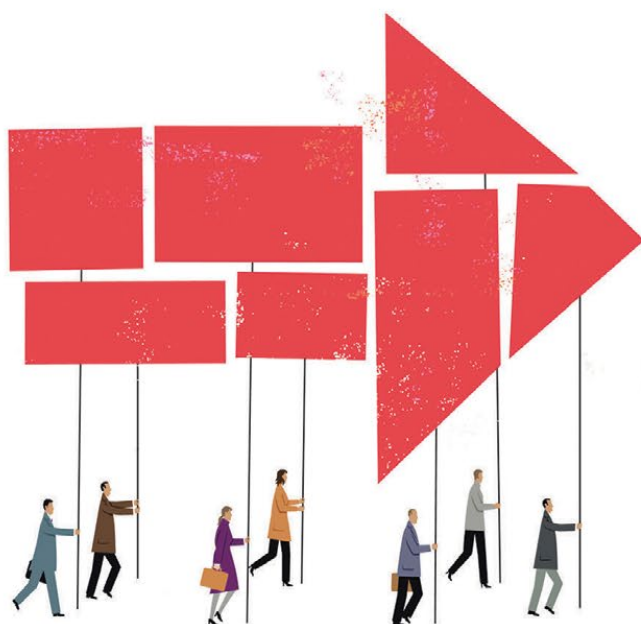


SCOTT VAUDREY, MD, MA



RENOVATE  
*your*  
RELATIONSHIPS

STUDY GUIDE

A PROVEN GUIDE TO SETTING  
BOUNDARIES AND BUILDING BRIDGES  
*with* THOSE WHO MATTER

**WELCOME TO THE**  
*RENOVATE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS*  
**STUDY GUIDE**  
*for Individuals & Groups*

You'll find the questions that follow are a helpful way for you to apply concepts from the book to the relationships in your actual life—in a way that equips you to narrow the gap between where things stand today and where you dream they could be in the future.

By design, each chapter includes questions that vary in their depth.

- **FOR INDIVIDUALS:** If you're working through the study on your own, I strongly encourage you to take your time, go after each question wholeheartedly, and answer with as much insight and honesty as you can. I would also encourage you to find at least one trusted friend to process your answers.
- **FOR GROUPS:** If you're working through the study in a group setting, the varying depth of the questions allows you to share as little or as much as feels appropriate for your setting. If you're in a group that is not yet in the habit of deep, intimate sharing, you can maximize your own growth by writing out your answers privately. Consider partnering up with a trusted friend to go through the book together. You'll gain much from their insights, and I bet you'll have wise insights to offer in return.

I'm thrilled that you're taking the concepts from *Renovate Your Relationships* to the next level. When we invest time and energy to narrow the gap between ourselves and the people around us, our relationships get better—and our lives get better, too.

Grace & peace,



Scott Vaudrey



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## CHAPTER 1 | PROBLEM

1. As you read the parable of “the porcupine’s dilemma” (page 5), think of a relational situation in your own life where you experience a similar back-and-forth between intimacy and distance. In a few sentences, describe that relationship and how you experienced tension like the porcupines felt.

- What did it feel like when you were too far away from that person?

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- What did it feel like when you were so close that the inevitable irritation of proximity left you desiring more space from that person.

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2. As you explore the Problem of Life model (pages 7–8) and think about the discomfort of “the Gap,” which relationships in your life come to mind? List 2–3 names below—and describe the basic struggle with each individual, from your perspective.

**Person 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

Struggles:

**Person 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

Struggles:

**Person 3:** \_\_\_\_\_

Struggles:

*Additional Notes:*



## CHAPTER 2 | SOLUTION

1. On page 12, we define two ingredients—ways we respond to gaps in our relationships:

- Accepting:** building a bridge toward another person
- Protecting:** setting a boundary

Which of these two ingredients comes most naturally for you? (*Check one.*)

2. Why do you think you're prone to using this ingredient? Where or when did you learn to lean into this ingredient more than the other?

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3. How has this tendency affected you relationally—both positively and negatively?

- Describe a relational situation where your strength in applying this ingredient helped the relationship improve and narrowed the gap.

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- Describe a relational situation (even if it involves the same person) where your tendency to apply this ingredient probably made things worse and widened the gap.

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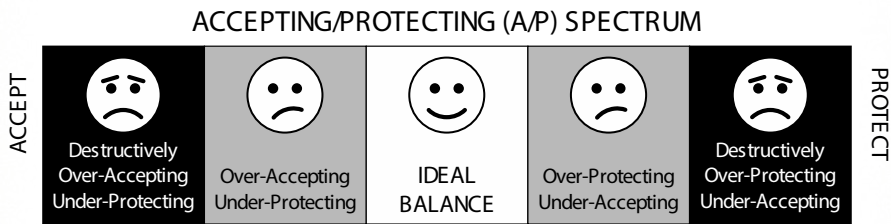
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4. Choose two relationships you'd like to improve by narrowing the gap—then examine the Accepting/Protecting Spectrum from page 15, shown below. Where on the spectrum would you plot yourself with each? Circle the face that most represents where you see yourself today in each relationship.

**Relationship #1:** \_\_\_\_\_



Why did you choose that face? Which characteristics under that face resonate most with you?

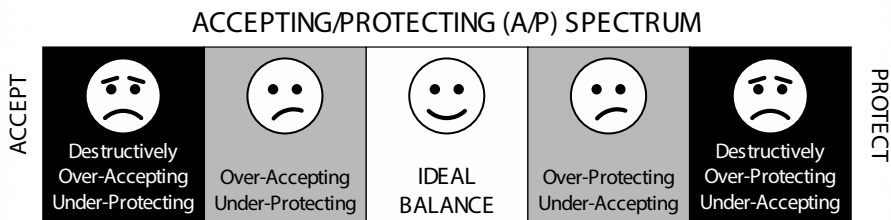
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**Relationship #2:** \_\_\_\_\_



Why did you choose that face? Which characteristics under that face resonate most with you?

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5. As you read about acceptors and protectors on pages 22–28, what insights jumped out at you? Can you identify a pattern? What did you learn about yourself and those two relationships?

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## CHAPTER 3 | ACCEPTING: *When Bridge Building Is the Ideal Strategy*

*Note: This chapter will be less taxing if you tend to be a natural Acceptor. (Acceptors, don't get too relaxed because the tables will soon turn in coming chapters!) Instead, use this chapter to encourage and offer some best practices to your Protector friends; to gain insight into how to use your natural "accepting" strength even more effectively; and to spot where you might be over-using it.*

1. Review the Value-Neutral Issues chart on page 30, then think about someone with whom you have recurring disagreements. How many of those disagreements are about value-neutral issues? Are you open to the possibility that those recurring disagreements are issues you need to learn how to manage—and not right/wrong arguments you need to win? How will you know the difference?

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For these next three questions, think of a current relational situation when primarily accepting would be the ideal response:

**Person:** \_\_\_\_\_

2. There are three tasks you need to accomplish *before* you respond to this person:

### BEFORE YOUR RESPONSE:

- Remember your own capacity to disappoint others.
- Give the other person the benefit of the doubt.
- Behave like there is hope for change.



## RENOVATE *your* RELATIONSHIPS STUDY GUIDE

Of these three, which will be the most difficult? Why?

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3. In that same situation, there are two tasks you need to accomplish during your response:

### **DURING YOUR RESPONSE:**

- Acknowledge your disappointment.
- Don't make a big deal about it.

Of these two, which will be the most difficult? Why?

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4. After you respond, there is only one task you need to accomplish:

When it comes to truly letting go of a resolved conflict, what do you find most challenging? Why?

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**AFTER YOU RESPOND:**

- Let it go.

5. Think of a time you successfully let it go after a conflict with someone. What helped you let it go? How can you apply that strategy over future relational disappointments?

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## CHAPTER 4 | PROTECTING: *When Boundary Setting Is the Ideal Strategy*

1. In general, how comfortable are you with protecting and setting boundaries? Why?

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2. Think of a time when you were over-accepting and failed to set a boundary. How did you feel during that season? How did that situation turn out?

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On page 57, we discuss what a boundary is *not*.

### WHAT A BOUNDARY IS NOT:

- A tool to coerce, manipulate, or change the other person
- A weapon to hurt the other person, seek justice, or exact revenge
- An excuse to abandon or escape from a relationship

3. Think of a time when you resorted to using a boundary for what a boundary is *not*. How did that situation turn out?

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On page 75, we unpack the Relational Crisis Sequence:

**RELATIONAL CRISIS SEQUENCE**

- Get safe.
- Get well.
- Make big decisions

4. Think of a time when you or someone you know was in a relational crisis, but failed to deploy the Relational Crisis Sequence. Which step(s) did they miss? How did that crisis turn out?

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## CHAPTER 5 | DON'T MAKE THINGS WORSE

In every challenging relationship, there are some things we can control and some things we cannot. As you consider relational situations that are currently disappointing you...

1. Which aspects of those situations do you have some control over?

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2. Which aspects do you have control over?

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In medicine, the physician's first task in healing is, "First, do no harm." The same can be said of relational healing: "First, don't make things worse." On page 86, we discuss how to avoid the Four A's of making things worse:

### THE FOUR A'S OF MAKING THINGS WORSE:

- **Aggression:** We get too big and controlling
- **Avoidance:** We get too small and passive
- **Abandonment:** We run away and withdraw
- **Anesthesia:** We numb out and ignore

3. We are all vulnerable to making things worse in challenging relational situations. When you're tempted to react in a way that makes matters worse, which of the Four A's are you most likely to use? Why?

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## RENOVATE *your* RELATIONSHIPS STUDY GUIDE

4. Think of a time when you made things worse in a relationship by resorting to one of those Four A's. What was the outcome? How did that feel?

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5. Think of time when you were tempted to make matters worse by resorting to that behavior, but you resisted. What was the outcome? How did that feel?

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When we're tempted to make matters worse by resorting to aggression, avoidance, abandonment, or anesthesia (the Four A's), fear is often at play.

6. What role does your fear play in how you respond to others?

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7. How can you better cope with that fear so it doesn't make things worse in your relationships?

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## CHAPTER 6 | DESIRES: *What Do I Really Want?*

1. When you assess your deepest desires, what do you really want out of life?

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2. Is it easy or difficult for you to identify and name what you really want—and to communicate what you really want to others? Why or why not?

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3. If your friends were to follow you around and observe what you do, say, spend money on, and get upset about, what would they think you really want out of life? Do your desires match what they would conclude about you? If not, how can you make adjustments so your actions are more likely to ring true to your deepest desires?

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## RENOVATE *your* RELATIONSHIPS STUDY GUIDE

4. Getting clear on what you really want in a relationship is the first to narrowing the gap between where things stand today and what you dream they could be in the future. Think of a disappointing relationship in your life. What do you really want in that relationship?

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*Additional Notes:*



## CHAPTER 7 | REALITY: *What's Really Going On?*

In this chapter, we take a look at how self-deception works. We're all prone to self-deception, but depending on our natural wiring and past experiences, each of us leans toward one of two styles:

1. Are you more prone to **stretching** self-deception (accuse and excuse) or **shrinking** self-deception (minimize and rationalize). Why?

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2. When are you more at risk for resorting to *stretching self-deception*? Describe a specific situation when you self-deceived by accusing the other person and excusing yourself.

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3. When are you more at risk for resorting to *shrinking self-deception*? Describe a situation when you self-deceived by minimizing the problem and rationalizing your weak response?

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RENOVATE *your* RELATIONSHIPS STUDY GUIDE

4. If you were able to stop (or greatly decrease) your self-deception, how would it impact your relationships?

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*Additional Notes:*

## CHAPTER 8 | BEFORE THE CONVERSATION

1. In chapters 8–10, *Renovate Your Relationships* gets specific about the process of setting a boundary. To apply the process to your real life, think of a specific relationship where you sense you need to add a little protecting by setting a boundary:

**Person:** \_\_\_\_\_

Setting boundaries always involves having a conversation. It would be unfair to the other person to make changes in how you relate without first discussing the issues at hand. And if caught off-guard by new, unspoken boundaries, the other person will understandably call foul—and you’ll have made matters worse.

In order to navigate a boundary-setting conversation with confidence and success, we must accomplish certain tasks *before*, *during*, and *after* the conversation. In chapter eight, we examine five tasks to accomplish *before* the conversation:

### TASKS TO ACCOMPLISH *BEFORE* THE CONVERSATION:

- Secure a safe, stable support system
- Remember what a boundary is *not*
- Name the troubling behavior and its consequence
- Decide on boundaries that are clear, kind, and courageous
- Anticipate reactions and risks

1. Which of these five *Before* tasks are you most confident you’ll get right? Why?

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2. Which of the five *Before* tasks will be hardest for you? What makes it so hard?

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## RENOVATE *your* RELATIONSHIPS STUDY GUIDE

3. Task 1 is to find a safe, stable support system. Who comprises your safe, stable support system? Are they aware that you view them in that category?

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4. If you don't have a safe, stable support system at this time, what are some steps you can take to build a group of people who can support you in this way?

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### **NEED A QUICK SUPPORT SYSTEM?**

Seek out a licensed therapist who is trained to help people navigate the kind of relational challenges you face. Not sure where to look? Go to [psychologytoday.com](http://psychologytoday.com) and use their "Find a Therapist" search engine to find a therapist near you.)

5. Think of your need for setting a boundary with the person you identified in question 1. What are some of the responses you can anticipate from this person when you set a boundary?

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6. When you think about that person's likely response, what negative emotions do you feel? How might your safe, stable support system help you overcome those emotions?

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## CHAPTER 9 | DURING THE CONVERSATION

Using the person you identified in Question 1 from the previous chapter as your practical example, let's get to the meat of boundary setting by examining three tasks we must accomplish *during* the conversation.

### TASKS TO ACCOMPLISH DURING THE CONVERSATION:

- Be kind
- Be courageous
- Be clear

1. Which of the characteristics in these three tasks are you most confident you'll get right—kind, courageous, or clear? Why?

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2. Which of the three characteristics will be the hardest? What makes it so hard?

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## RENOVATE *your* RELATIONSHIPS STUDY GUIDE

One of the steps within the “Be kind” task is this: “Own and validate what you can.”

3. In the situation you’re facing with the person you named in chapter 8, what part(s) can you own and validate?

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4. If you’re unable to see any contribution you’ve made to the relational problem, get curious. Do you have a blind spot? Do you have a fear of being wrong with this person? If so, who could you talk to, in order to be confident you’ve owned and validated everything that’s yours to own and validate?

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Using the chart on pages 187–188 as examples, begin crafting the clear phrases that will guide your boundary-setting conversation.

5. **Behavior:** What specific behavior causes the negative consequences you’re carrying for this person?

“When you...

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RENOVATE *your* RELATIONSHIPS STUDY GUIDE

6. **Consequences:** What consequences are you will no longer willing to carry?  
"...this happens:

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7. **Response:** What is the specific way you will respond the next time this behavior occurs?  
"The next time you [re-state behavior], I will...

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8. If you're comfortable, share your phrases with your group and get some feedback. Make adjustments to your phrases as needed until you're confident that all three phrases will help you be kind, courageous, and clear in your boundary-setting conversation.

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## CHAPTER 10 | AFTER THE CONVERSATION

It's easy to assume that once we've had the boundary-setting conversation, our work is done. Nope! There are four more tasks you'll need to pay attention to, in order for your boundaries to stick:

### TASKS TO ACCOMPLISH *AFTER* THE CONVERSATION:

- Stay connected to safe people
- Don't react to their reaction
- Empathize with, but don't assume ownership of, their feelings
- Don't be swayed by your own negative internal voices—stay the course

1. Don't be swayed by your own negative internal voices—stay the course Often after setting a boundary, we're at risk for second-guessing ourselves. When you think about setting a boundary, how will you likely second-guess yourself after the conversation?

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2. To minimize the risk of second-guessing yourself after the conversation, make a plan now to connect with your safe, stable support system. Who will you contact?

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## RENOVATE *your* RELATIONSHIPS STUDY GUIDE

3. What will it look like for you to “empathize with” but not “assume ownership” of the feelings or reactions of the other person? What phrases might you have ready to use during the conversation, so you can offer empathy for their feelings but stand firm in your decision to set a boundary?

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When your own negative, internal voice starts pestering you, it often uses outdated, untrue beliefs about yourself. Those untruths might sound something like this:

*You're so selfish! You're a terrible mother (or father/daughter/son)!*  
*You haven't thought this through! Give the person another chance!*

4. If a negative, internal voice starts to pester you, what is the underlying untruth it's trying to convince you to believe?

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5. What are some of the ways you can respond to the self-doubt and discomfort that comes in those times?

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## CHAPTER 11 | CASE STUDY: *Brad and Tony*

On page 200 of Part IV: From Start to Finish, you'll find the Renovate Your Relationships Pathway.

1. As you study the pathway in the context of the boundary-setting conversation you need to have, at which stage(s) of the pathway are you most likely to succeed? Why?

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2. Which stages along the pathway will be most difficult for you? Why?

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Read through the conversations between Brad and Tony in Chapter 11 and take note of any statements, phrases, or reactions that stand out to you.

3. As you read about Brand and Tony's journey, what part(s) stand out to you? Which parts relate to your own situation?

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RENOVATE *your* RELATIONSHIPS STUDY GUIDE

4. How have you experienced something similar in past attempts to set boundaries?

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5. Why is it necessary to provide “grace slip-ups” when setting boundaries?

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*Additional Notes:*

## CHAPTER 12 | CONCLUSION

In chapter 12, you'll find two final lessons for undergoing renovations in your relationships:

### TWO LESSONS FOR UNDERGOING RENOVATIONS

- Plan for unexpected challenges.
- The end result will be worth the effort, even when it's hard.

#### Plan for unexpected challenges.

1. As you think about the difficult relational situations you face, how can you prepare for challenges or setbacks?

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2. How equipped are you to plan for your next relational renovation—whether that entails building a bridge or setting a boundary? If you're not feeling fully prepared, what next steps will you take to prepare?

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## RENOVATE *your* RELATIONSHIPS STUDY GUIDE

**The end result will be worth the effort, even when it's hard.**

3. Take time to evaluate the key relationships in every area of your life—family, work, friends, and acquaintances. Which relationships need some renovating? List some names below, under the heading you feel they best fit:

### **Build a Bridge**

Add more accepting

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### **SET A BOUNDARY**

Add more protecting

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### **Key Take-aways**

4. What specific next steps you are taking away from *Renovate Your Relationships* and this discussion guide?

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5. Who will you discuss these next steps with, so they can guide and support you?

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6. How will using the concepts in *Renovate Your Relationships* narrow the gap between you and those most important to you? In what way will those concepts improve your relationships?

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