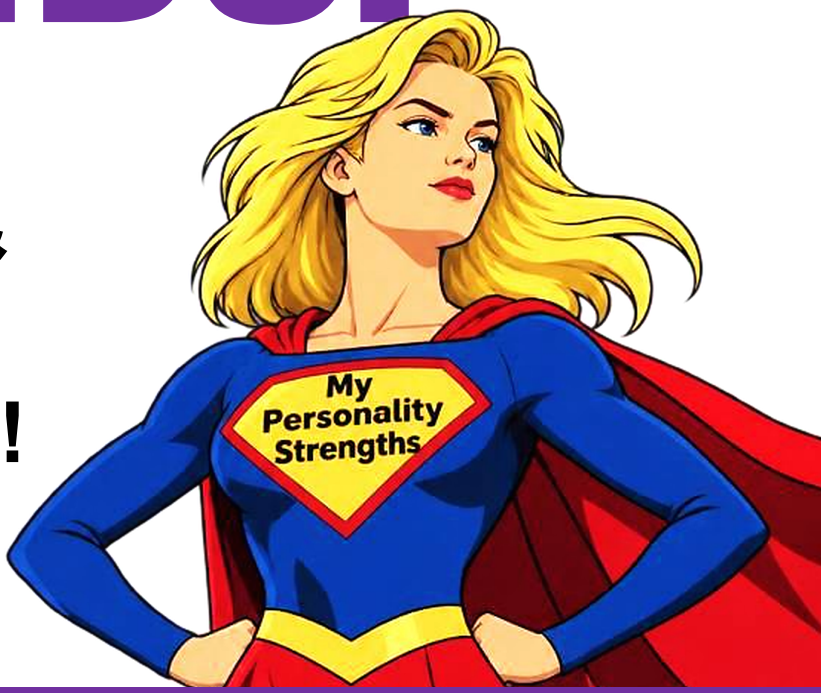
THRIVING KIDS!

Connection & Belonging To Learn & Grow!



CONNECTED Communication

for Families & Educators



CREATE & IDEAS



ACTION & FACTS



RELATE & FEEL



DETAILS & ORGANISED

with Danielle Stebbins PhD

HIGHPERFORMANCE SCHOOLS

Welcome!

A thriving child (or adult) feels a sense of connection and belonging which creates the safety and support needed to learn and grow to their full potential. To ensure everyone can 'thrive' we have to overcome two significant barriers to connection and belonging:

1. Recognise that showing genuine empathy and kindness to others requires more upfront effort (despite the positive benefit afterwards) than being indifferent, ignoring or diminishing others. To overcome this barrier, we need to make showing empathy to others easier!
2. Recognising that showing empathy and kindness to others is not a 'one size fits all' approach but rather there are 4 possible ways other people prefer communication and matching their preference is the key to strong connection.

The Thriving Kids CONNECTED Communication Toolkit is a practical resource for families and educators to address these issues by (i) creating a simple prompting system based on two color dots which reduces the effort and capacity needed to know how best to show empathy and kindness to another person, and (ii) provide an easy to access set of simple prompts and tips to enable children and adults to connect with people by 'matching' to the other person's communication preferences.

Importantly, when we can more *easily* show empathy and kindness matched to others' preferences, we no longer need to default to indifference when we're low on capacity. We will then also experience a much greater payoff for ourselves (enhanced relationships) and the other person (feeling connected and belonging) creating a win-win that positively transforms our mental health and our desire to learn and grow.

Dr Pete Stebbins, PhD

Contents

Thriving Kids & CONNECTED Communication ____ **3**

Meeting Needs for Connection & Belonging ____ **4**

Encouraging Openness to Learn & Grow ____ **5**

CONNECTED Communication In Families:

Step 1 Awareness ____ **7**

Step 2 Personal Profiles ____ **8**

Step 3 Combined Family Profile ____ **10**

Thriving Kids!

The CONNECTED Communication Toolkit for Families & Educators

With Danielle Stebbins PhD

Every parent wants their children to 'thrive' – to be the best they can be - to form meaningful friendships - to excel at learning and enjoy their school years - to achieve in sports, arts, science or wherever their creative interests and hobbies lead them – and most important of all, to feel a sense of belonging and connection within their family, among their peers and with significant mentors and teachers.

As a parent, I want my kids to 'thrive'. As a child psychologist and PhD researcher, I know that thriving occurs when children can successfully cope with the challenges of life – when they can resolve the issues they face in a way that maintains or enhances their sense of autonomy, relatedness and competence.

In my research, the children who thrived (coped well with challenging situations) did so because of their parents' communication and socialisation practices in the context of their own temperaments. Which is a fancy way to say kids thrive when their parents understand their differing personalities and then communicate in a way that is matched to their needs AND increases their sense of belonging and openness to learn and grow.

As such 'communication' is the key for Thriving Kids – communication that is (1) matched to their individual personalities and (2) meets their needs for connection and belonging AND (3) motivates them to learn and grow.

1. Matching Communication To Individual Personalities

Understanding a child's underlying personality is central to understanding their patterns of behaviour and helping them learn and grow. Whilst personality traits gradually evolve and develop over time most children have a clear set of defining personality characteristics by the time they commence school.

Ask any parent about what 'pushes the buttons' of stress in each of their children and they quickly highlight the differing triggers and communication preferences of each child.

A child's personality traits sit at the very heart of their temperament and character. However a child's behavioural responses are based not only on their personality but also on specific immediate contextual factors such as fatigue, irritability, nutrition, confusion, as well as any co-existing disabilities and/or diagnosable conditions such as anxiety, attention deficit disorders, depression, etc.

The key point to remember is that understanding and matching your communication to a child's personality will ALWAYS have a positive impact even when other diagnosable conditions or disabilities are contributing to behavioural difficulties. Further to this, failure to match communication to a child's underlying personality will reduce the effectiveness of any other support strategies.

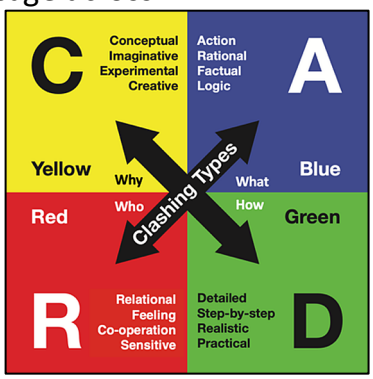
Communication: The Golden Rule vs The Platinum Rule

When we don't understand each other's personality and communication needs it can be a but *'hit and miss'* in getting our message across – this is because our attempts to communicate kindly and clearly are based on our own preferences.

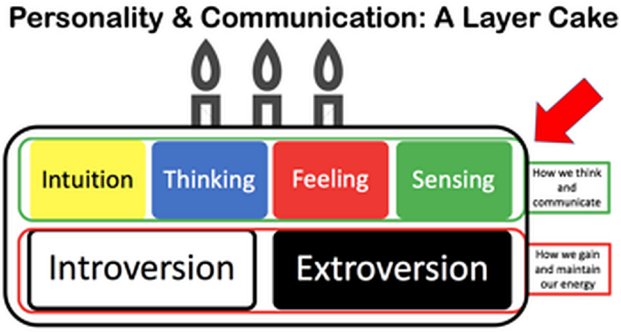
This is known as following the 'Golden Rule' where I'll communicate 'kindness' to you in the way I want you to communicate 'kindness' back to me. If we are very similar personalities this will usually be successful BUT if we are even a tiny bit (or a much larger bit) different in personalities then this may not work very well, or even have some unintended negative consequences. Afterall, for some people 'kindness' in communication is about politeness, pleasantries and longer conversations whilst for others 'kindness' in communication is about getting to the point quickly and stating your needs clearly and directly.



The key to success in EVERY communication interaction is not to follow The Golden Rule but instead follow The Platinum Rule which is about matching communication to the other person's personality preferences. Taking the example of 'kindness' above, this means I will choose how to communicate 'kindness', not based on what I prefer, but rather based on what *they* prefer. Thus we must be able to quickly ascertain what their underlying personality and communication needs are if we are to be effective in getting our message across.



The CARD model is simple and effective way to identify the underlying personality and communication needs of both yourself and others you interact with. The CARD model of communication and personality was originally derived from the work of Swiss Psychologist, Professor Carl Jung, who released a book about personality and communication in 1921 titled 'Psychological Types' which was based on nearly 20 years of clinical study into how people function.



Jung's model can be represented as a layer cake. On the bottom layer Jung identified two main attitude types, Extraversion and Introversion which influence how we maintain our emotional energy levels. When focusing on communicating effectively with others, it is the top layer that matters most.

On the top layer Jung identified four different communication styles: Sensing (communication focus on Detail – model color Green) , Intuition (communication emphasis Concept – model color Yellow), Thinking (communication emphasis Action – color Blue) and Feeling (communication emphasis Relational – color Red).

It is within this top layer of personality that our communication bias/preference lies. Jung states that everyone will have their own Dominant Functions (i.e., the majority of people have a 'top two' preferences for communication – where successful communication is easiest) and a lowest or inferior function (where communicating in this type is most difficult). To put it simply, we want to always aim to communicate to others in a way that matches one or more of their dominant (top two) preferences and always avoid communicating to others in their inferior (lowest) preference which leads to a 'clash' or mis-match.

Mis-matched communication can cause a lot of unnecessary tension for parents and their children – none of whom are typically identical in personality per se and all of whom have to live together and communicate about a diverse range of things – often at times when they are tired or stressed. Getting your family to both understand themselves and each other's preferences for communication according to the four CARD types provides an opportunity to better meet each other's needs and boost the quality of family life!

2. Meeting Needs for Connection and Belonging

Connection and Belonging are fundamental aspects of the human experience, shaping our relationships, identities, and sense of purpose in the world. While often used interchangeably, they represent distinct yet interrelated concepts that play a crucial role in our social and emotional well-being.

'Connection' is the bond that forms between individuals, such as family members or friends. Strong connections are built by developing a deep sense of understanding, empathy, and shared experiences. Connection is the invisible thread that links us to one another, fostering feelings of trust, and fulfilling some aspects of our needs for belonging.

'Belonging' refers to our innate desire to be accepted, loved and valued within a group or community (and ultimately within ourselves – self-love and self-acceptance). Our sense of 'Belonging' is a feeling we experience intrinsically – within ourselves. We cannot directly make someone 'belong' BUT we can increase the likelihood they will feel a sense of belonging by how we build a 'connected' relationship. For families, an important part of this is about simply saying to each other 'I love you' (without any other pre-requisites) and regularly showing connectedness in the form of hugs, pats on the back or other meaningful acts of family connection.

The other critical parts of encouraging connection and belonging in families are giving 'praise' and showing 'appreciation'. Praise and Appreciation that is Matched to another members' communication preferences is a powerful enabler of deeper connection in our families. You can see below the different approaches to Praise and Appreciation according to the CARD model. Does your praise and appreciation match to differing the needs of your family members to build connection and belonging?

Praise*

*(*Praise words should always reflect efforts not attributes (Growth Mindset Theory))*

CONCEPT	ACTION	RELATIONAL	DETAIL
That's awesome! That's amazing! That's fantastic!	Great job! Well done! Nice one!	That's so kind! That's so helpful! That's so nice!	That's perfect! That's excellent! That's brilliant!

Appreciation

CONCEPT	ACTION	RELATIONAL	DETAIL
I appreciate your energy and enthusiasm for… I appreciate your ideas, insights and perspective on…	I appreciate all your effort and hard work on… I appreciate your quick response to…	I appreciate YOU and all that you are doing for… I appreciate all your care thoughtfulness & consideration…	I appreciate your commitment and dedication to… I appreciate how well organised and prepared you are…

A Note on Bullying & Victimisation

It will come as no surprise for many people to learn that unrecognised personality clashes are the culprit behind many bullying and problematic relationship dynamics in peer groups of children. The 'perpetrators' of the bullying often have opposite personality strengths to the 'victims' and instead of seeing this as a neutral difference (neither good nor bad) and an innate characteristic (can't be changed) they devalue the other person and persecute them (criticise/punish them as if their innate personality is wrong and should be changed). This is a quite detailed and complex issue for schools to address. However, for us as parents, we can help our children (i) recognise peer group personality differences without the need to devalue those we don't like; and (ii) help our children recognise that the personality types of bullies will not change no matter how hard they try to appease them and avoiding, non-responding and reporting are better self-management pathways than appeasement.

3. Motivation to Learn and Grow

Learning and growth are essential for everyone. It's not just our children for whom learning and growth is important but also for ourselves as parents – especially as the world keeps changing. We too need to adapt to change - to understand new things and learn new skills. Learning new things is by its very nature difficult!

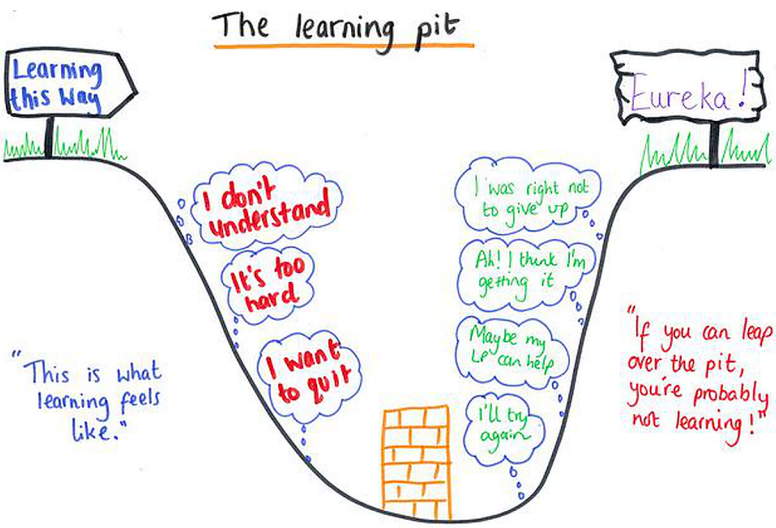
The pathway to learn new things is often referred to as 'The Learning Pit' based on the notion that it is not easy to learn new things and let go of old ideas that we previously held onto (see diagram).

When we're supporting family members to learn and grow, we need to take a Platinum Rule approach in three important areas:

A) Recognise differences in how we each experience our 'inner critic' when we're struggling.

B) Share affirmations of encouragement with others that match their personality and communication needs.

C) Create engaging learning experiences & give feedback that connects with their personality and communication needs.



The Learning Pit: Affirmations to Counter Your Inner Critic

When we are trying to learn something new that we find really difficult (i.e., something we're learning at school or work; a home-based tasks such as DIY repairs or cooking complex recipes; installing new software on your computer; or even managing some unexpected behavioural response from someone which seems out of character) it's easy to get frustrated when things don't work out.

When this happens our 'inner critic' reveals itself and we can engage in negative self-talk which can make things worse – damaging our self-esteem and self-worth. You can see in the table below some examples of differing types of inner critic negative self-talk that people may experience according to their CARD types.

Inner critic

CONCEPT	ACTION	RELATIONAL	DETAIL
I'm an idiot / I'm dumb! I'm stupid! I should be smarter!	I'm lazy! I suck / I'm hopeless! I should've done better!	I'm a loser / I don't fit it! I'm not good enough! I'm inadequate!	I'm a fraud! I'm a failure! I should've got it right!

To counter your inner critic, you need to use positive self-talk to affirm yourself and/or have another family member speak affirmingly to you in a way that is matched to your CARD preferences. See the table below for some examples of positive self-talk/ affirming statements and how it can vary across CARD types:

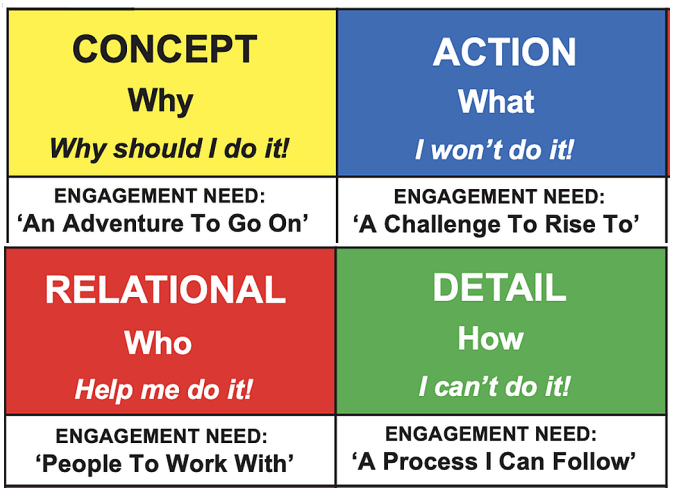
Affirmations when struggling

CONCEPT	ACTION	RELATIONAL	DETAIL
"No one is an instant genius! Everyone needs time to think things through."	"You're not a machine! Your best varies according to your energy at the time."	"I accept myself as I am. Not everyone will like me. Trust takes time to build."	"No one is perfect. We ALL make mistakes as part of improving."

Motivation To Learn: Engagement & Feedback

Openness to learning and growth begins by being engaged with the subject in focus. As you can see in the diagram, each CARD type has a different engagement need that must be addressed in order for them to become deeply invested in learning.

If engagement needs are not met then we will 'dis-engage' in the form of helplessness or oppositional responses which vary according to different CARD types (see diagram).



We also need to be curious, ask questions and be open to feedback. To avoid mis-matched feedback and unnecessary triggers we need to match our feedback approach to the other persons communication preferences. You can see in the table below the different approaches to feedback based on the CARD model. Is your feedback approach matched to the needs of your family members to encourage their learning and growth?

Approaches to feedback

CONCEPT	ACTION	RELATIONAL	DETAIL
Feedback about how I can contribute to 'big picture' objectives and goals.	Feedback that is timely, clear and direct about specific things I can improve.	Feedback that acknowledges my strengths, efforts, and areas I can improve.	Feedback that is accurate, detailed and useful to improve my own work.

CONNECTED Communication In Your Family: 3 Steps

Step 1
Awareness & Insight
Action: Conversation & CARD Game

Step 2
Profiles In Detail
Action: Self & Other CARD Profiles

Step 3
Combined Family Profile
Action: My Family CARD Map

Step 1: Awareness & Insight

Awareness: Family Conversation – 'Different Strokes for Different Folks'

Round 1 - Thankyou: Get everyone to discuss different ways they could say 'Thank You' to someone who had helped them if the other person was (a) really busy, (b) really caring, (c) really creative and (d) really clever. Write down answers on flip chart paper everyone can see according to the 4 x CARD types (see example).

Round 2 – Help Seeking: Get everyone to discuss different ways they could ask someone for help if the other person was (a) really busy, (b) really caring, (c) really creative and (d) really clever. Whiteboard answers according to the 4 x CARD types (see example).

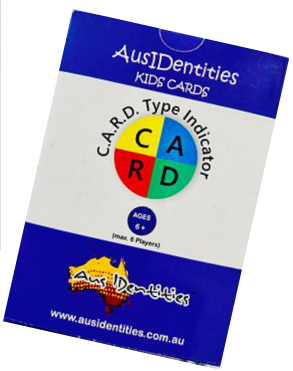
Giving Praise & Seeking Help (C.A.R.D)

CONCEPT – Yellow Help Question: "I'm keen to get your thoughts / ideas / insights on…" Praise: Such great insights / vision / solutions / ideas	**ACTION – Blue** Help Question: "Need to get some quick advice / direction on (issue)…" Praise: Great work / job
RELATIONAL – Red Help Question: "I'd be so grateful to get your help / advice on…" Praise: Thank you so much for helping me with this!	**DETAIL – Green** Help Question: "Can you please check / review / fine tune (specific issue) for me…" Praise: Excellent work / very thorough / very clever etc.

Insight: Kids CARDs - Family Game

1. Invite the family to sit around a tables Shuffle and spread the cards out face up and ask everyone to 'select any 5 cards that they feel best describe them' (2min). Avoid selecting cards on behalf of others nor making suggestion to each other.
2. Instruct players to now discard the 2 cards that *least* describe their personality – leaving them with their first-choice 3 cards. Ask players to raise their hand if they have 3 cards of the same colour. Advise them have finished the game.
3. Instruct all other players that are holding 3 cards with differing colours that they must now discard 1 more card that *least* represents them – leaving their top 2 cards only. And repeat again if two colours are different.
4. Explain how you have just done a quick exercise to reveal their communication preferences. Referring the diagram on the Back cover (or for young adults use the diagram on the inside of Front cover), discuss the importance of knowing your Top 2 preferences as well as your Lowest and invite each family member to share their preferences in more detail.

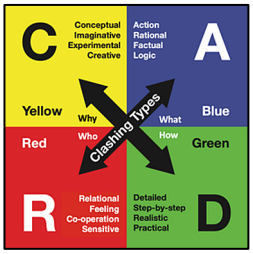












C.A.R.D. Profile: Self

Name:_____

Date:_____

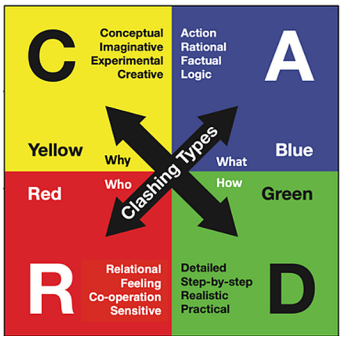
1. Who I Am…

Activity: Rank order your C.A.R.D profile from 1-4 (1 = most like me; 4 = least like me)

CONCEPT	ACTION	RELATIONAL	DETAIL
I like to focus on the 'big picture' – looking ahead, innovating and solving complex problems	I like to focus on the here and now – taking logical and realistic steps to get things done	I like to focus on making sure people feel engaged and work together effectively	I like to focus on the detail and the process – making sure things are done properly

2. Working with Others: Clashes and Comfort Zones

Activity: Based on your preferences above, who are you most likely to clash with and who are you most comfortable working with?



I'm most comfortable working with…
(usually rank #1 & #2 from Q1)

_____

I'm at risk of clashing with…
(usually rank #3 & #4 from Q1)

_____

3. Praise* that motivates me

*(*Praise words should always reflect efforts not attributes (Growth Mindset Theory))*

Activity: Tick the 'praise' types that resonate most with you (i.e., makes you feel good inside)…

CONCEPT	ACTION	RELATIONAL	DETAIL
That's awesome! ☐ That's amazing! That's fantastic!	Great job! ☐ Well done! Nice one!	That's so kind! ☐ That's so helpful! That's so nice!	That's perfect! ☐ That's excellent! That's brilliant!

Additional Notes: _____

4. Appreciation that connects with me

Activity: Tick the types of appreciation that resonate with you…

CONCEPT	ACTION	RELATIONAL	DETAIL
I appreciate your energy and enthusiasm for… ☐ I appreciate your ideas, insights & perspective on…	I appreciate all your effort and hard work on… ☐ I appreciate your quick response to…	I appreciate YOU and all that you are doing for… ☐ I appreciate all your care thoughtfulness & consideration…	I appreciate your commitment and dedication to… ☐ I appreciate how well organised & prepared you are…

Additional Notes: _____

5. Motivation to engage in learning

Activity: Tick the types of engagement that motivate you to learn…

CONCEPT	ACTION	RELATIONAL	DETAIL
I need an adventure to go on! ☐ *Learning tasks that are of personal interest.*	I need a challenge to rise to! ☐ *Learning tasks where I can be in control & pace myself.*	I need people to work with! ☐ *Learning tasks where I can. share & interact with others.*	I need a process I can follow! ☐ *Learning tasks with very clear steps I can follow.*

Additional Notes: _____

6. Positively embracing feedback

Activity: Tick the approaches to feedback you respond best to…

CONCEPT	ACTION	RELATIONAL	DETAIL
Feedback about how I can contribute to 'big picture' objectives and goals. ☐	Feedback that is timely, clear and direct about specific things I can improve. ☐	Feedback that acknowledges my strengths, efforts, and areas I can improve. ☐	Feedback that is accurate, detailed and useful to improve my own work. ☐

Additional Notes: _____

C.A.R.D. Profile: Other

Name: _____

Date: _____

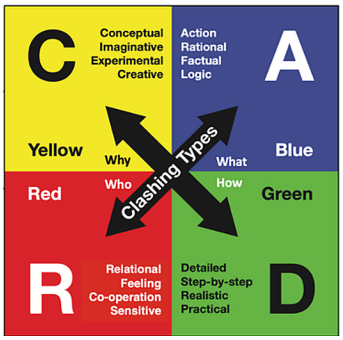
1. Who I Am…

Activity: Rank order their C.A.R.D profile from 1-4 (1 = most like them, 4 = least like them)

CONCEPT	ACTION	RELATIONAL	DETAIL
I like to focus on the 'big picture' – looking ahead, innovating and solving complex problems	I like to focus on the here and now – taking logical and realistic steps to get things done	I like to focus on making sure people feel engaged and work together effectively	I like to focus on the detail and the process – making sure things are done properly

2. Working with Others: Clashes and Comfort Zones

Activity: Based on their preferences above, who are they most likely to clash with and who are they most comfortable working with?



They are most comfortable working with…
(usually rank #1 & #2 from Q1)

_____

They are at risk of clashing with…
(usually rank #3 & #4 from Q1)

_____

3. Praise* that motivates them

*(*Praise words should always reflect efforts not attributes (Growth Mindset Theory))*

Activity: Tick the 'praise' types that resonate most with them (i.e., makes them feel good inside)…

CONCEPT	ACTION	RELATIONAL	DETAIL
That's awesome! That's amazing! That's fantastic! ☐	Great job! Well done! Nice one! ☐	That's so kind! That's so helpful! That's so nice! ☐	That's perfect! That's excellent! That's brilliant! ☐

Additional Notes:

4. Appreciation that connects with them

Activity: Tick the types of appreciation that resonate with them…

CONCEPT	ACTION	RELATIONAL	DETAIL
I appreciate your energy and enthusiasm for… I appreciate your ideas, insights & perspective on… ☐	I appreciate all your effort and hard work on… I appreciate your quick response to… ☐	I appreciate YOU and all that you are doing for… I appreciate all your care thoughtfulness & consideration… ☐	I appreciate your commitment and dedication to… I appreciate how well organised & prepared you are… ☐

Additional Notes: _____

5. Motivation to engage in learning

Activity: Tick the types of engagement that motivate them to learn…

CONCEPT	ACTION	RELATIONAL	DETAIL
I need an adventure to go on! *Learning tasks that are of personal interest.* ☐	I need a challenge to rise to! *Learning tasks where I can be in control & pace myself.* ☐	I need people to work with! *Learning tasks where I can. share & interact with others.* ☐	I need a process I can follow! *Learning tasks with very clear steps I can follow.* ☐

Additional Notes: _____

6. Positively embracing feedback

Activity: Tick the approaches to feedback they respond best to…

CONCEPT	ACTION	RELATIONAL	DETAIL
Feedback about how I can contribute to 'big picture' objectives and goals. ☐	Feedback that is timely, clear and direct about specific things I can improve. ☐	Feedback that acknowledges my strengths, efforts, and areas I can improve. ☐	Feedback that is accurate, detailed and useful to improve my own work. ☐

Additional Notes: _____

Step 3: Combined Family CARD Profile - Example

Name	Highest (Top 2)	Colour Dots	Engagement Needs	Praise	Appreciation	Feedback Approach
Me / Partner						
• **Me**	Yellow /Blue		• Have an adventure • Rise to the challenge	Awesome!	I appreciate your ideas, insights and perspectives on…	Feedback which is clear and specific and linked to achieving worthwhile big picture goals and objectives.
• **Partner**	Red / Green		• People to work with • A process to follow	So Kind!	I appreciate YOU and all that you are doing for…	Feedback that acknowledges my efforts and that is accurate and detailed about how I can personally improve.
Kids / Others						
• **Child 1**	Red / Yellow		• People to work with • Have an adventure	So Helpful!	I appreciate all your care, thoughtfulness and consideration…	Feedback that first acknowledges my strengths and efforts before identifying where I need to improve.
• **Child 2**	Blue / Red		• Rise to the challenge • People to work with	Great Work!	I appreciate all your effort and hard work on…	Feedback that is timely, clear and direct about specific things I need to improve.
• **Child 3**	Green / Red		• A process to follow • People to work with	That's Excellent!	I appreciate your commitment and dedication to…	Feedback that acknowledges my efforts and that is accurate and detailed about how I can personally improve.
• **Child 4**	Yellow / Red		• Have an adventure • People to work with	So Amazing!	I appreciate your energy and enthusiasm for…	Feedback that first acknowledges my strengths and efforts before identifying where I need to improve.
• **Child 5**	Blue / Red		• Rise to the challenge • People to work with	So Helpful!	I appreciate your quick response to…	Feedback that acknowledges my efforts and is clear and direct about specific things I need to improve.

Step 3: Combined Family CARD Profile: My Family

Name	Highest (Top 2)	Colour Dots	Engagement Needs	Praise	Appreciation	Feedback Approach
Me / Partner						
		◯ ◯				
		◯ ◯				
		◯ ◯				
		◯ ◯				
		◯ ◯				
		◯ ◯				
		◯ ◯				

CONNECTED Communication

What are your Top 2 strengths?



Your personality strengths are your superpowers!

YELLOW: CREATE & IDEAS



- Creativity & imagination
- New ideas & solutions
- Enjoys solving problems
- Likes brainstorming

"How much is YELLOW like me?"

BLUE: ACTION & FACTS



- Practical & hands on
- Gets started quickly
- Makes decisions fast
- Straight to the point

"How much is BLUE like me?"

RED: RELATE & FEEL



- Caring & sensitive
- Notices how people feel
- Includes & encourages
- Likes working with others

"How much is RED like me?"

GREEN: DETAILS & ORGANISED



- Follows steps carefully
- Keeps things organised
- Good at detailed work
- Likes predictable routine

"How much is GREEN like me?"