

Communication in Community: Skills for Establishing Trust and Healthy Interpersonal Relationships.

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Resources for Healthy Life & Ministry

Agenda

- Explore skills associated with emotional competence
- Identify strategies for healthier interpersonal relationships
- Discuss the power of expectations and its influence on relationship success
- Predict and prepare for interpersonal obstacles
- *Small Group Work*

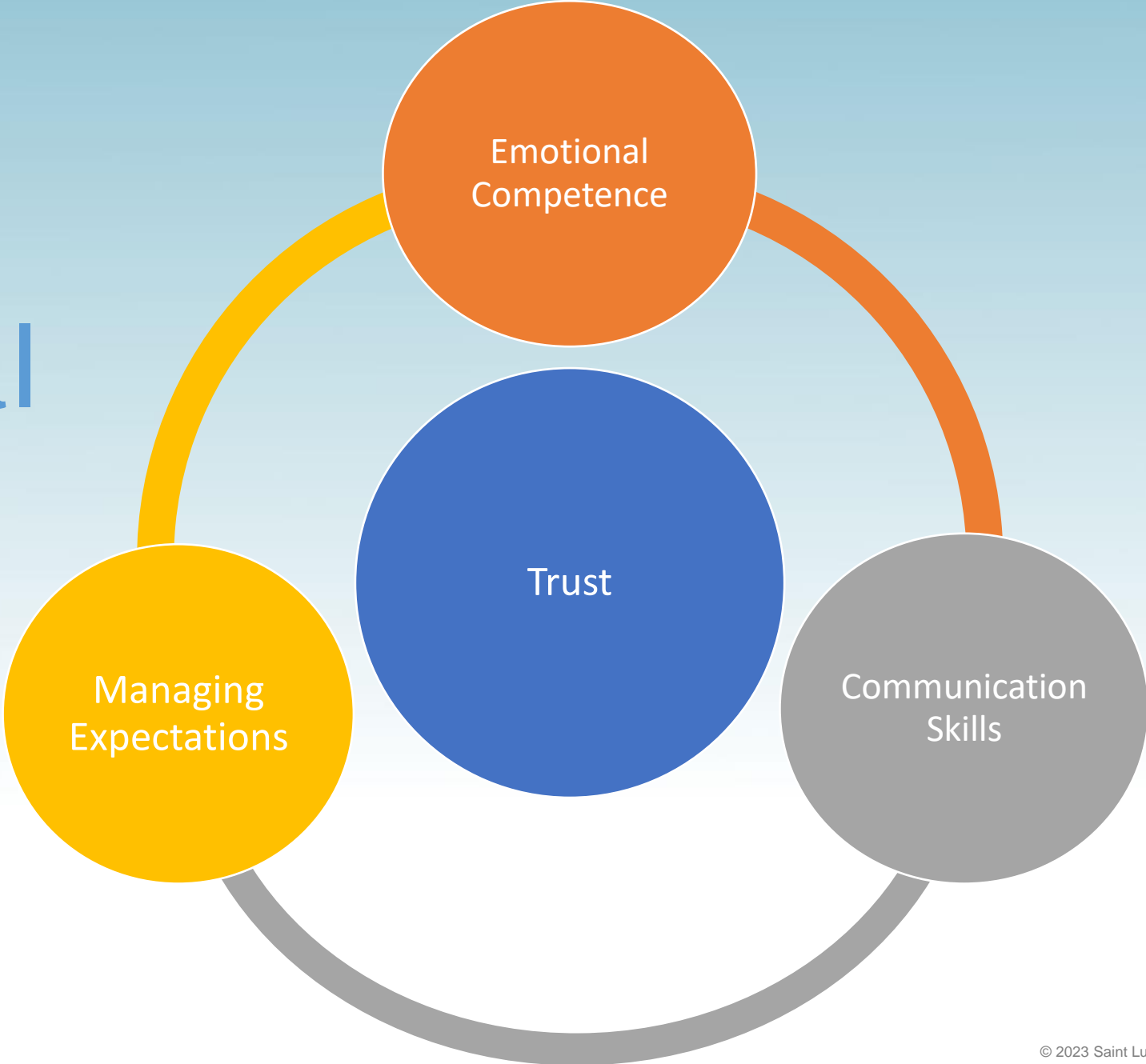
The Work of Trusting

1. Building Trust
2. Maintaining Trust
3. Rebuilding Trust

Interpersonal Health



Interpersonal Health



Emotional Competency

“We are describing how people can respond emotionally yet simultaneously and strategically apply their knowledge about emotions...such that they can negotiate their way through interpersonal exchanges and regulate their emotional experiences toward desired outcomes or goals.”

Carolyn Saarni

Emotional Competence

1. Awareness of one's own emotional state
2. Skills in discerning others' emotions
3. Skills in emotional expression
4. Capacity for empathic and sympathetic involvement

Emotional Competence

5. Awareness of how emotional immediacy and symmetry inform a relationship
6. Skill in understanding that inner emotional state and outer presentation need not always match
7. Skill in adaptive coping with aversive or distressing emotions (Acute and Daily)
8. Capacity for emotional self-efficacy



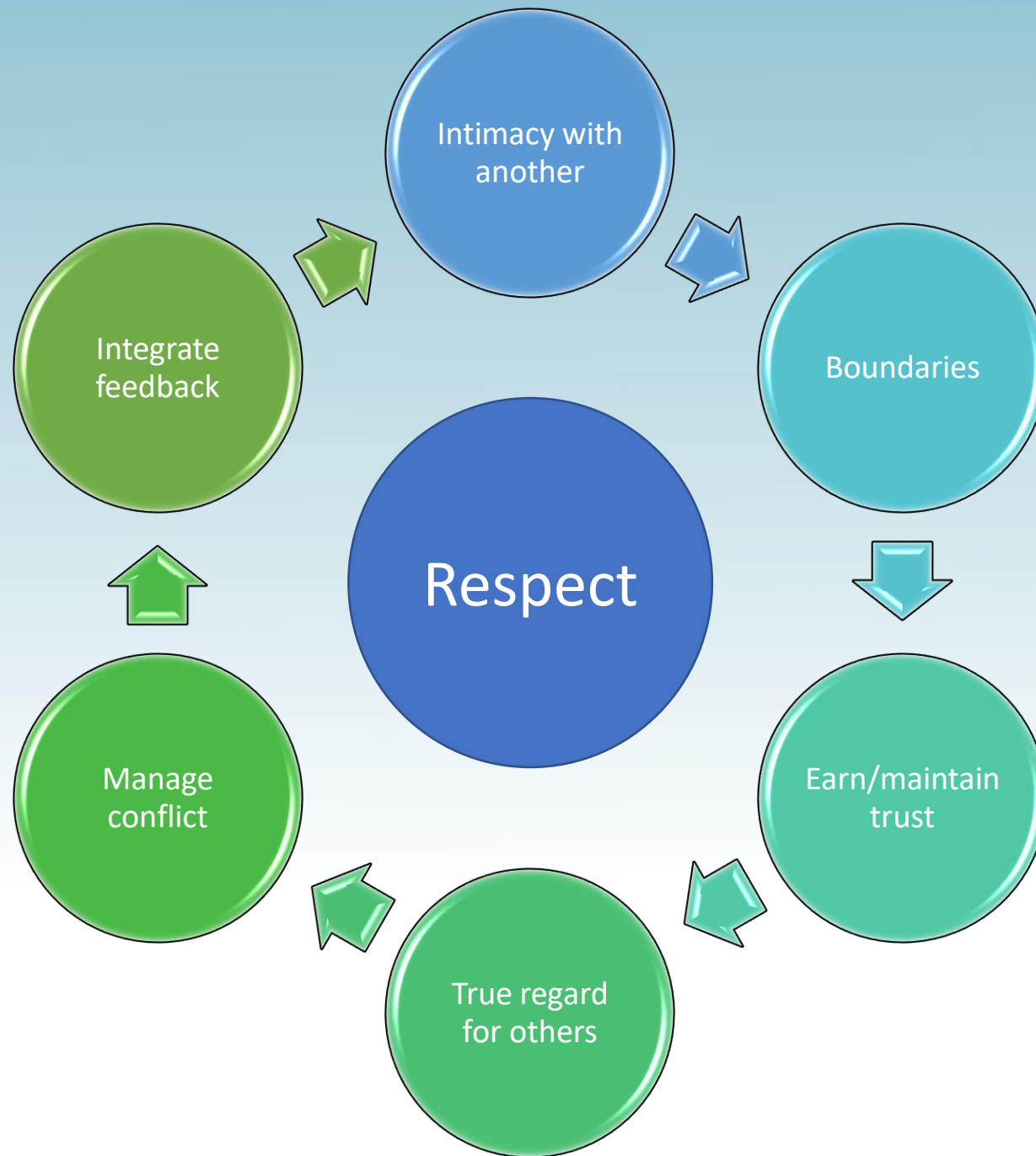
Where do I need to grow?

1. Aware of my emotional state
2. Aware of others' emotional state
3. Skill in emotional expression
4. Sympathy and empathy
5. Awareness of emotional/role context
6. Recognize emotional incongruence
7. Coping skills tool box
8. Confidence in managing feeling life

Critical Interpersonal Skills

Interpersonal Skills

1. Ability to be emotionally intimate and connected with another. Be vulnerable...*gradually*.
2. Establish and maintain boundaries
3. Ability to earn (and maintain) the trust of others
4. Capacity to convey true regard for others
5. Capacity to manage and resolve conflict
6. Ability to take correction and integrate feedback



The power of expectations

- Expectations heavily influence our thinking and feeling stages in response to a variety of situations
 - Our assessment of a **scenario**
 - Our **beliefs** about how **others** *should* respond
 - Our hopes/needs/wants for our **own** experience

Expectation Awareness

No Expectations

Middle Ground
(Informed by Experience)

High (Unrealistic)
Expectations



No Expectations

- I expect nothing of anyone....that way I won't get hurt
- Expectations just set people up to fail
- Without expectations, I am freer
- Appearance of relaxed and carefree but actually, in relationships, a protective and defensive stance
- And yet, no expectations undermines authentic connection....we don't trust or take healthy interpersonal risks

High Expectations

- I work hard so those around me *should* work hard too
- They *should* know this is important to me and respond accordingly
- I did all of this work, they *should* appreciate me and say thank you accordingly
- Unrealistic or “too high” expectations of others guarantee failure and disappointment
- Allows us to feel in positions of power, cultivates a sense of entitlement and self-importance, and/or gives us permission to criticize and judge others

Expectation “**Buzz**” Words

- He *always*.....
- She *never*.....
- They *should*.....
- These words act as a match to gasoline-soaked logs
 - (We’re already a bit activated!)
- We resonate with statements that make illusions to the truth and to our experience but further **activate** us emotionally....making us more likely to act out of an unhealthy place.

Expectations Adjustments

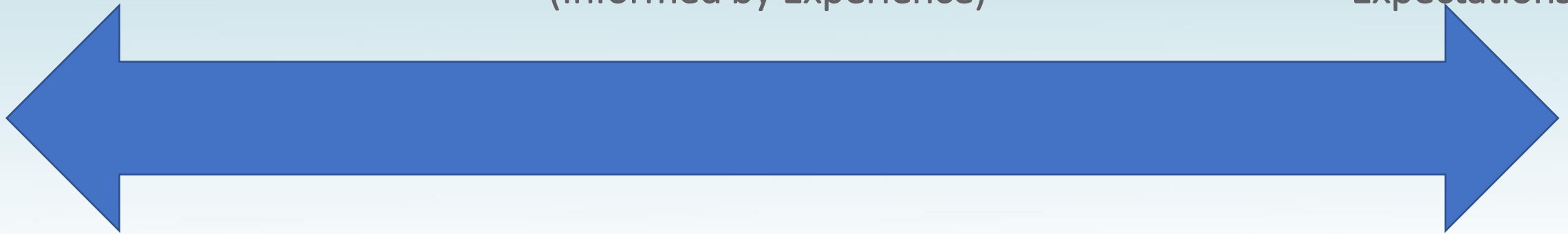
1. Cultivate awareness
 - What do I bring into the room?
2. Cultivate grace and gratitude
 - Acknowledge the limitations of others
3. Make a choice towards acceptance
 - Accept the limitations of the other.....OR engage in the process of change *with* the other
4. Cultivate Flexibility
 - Pay your RENT (Rest, Exercise, Nutrition, Thoughts)

Expectation Adjustment

No Expectations

Middle Ground
(Informed by Experience)

High (Unrealistic)
Expectations



*How do we get more comfortable in middle ground?
What do we need to regularly assess and adjust our expectations?
When do I need to lower my expectations? Raise my expectations?*



Where do I need to grow?

1. Establish emotional intimacy with others
2. Maintain appropriate boundaries
3. Earn the trust of others
4. Convey true regard and love for others
5. Manage conflict
6. Take correction, learn *and* change
7. More flexible expectations

Obstacles to Relational Success



What gets in *my* way?

Lack of healthy boundaries

- Enmeshed or dependent relationships
- Unmet needs for connection or intimacy
- Loneliness and social isolation
- Unhealthy or harmful beliefs about relationships
- Poor self esteem or self image
- *Example: I believe most relationships end up with someone getting hurt so I'm more comfortable having lots of friends but not sharing "all of me" with anyone.*

What gets in *my* way?

Lack of skills

- Difficulty managing feeling life
- Not enough skills for conflict management or assertiveness
- *Example: I have great friends but anytime there is an argument, I shut down and withdraw.*

What gets in *my* way?

Lack of self-awareness

- Difficulty recognizing the impact of my behavior on others or how others experience me
- *Example: Over the years, my closest friends have said they find it hard to work on projects with me because I get “testy” or “irritable” easily. I’m not sure what they are referring to.*

What gets in *my* way?

Unresolved Hurts

- Significant hurts from my past that continue to burden me
- Unhealed wounds or trauma that continues to play out in my relationships or view of myself (fear, lack of trust, avoidance)
- *Example: When someone gives me feedback, positive or negative, I find myself immediately tearful and it is hard to stay connected with that person in the moment.*

Obstacles to Relational Success



What gets in our way?

- Smaller numbers
 - Increased demands on current members
 - Fewer people in the swimming pool
- Tensions among ministry verse community obligations
- Primary source of relationships is ministerial (colleagues)
- Evolving roles within religious life (vocation director, formation director, leadership)

Challenging Community Dynamics

- Clinging to rigidly to “we’ve always done it this way”
- Forced changes
- Complicated experiences of authority
- Collective experiences of trauma *and* a lack of healing
- The dance of *personal* verses *confidential* in community life

What dynamics would you give voice to?



Clearing my path

Clearing my path....

- A mentor
 - Someone to offer feedback or advice
- Therapy
 - To address the roots of our behavior or learn new behaviors
- Self-help
 - Books, webinars, classes or psychoeducational workshops
 - Skills-based courses
- *Insight first....then a modality that will help you achieve growth*



Clearing our path

Clearing our path....

- A facilitator
 - Someone to offer feedback or advice, help the community name/address the obstacles
- Psychoeducation
 - To address the roots of our behavior or learn new behaviors
- Community-wide dialogue, directed retreats, and days of reflection
- Small group/Faith sharing experiences
 - Books, webinars, classes or psychoeducational workshops
 - Skills-based courses
- ***Commitment to doing the work***

The Work of Trusting

1. Building Trust
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Building Trust in Relationships

1. Communicate openly
2. Demonstrate mutual respect
3. Set boundaries
4. Give the benefit of the doubt
5. Be vulnerable

Maintaining Trust

1. Step outside of your comfort zone
 - Resist passivity or complacency
2. Show consideration and care
3. Admit mistakes
4. Keep your promises

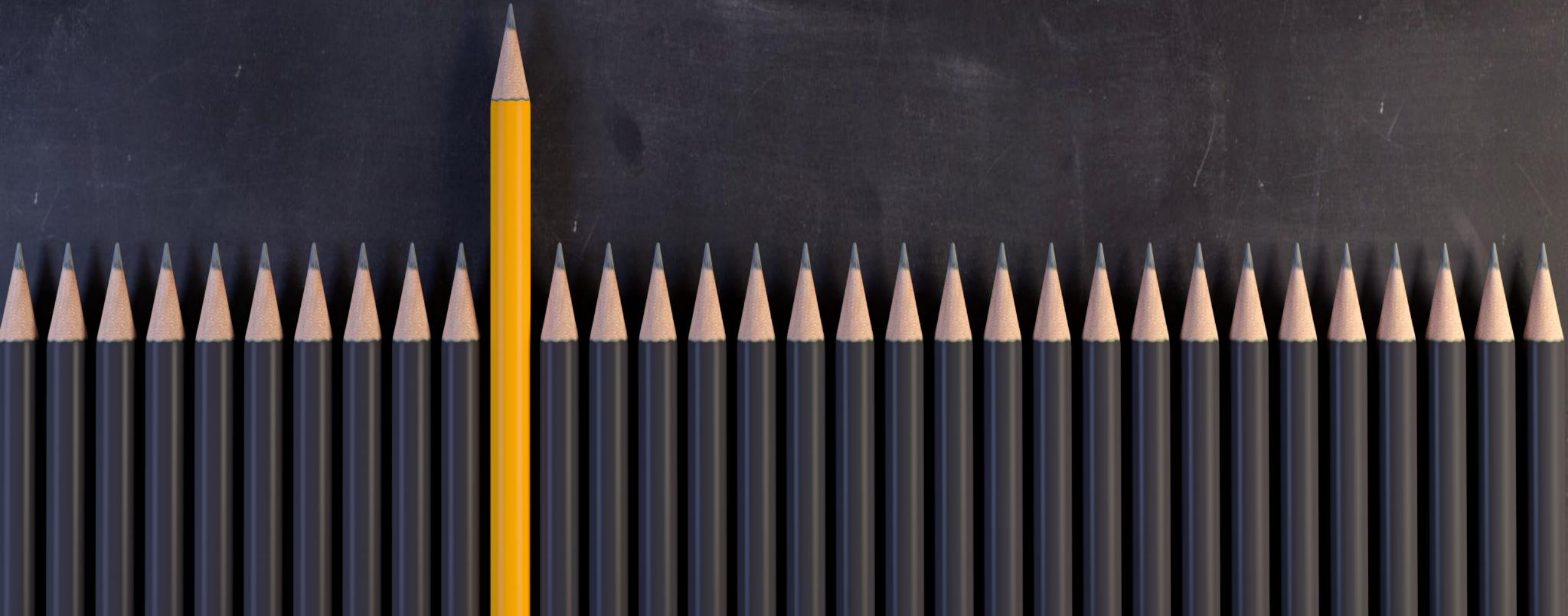
Rebuilding Trust

1. Make amends
2. Commit to your words
3. Check the pulse (with regularity!)

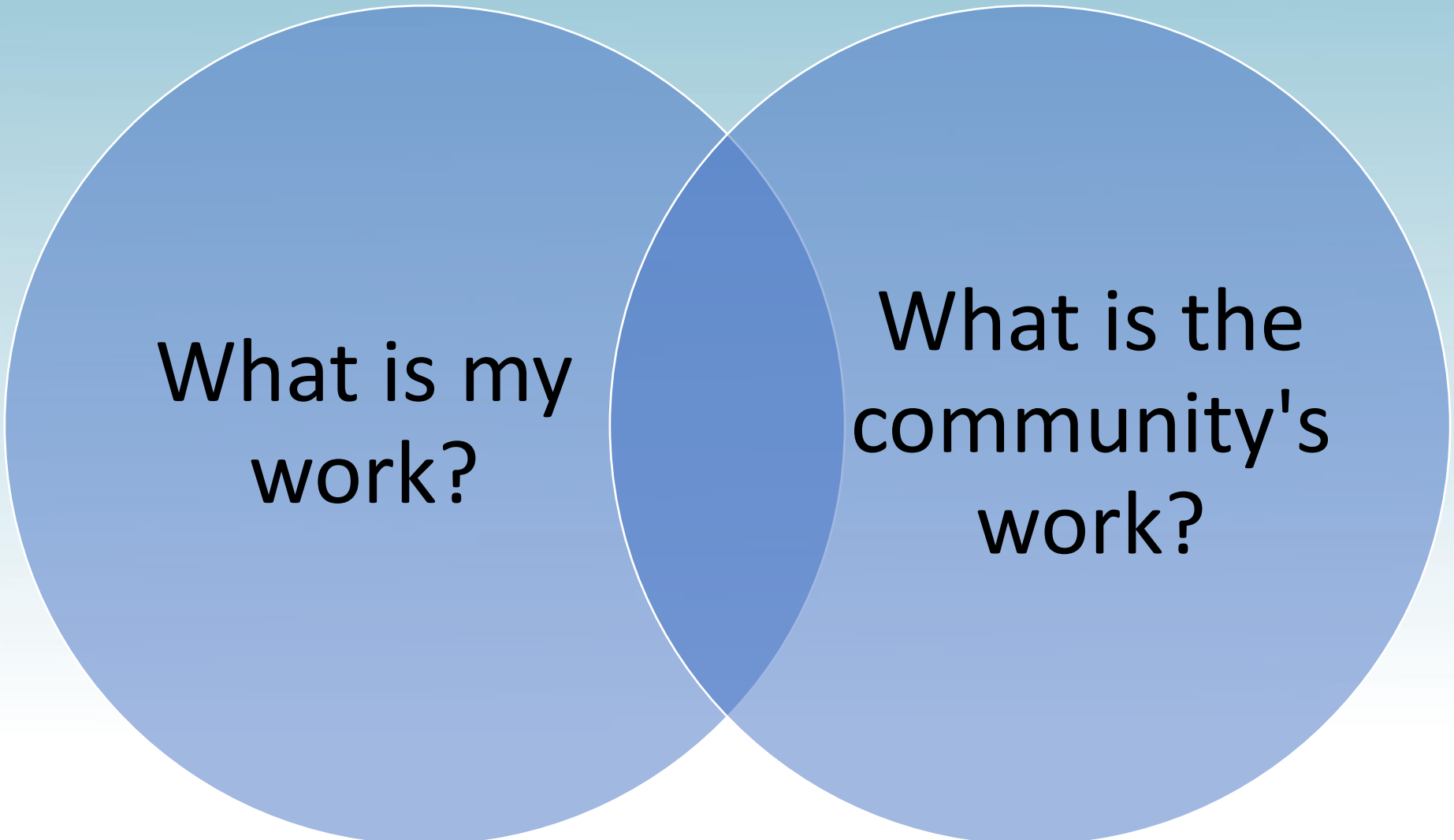
Accept that none of us are perfect....

We will make mistakes!

The “After School Special” Effect



“I want to write something
so simply
about love
or about pain
that even
as you are reading
you feel it
and as you read
you keep feeling it
and though it be my story
it will be common,
though it be singular
it will be known to you
so that by the end
you will think—
no, you will realize—
that it was all the while
yourself arranging the words,
that it was all the time
words that you yourself,
out of your heart
had been saying.”
— Mary Oliver, *Evidence: Poems*



What is my
work?

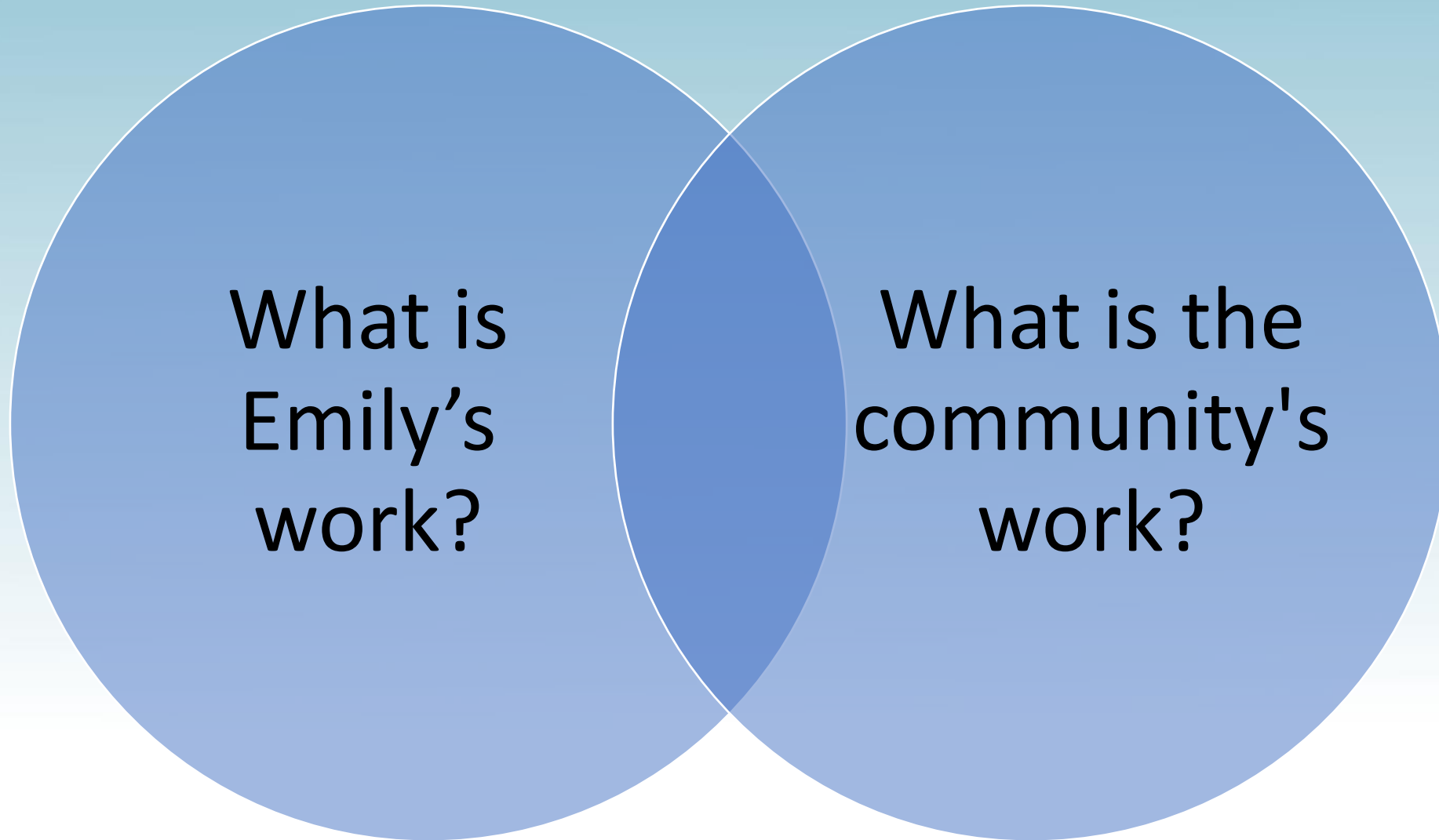
What is the
community's
work?

Small Group

1. Of the content presented, what phrases or ideas stood out to me? Please choose one and share with the group.
2. What are some of the personal obstacles to relationships that I struggle with?
 - Ex: Asking for help, admitting weakness, letting people know, etc.
3. What are some of the interpersonal obstacles our community is facing right now?
4. How do we as leaders model building, maintaining and rebuilding trust?

Case Scenario

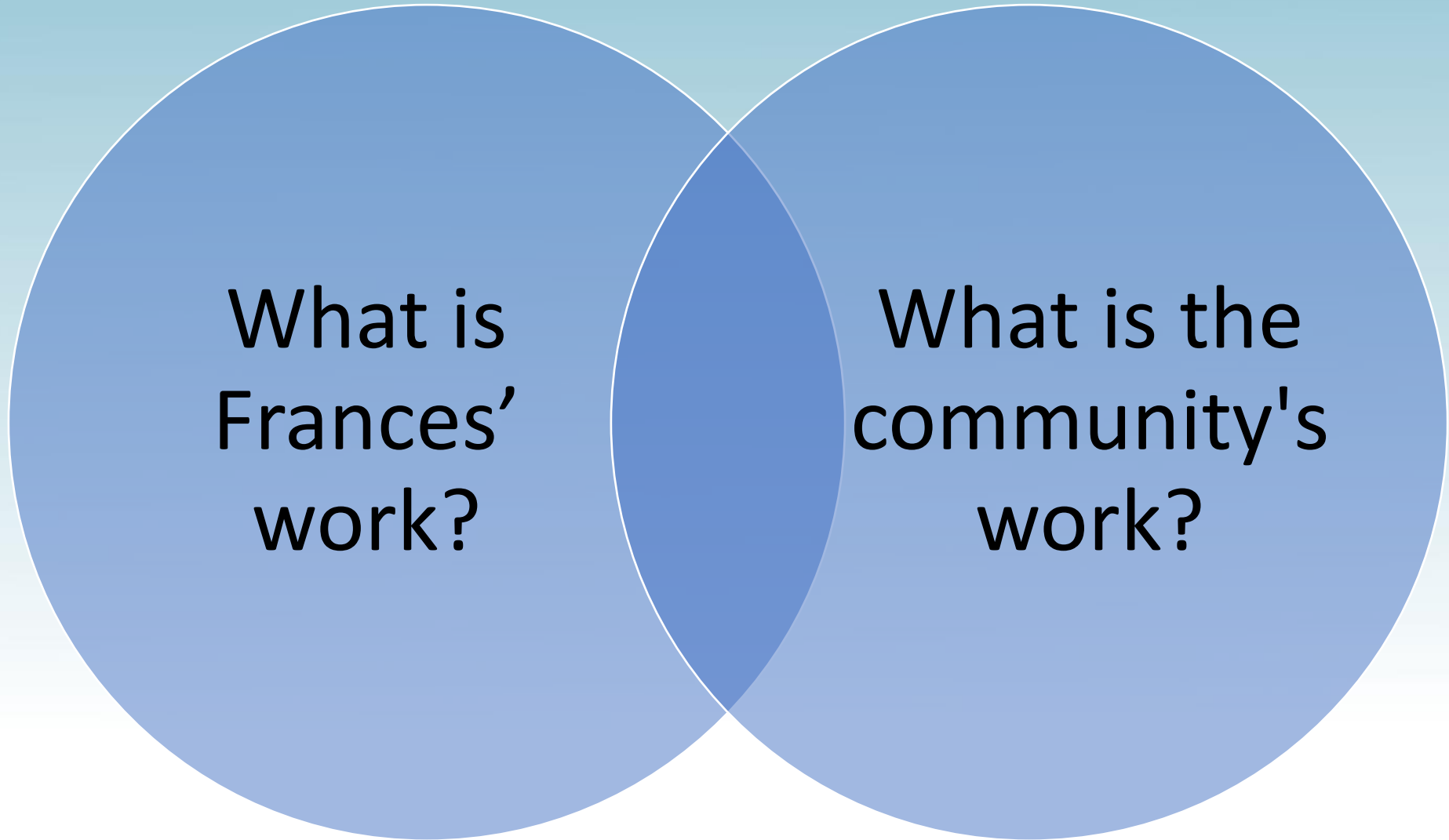
- Sister Emily is the director of a local non-profit that was started by the community 30 years ago. In addition to a very demanding job, because it is a public-facing role, she is called upon regularly to attend fund-raising events and dinners with potential donors. As a result, her presence in community these last few years has diminished and she has put little effort into maintaining her community relationships. Recently, in a conversation with the Subprioress, Sister Emily has expressed feeling hurt that she perceives sisters are making little effort to support her or this ministry and that she feels significantly isolated from the community.



Where might you see yourself in parts of Sister Emily's experience?

Case Scenario

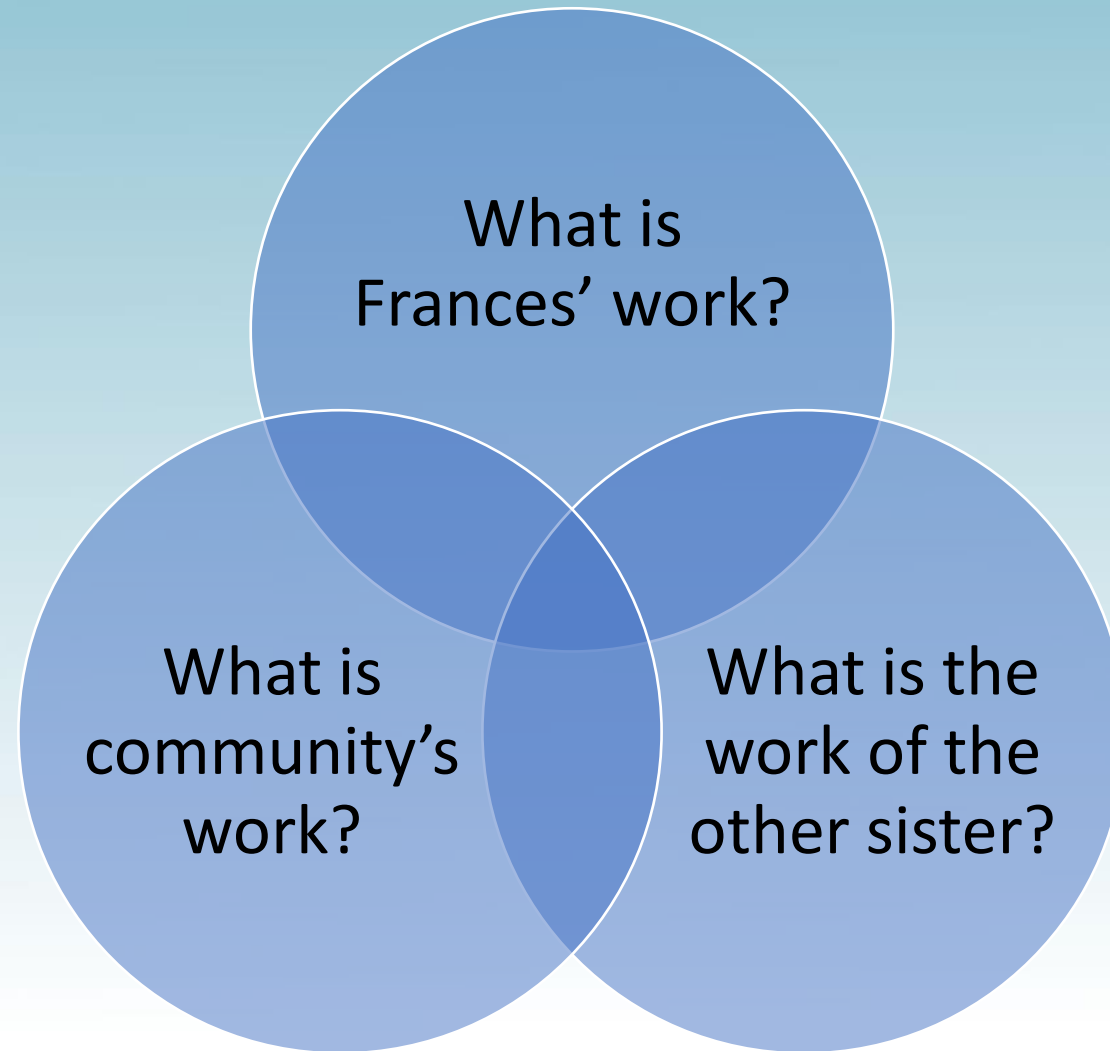
- Sister Frances was recently diagnosed with kidney cancer. Fortunately, the treatment plan is manageable and her prognosis is quite good, requiring surgery and only a brief time in recovery. Sister Frances feels conflicted about sharing this with the community; she struggles to ask for help and feels like this not worth sharing given that her prognosis is so positive. She is asked by the Prioress to put an announcement in the weekly email to the sisters but does not respond. Without direction from Sister Frances, the Prioress drafts and submits an announcement that Sister Frances will undergo surgery and will recover at the monastery health center before returning to her living group. Sister Frances receives calls and emails offering support but is not responsive, rather, she finds herself focused on the anger she feels towards the Prioress.



Where might you see yourself in parts of Sister Frances' experience?

Case Scenario

- Sister Heather just moved into a new living group. As part of her desire to move into deeper connection with the group, she felt she needed to let them know that she struggles with anxiety and is looking for a local counselor to help with her transition to her new ministry and living situation. The following day, she overhears one of the sisters sharing with a staff member at the parish about Sister Heather's desire to find a counselor. Sister Heather feels angry that her sister has betrayed her confidence; the other sister reacts defensively and said she was only trying to help Sister Heather find what she said she needed.



Where might you see yourself in parts of Sister Heather's experience?
Or the experience of the other sister? Or the experience of the living group?

QUESTIONS

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