



## When Things Go Wrong

Iowa Association of Community Providers Webinar

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Susan Smith

[ssmith7@dhs.state.ia.us](mailto:ssmith7@dhs.state.ia.us)

Woodward Resource Center

Iowa's Technical Assistance and Behavior Supports

# 4 Prong Approach

1. Safety
2. Validate
3. Reassure
4. Nudge toward using a skill

# Safety

- Peers
- Individual
  - Know the person, potential behaviors
    - Running, aggression, ingesting, etc.
  - Position yourself accordingly.
- Staff
  - Stay vigilant.
  - Know the person/their Behavior Support Plan.
  - Stay Calm.
  - Maintain calm body stance.
  - Maintain non threatening voice tone.
  - Often-minimize sensory input.

# What Validation IS:

- Communicating to the person that:
  - You are listening / paying attention to
  - You understand, or are trying to understand what he/she is feeling
  - Comes BEFORE “Problem Solving”

# Validation

- It is all about letting them know you care about their mental state and that it is understandable within the context,
- what is happening now AND everything they have been through in life that may influence how they react to things.
- “Anyone who has been in your shoes may feel the same.”

# Validation

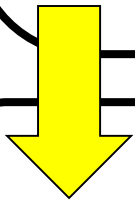
- If you are REALLY good at validating, a co-worker wouldn't know if you agree or disagree with the person.
- Validation can be used throughout the day and is NOT limited to when things are going wrong.

# 3 Steps in Validating Comfortable Emotions

## #1 Gather information

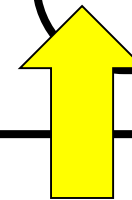


- Listen to what the person is saying
- Watch for nonvocal communication
- Pay attention to what is going on in the environment
- Consider the person's sensitivities (biology, past experiences)



## #2

“That must be a funny television show.”



## #3 Validate

“You’re  
laughing”

# Validation for Uncomfortable Emotions

- Identifying the discrepancy
- With little known information
- Hypersensitive to  
Rejection/Abandonment



# 3 Steps in Validating

## Identifying the Discrepancy

### #1 Gather information



- Listen to what the person is saying
- Watch for nonvocal communication
- Pay attention to what is going on in the environment
- Consider the person's sensitivities (biology, past experiences)



### #3 Validate

“You’re disappointed.”

### #2 *(Discrepancy)*

“You wanted to go on the trip.  
Instead, you’re not going to be able to.”

# 3 Steps in Validating

## Identifying the Discrepancy

### #1 Gather information



- Listen to what the person is saying
- Watch for nonvocal communication
- Pay attention to what is going on in the environment
- Consider the person's sensitivities (biology, past experiences)



### #3 Validate

**“You’re  
frustrated.”**

### #2 *(Discrepancy)*

**“You thought he should only eat his own food.  
Instead, he’s been eating yours, too.”**

# 3 Steps in Validating With Little Known Information

**#1 Gather information**



??



**#2**

**#3 Validate**

*“You’re super stressed/overwhelmed/angry/etc!”*

# Invalidation

“When a person's thoughts and/or feelings are rejected, ignored, or judged.”

It is not uncommon for invalidation to have occurred, immediately prior to a behavioral escalation, e.g. aggression to self, others, property.

# Invalidation

It can be upsetting for anyone, but particularly hurtful for someone who is sensitive to rejection/abandonment, e.g. individuals who:

- meet diagnosis for certain diagnoses
- desire more interaction with their families than they have
- have struggled making/keeping friends
- have no other skills to express how they are hurting

# 3 Steps in Validating Following an Accusation

## #1 Gather information



- Listen to what the person is saying
- Watch for nonvocal communication
- Pay attention to what is going on in the environment
- Consider the person's sensitivities (biology, past experiences)



## #3 Validate

**“You’re angry  
at me. Is  
that right?”**

## #2

**“I have done something to  
really upset you/hurt your feelings.”**

# 3 Steps in Validating Rejection/Abandonment Sensitivity

## #1 Gather information



- Listen to what the person is saying
- Watch for nonvocal communication
- Pay attention to what is going on in the environment
- Consider the person's sensitivities (biology, past experiences)



## #3 Validate

**“That hurts  
and now  
you’re angry  
at him. Is  
that right?”**

## #2

**“You’re feeling like he thought your idea  
was a bad one (stupid).”**

# 3 Steps in Validating Rejection/Abandonment Sensitivity

## #1 Gather information



- Listen to what the person is saying
- Watch for nonvocal communication
- Pay attention to what is going on in the environment
- Consider the person's sensitivities (biology, past experiences)



## #3 Validate

“That hurts and now you’re doing things to feel better again. Is that right?”

## #2

“She didn’t show up to meet with you like she said she would.”



# Reassurance

Depending on your relationship with the individual, choose the one that is most fitting:

- I care about you.
- We care about you.
- (Name of Agency) staff care about you.
- People here care about you.

Be genuine when saying it!

# Nudging Toward Using A Skill

**Learning  
Sessions/  
Therapy**



**Real Life  
Situations**

Staff can be a “bridge” between a skill the individual has already learned, or a skill the individual is currently working on by gently/skillfully providing the prompting necessary to motivate the person to use it in the heat of the moment.

**REALLY HELPFUL/IMPORTANT!**

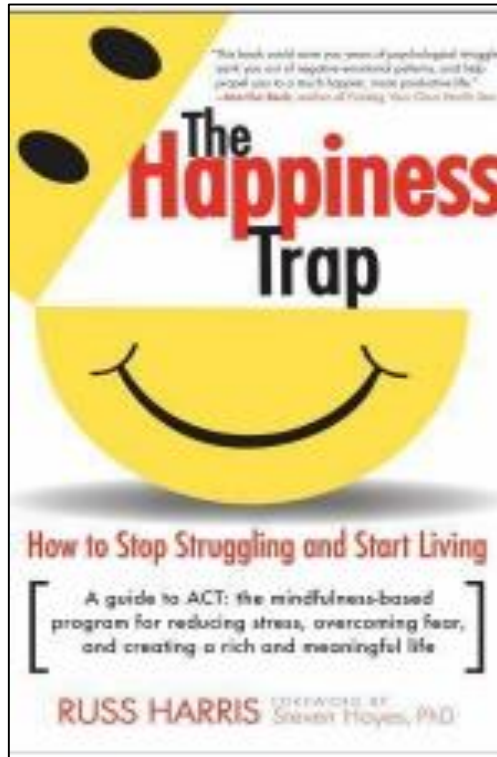
# Nudging Toward Using A Skill

**Which** skill you nudge them toward will depend on which skills have worked in the past, are conducive to the current environment, etc.

ACT-based examples:

Choice Point	Unhooking	Thanks, Mind
Self Compassion	Dropping the Anchor	5 Finger Breathing
Feel One Emotion/Act Another	Pivot To What Matters	What I Can/Cannot Control

# Choice Point



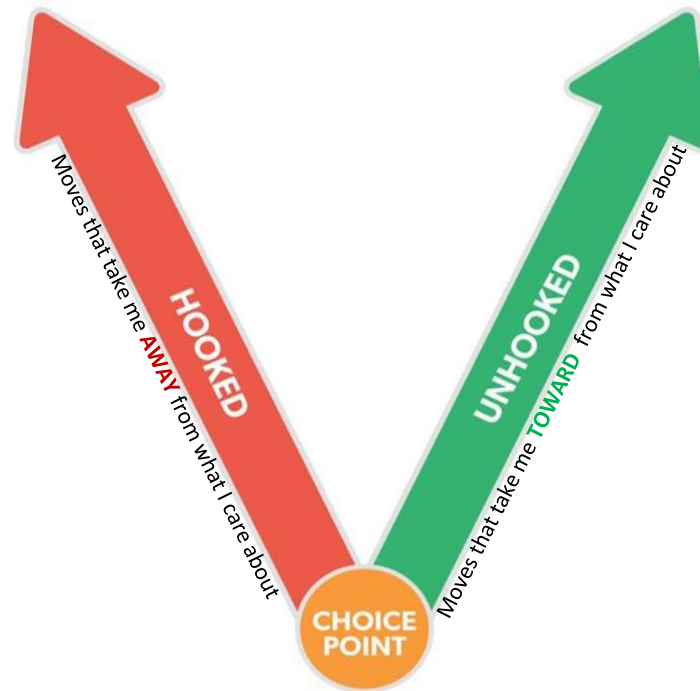
Russ Harris



# The Choice Point

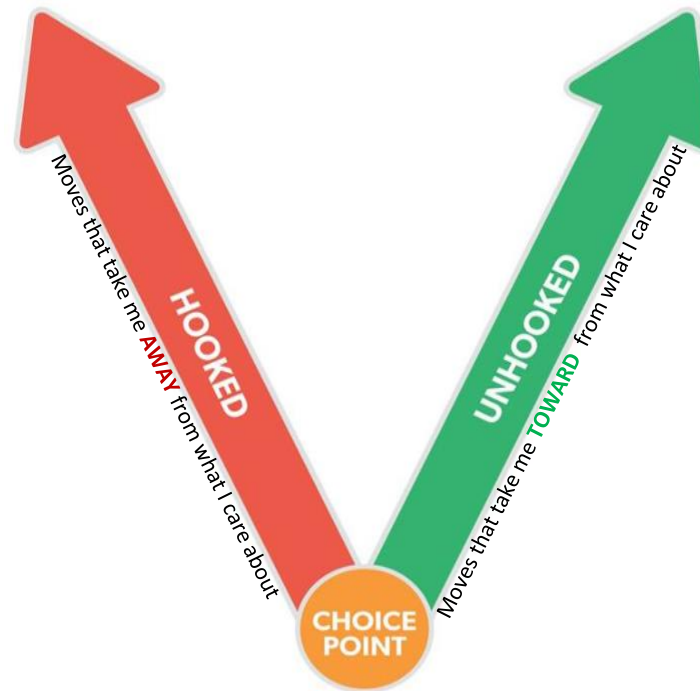


There are different formats of this available.



# What's Important to you?

- Good relationships





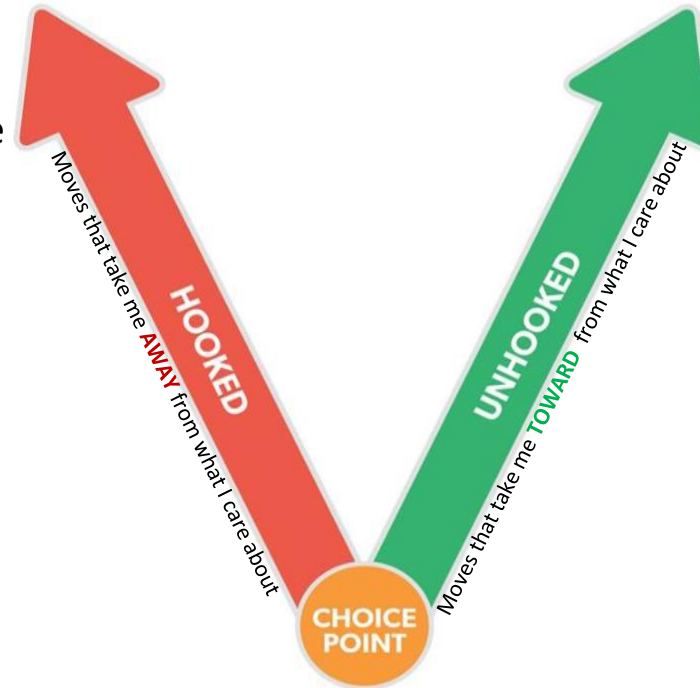
## What gets in the way?

- Good relationships

Actions that are:

**AWAY** Moves / NOT Effective

- Hurting myself
- Saying someone did something they really did NOT do
- Leaving designated area



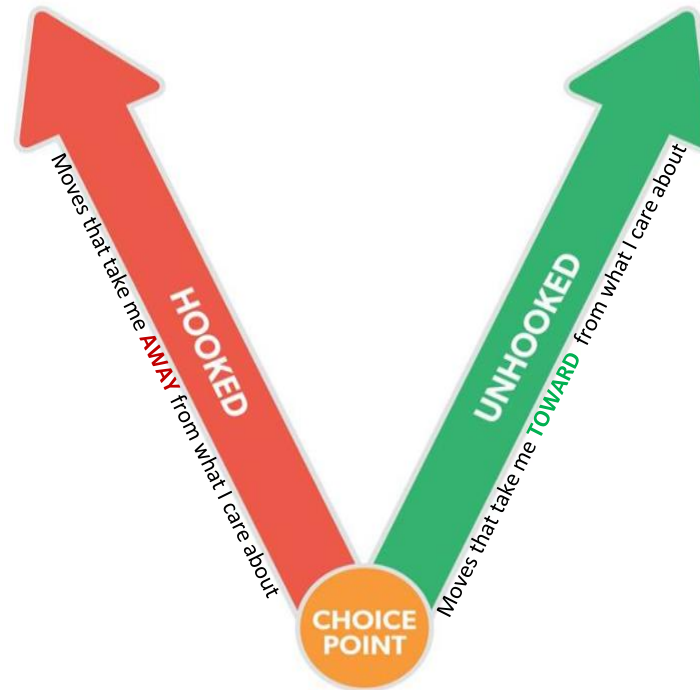


- Good relationships

Actions that are:

**AWAY** Moves / NOT  
Effective

- Hurting myself
- Saying someone did something they really did NOT do
- Leaving designated area



Choice Point  
Triggers/Situations

What starts it all?

- When peers are rude to me.
- When Mom doesn't answer my calls.

- Phone restriction
- Item Removal
- Stormy relationships
- Good relationships

Actions that are:

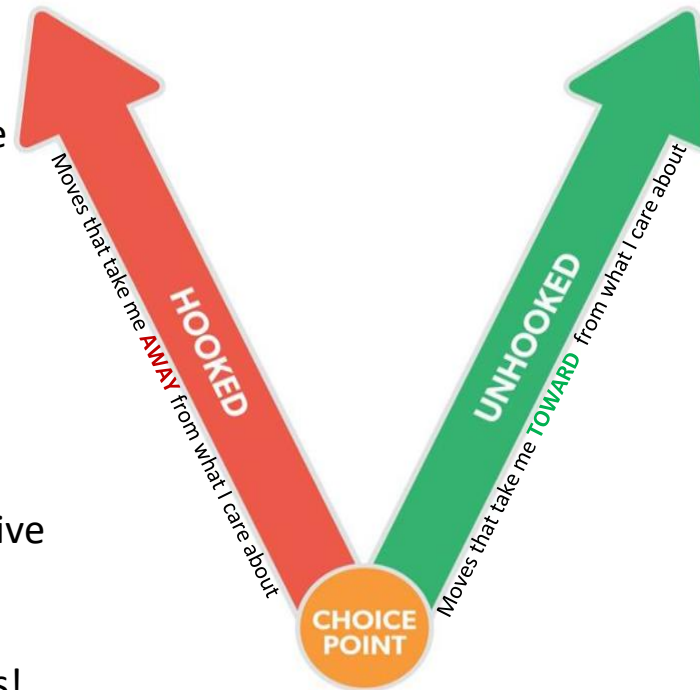
**AWAY** Moves / NOT Effective

- Hurting myself
- Saying someone did something they really did NOT do
- Leaving designated area

Thoughts that are:

**AWAY** Moves / **NOT** Effective

- I'll show her!
- He thinks I am stupid!
- She thinks she is my boss!
- Why do I always mess up?



Choice Point  
Triggers/Situations

What thoughts do you have when that happens?

- When peers are rude to me.
- When staff boss me around.

- Phone restriction
- Item Removal
- Stormy relationships

- Good relationships

What **THOUGHTS** would be more effective to move you toward what is important?

Actions that are:

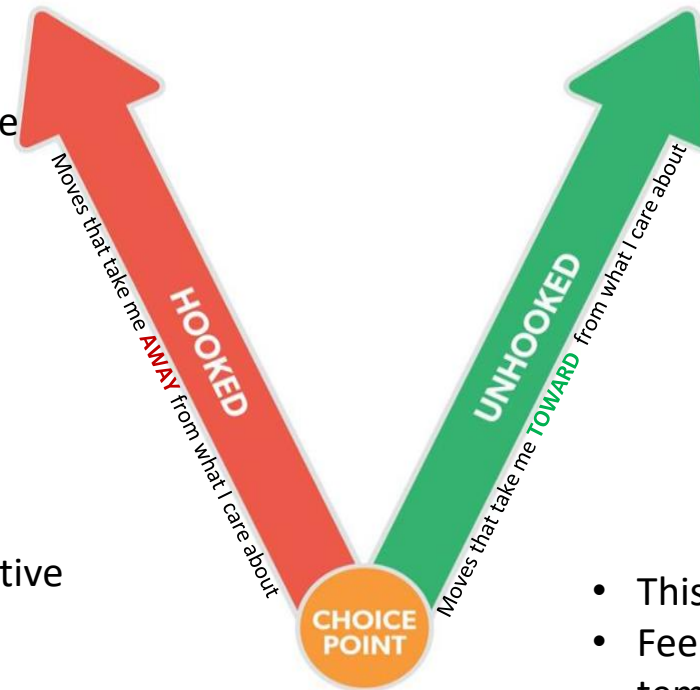
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Thoughts that are:

**AWAY** Moves / **NOT** Effective

- I'll show her!
- He thinks I am stupid!
- She thinks she is my boss!
- Why do I always mess up?



Choice Point  
Triggers/Situations

Thoughts that are:

**TOWARDS** Moves / Effective

- This feeling hurts, but it is only a feeling.
- Feelings are like weather, they are temporary. Just wait and it will change.
- My mind is trying to jerk me around again; I'm not going to let it control me.

- When peers are rude to me.
- When staff boss me around.

- Phone restriction
- Item Removal
- Stormy relationships

- Good relationships

What **ACTIONS** would be more effective to move you toward what is important?

Actions that are:

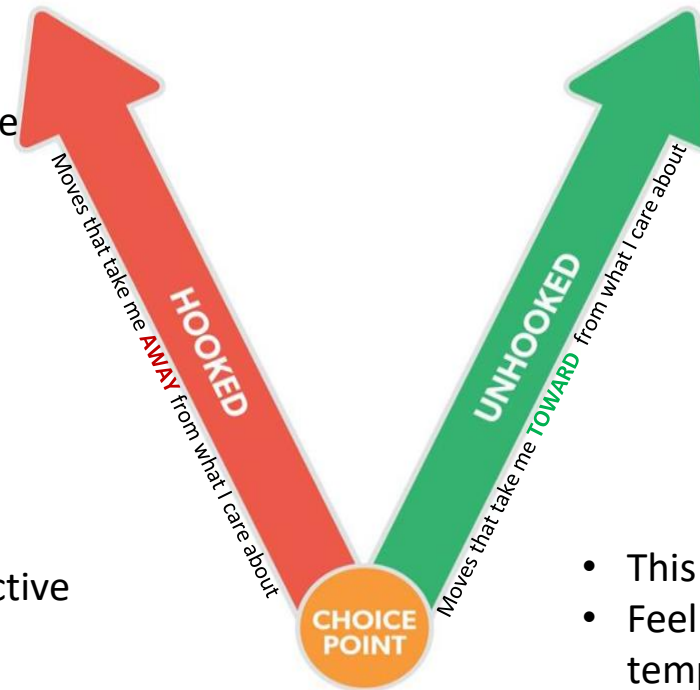
**AWAY** Moves / NOT Effective

- Hurting myself
- Saying someone did something they really did NOT do
- Leaving designated area

Thoughts that are:

**AWAY** Moves / **NOT** Effective

- I'll show her!
- He thinks I am stupid!
- She thinks she is my boss!
- Why do I always mess up?



Choice Point  
Triggers/Situations

- When peers are rude to me.
- When staff boss me around.

Actions that are:

**TOWARDS** Moves / Effective

- Getting into Present Moment
- Defusion strategies
- Relaxation – Deep breaths

Thoughts that are:

**TOWARDS** Moves / Effective

- This feeling hurts, but it is only a feeling.
- Feelings are like weather, they are temporary. Just wait and it will change.
- My mind is trying to jerk me around again; I'm not going to let it control me.

- Phone restriction
- Item Removal
- Stormy relationships

- Good relationships

Directions:  
Fill in the missing words below:

Actions that are:  
**AWAY** Moves / NOT Effective

- Hurting myself
- Saying someone did something they really did NOT do
- Leaving designated area

Actions that are:  
**TOWARDS** Moves / Effective

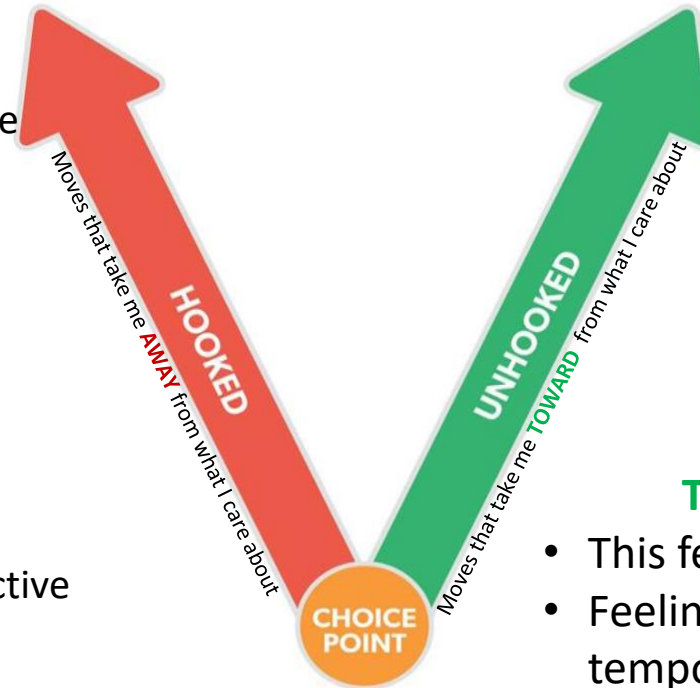
- Getting into \_\_\_\_\_ Moment
- Defusion strategies
- Relaxation – Deep \_\_\_\_\_

Thoughts that are:  
**AWAY** Moves / **NOT** Effective

- I'll show her!
- He thinks I am stupid!
- She thinks she is my boss!
- Why do I always mess up?

Thoughts that are:  
**TOWARDS** Moves / Effective

- This feeling hurts, but it is only a \_\_\_\_\_.
- Feelings are like \_\_\_\_\_, they are temporary. Just wait and it will change.
- My mind is trying to jerk me around again; I'm \_\_\_\_ going to let it control me.



Choice Point  
Triggers/Situations

- When peers are rude to me.
- When staff boss me around.

# Choice Point in BSPs

- Do This to Avoid Problems
  - “You were just at a choice point and made an “effective” move towards your goal of \_\_\_\_\_. That’s great, give yourself a pat on the back!”

# Choice Point in BSPs

- When Precursor Behavior Occurs
- When Things go Wrong
- “You’re at a choice point. What action can I help you do, right now, that will help you move towards \_\_\_\_\_?”

# Drop the Anchor

We ALL have times when a very uncomfortable thoughts, emotions, or feelings shows up in our minds. When that happens, “Dropping The Anchor” is a good tool to use.



1. First, sit down.
2. Pretend you are dropping an anchor.
3. Push your feet hard into the floor.
4. Push your fingertips together.
5. Shrug your shoulders.
6. Notice: what is going on in your body?
7. Then, notice the room you are in.  
What can you see? What can you hear?
8. Notice yourself working on Dropping the Anchor.

So, at the same time that there are difficult thoughts, emotions, or feelings in your head, you can let them be there and just focus on what is going on:

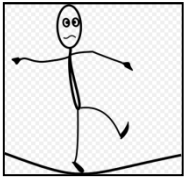
- in your body,
- in the room around you, and
- yourself working on Dropping the Anchor.

**Go ahead, practice it now.**

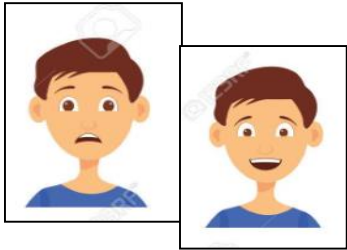




The man who is being licked by a bear,  
“FEELS” scared, but he “ACTS” brave so that the bear does not attack him.



The man on the tightrope ,  
“FEELS” nervous, but he “ACTS” calm so that he does not fall.



The man who is upset,  
“FEELS” unsafe, but he “ACTS” kind so that he does not hurt anyone.

Talk with staff about a time when either one of you FELT an emotion, but ACTED a different emotion. (E.g. felt tired, acted energetic and went to work; felt full, acted hungry and kept eating; felt worried, acted calm and followed regular schedule, etc.). Talk about how it takes practice, is not always easy, but can be done to get one closer to the things that are really important to him, his goals/values.

Give yourselves credit for the  
good and difficult work that  
you do each day!

