is the rule:

If you have a repeated sexual relationship with someone you do not know or barely know, one of two things will happen:

First, you will come believe that you have fallen in love with that person, even though your feelings have no greater significance than if you took our fictitious love pill just before you went on a Disneyland ride and fell in love with the ride.

Second, you will try to ignore your feelings and risk becoming a cold and calloused person who is out of touch with your own feelings. In order to do this you will need to reduce the importance of the sexual encounter in your mind to being no more significant than an amusement park ride.

Oh sure, you may catch any one of dozens of sexually transmitted diseases, not the least of which is AIDS. Sure, it could end up killing you. There is no question about that reality.

However, it is our contention at Solving Conflicts™ that the death you die from AIDS is not nearly as painful as living with the broken heart and devastated emotions from simply falling in love with the wrong person, at the wrong time, for the wrong reasons, and from seeing the relationship end in disaster and broken lives.

Are we clear on this?

You see, starting a relationship in a sexual way is a guaranteed method of feeling as though you are falling in love with that person whether you want to or not.

Why? Again, because that is the way our brains work. In our brains, sex feels like emotional love and emotional love feels like sex. Our brains simply don't know the difference between the two.

If you have sex with someone you don't love, and if you continue having sex with the person, you will eventually feel as if you emotionally love the person. It starts happening on the very first encounter. You may even decide to marry the person. You may even pretend you are happy and everything is wonderful, that is, until you wake up one morning and see their true counterfeit character qualities.

Now, do you understand why Gavin and Paige thought they were in love and thought that marriage was a good idea?

If you take any two people on the entire earth who are normal, typical, and similar aged, and put them together in a private room of their own free will ...even if you are paying them money to participate, after a repeated sexual relationship, they will begin to feel as though they are emotionally in love. There is no other possible option. That is how the brain chemistry works. Even if they do not get along or see eye-to-eye on anything, they will still develop feelings of being emotionally in love.

So the very first tip in finding the right person to marry, then, is never have any sexual touching in a relationship with a person unless you already know that you love the person in a special way based upon your familiarity with their genuine character qualities and also a familiarity with their counterfeit qualities they are most likely to use when they are short of temper or not acting their best.

If you break this rule, you put yourself at high-risk for falling in love with the wrong person for the wrong reasons.

Second, you can deduct from the first tip that it is not wise to choose to be in a binding non-sexual love relationship with someone until you know him or her well enough in terms of his or her genuine character qualities first. In other words, don't make relationship commitments prior to knowing the person's character qualities.

We will say it one more time. If you have a repeated sexual relationship first before you know the person's character, there is a great chance of falling in love with that person. However, because you did not learn about that person's character before you had sex and before you fell in love with that person, when you finally become acquainted with the person's character later in the relationship, you may not like what you see in them at all.

Have you heard the expression, "Love is blind"?

Now, perhaps you can see why that seems to be true; however, just as true is this saying, "Marriage cures blindness!"

Do you think that just maybe this has something to do with the out-of-control divorce rate?

Too often, people choose their life partner based on things that have nothing to do with character qualities. Often the reasons are no less superficial than physical attraction, employment, and a good sense of humor. While these may have some vital benefit in a relationship, they fall far short of describing a person's character qualities.

If nothing more is known about a person's character qualities, there is a great chance for problems in the future. Eventually, their character is revealed through the real life day-to-day adversities that we all face.

For the single person who becomes proficient at learning to read another person's character, he or she will be able to look for a life partner armed with knowledge of what to look for in a mate. They will be able to give a more honest portrayal of their own character strengths to their potential mate. They will also become skilled in looking for genuine qualities they prefer or counterfeit qualities they wish to avoid.

There are many things to watch for and be aware of; however, here is a list of just a few examples for you to consider:

- If punctuality is not your quality, beware of making a commitment to someone who is prone to be punctual and prone to misuse it. Sparks will fly every time you are late, and feelings will be hurt.

- On the other hand, if punctuality is your quality, and if you are prone to misuse it, beware of making a commitment to someone who lacks the quality of punctuality. Their lack of punctuality will cause problems for you to deal with.
- If you were certain that you would never want to be in a relationship with a complainer, make certain that your potential mate has the quality of gratefulness.
- Are you certain that you want to be with someone who can talk and hold an expressive conversation? If you are, be prepared to see the counterfeits of expressiveness because there is a large chance you will see it in action.
- You have determined that your potential mate under consideration has a good number of character qualities that you really admire; however, you see a prevailing attitude of disrespectfulness as well. Beware! Respectfulness can enhance every genuine quality; however, disrespectfulness can magnify every counterfeit.
- You have the quality of hospitality and amiableness. You love to entertain guests and cannot imagine your life any other way. You have two choices. One, find someone else who has the quality of hospitality. Two, find someone who at the very least has the quality of cooperativeness.
- Do you want to avoid pack rats? Avoid people with counterfeit frugality ...especially if they lack respectfulness!
- Is personal organization necessary for you? Keep your eyes wide open for the quality of neatness! If you do not see it, move on to the next person.
- Would you like to find someone that is good at settling disputes? Look for fair-mindedness ...but beware of how it is misused! You may not like that.
- Are you absolutely convinced that you want to be with someone who clearly understands that when you say no it means no? Make certain to avoid someone with the quality of persistence ...especially those who are inclined to misuse it.
- If you are having a problem with the counterfeits of sensitivity beware of a relationships with others who have a problem with the counterfeits of objectivity. There may be a serious clash between the counterfeits of easily offended and insensitivity.

Mrs. Doe's solution is this: she must stop thinking in terms of patience, expressiveness, and neatness when she is angry with Mr. Doe. When she does, she misuses them. These are perfectly good qualities for Mrs. Doe to use when she is calm and rational, but when she is angry, she misuses them in a dissatisfying and destructive manner. She would benefit greatly by supplanting those qualities with the qualities in her blue zone (or the ones closest to the blue zone) when she is feeling angry with Mr. Doe. After she calms down, she can resume the other qualities in a positive manner.

Remember, there is no greater tool to assist you in making good choices than to know yourself well. No matter what you do, where you go, where you live, where you work;

whether you live alone or together with others, every single choice that you make is governed by character qualities. Each character quality is yours already to practice and use. You have a right as a human being to use those genuine qualities to assist you at every turn and in every relationship.

In our modern age, we seem to have nearly forgotten about character. We seemed to have nearly forgotten that we are entitled to make better choices if we want to.

What kind of choices do you want to be remembered for making during the years of your life?

In Lincoln, Nebraska, there is a cemetery in the middle of town. It's been there since 1869. Most of us will never be the subject of a book or a movie. Most of the people who are buried in that cemetery have long since been forgotten. As the years continue to fade into the past, less and less will be known about the people who are buried there.

I took a walk around that cemetery to see what I could learn about the people who were buried there. I took some paper with me to keep track of what I would find. I did not record everything, but I randomly observed about 400 graves to see what I could learn about who those people were.

What I found was very revealing. I found that the biggest share of the graves were only marked with a name and date of when the person was born and when they died. That's it!

The next largest category simply indicated that they were a husband, a wife, or mother, or father, a son, or a daughter.

Far fewer still, were the people who were actually remembered by cute little sayings like, "gone but not forgotten!"

About the same number as those were remembered for what they believed.

Almost none of the men and none of the women were remembered for what they did? If a man was remembered at all for what he did, typically it was his military service, unless he was a very important person like governor, general, founder of a large business or bank, that type of thing. However, by far, the biggest share of men were not even remembered for what they did for a living.

I saw just one man who was noted that he knew somebody important, and that was because he was a friend of Charles Lindbergh, the first man to fly across the Atlantic Ocean alone.

I found no one who was noted for what they said.

I found no one who was noted for owning a big fancy house, a ranch, a farm, a boat, a horse, or a car ... not even a really nice car!

Almost everyone who was noted and remembered for anything at all was remembered for being a husband, a wife, a mom, a dad, a son, or a daughter.

There are over 50,000 people buried in this cemetery, but only two are widely known for what they did. Both of these men did something that was extra-ordinary. Charlie was known for what he did wrong, and Gordon was known for what he did right. Both men started out like all the rest of us. Both men began making choices as children. Both of them had very solid character strengths. Both of them were actually gifted in the character strength of expressiveness.

However, Charlie was not interested in making good choices with his expressiveness like Gordon was. Charlie was willing to settle for counterfeit expressiveness and Gordon wanted to make choices to pursue genuine expressiveness.

Charlie and Gordon both had media fame.

Charlie and Gordon both caught the attention of the President of the United States.

Charlie became so famous that his life was the inspiration of several movies.

Gordon became famous because he was an actor in the Movies.

Charlie's life was chaotic, and filled with selfish choices!

Gordon's life was honored by President Ronald Reagan. You see, Gordon MacRae, was famous for his role in the musical Oklahoma for singing, "Oh, What A Beautiful Morning." He lived a long life and he retired in Lincoln. He passed away in 1986.

Charlie's life has been studied by the FBI, and criminal psychologists for many years now. You see, Charlie Starkweather, made some really big mistakes by the time he was just 19 years old. He went on killing spree in Lincoln which shocked and horrified the entire nation back in 1959. His life abruptly ended in punishment in the electric chair before he turned 21 years old.

Everyone of us have choices to make. Most of us will never make the bad choices that Charlie made. Most of us will never be known for being a famous actor and singer. If we are lucky, we will be remembered as husband, as wife, as mom, as dad, as son, or as daughter. The memory of us will be what we earned, day by day ...just one good choice at a time.

Chapter Nineteen

Questions & Answers

Question: I have a high score on one of the genuine character qualities, and I have low scores on the corresponding counterfeits. What does this mean?

Answer: The high score on the genuine character quality is a good thing. It means that you are likely to use that quality in a positive way. However, even though the scores on the corresponding counterfeit traits were low, any score above a zero indicates that you have a tendency to misuse those traits to some degree. However, it is good that your counterfeit scores are low. You could still make better choices to improve these.

Question: I have all zeros on a genuine character quality and all zeros on the corresponding counterfeits. Is that good a good thing?

Answer: Simply put ...No! That is not a good thing. The fact that you scored all zeros indicates that you are likely to have problems in certain areas of your life because you lack that character quality. Not only do you lack the genuine character quality, your scores of zeros on the counterfeits would indicate no propensity for it either. While it is good that you have zeros on the counterfeits, combined zeros would indicate that you seriously lack in your awareness of this quality. Developing it may be a challenge; however, you can choose it for yourself just as anyone else can do. In certain areas of your life, you may be acting the opposite of the character quality in question because you lack the quality. Work on developing the genuine quality properly without the counterfeits. The good news about this is since you have not developed the counterfeits of this quality, you will not be at risk for misusing them as you develop the genuine quality.

Question: I have a score of zero on a genuine quality; however, I have very high scores on the corresponding counterfeits. What does this mean?

Answer: Unfortunately, it means you have great potential to use the genuine quality; however, you have not been doing it. Instead, you have been using the counterfeits. Your high scores would indicate that you are using the counterfeits a lot. The good news is that it means you have good potential to learn how to use the genuine quality. Adding respectfulness toward others and selflessness will help you turn this around. It is virtually your niche if you choose to turn this around; however, you must learn to use the genuine quality and avoid the counterfeits. You may need to start by apologizing!

Question: Some of my scores on the counterfeits are low scores. When I read about them in the Character Profiles, it does not seem to describe me very well. Why is that?

Answer: All of the Character Profiles, both the genuine qualities and the counterfeit qualities, are written with a score in mind of 100. The fact that you have a low score on some of the counterfeits is a good thing. The higher your score on a counterfeit -- the more you will see that it applies to you. This would also be true of the genuine qualities.

Question: I scored 100 on some of the genuine qualities. Yet when I read about them, I see that I fall short of acting like the way it describes. Why is that?

Answer: The genuine qualities are described in the Character Profiles to challenge each person to aspire to the highest possible degree always.

Question: Has anyone ever scored a perfect score?

Answer: Nope!

Question: Is it possible to score a perfect score?

Answer: It is not likely that anyone who is answering truthfully about their life from childhood through to the time they take the assessment will ever get a perfect score.