

Practicing Affirmation

Practicing Affirmation: Chapter Two

1. On p. 37, Crabtree refers to affirmation as the misplaced key to all relationships. “Not the most important aspect of a relationship”, nonetheless something that will cause breakdown in marriages & parenting if we or our spouses or children fail to live without. How have you seen this to be true, either for you or your spouse, for your children, or for yourself with your own parents?
2. “Part of God’s mercy to us when we refresh others is the boomerang effect he has designed into the universe: ‘He who refreshes others will himself be refreshed’ (Proverbs 11:25, p.42)” Read the first paragraph on p. 41 and Matthew 10:42. When have you experienced the fruit of mercy & refreshment from affirming others?
3. It seems easier to practice affirmation early in relationships, and it can get harder later. . . . Generally, new relationships are still predominately affirming, but as relationships endure the years, they also endure a lot of correction. More specifically, affirmation didn’t keep up. Not enough affirmation was dished out compared with all the other messages in the relationship. A fire not stoked goes out. A refrigerator unplugged rots the eggs. . . . A garden not tended erupts with weeds, not vegetables. Affirmation is the fire-stoking, refrigerator- electrifying, garden-tending side of relationships” (p.44). Have you seen this to be true? How so?
4. What does Crabtree say is “the importance of proportionality?” (see p. 44)
5. Describe a relationship in which you experienced so much affirmation that it freed you to hear/endure criticism, correction or even neglect.
6. Crabtree is careful to say that “affirmation does not entirely remove the place of correction” (p.46). . . . However: “Affirmations tend to evaporate over time. Meanwhile, corrections keep piling up (outnumbering) affirmations, and by doing so, corrections sabotage or undercut the value of affirmations. . . . “If not counterbalanced by an overwhelming gang of affirmations, they take over the flavor of the relationship” (pp. 45-46). He says, “Some will choke even at the thought of hair in their food; similarly, people may emotionally choke at the thought of any more correction coming from us.” If you’re willing to share, describe a relationship where you may have been guilty of this yourself.

7. At the bottom of page 46, we read: "According to one perspective, "It takes more than one positive to overcome a negative. You hurt my feelings, so do something nice for me. Are we okay? Not usually yet. The bean counters are telling us that a healthy state in a system actually requires 3-5 positive events to overcome one negative event." He later goes on to argue on p. 47 that the reasons for this is because "corrections weigh more than affirmations." Do you agree with this? What has been your personal experience?
8. Crabtree also makes the distinction that: "It won't do to offer what we assume is refreshment, if it doesn't really refresh" (p.49). Thoughts?
9. He also states that, "An overabundance of correction will result not only in a person's tuning out your legitimate corrections, but tuning you out almost altogether." This is easy to see in others, but sometimes hard to believe for ourselves that others would tune *us* out. He says that some signs this is happening are: "light heartedness has gone out of the relationship" (p. 50) and "withdrawal" (p. 51). Think of a relationship where this could happen or has happened. How does that make you feel? What would keep you from turning up the affirmation?
10. On pp.52-53, the author talks about withdraws & deposits and three stages to a relationship: "First, not accepting specific input; then, not accepting your input at all; and third, opposition to any position you take on nearly any subject. While he gives hope for every relationship- even those that have gone to stage 3- I couldn't help but see some resistance in my heart to be the one to take the first step. Can anyone relate? How can we trust God with these feelings of resistance?
11. Crabtree gives a list of practical suggestions to "reverse the trend of an overly corrective relationship" (p. 53). Any of these stand out & why?
12. On pp. 57-58, Crabtree tells a story about his daughter, with whom he had lost a hearing. When he compliments her for organization & hugging her mom, he ties his compliment to an attribute of God. Then he says: "Is it okay to bring God into your compliments? If you don't think so, you're going to have a hard time with this book. Bringing God into compliments is the best way to give them. I do not mean bringing him in as an afterthought, but basing your compliments and affirmations on his character." What do you think about this?
13. He goes on to give an example where as a teacher, he tells a boy, "I like a man who's a thinker!" showing that situations are nuanced and require wisdom & appropriateness. How can we take Crabtree's principle of God-centered affirmation and nuance it for different situations in our lives?