

The Power of Self-Government in Relationships

The whole point of teaching self government is relationships. Together let's examine the following and examine how Self-Government is used in all types of relationships --Relationships the TSG way.

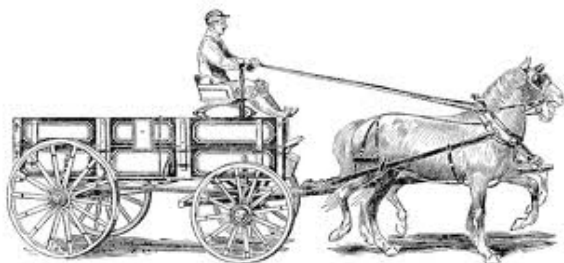
- How do I do relationships TSG style?
- How do I check up and assess these relationships?
- How do I show love in a healthy bonding way?
- How do I beat codependency?

Using Self-Government in Relationships helps us be more deliberate, loving, serving, united, and happy.

There are several things that will help anyone to realize the freedom that being self-governing in relationships brings. (1) Be Principle Centered, (2) Use the 4 Keys of Self-Government, especially Assessment, (3) Be Assertive, (4) Show Love, (5) Address CoDependency Head-On

(1) Be Principle Centered

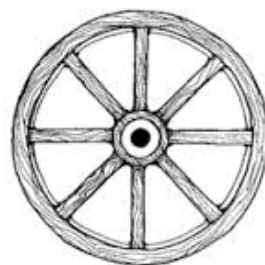
Imagine an old wooden wagon wheel, the hub at the center, the spokes going out from the hub, and wood and a metal band making the wheel. Obviously, such a wheel is critical to a wagon progressing forward.



The hub, or center of the wheel in TSG, are core values and morals, principles, beliefs and spirituality in the home. These are often called standards or foundational principles. This is the hub of each person's life, and the hub of each home. Everything in the home/person's life attaches to this. Without this properly made, there is no forward movement, even if everything else is in place.

Next, are the spokes. The spokes create a strong structure for the wheel to function. The spokes that come from the hub of that wagon wheel are the things that you teach: skills, systems, routines, how to respect and honor you and your role and each other. All of those kinds of things.

Last is the wheel, the wood circle and the metal band that goes on the outside of the spokes. This band is critical for protecting the wheel. It's the part you drive on. It's the part that gets the most abuse. This band is relationships. It has to be so strong. If anything in a relationship looks like it's getting weak or failing apart, that's when you mend the wheel. That's



where you add another strip of metal on the outside. You fortify it so you don't lose your teachings(spokes) and you don't lose your moral principles and beliefs (hub). By fortifying the relationship, the wheel remains in integrity and works well. If you do not stop and repair the wheel (relationship), the whole thing will fall apart. Consider for a moment what this could mean in your life.

Teaching self government is all about relationships even though, when we talked about teaching self government, it does involve learning skills and focusing on foundational principles and beliefs as well. It has to, or the relationships are not solidly built.

(2) What's in the HUB of 'TSG' Relationships?

Assertiveness through Describing

Teaching self government relationships are assertive, but what does it mean (in TSG) to be assertive? How is assertiveness used?

Being assertive means that we do not need to get emotional or try to manipulate each other with emotions. Instead, we just describe what's happening and then describe what should happen. In fact, there are lots of times to describe. **We describe, describe, describe because we don't define that person by that one behavior or that one moment.**

Personally have a Repentant Attitude

We do not attach each person's identity to their behavior or the choices that they make. Instead, it is with a repentant attitude that we approach each other, by describing the behavior we see. You allow yourself to forgive the other person and you allow them the opportunity to not make their mistakes or bad choices part of their identity. With a repentant attitude, you allow room for the other person to repent and to change. This is so vital. It is why your emotions should not play into a lot of these decisions--it allows for change.

Set the Proper Tone in your own heart, then the home, through Spirituality

Children at home are in training...being trained to be responsible, contributing adults. We need to make sure that the home environment is safe for them to learn in. Tone is part of creating that safety.

So what is tone? Tone is calmness. Tone is love. It is trust. It is understanding. It is mercy. It is acceptance. That is the tone --that feeling that needs to be in the home. It is spiritually based. So we have to spiritually invite that feeling into our own hearts and homes, deliberately taking the necessary action to have the right tone.

Patience

And patience, we need a lot of patience to. When a person learns self government, they are not going to be perfect overnight. Part of the tone is that we trust every moment. We trust that others have goodness, that they want to make the right choices. And then, we patiently and consistently direct them

and help them until they learn to govern themselves. (And we patiently and deliberately in our practicing our own self-government.)

(3) Use the Four Keys of Self-Government

The four keys of self government are keys to use to give any relationship the chance to be really great. (If you've been with TSG for a while you've probably heard these before, which is good. They are great to use in about any situation.) The four keys are:

1. Assessment, you need to assess your relationships or analyze your relationship.
2. Then make a plan for your relationship.
3. Next deliberately take action, you act deliberately.
4. Last, you communicate effectively.

All of these things have to happen for great relationships. AS you can see, assessment is where it all starts. So blow I will spend quite a bit of time discussing various types of assessment and how each is used to promote healthy , strong relationships.

Ongoing Assessments: Meetings

To do regular relationship assessments in a family setting through various regular meetings: couple's meetings, family meetings and mentor meetings. All three of these meeting structures provide the opportunity to do continued assessments and take deliberate action. (These meetings are described in detail in my book, *Parenting: House United*.)

Each week (or however often you choose to have these meetings on a regular basis) these meetings help with on-going assessments where you are analyzing over and over again:

- how you are doing as a family,
- what does each individual need,
- what do we need in our couple's relationship.

Ongoing Assessments - Counseling Sessions

Another effective assessment time is Counseling Sessions when you assess a problem that you found or preparing for a new situation that might arise. This is typically done as a one on one meeting with your child or your spouse. It is a new time to begin a plan. (To read more about Counseling Sessions refer to my book, *Parenting: A House United*.)

NOTE: When starting to teach self government in the home, before starting, it is advisable to have these kinds of assessments with your family, especially with children 12 and older. One by one each older child should be met with in a Counseling Session where the parent shares the vision for the family. Parents need to also share the skills the family will be learning and how these skills are going to benefit that child. Also in this session, the parents need to discuss any problems that the family is having and explain how they are going to really deliberately conquer that. Then enlist their help in mastering self-governance and conquering

any family problems that come up. These older children can be very helpful when they understand what is happening before the family starts to implement the self-government skills and systems.

Parent counseling sessions are so vital.

Ongoing Assessments - When Things Get 'Heated'

Assessments happen really well when things are getting heated if the observation is verbalized that something is not right. Such an observation may sound like this:

“Oh, do you feel that? Do you feel that feeling? We are not calm.”

“Children are contentious right now. We need to get ourselves ready to communicate better. We can't talk like this.”

That is a key assessment. That is a time where you say:

“We need to choose to be calm first, then we can talk about it.”

By stopping and making the observation out loud you are sending the message that,

“If we talk now, in the heat of the moment, our relationship will be damaged. We can not afford that. Let's get calm.”

With this type of an assessment the problem is already established. You've already decided you won't talk to anybody unless they are calm. That's the plan that you've already made. So when a situation arises, you just have to remind yourself of the plan and deliberately take action by saying:

“No, we are not going to talk. Instead, let's just get calm. Let's just focus on being calm first and then we will focus on the issue and what principle we need to use in order to solve this problem.”

Can the assessing happen all the time? Yes. In fact, you should be assessing just as much as you are while teaching your children.

Assessing is so vital.

Spring and Fall Assessments

While day to day assessments are so vital, parents (or anybody) would do well to have Spring and Fall assessments.

Why do I recommend Spring and Fall? Why not just every six months? (Which you could do and schedule for what fits your family.)

I find that when families are getting ready to transition in their routines --right before Spring and Fall begin, are the very best times to do these assessments.

Fall is a time of the year when people are ready to take on new projects. They are ready to do more in the Fall because they had a break in the Summer. Their structure has been a little chaotic. As Summer comes to a close, it is in the Fall that people are ready to get back to structure.

Historically in the fall school begins, and the harvest happens. All of the work than normally is done outdoors starts to come to a close. It's a really great time to assess relationships while preparing for this seasonal transition from outside projects to ones more inside.

How I do a Seasonal Assessment?

The basic assessment is in three parts:

1. I first consider each of my relationships with my children and others as appropriate to include in this assessment. What types of things we need to work on? What person may I need help with? How close is our bond?
2. As I think about each relationship and consider the above questions, I write the answers I come up with.
3. Then I deliberately make plans to strengthen those bonds and those relationships.

Some have asked for detail about this assessment. Below are some of the things I think through while assessing the relationship. (As you do this there are things that you will start to do each time that works for you and your family situation.)

- TIME: how do I spend my time? How much time am I spending with the children? do they need more?
- PROJECTS & CONCERNS: Assess projects and concerns related to each person or work relationship. Sometimes a relationship project might be: "Hey! We need to have weekly dates." Or a concern might be: "You know, they don't want him to talk to me. We need to have a project where we have more talk time."
- GOAL: What do I want my relationship with this person to be like? (it's okay to ask that every six months and to remind yourself of that.)
- PROBLEMS: What is the biggest problem in our relationship? (that could change from time to time.) What can I fix? What do I know how to fix right now? (I might need help.) When am I going to talk to them about these things?
- CONNECTION: Do we look in each other's eyes? How often do we speak on a deep level?

Levels of Communication

As I am assessing, I also look at the different levels of communication that exist in the relationship. Here's a description of levels of communication that may be helpful:

1. The first level is **pleasantries**. "Hey, how was your day?" "Do you have any homework?" That's pleasantries. "Can you help me with dinner?"
2. Then there's the **facts**. "Oh, I'm really tired today." "I haven't sleep very well this night." "I'm so hungry, what's for dinner?" Those are the facts.
3. Then there's how I **feel**. "I feel so hurt by what you said." "I feel like I'm doing this all alone."

feeling is about sharing more vulnerable things.

4. Then there's **need**. "I need" "I need you to do the dishes." It could be. "I need to talk to you right now." Or when you have a communication with somebody on a deep level, maybe you are talking about things that they really need. Now, those communications about what they need should be happening regularly in the mentor meetings with your children, in your couple's meetings where you talk about each other's needs, and in the family meeting where together you discuss your family's needs. You see, so those are the opportunities to regularly communicate about the needs that exist in your families relationships. It's so important to have.

Other Assessment questions:

Other questions you might ask are:

- When can we schedule our regular check-up on our relationship?
- It's the time we are having at mentor meeting still good. But do we need to switch to another time?" (Have you been having mentor meetings?)

Harder Assessment Topics

There might be other things you need to assess. You might need to ask yourself hard questions:

- Do you still feel love for this person? If not, How can I love this person more?
- What praise should I be giving them that I'm not giving them?

Assessment in Relationships --Summarized

Assessments are so vital to teaching self government style relationships. When we assess, we can then be deliberate. We talk about things before we do them. This brings us comfort, no or low anxiety because of our willingness to deliberately examine what is going on and then, deliberately communicate with each other. By assessing our relationships and deliberately taking action, we also give ourselves permission to become more than we have been, to love more and to serve more.

(4) Show Love in Healthy Ways

Love Languages

Strong relationships need us to show love in healthy, bonding ways. Everyone shows love differently. *The 5 Love Languages* book is a great resource that describes the 5 different ways people seem to feel loved the best. These love languages are: touch, word, gifts, service, and quality time. It's great to have the love languages in mind as you are seeking to show love in various relationships. What works for one person may not work as well for the next. Everyone will have a preferred way to communicate love (and to recognize love).

Boundaries

Even in all of these methods of showing love, some people may cross others boundaries too often, they may 'over do it'. Others may stay too aloof, which ends up forcing others to assume things which in the end might not be correct.

How to Address Love Languages and Boundaries

Anything healthy needs to be done deliberately. Because we are all so different in how we express or want to receive love, and our boundaries all vary from one person to another, planning how you are going to bond with people can save lots of time and headache. If you plan ahead you can make sure everyone is comfortable, and that the message you want to send (of love) is understood (love languages and boundaries can all be planned for in advance).

When you plan in advance with your spouse and children, they'll know, "This is the way our family are going to bond together." and, "This is not how our families are going to bond together."

There may have been situations in the past you were not comfortable with. No problem. Change the 'rules'. Plan how you are going to and how you are NOT going to bond. Discuss it with your loved ones. Be clear. You can say,

"This is my love language. I like to spend quality time, so if I'm wearing you out, if I'm taking too much of your time just disagree appropriately with me and let me know. Because I do not want to bother you. I really do want to show you love in the way you understand."

Just understanding each other's love languages can make a big difference in healthy bonding with each other. If you are deliberate and make a plan it will help so much.

Watch out for Entitlement and Enabling

Be careful about creating situations of entitlement or enabling. Giving gifts to show love can create entitlement and materialism. Be careful on that. If somebody's love language is gifts, the maybe you give sweet gestures, but not like costly gifts all the time because it can lead to entitlement.

If you serve somebody too much, you may enable them or they may not learn the adult skills that they need. When I tell people that all my children start doing their laundry, fold it and put it away when they were 3 years old, people say, "Woah!" They probably think that I'm rather extreme. I'm not. I want confident kids and learning an adult skill creates that confidence. I don't want anyone to enable them to make them think that they can't learn things on their own. Serving someone too much can be a problem even though that's one of the love languages.

Praise for Things Worthy of Praise

Praising or words of affirmation is one of the other love languages. If you praise unnecessarily, meaning you praise things that aren't worthy of praise or someone didn't actually do, you could be teaching them lying and dishonesty. That can ruin relationships for them in the future. They can also get a false

understanding of what kind of things are praise worthy. So when we praise, we should praise about things that deserve praise.

Many parents tell their children: “Oh, you’re a genius. You’re so amazing. You’re so…” and build and build and build their child up, yet don’t really praising actual work that happens. The child could become confused because praise of the actual actions doesn’t happen. The parent is just expressing hope in in the child, and trying to be motivating. If motivation is needed, then instruct and motivate, but praise for things that truly deserve praise. It’s how children learn to strive for excellence.

The point is to apply the principle of praise correctly. And that's it with every principle. The principles are true and when applied honestly they work.

Is Touching Tricky?

Touching, as a love language can be tricky. Some people can feel uncomfortable if they are touched too much. So, watch out for people’s comfort levels, as touching can also be overdone.

Quality Time Can Consume if You’re Not Careful

The last love language is the quality time. Like I mentioned before, requiring too much time from others can cause problems. We all need a little bit of space. Awareness of boundaries, even time boundaries are important.

Love is Selfless

No matter the preferred love language, we have to ask ourselves, “What does this other person need from me?” not just what I need from them.

So often we show love from a selfish perspective. We give love the way we would like love to be given to us. And we might not have taken into consideration the way others want love to be given to them. Oftentimes, deliberately talking about the ways that you want to show love in a family is very instructive and helps overcome selfishness when expressing love.

Simply seeking to understand others in all of those everyday moments is so important. Just talking with the children, or your spouse, and having those regular assessment times that I mentioned earlier.

Those things create bonds.

Correcting

You know, there’s another one that we usually mention that creates strong bonds. And it’s usually surprising to people but correcting children can be very bonding and loving. Correcting children when something goes wrong actually bonds you more tightly if it is done with the right tone. And if pre-teaching has been done prior to. The act of pre-teaching in role playing and in the skills and in the way you are going to crack behaviors. That deliberate action is bonding in nature. (Read more about pre-teaching and correcting in *Parenting: A House United*.)

Some children might want to repel from that type of bonding because they know that in the end, they

might be held accountable to it and they try to manipulate out of it. But in the end, that action of practicing tone and correction together is bonding. Just working on self government is bonding.

After a correction has happened you should be more in love with each other. You should feel more understood, more respectful to each other. You should be more connected. And I know that this is what everybody is trying for and they think: "Oh, I'm not there yet."

That's okay. Keep trying. The ideal, no matter what, is that the bond is constant. The love is strong and solid.

This bonding through loving correction is a beautiful thing. My 17 year old son behaves like a man. But occasionally, I still have to correct him. And when I do he looks at me and says, "Okay! If that's your decision mom, if that's what you think then I'll honor that." And in the end, we are more tightly bonded. He is not frustrated and angry. He is respectful and accepting. That is what happens when you have created a deep bond with your child. It really is possible. (If your child is already 17 and you are not there yet, do not worry. I didn't fully strengthen my bond with my mother until probably I was already married, probably after I already had a child. Those bonds are continually growing and strengthening. It's never too late to start working on those.)

(5) Address Codependency Head -On

Codependent people want everybody else to do stuff for them. Children can be codependent. Spouses can be codependent. Parents can be codependent on their children if the parents are really permissive and allow the child to do whatever it wants. When this happens, the parents have made themselves codependent on children for the structure of the home.

There are different ways to look at codependency. Codependent people are usually that way because someone babied them too much or someone controlled them too much.

If you remember the article about parenting styles, you'll recall that people often feel they have little choice --all around us, in the media, in the popular culture we see two choices --bully parenting and permissive parenting. Parents often try to stay somewhere between bullying and being permissive. They want to be somewhere in the middle and they go back and forth, back and forth because they are not exactly sure where the right place is.

Yet, there is this lovely place where you nurture, understand, love, teach skills and direct lovingly. It is the place of traditional strict parenting which transcends bouncing between bullying and modern progressive parenting. That additional strict parenting is in a different place and it's principle based. You are not going to baby someone, but you will understand them. You will be consistent with them, but you will not be aggressive or controlling.

How to Stop Creating Co-dependency

What makes the difference between creating codependency and healthy relationships? The difference

is principles.

Are you trying to manage a situation or are you following principles? If you are following principles, you are a traditional strict parent and you do not have to vacillate back and forth between trying to be aggressive and then trying to be soft.

Co-dependent people are usually people who have been in the worst types of situations. Some people, when they are born, have more codependent tendencies. They are people who like to be cared for a little bit more and who feel a little bit more insecure about their own ability to problem solve.

Even though some people are born that way, a little bit more than others, generally those things have been modified or intensified based on the environment in which that person has been raised in.

So, when raising children be sure to correct things calmly, not controllingly. (Even though I know that's not a word.) Be a safe person to talk to.

Teach Your Children to Do Hard Things and Step Outside of Comfort Zones

Teach your children to do hard things. Do hard family things together. Take on projects as a family, things that require bravery.

Plan a family program where you are going to sing or do something. Even if you are not the greatest musical people or be in a play or play musical instruments and make a family band and the list goes on.

Build a bridge in the canyon by your house. Take family things and make it in a community park. I mean, there are so many things you can do with your family as a project that are hard things, that show them that they have what it takes to do hard things. I think that is the big thing, it is that you have created a situation where children are not codependent or spouses are codependent. You've got to do hard things. You've got to step outside of your comfort zone.

Codependent people try to stay in a comfort zone. That's why they want other people to take their responsibilities for their actions. If you are going to beat that, you have to step outside your comfort zone. It is so important.

Move from Co-Dependency to Healthy Relationships

If you are suffering with codependency, here's a couple of things I would do.

Aggression is Not the Answer

Do not think of yourself as the victim. People who are victims often end up being aggressive. Often, people who believe they are oppressed, that somebody else controls them, or that they are a victim, often feel the cure is to turn aggressive. But aggressiveness is not the answer for a codependent person.

Assertiveness, Bravery, and Stepping out of Comfort Zones

Following principles and being brave and taking brave steps out of your comfort zone, not in aggressive ways, but in purposeful ways is the answer. Being calmly assertive is the answer.

If somebody is 'walking all over you' in a relationship, you calmly and assertively communicate with that person that there's no need to be aggressive. You might even just describe. You might say:

"Right now, you are talking to me in a way that doesn't show respect for me," or, "right now your voice tone is really condescending. You are belittling me."

You can be completely calm when you say those things. You don't need to play into another's aggression --or be aggressive yourself. You don't have to be controlled. But you also do not want to be the controller. Switching to being the controller doesn't help you at all.

Make Goals, be Accountable

Making goals is going to be important. So make goals for how you are going to communicate with people. Then try some of these new ways. Have someone to account to.

Why account to someone else? Because codependent people process their life experience differently than people who are not codependent. They look at situations in a different way, in a helpless way, where they have to pacify the other person. If you are going to start processing differently, you need someone to talk to, because someone else is going to process the situation differently and share the way they see what is going on. It will open your eyes to new ways of thinking and it will help you to change your processing style.

Again, be careful not to become aggressive. That is probably the number 1 thing that people do when they are trying to conquer their own codependency. They just become aggressive. Don't do that.

Do Hard Things

Do hard things on a regular basis, it will help you. (see above about teaching children to do hard things).

Assess Yourself Regularly

So here we are back full circle, returning again to the topic of how to use TSG in relationships. It is always the same, use the 4 Keys of Self Government on yourself. Do your own self assessment every Spring and Fall. Look at you and what you need to be healthier in relationships, then make a deliberate plan, share it with the person you talk to, and then follow your plan.

In fact, add in journaling if you do not journal already. Journaling is one of the best ways to do ongoing self assessments. This way you can go back to previous writings about your: goals, progress, observations, relationship assessments, personal assessments, your deliberate plans, and so on. You'll be able to see progress your efforts are making and pinpoint areas to improve on that you hadn't noticed before. This will keep you on track to healthy relationships-- the TSG style of relationships --principle based, deliberate and bonded in love.

Discussion Questions

- What are some of the insights that stand out to you --things that will help you.
- What are the themes that run through the article? What seems to be the “hub” of ‘doing relationships the TSG way’
- Do seasonal assessments seem doable? Would they work for you? Why or why not.
- What did “assertive” mean to you --before you read this article or found TSG? Is your view of assertiveness changing? How? What is the most helpful in being assertive in healthy ways?
- Considering the wheel again, is there some part of the ‘wheel’ that you get ‘stuck in’ or fixated upon and lose track of the big picture? How do you stay balanced in your focus (have you stayed balanced)? or When you have been balanced in your focus, what has allowed you to be balanced?--have the whole ‘wheel’ in mind)?
- What did a “repentant attitude” bring to mind when you read the title? Did the explanation surprise you? How? Do you agree with who should have the repentant attitude (first)?
- Do you agree with the power of love languages? Do you know your kids love languages? If you are familiar with love languages and use them, what have you done to help remember them and feel good when using a love language that feels ‘foreign’ to your love language?
- Is codependency all it has been cracked up to be?
- Do you agree with the article’s description of how to handle codependency?
- If you are dealing with codependency, how can you share with another to stay on track to overcoming codependency? What would you share?
- What ‘hard things’ have you tried as a family?

Challenges

- Draw a wagon wheel and identify the parts of it in your key relationships.
 - What is your relationship hub made of? Is it the same for everyone or does it vary depending on the situation?
 - What are the spokes? Are they the same for everyone?
 - How is the rim made? IS it the same quality for each ‘relationship wheel’?
 - What discrepancies do you see? What do you want to change (if anything)?
- Schedule personal time to assess your key relationships, and then make a doable plan to improve the relationships you have.
- Celebrate your relationship successes

- If you are working through codependency issues, find someone you can talk to to 'process' how you 'do relationships'.
- Start journaling your assessments.
- Do an assessment and set at least one deliberate goal that will improve at least one of your relationships over the next month.

The WHEEL: (see Challenges)

