

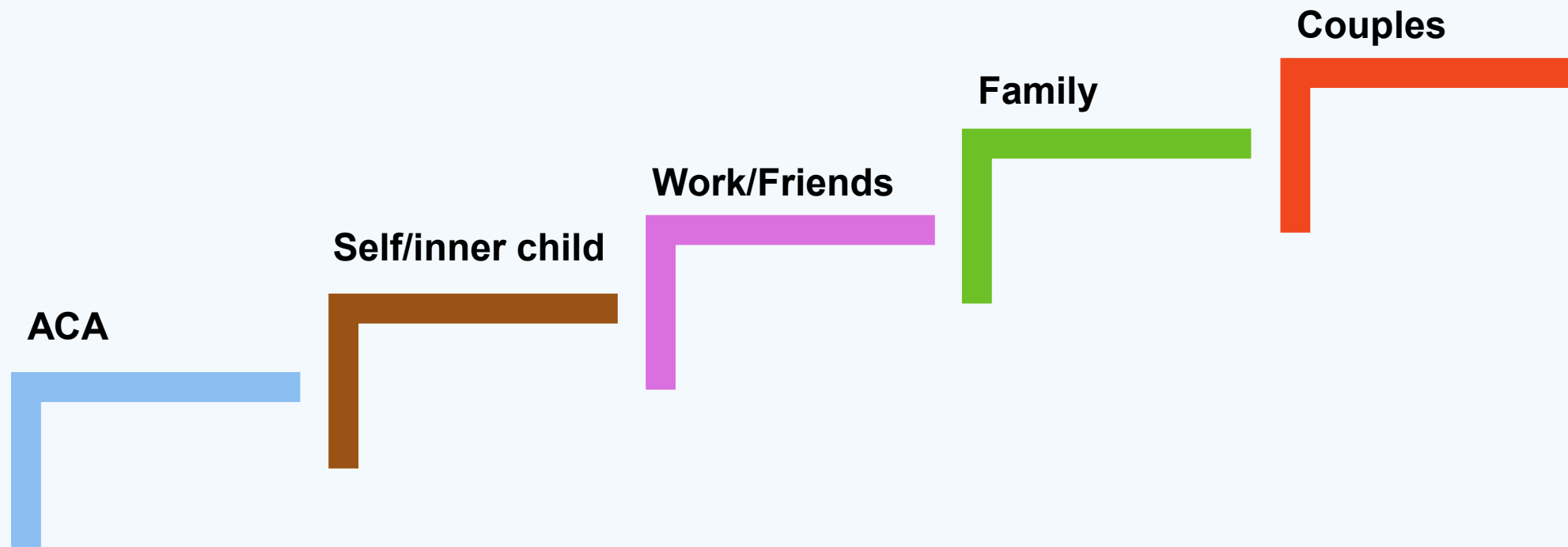
A stylized landscape illustration featuring rolling green hills in the foreground and background. On the left, there is a green tree and a purple flower. A small red bird is flying in the sky. The sky is composed of horizontal bands of blue and white. The overall style is simple and colorful.

Relationships In Recovery

Robin T. and Charlie H.

This presentation is for attendees at an Oct. 16, 2021, workshop. Please do not reproduce or distribute without written permission of the authors.

What Relationships Are We Talking About?



We are not limiting this to coupleship. ACA can be our recovery lab for all types of relationships.

What Is a Healthy Relationship?

ACA's BRB has a simple, excellent definition (on Page 403):

“A healthy relationship involves talking about feelings, mutual respect, and a commitment to trust and honesty.”

We feel safe, trusted, and open. We are free to be our authentic selves.

How Trauma Affected Us Early

- Terror of abandonment
- No sense of self
- Feel unworthy, unlovable, less than (shame)
- Can't Talk, Can't Trust, Can't Feel

Our adult relationship problems started as little children. We need to acknowledge that the past affects our present.

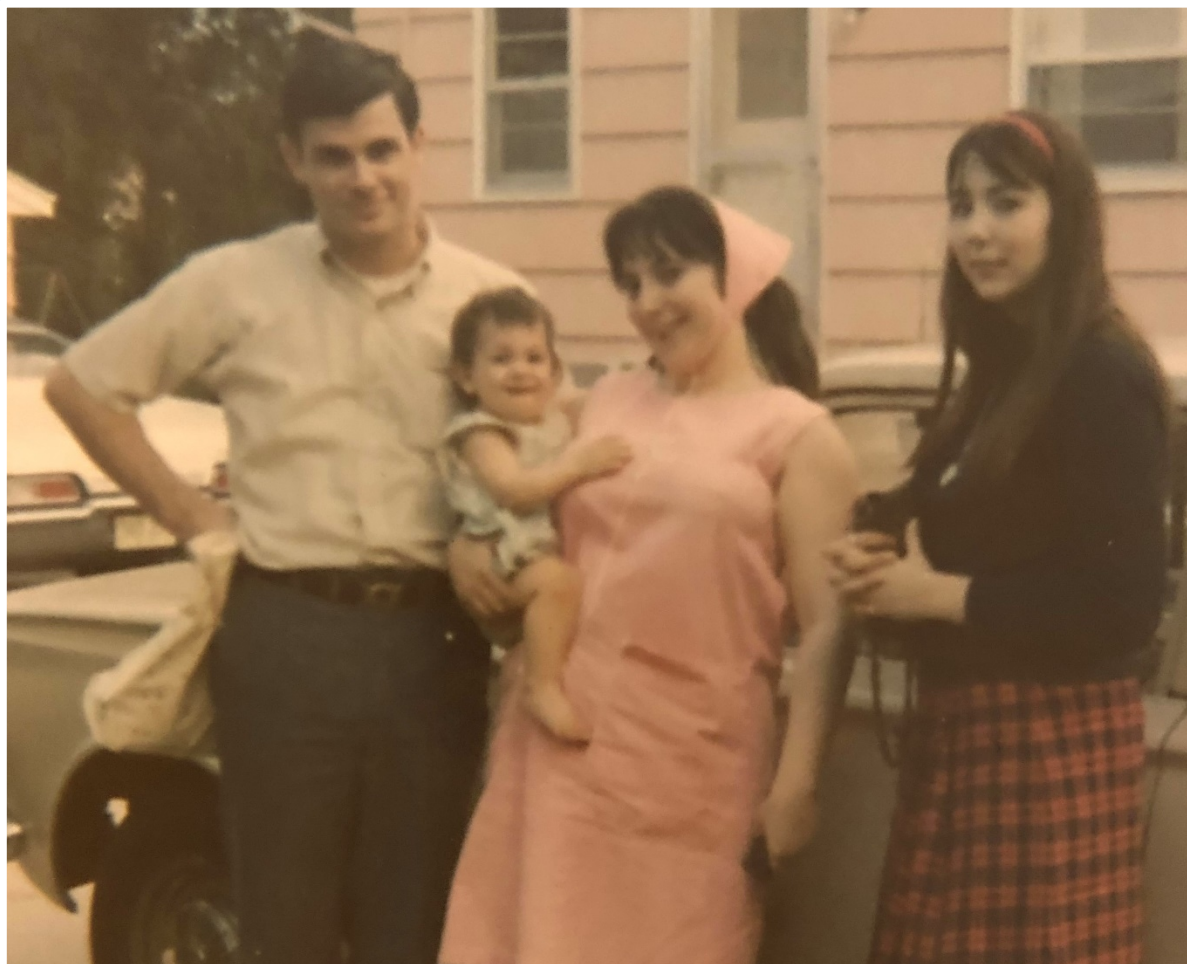


*Charlie's
Childhood*

Audience Exercise

Name 1-2 early childhood wounds or relationships that might impact your relationships today.

Feel free to share on chat.



Robin's Youth

Teens & Early Adulthood

Trauma's Lasting Impact: 12 Deficits

- 1) **Don't Talk, Don't Trust, Don't Feel** (avoidance of intimacy)
- 2) **Attachment disorder**—tend to 'snap,' use all-or-nothing thinking
- 3) **Unresolved desire for a loving mother or father**
- 4) **Emotional flashbacks**
- 5) **Little (or no) modeling to draw on**
- 6) **Fear:** Abandonment, Shame, Annihilation

Trauma's Lasting Impact: 12 Deficits

7) Codependence/loss of identity

8) No relationship with inner child (out of touch with feelings, needs)

9) Adaptive roles (family hero, lost child, etc.)

10) Feel unworthy, unlovable

11) Loyal to others when it is undeserved

12) Fear of change, even when change is needed

And, of course, the rest of the Laundry List & Other LL

The Adult Child Dilemma

We Are Lonely (and want to connect)

We Are Terrified (and feel the urge to fight, flee, freeze, fawn)

As we get close to others, we often feel out of control. Historic wounds rush to the surface, making us an emotional time bomb.

Before ACA

Adaptive choices

- Avoid relationships altogether
- Codependent relationships (repeat our past)
- Emotionally distant relationships

If we lose faith that we can connect happily, we find ways to limit our pain. We “settle,” and repeat our childhood.

Audience Sharing

Does any of this description remind you of your past?

How did you try to limit or avoid relationship pain?



A Fresh Start in ACA

Unlearning Our Family's Distorted Thinking

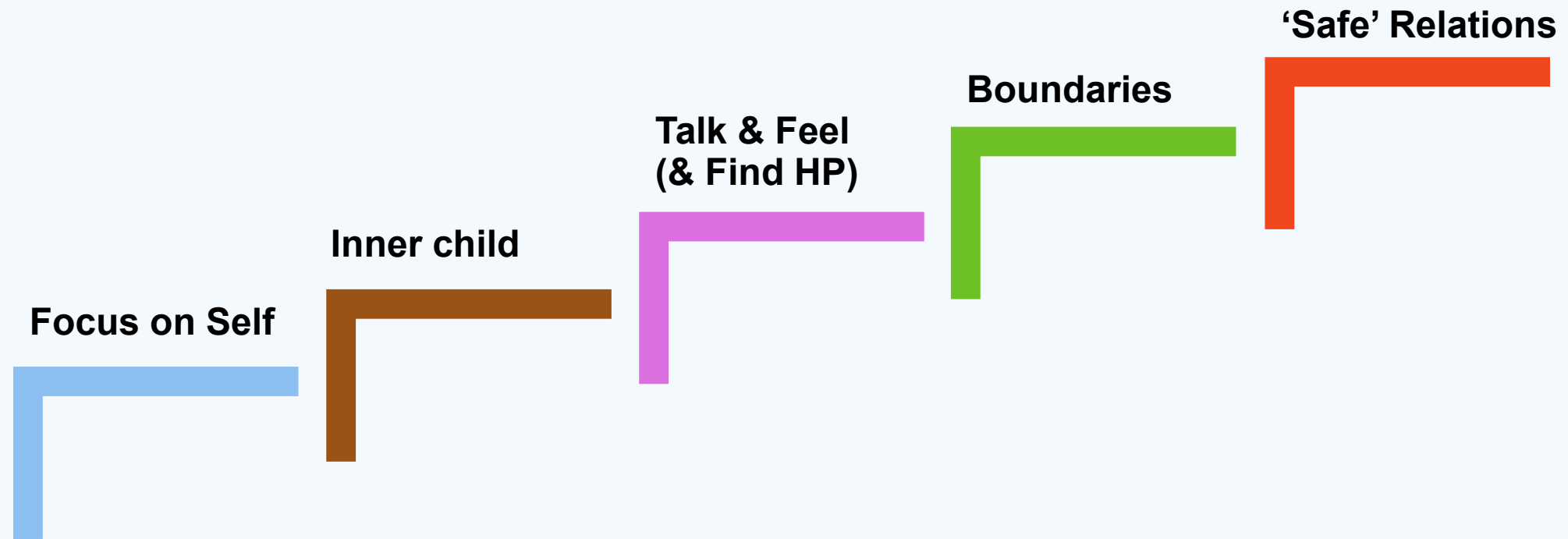
Early Reactions to ACA

“A healthy relationship involves talking about feelings, mutual respect, and a commitment to trust and honesty”

(BRB, p. 403)

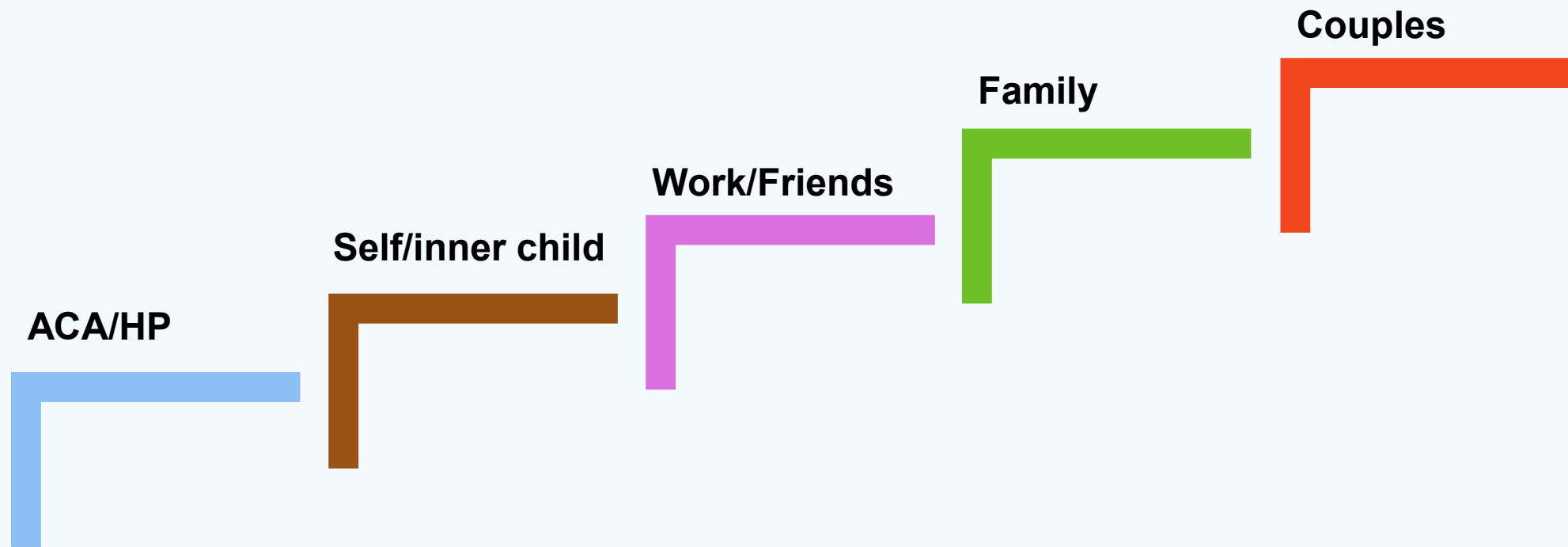
Newcomers often not ready. Likely to linger in shame, fear, confusion. Our reaction? “Don’t Talk, Don’t Trust.”

Using ACA as a 'Relationship Lab'



In ACA, we start with ourselves, & our healing. By focusing on the program, we open up.

Translating ACA Into Relationships



In ACA, we start with ourselves, then with friends. Complex relationships improve gradually.

New Behaviors in ACA (& Therapy)

- Our childhood really did affect us
- Focus on ourselves—honest inventory
- Talk Feel and Trust
- Be authentic, even when it hurts
- Love your inner child
- Hope is on the way (community, hp, loving parent). We are not alone

Audience Exercise

Name two helpful things you've learned in ACA or therapy, especially in connection with positive relationships. Name two things you still hope to learn.

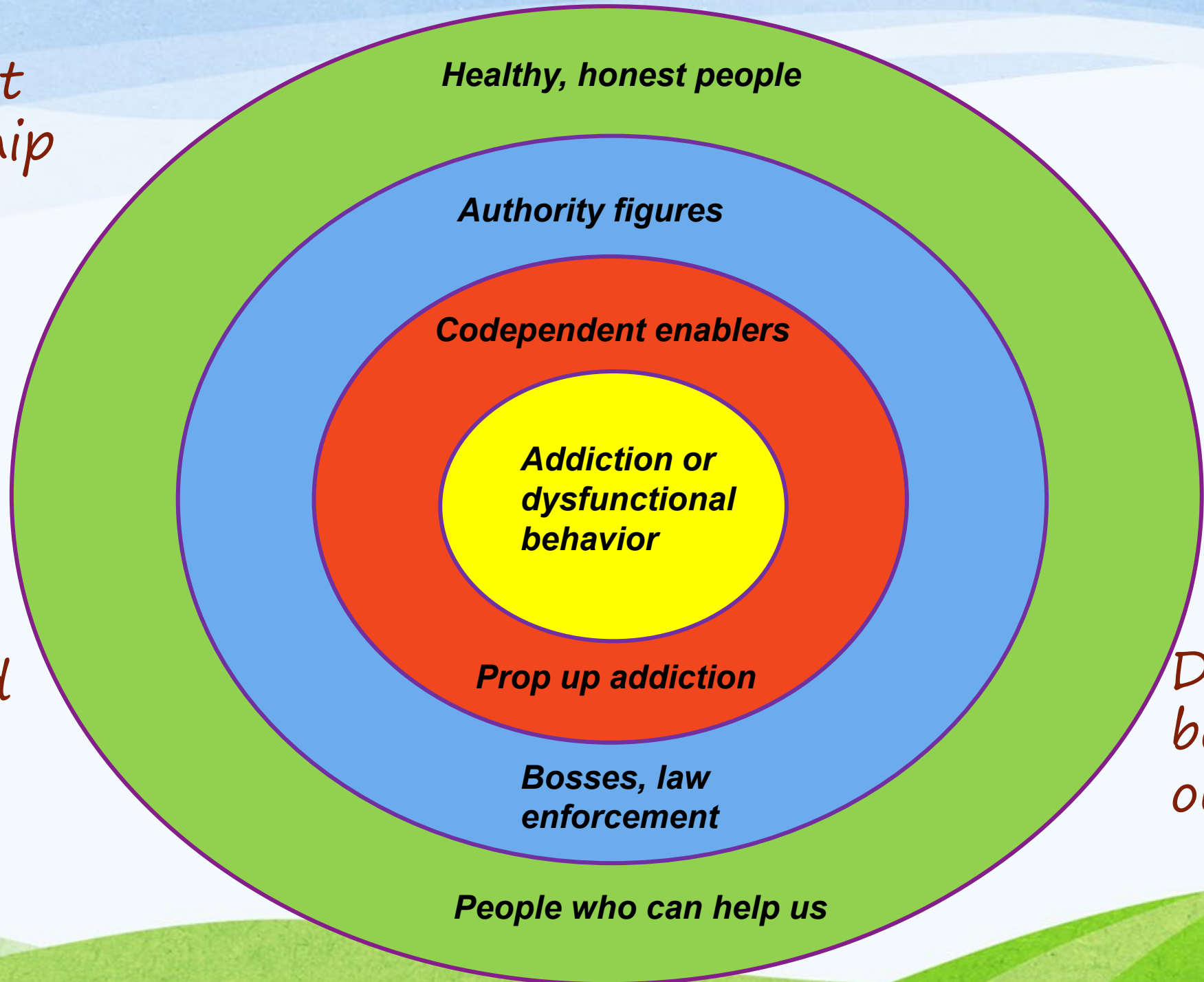
Feel free to share on chat.

A stylized landscape illustration featuring rolling green hills in the foreground, a small tree with a brown trunk and purple and pink foliage on the left, and blue and white wavy hills in the background. The text is centered on the right side of the image.

Rethinking Relationships

Putting Recovery, Self-Love & HP at the Center

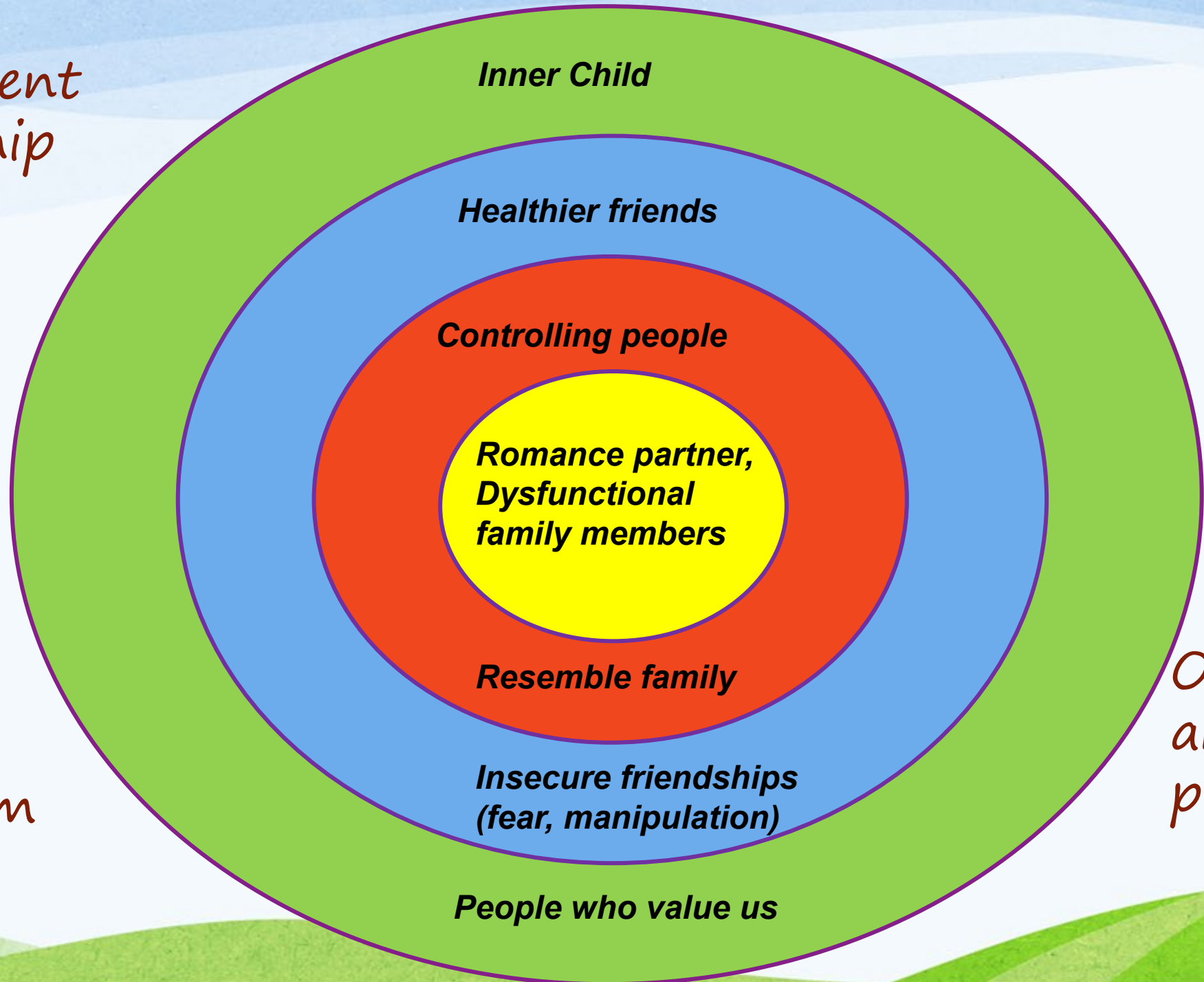
Dependent Relationship Circles



Goal: Find
safety in
escape or
control

Dysfunction
becomes
our hp

Codependent Relationship Circles



Our hp is another person

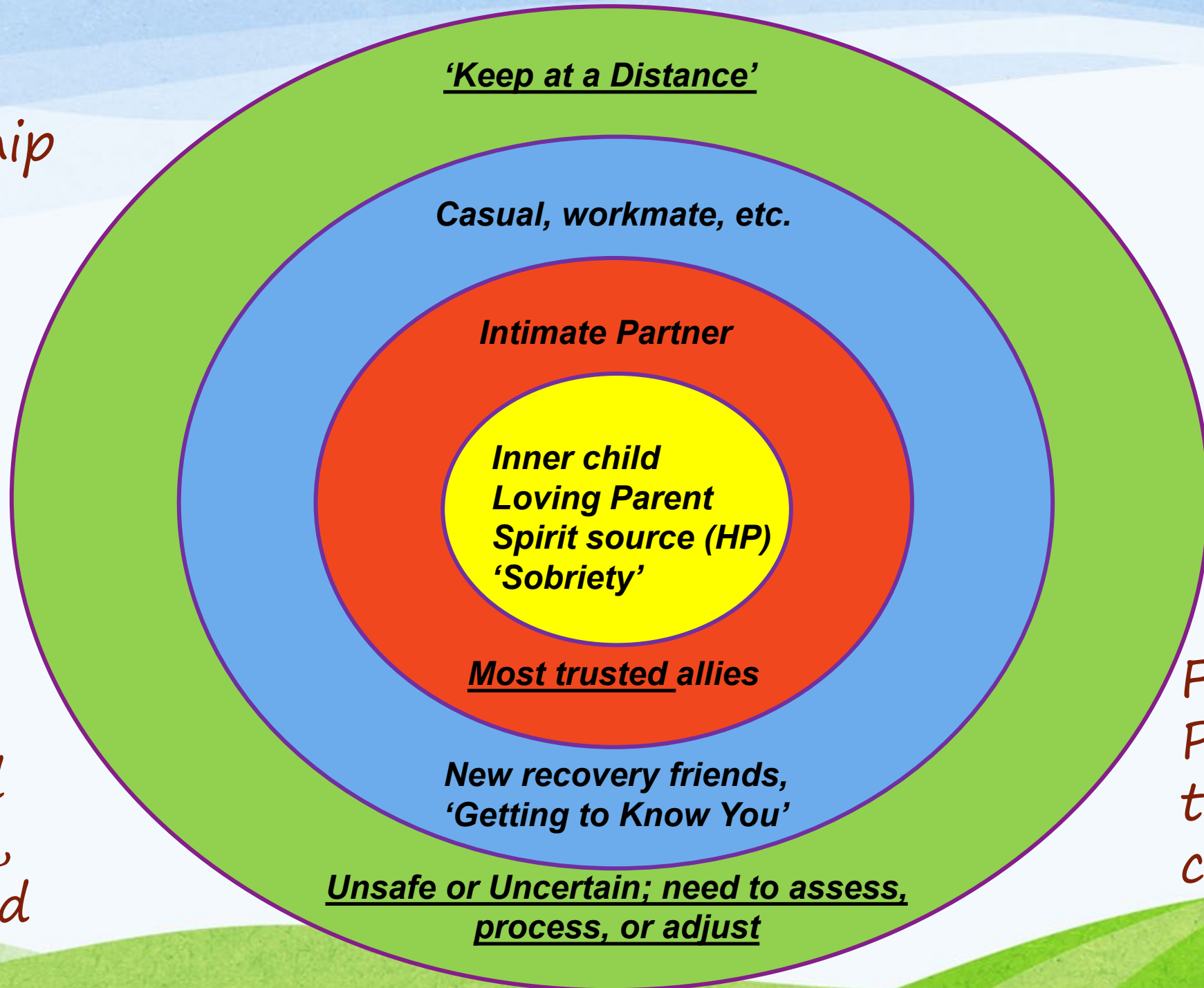
Goal: Find safety from outside us

Signs of a codependent relationship

- Someone else is at the center of our world
- We feel like we need their approval
- We abandon ourselves & our inner child

We live in constant fear of abandonment:
“What if they leave me?”

'Essential' Relationship Circles



*Goal: Find
wholeness,
self-regard*

*Flexible:
People earn
their right
circles*

Beyond Abandonment

- At our center, we have love—no matter what
- Our inner child is cared for—always
- Our partner is accountable
- We can state needs & negotiate without fear
- We can ask for help, and get it

ACA Solution: Become Our Own Loving Parent. This is a love no one can take away.

A stylized landscape illustration featuring rolling green hills in the foreground, a small tree with a brown trunk and purple and pink foliage on the left, and blue and white wavy hills in the background. The title 'Coupleship in Recovery' is written in a brown, cursive font in the center-right area.

Coupleship in Recovery

'Getting to Know You'

- I'm not desperate; my life is already good
- I am worthy of love
- My inner child is precious; you are an experiment
- Honesty is a must
- I am not alone; I can ask for help and clarity

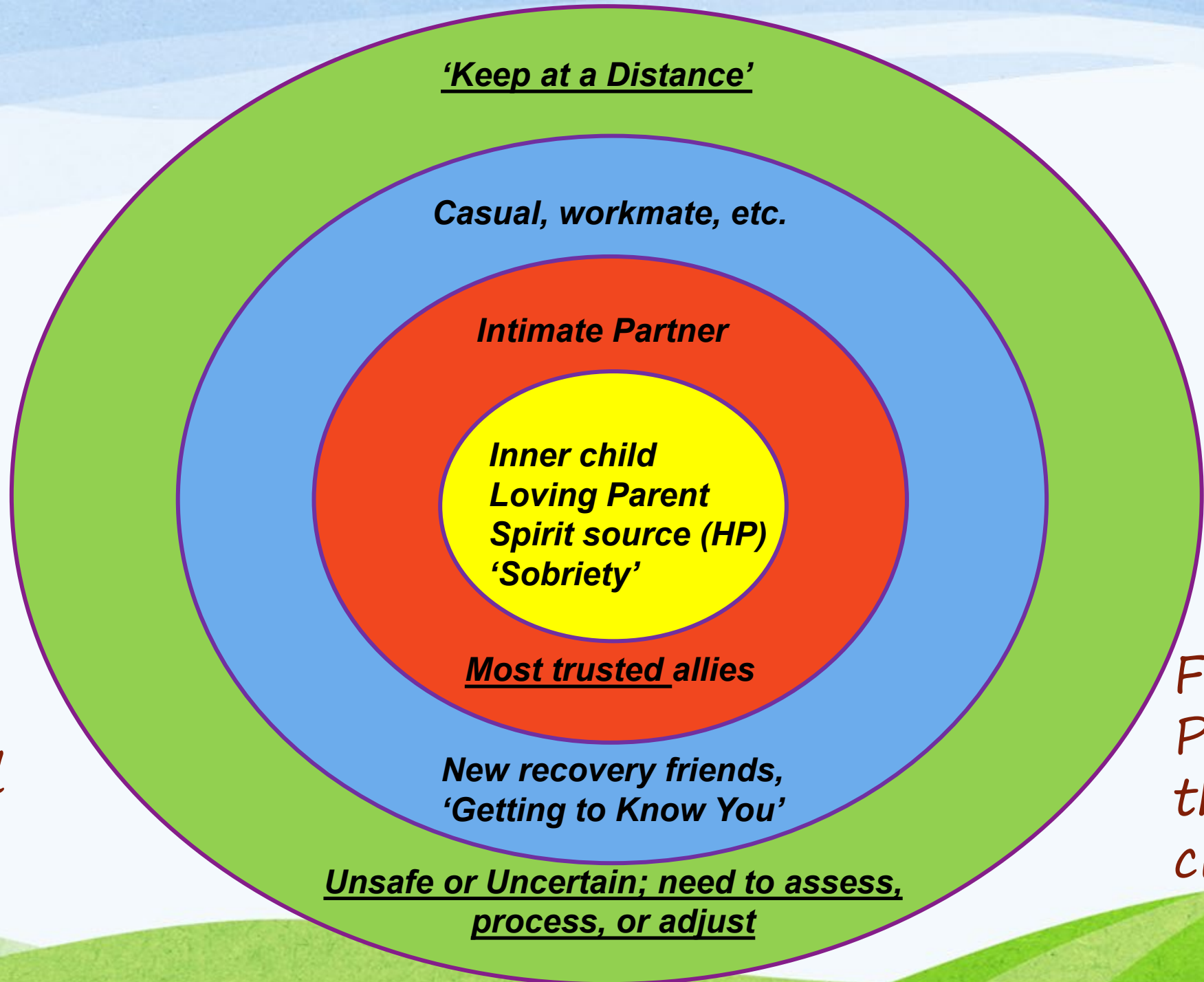
When we fear abandonment, we abandon ourselves. When we feel loved, we insist on safety, respect, honesty.

Some Keys to Early 'Recovery Coupleship'

- Friends First: why this person?
- Can't be 'entirely ready,' just 'ready enough to try'
- Use the ACA community, don't put all needs on one person
- If you're reacting to your past, take a pause
- Failure IS an option, and maybe a good one.

Recovery stays in the center. Everything else falls into place

Recovery
Remains
Our Focus



Goal: Find
wholeness
within

Flexible:
People earn
their right
circles

The 'Loving Parent Pact': No Inner Child Left Behind

- Will you support me in my program—first?
- Will you honor my inner child? Will I?
- Will you support your own program, inner child?
- Can we be co-Loving Parents?

Added bonus: when we all share Loving Parent duties, we stop turning partners into mom/dad, or a rescuer/persecutor.

The 'Blended Recovery Family'

- All inner (& outer) children have a place
- Loving parents run the show, using program
- We are responsible for our own wounded child, critical inner parent
- Let the children feel and play, and the adults negotiate.

Inner child, loving parent, & critical parent: How do they relate?

Audience Exercise

Do you have a sense of how your inner child responds to new relationships? How can you help that child?

Feel free to share on chat.

Robin & Charlie: 25 Years in a 'Petri Dish'

- *Navigating Romance, Recovery, and Reparenting*

Real Life: 3 Q's About ACA in Couplship

- Do we argue, and how?
- How do we cope with trauma/wounded child flashbacks?
- How do we balance dreams, needs and recovery?

The 12 Steps and Relationships

- Step 1: What does 'powerless' mean?
- Steps 2-3: Insanity to hope
- Steps 4-5: Seeing & sharing our authentic self
- Steps 6-8: Willingness to change
- Steps 9-10: Freedom from shame
- Steps 11-12: Conscious contact; healing to helping

4 Promises and Relationships

- Fear of authority figures, 'people-pleasing' leave us
- Healthy boundaries & limits will become easier to set.
- We will slowly release dysfunctional behaviors.
- We will learn how to play and have fun in our lives.

BRB on healthy relationships: "Can talk about feelings; mutual respect; trust; and honesty."



???

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