

INTRODUCING

*CARE*  
*in*  
*Community*

*C*ONVERSATIONAL *A*PPROACH TO *R*ELATIONAL *E*FFECTIVENESS

*EMPOWERING RELIGIOUS WOMEN AND MEN TO  
WALK DEEPLY, SHARE MUTUALLY, AND LIVE  
AUTHENTICALLY IN COMMUNITY*

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# INTRODUCTION

The enclosed material is intended to provide an overview of **CARE** Conversational Approach to **R**elational **E**ffectiveness - for those congregations seeking substantive change. We are fortunate to have enjoyed a professional history of collaborating with a variety of religious congregations, hospitals, and educational systems that have sought to bring about cultural change through the enhancement of interpersonal relationships. We have provided **CARE** for the purposes of leadership development, team training, and congregational and/or organizational change. We have offered **CARE** to leadership teams, local communities, formation groups, and entire religious congregations, as well as other value-based organizations. This overview material is geared toward those who are considering congregation-wide training with **CARE**.

We believe that one of the most important goals of our work would be to help you develop the skills necessary to actualize your congregation's vision by strengthening the interdependent bonds among community members. We see **CARE** not simply as a method of teaching effective communication, but as a way to build the interpersonal skills and cultural milieu that support your collective journey. While the basic skills of **CARE** are about communication, the heart of **CARE** is about deepening and strengthening relationships. While the *process* of **CARE** involves practice and learning, the *content* of **CARE** (i.e., what you talk about) is the substance of your lives. While every individual discovers her own learning, the collective learning that takes place offers challenging invitations toward systemic change. The soul of **CARE** is its spiritual foundation, its compatibility with gospel living and the value-base of *mutuality*.

## Definition of **CARE**

**“CARE is a training program that uses a set of conversational skills to make real, and bring to life, the value-base of mutuality. It is intended to enhance relational effectiveness by fostering congruence, authenticity and interdependence”.**

When applied to intact groups, such as religious communities, **CARE** provides a model and a means for systemic change. **CARE**, in its most instrumental form, can provide the interpersonal infrastructures so urgently needed to link the ideal world of values and vision to the real and concrete world of behavior and lived relationships.

When embraced and practiced by religious communities for the purpose of collective growth, **CARE** can empower the members to find their personal and collective voice in a value-based, person-centered, spirit-driven process of change. As this happens, a community's mission and spirit are given common, vibrant and tangible expression.

## OVERVIEW

### Unlearning the Old and Learning the New

We believe that people, by and large, have not been *taught* skills that enable them to communicate effectively in an interdependent manner. Rather, most people have learned, indirectly, from their parents, teachers, and peers to communicate in ways that often hinder the development of effective and authentic relationships. Most of us have learned to interact with others in ways that promote self-protection, rather than openness and honesty. Our culture has been built upon the values of independence and self-sufficiency. As an outgrowth of our upbringing and experience, we have developed habits in our style of communicating that are often in opposition to the very things that religious communities espouse as valuable—*interdependence, shared wisdom, and authentic engagement in loving relationships*.

We believe that the habits that work against effective, interdependent relationships can be identified, unlearned, and re-shaped. We believe that people can be taught to communicate more effectively, thereby enhancing their quality of interactions and of functioning in interdependent relationships. We believe that these skills can be learned by didactic input, by modeling and coaching, and by practice with supervision and guidance.

We believe these things because this is what we do. We teach people the conversational skills of *mutuality*. In doing so, we have discovered the energy and productivity that is unleashed in communities when people are empowered to become more fully themselves, as well as more responsible and effective in their manner of relating. We have experienced the power that emerges when a community *really* owns their values and vision, not just in words, but in everyday behavior. We are in the business of helping people learn how to engage more directly and authentically in dialogue, how to strengthen the congruence between their words and their behavior, and how to bring out the best of their diverse resources. This work is the substance of our ministry.

### CAREing for Communities at Risk

Communities can easily get stuck either in their attempts to support and affirm one another or in their efforts to work through conflict. When grappling with interpersonal differences is unsuccessful, patterns of conflict avoidance and individualized efforts typically emerge. Speaking for others, disengaging, arguing, jockeying for position and power, and other dysfunctional patterns develop rapidly. Once entrenched, these behavioral patterns are difficult norms to change. When communication breaks down, community functioning (e.g., committees, leadership teams, assembly gatherings or local communities) breaks down; thus, ministry efforts, and the people involved, suffer the consequences.

In order for community members to enhance their interpersonal and ministerial effectiveness and to strengthen the level of cooperation and interdependence, more than personal effort is needed.

Members need more than a strong leadership team, and they need more than spiritual renewal or new vocations. Communities at risk need to embark upon a collective effort to learn tangible, concrete skills that can empower them to transform destructive patterns of managing conflict.

## Systemic Change

The new forums and experiences within the community, the dialogic process of planning and of moving the community forward, the learning of new skills, the common language from which to dialogue about and understand community life, all contribute to **CARE** being much more than “just another workshop”. **CARE for Communities** is a substantial undertaking that takes several months to more than a year to complete, depending upon the depth and breadth of desired involvement. The process of doing it, the *journey*, as much as the skills, is what helps to foster systemic change. The substantive reasons and agendas that lead a community to choose to make such a commitment in the first place are the very *heart of the matter*. These issues become the growing edge and impetus for the systemic change that occurs.

What follows are some of the reasons that help to explain why **CARE** is as much about systemic change as it is about communication.

### More than a “Communication Workshop”

The cornerstone value of **CARE** is *mutuality*, which is about sharing power and living gospel values in a nonviolent, interdependent way. When these values and these skills are applied in an integrative manner, not only are relationships strengthened, but also community change efforts become more effective, far-reaching and long-lasting. When fundamental structures and norms for relating are changed in a community, the impact is felt by everyone and, in turn, by all those with whom the community is engaged (e.g., ministry organizations, associates, etc.). Having an entire community go through a rigorous training process *together* is very different from a few individuals or subgroups going off to a workshop. The impact is far greater. While not all communities choose this level of training and commitment to change, those that do experience the full power of **CARE**. The result of such a serious and congregation-wide effort goes well beyond surface changes to make deep, lasting and fundamental shifts in culture and norms.

### Call for Transformation

When we offer **CARE** to entire communities, it is typically done for reasons beyond a desire to learn communication skills per se. A community that devotes the time, energy and commitment to such extensive training is after more than a workshop on communications. Members typically want, and need, to change the way they are relating with one another around important community matters and agendas. They are seeking to heal deep wounds that are signaling an invitation toward powerful growth. They are seeking nothing short of a transformation. Thus, the impetus for change originates within a community, paving the way for **CARE** to be the conduit for change. We believe that **CARE** can be a way to respond to this corporate desire for change and can enable a community to transform itself anew.

## Discovering Common Ground through Common Language

When **CARE** is chosen by an entire community, it becomes a commitment of, and for, the building of community. It is experienced as a high priority. When an entire community is trained in **CARE**, it provides a common language with which they dialogue about their relationships, their ministries and their lives. It puts people “on the same page” with regard to the ground rules for, and values pertaining to, dialogue. With assistance and coaching, persons will make more conscientious efforts to discipline their conversations and speak a language of nonviolence, a language of mutuality.

Going through the training together provides a sense of being-in-it-together for the sake of the community. Persons involved in the training become a *learning community* – a community of learners all taking risks in an effort to grow. These collective efforts tend to bring people closer together, strengthening members overall sense of cohesion and connectedness, thereby enabling a more unified approach toward desired change. Not only does **CARE** help to provide a common language, it aids communities in discovering their common heart.

## Spawning New Structures

Planning for **CARE** requires dialogue with the leadership and key planning groups regarding *how* the training will take place and how to make the method of training compatible with existing community structures. This **CARE** training, along with the *planning dialogue* itself, often spawns new channels and forums of communication which can contribute to the potential re-shaping of the direction and use of structures in community. These new or modified structures, if developed, help to ensure the maintenance of changes that occur as a result of **CARE**.

## Person-Centered, Value-Based, Spirit-Driven

The value of **CARE**, while it is a method and means for systemic change rests ultimately and always in the hearts of those involved. This model is about caring for, and valuing people, as partners and as the community’s greatest gifts. It is about sharing more deeply with one another. It is about offering one another support and challenge in such a way as to foster personal and relational growth. **CARE** is about creating a climate wherein each person is valued and can become their best selves. It is about helping individuals find their authentic voice, and the congregation, its collective voice.

When a faith community’s dialogue is in-depth, and leads to collective authorship and ownership of chosen directions, change is not just an “organizational” process, it is a truly a *Spirit-driven* process. When honest, in-depth community conversations take place, communities can create a powerful medium through which their true voice, their collective voice, can be recognized and articulated. Common visions searching for a common voice—a Spirit voice—find expression when people genuinely respect one another’s truths, values, and unique gifts, and want to understand one another. While honoring the diversity within the community **CARE** assists in finding the collective voice of the community.

## MUTUALITY: THE VALUE-BASE

The values expressed in this **CARE** are its essence. The skills extend these values into tangible form. The values speak of relationships rooted in the gospel and of the enhancement of interdependent living. The skills are the behavioral manifestation of these underlying values and, as such, are truly *life-skills*.

In the broadest of terms, we talk about our relational orientation as being framed within the value of *mutuality*. As our cornerstone value, being mutual requires an orientation toward interdependence. Mutuality bespeaks a desire to be as responsible and loyal toward my relationship with you as I am toward my own self. All other values of **CARE** are embedded in this framework of mutuality. There are sixteen specific values that fall within the rubric of mutuality. We will highlight just a few to give you a flavor of who we are and what **CARE** is about.

We value being *co-responsible* for relationships. In other words, we believe that it is not more my responsibility, or more yours, to determine the nature and expression of our relationship. We believe that it is up to both of us to co-author our relationship. If one person dominates the shaping of a relationship, then someone, in essence, is being devalued. We do not believe in relationships that are 70/30%, 60/40%, not even 50/50%, but in ones that are 100/100%. In other words, we believe that people should be fully authentic, sharing the responsibility for, and determination of, the nature and direction of their relationship.

We believe in *shared power*, as distinct from relationships wherein someone either gives away power to another or hoards power for manipulative gains. People often give away power, along with their responsibility for maintaining relationships, by being excessively deferential and non-assertive regarding their needs, wants or opinions. Likewise, some people try to maintain power over people for their own personal gain. In either extreme, someone is likely to become devalued in one way or another.

We value *shared truth*. If I abandon my truth in favor of yours (e.g., “You must know better.”) or, if I dismiss your truth in favor of mine (e.g., “I know the *real* truth.”), then someone’s truth has been squelched. A greater truth (e.g., wisdom, creative breakthroughs) can be discovered as a result of bringing each individual’s perspective into the collective understanding. This essentially requires a willingness to be influenced by what others say, as well as a capacity to listen deeply and respectfully to one another’s subjective piece of the truth.

We believe in relationships that are built on a *balance of support and challenge*. We find that relationships built upon one, without the other, are problematic and unhealthy. It is difficult to relate to people who are excessively nice, because they do not like hearing, nor will they express hard truths (e.g., things they don’t like or about which they are angry). They will not tell you when they are upset, nor will they challenge you with the hard questions. Without the challenge

of conflict and of differences being expressed, possibilities for growth and intimacy are hindered.

On the other hand, people who are excessively negative (e.g., angry, critical or complaining), and who do not, simultaneously, express affection, care, or offer positive suggestions, are also difficult to be around. These individuals do not provide a sufficient foundation for support, thus diminishing the possibility of a successful outcome in confrontations. People do not thrive well in relationships that are only challenging or only nice.

We value *being proactive* in relationships. When we react out of fear and, thus, avoid dealing with people, we detract from the robust potential that is inherent in a given relationship. This is true also when we react out of anger, in oppositional ways, rather than actively seek to address and resolve a conflict. We believe in behaving our values proactively, choicefully, and in a disciplined manner.

These are among the many values that underlie **CARE** and that are expressed in this notion of mutuality. As you can see, the skills are not about “how to win friends and influence people”. **CARE** is not an “assertiveness training” course, nor is it a touchy-feely exercise in feeling stroked. Values without skills amount to nothing more than lovely words. Skills without values have as much potential for harm as for good. You cannot *really* **CARE** unless you are sincerely interested in something beyond yourself, and have the skills to behave in mutual ways with others.

# GOALS

## Relationship Goals

The personal and interpersonal goals of *CARE* are:

1. Foster a greater degree of *integration* between the values you hold and the ways in which these values are transformed into your conversations, your behaviors and your lived relationships.
2. Identify patterns and *habits that thwart mutuality* in conversations and in your manner of relating to, and working with, others.
3. Improve your clarity of *expression* of thoughts and feelings as you engage in conversation.
4. Enhance your expression of respect and your quality of *presence* to one another.
5. Learn to offer critical *feedback* in non-critical terms.
6. Learn to listen with greater accuracy and *empathy*.
7. Enhance your ability to foster creativity, depth and substance by listening *beyond the spoken word*.
8. Learn ways to engage in *caring and constructive self-challenge and interpersonal confrontation*.



## Systemic Goals

The systemic goals of *CARE* are:

1. Foster a greater degree of *integration* between the values your community holds and the ways in which these values are transformed into the conversations and behaviors of leadership teams, committees, assemblies and Chapters as well as the day-to-day interactions among community members.
2. Enhance your collective ability to interact more *openly* and *honestly* as you share the experience and efforts of living community.
3. Enhance your ability to live and work more *mutually, interdependently* and *collaboratively* with others, while simultaneously strengthening personal authenticity and competence.
4. Provide a primary foundation, a common language, and a tangible means for *team training and leadership development*.
5. Unleash a *spirit of wisdom* as the collective voices of your community are fully heard, respected and integrated into purposive goal accomplishment.
6. Enhance your corporate ability to *co-determine the person-centered, valued-based, mission-driven* movements that are central to community and the people you serve.
7. Foster personal and corporate development and *systemic change* within the faith context of discovery, dialogue and collaboration.
8. Enable you to *embrace the differences* you hold, and the conflicts that emerge in living together, as invitations to grow and deepen your relationships with one another and God.

# BENEFITS AND COSTS

## Benefits

In addition to the goals of *CARE*, there are numerous benefits that have been identified by participants of the training. Some of these are highlighted as follows:

- ◆ Stronger integrity in behaving the values you hold
- ◆ Higher self-esteem and stronger respect and esteem for others
- ◆ Greater understanding of self and others
- ◆ Greater effectiveness in one-to-one relationships
- ◆ Fewer misunderstandings
- ◆ More productive communication
- ◆ Less unnecessary tension and hostility
- ◆ Mutuality in interpersonal relationships
- ◆ More effective ways of talking, listening and interacting
- ◆ Greater accountability in relationship to others
- ◆ More mutually satisfying decisions
- ◆ Co-creation and co-authorship of shared direction
- ◆ More synergy of diversified efforts
- ◆ More effective teaming
- ◆ More substantive, creative solutions to conflict
- ◆ More efficient and durable resolutions of conflict

## Costs

We realize that engaging in *CARE* does not come without a cost. Participants who practice *CARE* have identified the following personal costs:

- ◆ Requires more time for substantive dialogue
- ◆ Less personal control by risking unknown discoveries through dialogue
- ◆ More challenge when you share power mutually
- ◆ Greater demands of honesty and personal accountability
- ◆ Greater stress in tolerating the tension and ambiguity involved in sharing the discovery of truth
- ◆ Demands more discipline in conversations

# SKILLS OF CARE

While there are over 150 specific skills that are taught throughout the training, what follows is a broad outline of the basic content areas that are included in *CARE*.

## Self-Disclosure

- Sharing in a manner that is direct, clear, concise, concrete, and goal-oriented

## Presence

- Providing an attentive presence to one another by strengthening the congruence between verbal and nonverbal behaviors

## Giving and Receiving Feedback

- Providing feedback that is nonjudgmental and that is designed to be descriptive and constructive

## Basic Listening

Listening actively and accurately by learning to:

- Give back accurately the *content* of what was spoken
- Give back accurately the *feelings* related to the content
- Ask *clarifying* questions
- *Paraphrase* in a way that enhances clarity and depth of understanding
- *Manage emotional reactions* while listening

## Empathic Listening

- How to capture the *heart of the matter* by determining the dominant feeling and most important content being expressed, as well as the specific intensity of what someone is feeling; responding verbally to another in such a way so as to enhance (not distort) the meaning of what another has spoken

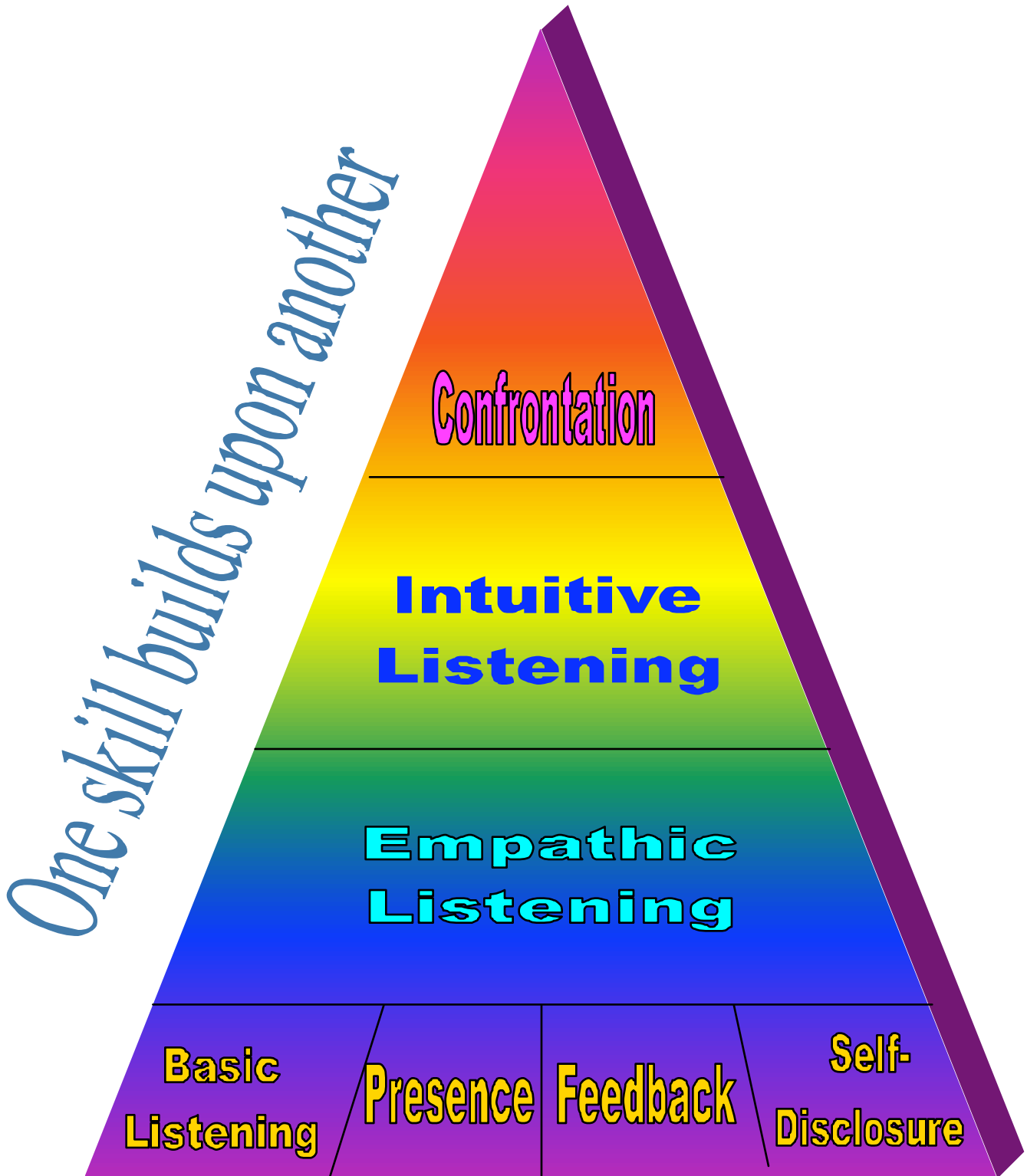
## Intuitive Listening

- How to listen and discriminate the underlying values and deeper meanings being conveyed in a conversation; finding what was not said, the deeper truth, and bringing it into the conversation in a manner that helps the other person explore his or her statements more fully

## Dealing with Confrontation

- Engaging in confrontations and resolving conflicts creatively, honestly and respectfully

## BUILDING THE SKILLS OF CARE



# LEARNING PROCESS

## Guiding Principles

As psychologists, we recognize and appreciate different learning styles (i.e., visual verses verbal, experiential verses didactic, reflective introspection verses dialogue and discussion, etc.). As such, we attempt to utilize a variety of learning methods. We provide verbal input, handouts, demonstrations and experiential learning with guidance and immediate feedback, reflection and process time, homework, play and rest. All of these are combined to create an optimal learning process.

## Learning Community

We work to establish a learning community within the context of our training. We want to promote an atmosphere that is nonjudgmental, and one in which every individual experiences her unique contributions as being valued by the group. We work to foster a climate of safety wherein substantive conversation becomes the norm, and mistakes are not only permissible, but also encouraged and enjoyed in order to optimize learning. We discuss the parameters of confidentiality in order to help the group establish a safer forum in which to discuss the material they might bring. We design processes in which each individual is an active and engaged learner, as well as an experimenter of new behaviors. We welcome challenge and encourage risk-taking, as well as supportive exchanges between, and among, group members and ourselves.

## Skills Are Cumulative

The skills of *CARE* are taught sequentially, beginning with the basics and culminating with the most complex skill of confrontation. The more basic skills (e.g., self-disclosure, giving and receiving feedback) are the foundational skills that lay the groundwork for effective use of the more difficult skills of empathic listening, intuitive listening and confrontation. Each new skill builds upon the earlier ones (see *Building the skills of CARE*, page 11).

# LEARNING CYCLE

In addition to the sequential and cumulative learning of skills, each skill is taught in a manner that has a certain flow. We teach one skill (or set of skills) at a time, and each skill is cycled through the same sequence, we call the *Learning Cycle* (see illustration below).

## Learning Cycle

