

REFLECTIVE NOTES

PHI KAPPA THETA CHAPTER RETREAT

RENSSELAER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
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SESSION ONE

ENVISION YOUR POSSIBILITIES

YOUR LIFE

Who do I really want to be? Who am I becoming?



INSIGHT

This first session begins with an invitation... an invitation to dream... to dream dreams that are worthy of your life. Every human being has infinite value, and you, as a young man, are one of those human beings with limitless possibilities.

In this next hour – dream a little, imagine what could be, and envision a life for yourself that achieves its fullest potential. Think beyond the next semester. Imagine life beyond college. Moreover, envision a you who is much more than your career and a 40-hour work week. Seriously, in these moments, don't think about what you are doing as much as who you are becoming.

Sadly, it is often only in those rare moments of confusion or crisis when young men pause long enough to ponder who they are becoming and what they want to be true of themselves at the end of their lives.

But not you.

Not us.

We are here this weekend to proactively look at ourselves in the mirror and wrestle with this timeless truth: we will not wake up one day having become someone we have not been becoming.



INTROSPECTION

Imagine yourself being asked the question by a parent or respected mentor, “So **who** do you want to be when you grow up?” Notice: the question is not, “So **what** do you want to do for a career when you grow up?”

The heart of this reflective probe is to think about the *qualities* and *characteristics* of your life that you hope will be remembered by others once you are no longer on this earth.



INTERACTION

What are some of the qualities and characteristics that came to mind as you quietly and personally reflected?

Why do you think that young men are more prone to think about these ultimate questions only during seasons of confusion or crisis?



INSTRUCTION

The Eight Essentials for both Envisioning & Experiencing Personal Possibilities

PERSPECTIVE

the dream of who I want to become and how I envision my future

PREPARATION

the development of character and competencies to become that person

PASSION

the deep desire that fuels motivation

PRIORITIES

those outcomes that are most primary and important in my life

PLAN

the decision to establish specific and achievable goals

PROACTIVITY

actually doing the details of the decision on a daily basis

PEOPLE

discussions and deliberations with inspiring people who share my vision

PERSISTENCE

the dogged drive to push through barriers, climb over obstacles, and maneuver around roadblocks that threaten my growth, progress, and success



INTROSPECTION

For you personally, in which of the eight essentials do you feel the most strength?

For you personally, in which of the eight essentials do you feel the most struggle?



INTERACTION

As you will notice, there are eight designated spaces throughout the room that represent each of the Eight Essentials. First, walk to the space that represents your strength and chat with those who share that same strength.

Secondly, walk to the space that represents your struggle and chat with those who share that same struggle. Now split the group in half, and do the same exercise two more times, but combine the strong and the strugglers at each space.



INSIGHT

Often for young men who have not been exposed to these kind of big ideas and bold conversations throughout adolescence and into early adulthood, they feel a vacuum of vision for who they might become. With that reality in mind, Dr. Michael Brown offers this potential portrait of a Possibility that he believes reinforces the powerful vision and values of the Phi Kappa Theta brotherhood. Here it is for your consideration:

“Servant leaders are in the process of becoming R.E.A.L. Men® who are growing as Lifegivers® while developing in all Twelve Dimensions® of Life.”

A PORTRAIT OF **REAL** MANHOOD

R

REJECT PASSIVITY AND IRRESPONSIBILITY

Men don't have to be lazy, undisciplined, unproductive, or numb. They can stop coasting and instead choose to live life on purpose and with clear intentions and direction.

E

EXHIBIT HONESTY AND INTEGRITY

Men don't have to hide, lie, pretend, distance themselves from people, or keep that big secret. They can be truth-tellers in every situation and in every relationship.

A

APPRECIATE TRANSPARENCY AND CONNECTEDNESS

Men don't have to wear a mask, keep real feelings bottled up, or trudge through life alone. They can initiate, cultivate, and enjoy transformative platonic friendships and meaningful intimate relationships with others.

L

LEAD INTENTIONALLY AND AUTHENTICALLY

Men don't have to shrink back, hesitate, avoid risks, or wait for someone else to take the initiative. They can try new things, seize opportunities, and refuse to be immobilized by insecurity or fear of failure.

THE LIFE GIVER MODEL

L Loving

I Intentional

F Fun

E Expressive

G Generous

I Inquisitive

V Vigorous

E Enthusiastic

R Responsive

TWELVE DIMENSIONS OF LIFE





This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

SESSION TWO

ENVISION YOUR POSSIBILITIES

YOUR FRATERNITY

Who do I really want *us* to be? Who are we becoming?



INSIGHT

This second session pulls back the lens and reframes the questions from the first hour together to be more about *us* than just *me*. Imagine if every brother in your RPI chapter were envisioning grand possibilities for their lives.

Consider what a chapter gathering might feel like if there were dozens of men in the same space who were each envisioning a big-picture perspective, who were preparing themselves for this lifetime journey, who were fueled by a passionate desire to become and behave in a manner that was honorable, who established priorities that truly mattered, who developed a plan of action matched with the proactivity to make it happen, who surrounded themselves with like-minded individuals who were inspiring and aspiring to go the distance – persistently pressing forward and onward to cultivate positive growth in their lives as well as throughout the Phi Kappa Theta brotherhood.



INTROSPECTION

Which phrase(s) from the **Insight** section strikes a chord with you as you think of your brothers and the dreams you might have for your chapter?



INTERACTION

As a large group, brainstorm a list of positive and future-focused dreams that you hope for your RPI brotherhood (without explicitly commenting on your chapter's current deficiencies or difficulties).



INSTRUCTION

The Eight Essentials for both Envisioning & Experiencing Fraternity Possibilities

PERSPECTIVE

the dream of who we are becoming as a brotherhood and how I envision a positive future for my chapter

PREPARATION

the intellectual, leadership, social, and spiritual development of members required to become a positive community of gentlemen and servant leaders

PASSION

a deep desire for positive progress that infuses the community with motivation

PRIORITIES

that my brothers are growing into effective leaders who passionately serve society, Fraternity and God

PLAN

the decision to establish strategic and specific goals that will accomplish the mission and vision of the Fraternity

PROACTIVITY

the daily decisions of every brother to stick to the plan

PEOPLE

cultivating powerful comradery, positive communication, and progressive conflict resolution while pursuing a common mission and vision

PERSISTENCE

the dogged drive to push through barriers, climb over obstacles, and maneuver around roadblocks that threaten our Fraternity's growth, progress, and success



INTERACTION

As you revisit and review each of the dreams on your master list that was brainstormed earlier as a group, talk about which of the Eight Essentials are most required at this point, if your chapter were to experience the fulfillment of each dream.



INTROSPECTION

For your chapter, write down the two strongest essentials that seem already to be going well.

For your chapter, write down the two weakest essentials that need the most attention and investment.



INTERACTION

Circle up with participants from your chapter to briefly discuss what each member listed as the two strongest and two weakest essentials for envisioning chapter possibilities.

SESSION THREE

EXAMINE YOUR PROBLEMS

YOUR LIFE

Why is it not happening for me?

Why does it often feel as if life is not working?



INSIGHT

Life is not as it should be. We all feel it: that unsettling sense in the pit of our stomachs that so much of what we experience as human beings is unjustified, unfair, or just plain uncomfortable.

Trust me: what you often feel is not ideal, but it is normal. This somewhat troubled reality is true for every young man, to one degree or another. Take a moment to scan your world; you see the pain and suffering. Take a moment to reflect upon your community, campus, and chapter: you surely observe the confusion and uncertainty around you.

Take a risk, look inside of yourself, and examine your own heart; there is probably some really hard stuff brewing just beneath the surface and behind the mask that you wear.



INSTRUCTION

The problems that you face in your personal life are the inevitable result of the presence of three realities: creation, circumstances, and choices.

- Creation is not always healthy/well.
- Circumstances are not always happy/welcome.
- Choices are not always honorable/wise.



INTERACTION

As a large group, quickly brainstorm and shout out some **specific examples** that you have observed in your world, community, campus, chapter, family, and/or personal life where and when:

- Creation was not healthy/well
- Circumstances were not happy/welcome
- Choices were not honorable/wise



INTROSPECTION

Take five minutes and write down three prevalent problems that you are currently wrestling with in your personal life.

Take an additional five minutes and try to discern which of the three realities (creation, circumstances, and choices) are playing a role in these personal challenges.



INSIGHT

Throughout history – scholars, poets, and philosophers from every secular and spiritual perspective wrestle with these complex questions.

In tangible terms, this trilogy of a broken world, bothersome circumstances, and bad decisions leave young college men often feeling:

- Wounded
- Confused
- Lonely
- Passive

Many young guys feel the **wounds** of unhealthy families, difficult life circumstances, or poor choices; the **confusion** of trying to wade through society's mixed messages regarding the definition and descriptions of modern manhood and masculinity; the **loneliness** that comes from wearing masks, keeping secrets, and failing to live transparent lives with those they love; and the **passivity** that is a byproduct of feeling overwhelmed, exhausted, and unmotivated from all of the pressures of life and the many expectations of other people.



INSTRUCTION

FOUR SYMPTOMS OF A PROBLEMATIC LIFE

Wounded → Distressed

Confused → Distraught

Lonely → Distant

Passive → Disengaged



INTROSPECTION

Rank from 1-4 (1=most and 4=least) which of the Four Symptoms of a Problematic Life do you think most describes your current reality.

1

2

3

4



INTERACTION

ANONYMOUS NOTE CARD EXERCISE

1 I feel wounded from...

2 I am confused about...

3 I am lonely because...

4 I am passive about...



IMPLEMENTATION

Write down one personal struggle or private secret that you will share with one brother here this weekend... and then two more brothers from your local chapter within the next week.

SESSION FOUR

EXAMINE YOUR PROBLEMS

YOUR FRATERNITY

Why is it not happening for us?

Why does it often feel as if our chapter is not living out its mission, vision, and motto to its fullest?



INSIGHT

In the previous session, we established the fact that life is not as it should be. We all feel the unpredictability and volatility of life as individuals, but our organizations also reflect this concerning reality.

It is possible that even within our RPI Chapter, there are those who might struggle with maintaining a positive attitude; who are tempted to keep secrets and hide struggles from one another; who have few role models in constructively handling criticism and resolving interpersonal conflict; who are often preoccupied with the pursuit of pleasure; who frequently lack discipline, drive, and determination; who lack the willpower to delay immediate gratification, and who struggle to articulate a compelling vision for their lives.

The problems of each member infects the community. The perspective of each brother shapes the ethos of the chapter. Moreover, the culmination of the practices (both positive and negative) of each Phi Kap will ripple throughout the culture of our Fraternity at the local, regional, and national levels.



INTROSPECTION

Which phrase(s) from the **Insight** section strikes a chord with you as you think of the challenges/problems you face in your chapter?



INSTRUCTION

FOUR KINDS OF PHI KAPPA THETA BROTHERS

Cop-outs (no dreams or initiative)
Hold-outs (no initiative)
Drop-outs (brief initiative)
All-outs (big dreams and lasting initiative)

THE ROOT ISSUES FOR QUITTING

Cop-Outs: Lack Vision
Hold-Outs: Fear of Failure
Drop-Outs: Selfish & Bored

Special thanks to **Dr. John Maxwell** for first conceptualizing the categories of cop-outs, hold-outs, drop-outs, and all-outs.



INTERACTION

As you think about the RPI Chapter, what would you guesstimate is the percentage of brothers in each category (cop-outs, hold-outs, drop-outs, and all-outs)?

____ % Cop-outs
____ % Hold-outs
____ % Drop-outs
____ % All-outs



INSIGHT

We have established that the fourth symptom of a problematic life is that of **passivity**.

Dr. Michael Brown defines passivity as “a visionless and passionless posture in one or more arenas of life that promotes inactivity and/or irresponsibility.”

In his opinion, this is the most prominent and problematic issue for every social fraternity on every college campus in America. It is the primary barrier between a fraternity’s membership agreeing with their mission and acting out their mission.



INSTRUCTION

5 CHARACTERISTICS OF PASSIVITY

Procrastination instead of intentionality
Idleness instead of determination
Reactivity instead of proactivity
Excuse-making instead of engagement
Cowardice instead of courage

5 CATEGORIES OF PASSIVITY

Roles
Routines
Responsibilities
Resolutions
Relationships

5 CIRCUMSTANCES OF PASSIVE PEOPLE

Stagnant
Stationary
Self-Absorbed
Scared
Stuck

5 CAUSES OF PASSIVITY

Confusion about Identity
Uncertainty about Core Values
Fear of Failure
Sense of Powerlessness to Change
Family Patterns and Close Friendships

5 CONSEQUENCES OF PASSIVITY

Disorganized Life
Inability to Make Decisions
Unrealized Goals
Shallow Relationships
Restlessness and Frustration



INTROSPECTION

On the previous page, take a moment to circle one characteristic, one category, one circumstance, one cause, and one consequence of passivity that are most challenging for your chapter.



INTERACTION

Which of the Five C's of Passivity (Characteristics, Categories, Circumstances, Causes, Consequences, or Cure) are most pressing and urgent for you as you consider the realities that you face as a leader in your chapter?



INSTRUCTION

5-STEP CURE FOR PASSIVITY

1. Dream
2. Decide
3. Do
4. Disclose
5. Discipline



INSIGHT

No doubt, this has been a very tricky session, as you were prompted to think about the difficulties and challenges within your own chapter.

Here is the good news: your chapter's problems are not unique. You are not alone.

Here is the tough news: change must begin with you. While you cannot impose change on your brothers, you can choose to change yourself.

So we end this session with a reminder that while passivity is easy to point out in others, it is most difficult to detect in our own lives.



INTERACTION

WALK THE LINE EXERCISE

What was your experience of the exercise?

What did you feel and/or think as you participated?

SESSION FIVE

EVALUATE YOUR LEADERSHIP

FOUR CHARACTERISTICS OF A LEADER

1. CHARACTER

public and private uniformity between expressed values and daily actions

FOUR CHARACTER PRINCIPLES

Character is developed in private.

Character is expressed in choices.

Character is most felt in relationships.

Character is revealed in crisis.

2. CHARISMA

a magnetic quality that results from breathing life into people's hearts and souls

FIVE CHARISMA KILLERS*

Pride: "I'm stuck on me."

Insecurity: "I'm uncomfortable with me."

Moodiness: "I'm unpredictable."

Perfectionism: "I'm demanding."

Cynicism: "I'm a dream killer and a day-ruiner."

3. COMPETENCE

the ability to get a job done and do it well

4. COMMITMENT

the daily choices required to remain consistent, keep promises, and demonstrate reliability in the face of distractions, disappointments, or downfalls

FOUR COMMITMENT LEVELS*

Cop-outs: no goals; no commitment

Holdouts: goal-oriented, but afraid of committing (for fear of rejection, disappointment with unmet expectations or failure)

Dropouts: quick starters who get excited about a goal, until the going gets tough or the allure wears off – then they quit.

All-outs: goal-setters, commit to the goals...and have staying power until the end; follow-through people. You can count on them.

* revised from John Maxwell



INSIGHT

EXTRAORDINARY LEADERSHIP IN FOUR WORDS

Intentionally Inspiring & Influencing Individuals

FOUR CHOICES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY LEADER

- 1 Makes tangible choices to tend to each of the twelve dimensions of life
- 2 Postpones immediate rewards for long-term results
- 3 Chooses to invest, and not merely spend, his time
- 4 Refuses to violate his values for the sake of people, profession, position, or prosperity

FOUR CONCERNS OF AN EXTRAORDINARY LEADER

- 1 Welfare of acquaintances and strangers
- 2 Meaningful relationships with family and friends
- 3 Consequences of every choice
- 4 Causes that outlive this short life

SIX DEFINITIONS OF LEADERSHIP

- 1 Leadership is the ability to influence the people around you.
- 2 Leadership is the inner world of vision cast into the outer world of action.
- 3 Leadership is taking the lead and forging ahead.
- 4 Leadership is the mixture of character, magnetism and intentionality!
- 5 Leadership is the ability to create and inspire new leaders.
- 6 Leadership is when people think, "I'd follow that individual anywhere."



INTROSPECTION

Think of a couple of your favorite leaders. What do you most respect and admire about them? What qualities do they possess that you wish you could emulate?

Life-Giver (not Life-Robber) see next page

Eager (not Apathetic)

Authentic (not Fake)

Dependent (not Independent)

Empowering (not Bossy or Stingy)

Resourceful (not Defeated)

Sacrificial (not Self-Serving)

Humble (not Prideful)

Intelligent (not Stagnant)

Proactive (not Reactive)

THE DMB LIFEGIVER DISCUSSION TOOL

LIFEGIVER

Loving I ntentional F un E xpressive G enerous I nquisitive V igorous E nthusiastic R esponsive

THE PROBLEM

Most fraternity men are lifetakers (self-consumed and self-absorbed).

WHY LIFETAKERS AREN'T OFTEN LIFEGIVERS

- They may be preoccupied with what other people think about them.
- They care about people, but only to the degree that they get something out of them for their personal benefit.
- They are stuck in the comparison trap.
- They are selfish... and make life all about them.
- They may have never seen lifegiving modeled in their past or current family, social, or professional environments.
- They suffer from the leaky bucket syndrome.

THE CHALLENGE

1. Reflect. Review and rank the acrostic and best practices: top three and bottom three with root causes.

2. Reach Out. Ask two or three close friends: Am I more of a lifetaker or a lifegiver? What are some lifegiving qualities I possess? What are some lifetaking qualities I possess?)

3. Resolve. Decide to embark on the journey of rejecting a life of self-interest and self-absorption and pursuing a lifegiving path of leadership and influence.

DECIPHERING YOUR LIFEGIVING LEADERSHIP QUOTIENT (LQ)

- Have you ever permanently broken yourself of a bad habit?
- How do you respond when things go wrong for you?
- How do you handle criticism?
- Do you readily secure the cooperation of others and win the respect and confidence of others?
- Would people trust you with handling a very difficult and delicate situation?
- Can you align people to happily do something – which they would not normally wish to do?
- Can you accept opposition to your viewpoint, without feeling defensive?
- Do you find it easy to make and keep friends?
- Are you dependent on the praise and approval of others to keep going forward in a particular task?
- Are you at ease in the presence of superiors and strangers?
- Are you really interested in people?
- Do you possess tact – being able to anticipate the likely affect of a statement before you make it?
- Do you nurse resentments, or do you forgive quickly injuries done to you?
- Are you naturally optimistic or pessimistic?
- Do other people's failures annoy you?
- Are you naturally critical or affirming?
- Do you shun the draining person or seek them out?

Revised from J. Oswald Sander

BEST QUALITIES AND PRACTICES OF A LIFEGIVER

Loving an individual means...

- accepting them unconditionally, regardless of their behavior or beliefs.
- serving them and meeting their needs tangibly.
- caring about them, putting down your guard and letting your heart feel.
- showing love to them.

Being **intentional** with an individual means...

- going to them, and not waiting for them to come to you.
- hanging out in their world and on their turf.
- moving close, making eye contact and engaging.
- making that phone call, setting up that hang out time and stopping by their home.

Having **fun** with an individual means...

- doing fun stuff with them, without an agenda.
- being their friend, just because.
- being spontaneous.
- laughing at their jokes, enjoying their quirks and celebrating their joys and successes.
- diving headfirst into their world of interests – taking risks and trying new things with them.

Being **expressive** with an individual means...

- encouraging their strengths and unique contributions.
- telling them how you feel about life – both the good and bad.
- telling them how you feel about them and their friendship.
- letting them see the emotions that flow from your pain and pleasure.
- sharing life-words, with no expectation of verbal feedback.

Being **generous** with an individual means...

- sacrificing your time to be with them.
- sharing your prized and precious possessions with them.
- being generous with your financial resources.
- seeking out opportunities to meet tangible needs in their lives.
- the willingness to share your heart, desires and dreams.

Being **inquisitive** with an individual means...

- being sincerely interested in other people.
- rejecting passivity in conversations.
- a willingness to carry most of a conversation, until a certain comfort level is achieved.
- not giving up on the quiet or socially awkward person.
- taking risks to explore with them the deeper issues of life; talking about things that matter.
- courageously asking personal questions in a caring way.
- understanding the importance of timing and tact.
- asking intelligent, open-ended questions.

Being **vigorous** with an individual means...

- persistence despite relational barriers.
- asking probing questions to uncover the root issues.
- responding to relational distance with expressive care.
- not shrinking back when conversations get tense.
- forging ahead even when friendship is not reciprocated.
- being the first to pursue resolving conflict or acknowledging relational tension.

Being **enthusiastic** with an individual means...

- approaching each day with an optimistic outlook.
- running after them with your heart, not just your feet.
- being energetic and excitable when with them.
- laughing hard with them.
- giving your friendship with them your all.

Being **responsive** with an individual means...

- being fully engaged when they are sharing with you.
- learning to use the power of touch as relational glue.
- maintaining great eye contact in conversation.
- responding quickly to their initiative – either by phone, email or in person
- replacing that blank stare with an expressive and interested facial expression.
- verbal and non-verbal responses – when they are speaking.
- becoming a student of your friend...seeking to know and understand their ways.
- picking up on their cues for help – and doing something about it.
- “rejoicing with those who rejoice and mourning with those who mourn.”

SESSION SIX

ENCOURAGE YOUR BROTHERHOOD

LIES ABOUT BROTHERHOOD

- Guy friendships are nice, but not necessary.
- Close friendships will happen naturally over time.
- No friend should know everything about me.
- I do not have much to offer in friendship.

LOSSES WITHOUT BROTHERHOOD

- False Sense of Reality
- Lacking Challenge, Inspiration, & Accountability
- Unmotivated, Frustrated, & Discouraged
- Isolation & Loneliness

LAGGING IN BROTHERHOOD

- Fear of Exposure
- Fear of Rejection
- Self-Sufficiency
- Unawareness
- Passivity

LOOKING FOR IN BROTHERHOOD

- Connection, Chemistry, and Compatibility
- Core Values, Calling, & Course of Life
- Communication Style & Comfort with Conflict
- Character & Commitment

LEVELS OF BROTHERHOOD

- Basic Phase #1: Acceptance
- Intermediate Phase #2: Affirmation
- Advanced Phase #3: Accountability
- Mature Phase #4: Authority

LANGUAGE OF BROTHERHOOD

- "I appreciate you."
- "I care about you."
- "I need you."
- "I choose you."

LESSONS ABOUT BROTHERHOOD

- Evaluate yourself as a R.E.A.L. man.
- Take off the mask.
- Take a risk and initiate.
- First become the friend you want to find.
- Be selective when choosing close guy friends.
- Learn healthy patterns to navigate the inevitable friction of friendship.
- Practice the language of affirming friendship.
- Be intentional about including, involving, and investing in people.

THE PHI KAPPA THETA BROTHERHOOD COVENANT

We, the brothers of Phi Kappa Theta at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, commit to diligently preserving the ideals of our chapter, by first and foremost pursuing R.E.A.L. manhood in our personal lives, making the unity of our brotherhood of highest priority, and committing to living out the principles of masculine friendship as prescribed by our forefathers and mentors.

Knowing that the excellence of our larger chapter will only be as strong as the health and depth of our friendships with each other, we commit to making every effort to wholeheartedly live out this portrait of powerful masculine friendship on a daily basis.

We also realize that as imperfect men in an imperfect world, we will fail to fully live up to the commitments within this covenant – and yet, we commit to pushing past our shortcomings, learning from our mistakes and aspiring to these precious values with great passion.

I will speak to each of you with honor, respect, and dignity.

I will celebrate my personal successes with you, knowing that my successes in life are somehow tied to my connection with and support from each of you. I will choose to believe that we are on this journey together!

I will welcome any feedback from you regarding my personal life, choices, or overall fraternity life – and when there is consensus among the brothers regarding changes that are required in my life, I will submit to these men.

I will not assume that I know what is going on within your heart. I commit to asking clarifying questions, before jumping to conclusions. I commit to believing the best in regard to your motives, decisions, and actions.

I will not speak a negative word about any man in this brotherhood to any person outside of this brotherhood, ever!

As well, if I ever feel frustrated, hurt, or annoyed by you – I will speak to you face-to-face about these things, as soon as possible. I will be diligent to repair any tension or break in our friendship, and to completely restore our closeness.

I will not withdraw from you or blow you off in my heart. In our differences, disagreements, or preferences – I commit to moving toward you as my friend. If I am confused by something I see in you, I will talk to you about it.

If I see something in your life that I believe does not reflect or honor the ideals of our brotherhood, I will care enough about you to humbly bring that to your attention. I will reject the notion that it is ‘none of my business’ or ‘not my place.’

If I see you have an emotional, relational, or physical need, I will reach out to you and seek to help. I will commit to picking up the wounded and hurting within our community, doing whatever it takes to help restore them.

As I seek to resolve tension with you, I will commit to being first concerned with how I have wronged you, before examining how you have wronged me. I will repent of any poor choices that have negatively affected our personal friendship or the morale of the larger community. And as you repent of any wrong done to me, I will always forgive you.

When I fail, I will not hide from you, but I will bring the specifics of my choices into the light with men in this community. And if I am struggling with anything of significance, I refuse to bottle up my problems or attempt to “go it alone.”

When you come to me with a concern or criticism, I commit to being open and receptive to your input, assuming that there is a good reason for your initiative with me, and I will carefully consider what you say.

As we interact, I will look not only as to how I can give to you, but eagerly seek the blessing of receiving from you. I will not shrink back from needing you, depending on you, or leaning on you. I will allow myself to rely on you.

I commit to you verbal expressions of appreciation and love. If I am encouraged by your life, growth, successes, decisions, or gestures – I will not rob you of the joy of hearing how proud I am of you. I will not shrink back from expressing affection.

If we have a scheduled time for meeting together as a brotherhood, I will never blow it off; I will make sacrifices to be there. And if something comes up, I will ask for the leadership’s permission to miss the function, and will keep everyone in the loop as to the reasons for my absence. I am well aware that my absence affects the entire community.

I commit to knowing, understanding, and appreciating you, not only as a part of Phi Kappa Theta, but as a friend as well.

Signed _____

Dated _____

HOW TO NOT BE A JERK

THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF A JERK

- A jerk is someone whose own woundedness, lack of self-awareness, and emotional immaturity often hurts, offends, and/or annoys other individuals within his sphere of influence.

THE SEVEN CHARACTERISTICS OF A JERK

- Complaining
- Comparing
- Competitive
- Cynical
- Critical
- Combative
- Conceited

THE FIVE CORE ISSUES OF JERKINESS

- Selfishness
- Insecurity
- Frustration
- Passivity
- Entitlement

THE SEVEN CHOICES TO REVERSE JERKINESS

- From complaining... to Contentment
- From comparing... to Confidence
- From competitive... to Collaborative
- From cynical... to Cheerful
- From critical... to Complimentary
- From combative... to Cooperative
- From conceited... to Contrite

FOUR FULL-PROOF CURES FOR JERKINESS

- Come clean by admitting your own needs, weaknesses, and shortcomings
- Commit to inviting feedback and accountability from trusted friends
- Care about people by daily expressing appreciation and affirmation to others
- Choose 23 days of gratitude

MAN-AGING EMOTIONS 161

SEVEN CATEGORIES OF MAN-EMOTIONS

- Happiness
- Sadness
- Fear
- Anger
- Worry
- Love
- Frustration

SEVEN COMMENTS ABOUT MAN-EMOTIONS

- Emotions are a completely normal part of the human experience
- Emotions should not be judged as good and bad, but as positive and negative
- Emotions will shape thoughts, which will then often trigger behaviors
- Emotions will fluctuate in regards to frequency and intensity
- Emotions are not always an accurate reflection of reality
- Emotions are like the flashing red engine light on the dashboard of a car
- Emotions should not be met with an impulsive reaction, but an intentional response.

SEVEN CONSEQUENCES OF IGNORING MAN-EMOTIONS

- Increased stress levels
- Increased isolation from people
- Increased need for control of circumstances
- Increased probability of imploding or exploding
- Increased physical and/or mental health issues
- Increased confusion about reality
- Decreased ability to experience the breadth and benefits of the human experience

SEVEN COPING MECHANISMS FOR NEGATIVE MAN-EMOTIONS

- Stuffing feelings deeper insider to ignore negative emotions
- Relating in a passive-aggressive manner with friends to dodge negative emotions
- Behaving recklessly and sometimes violently to attack negative emotions
- Abusing alcohol and drugs to escape negative emotions
- Pursuing sexual pleasure to bypass negative emotions
- Escaping to entertainment alternatives to evade negative emotions
- Indulging in comfort food to insulate oneself from negative emotions

SEVEN COMMON MISPERCEPTIONS ABOUT MAN-EMOTIONS

- Emotions are for women
- Emotions are for wimps
- Emotions are for whiners
- Emotions are a sign of weakness
- Emotions are a result of woundedness
- Emotions require too much work
- Emotions should not be welcomed

TEN CONSTRUCTIVE STRATEGIES FOR MAN-AGING MAN-EMOTIONS

- Accept and appreciate the reality that life is a mixed bag of positive and negative experiences that will trigger ongoing emotional responses as a human being
- Know your limits and prioritize self-care in all twelve dimensions of life
- Increase the frequency and intensity of positive emotions through enjoyable and energizing activities
- Take time to journal about your emotions; record, reflect, and rate feelings
- Normalize conversations about the what, when, who, and why of your feelings
- Risk transparency and vulnerability with close friends; ask for help when you need it
- Challenge negative emotions; then channel them as fuel for change, proactivity, and problem-solving
- Explore the art of mindfulness
- Prioritize meditation and/or prayer
- Practice gratitude every day; gratitude = happiness

BREAKING FREE FROM ADDICTION

TOPIC OF ADDICTION

Addiction is a deliberative series of actions which produces temporary positive rewards followed by often-delayed negative consequences.

TYPES OF ADDICTION

- Food addictions (particularly sugar and fat)
- Sex addictions (pornography, incessant masturbation, hooking up)
- Substance addictions (tobacco, drugs, caffeine, alcohol)
- Entertainment addictions (Facebook, mobile phone, television, movies, social networking)
- Gaming addictions (role playing and video games)

TRUTH ABOUT ADDICTION

- Addiction is a result of misdirected motion to find pleasure and satisfaction
- Addiction is an illegitimate response to a legitimate need
- Addiction begins with a choice, but grows into a neurological issue over time
- Addiction occurs when two characteristics are present: ruling emotions and lack of self-control
- Addicts: masters of minimizing, lying, and excuse-making
- Addicts: the future is now, so it is hard to see beyond the moment
- Addiction symptoms: 1) Others notice it; 2) Relationships change; 3) More of the activity or substance is required to experience the same rush; 4) Behaviors are hidden and justified
- Addiction can be overcome through neurological reprogramming to build new neuro-pathways
- Addiction is managed, but not eliminated
- Addiction is about “freedom from” as opposed to “healing of”

TIPS TO BREAKING FREE FROM ADDICTION

- Admit your addiction to close friends and family members
- Acknowledge your addiction is harmful and that you want healing
- Ask for help and accountability
- Change routines (21 days is often sufficient to form a new habit)
- Trade harmful addictions for healthy addictions
- Invest in cultivating new pleasure centers
- You can't make big changes, but you can make small choices

HAVING FUN THAT IS TRULY FANTASTIC FUN!

OBJECTIVE OF HAVING FUN

Fun is the by-product of engaging in enjoyable experiences in a playful, positive, and purposeful way that refresh and rejuvenate the mind, body, and spirit.

OPTIONS (HEALTHY & UNHEALTHY) FOR HAVING FUN

- Memory-Making with Friends
- Trips & Travel (new places, nature encounters, and unique sites)
- Food Indulgences (cooking, comfort food, and creative culinary experiences)
- Reading & Reflection (books, magazines, meditation, and solitude)
- Sexual Stimulation (pornography, masturbation, and erotic encounters)
- Chemical Substances (tobacco, caffeine, alcohol, and drugs)
- Media Entertainment (internet browsing, social networking, television, movies, and video games)
- Sport (exercise, competition, and fan-based spectating)

OUTCOMES FOR HAVING TRULY FANTASTIC FUN

- Relational connection with lifegiving people
- Replenishing an empty emotional tank
- Realizing a calm and unhurried state of being

OBSTACLES TO HAVING TRULY FANTASTIC FUN

- Seeking to evade responsibilities or escape reality
- Substituting mere amusement for meaningful recreation
- Selecting activities that feed unhealthy life patterns and addictions
- Searching for happiness as the goal when having fun

OWNING YOUR OPPORTUNITIES FOR HAVING TRULY FANTASTIC FUN

- Find friends who inspire you to choose healthy outlets for recreation.
- Stop living for the weekend; Monday through Friday is not a dress rehearsal for Saturday & Sunday.
- Choose hobbies and pastimes that refresh and refuel you for the next day/week.
- Avoid leisure activities that sap your energy, numb your soul, or encourage an escape from reality.
- Eliminate entertainment options that isolate you from people or strain important relationships.
- Designate one day every week as a day of rest.

LOVE FOR A LIFETIME

NOTE

These principles transcend the diverse categories of romantic relationships, and couples of all kinds have found these ideas and insights to be quite beneficial to the health and well-being of their relationships.

THE 'FALLING IN LOVE' FALLACY

- Lasting Love Begins with a Choice
- Lasting Love Requires Daily Attention and Action
- Lasting Love Intermittently Includes Strong Feelings

THE EIGHT QUALITIES TO LOOK FOR IN A FUTURE MATE

- Connection (Social, Intellectual, and Spiritual)
- Chemistry (Physical and Emotional)
- Core Values (Values, Principles, and Beliefs)
- Communication Style (Listening, Fighting Fair, and Conflict Resolution)
- Course of Life (Career Path and Anticipated Overall Direction)
- Calling (Overarching Purpose and Passions)
- Compatibility (Differences aren't Disruptive)
- Character (Integrity, Humility, Trustworthiness, and Self-Control)

FIVE MYTHS ABOUT THE HAPPILY-EVER-AFTER MARRIAGE

- We expect exactly the same things from marriage.
- The strengths in our relationship will only get stronger.
- Difficult aspects in our relationship will disappear.
- My spouse will fulfill all of my desires and meet all of my needs.
- Marriage is the key to my personal wholeness.

THE FOUR MISTAKES YOUR DIVORCED PARENTS MIGHT HAVE MADE

- Cutting corners in prioritizing quality and quantity time with one another
- Substituting small talk for encouragement and affirmation
- Allowing sarcasm, criticism, and unkindness to creep into the marriage
- Letting the relationship become dull, predictable, and routine.

THE FIVE DATING PRACTICES THAT WILL MAKE YOU MARRIAGE-READY

- Date to give, not to get.
- Only verbally communicate what you are willing to back up with commitment, and only engage in physical intimacy that reflects what has been verbally communicated.
- Treat your significant other as though he/she might be married someday to your best friend.
- Establish appropriate boundaries in all areas of the relationship, since playing marriage in a dating relationship fosters unhealthy codependency.
- Stay connected to a community of friends who will help you keep your head straight before, during, and after a romantic relationship.

THE SEVEN QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER BEFORE SAYING “I DO!”

- What is my primary goal for getting married?
- What are the top three things I am wanting from a marriage partner?
- What are the areas of tension and conflict in my current relationship, and how do I imagine those issues might play out in marriage?
- If my romantic partner stays just as they are today with no changes to their personality, perspectives, or behaviors, would I still want to be married to this individual ten years from now?
- How have my role models for marriage affected my view of, expectations for, and approach to the marriage relationship?
- What about my parents' marriage do I want to emulate and escape?
- Do I believe that getting married is a cure for my loneliness or essential to my happiness?

THREE WORDS THAT WILL CHANGE YOUR LIFE

Just be you	Kiss gossip goodbye	Stay the course
Delay immediate gratification	Smile at others	Cultivate healthy patterns
Establish a routine	Predetermine sexual boundaries	Handle anger constructively
Tell the truth	Ask for guidance	Eat less dessert
Give a hug	Offer an apology	Spend time alone
Ask tough questions	Find a mentor	Get off couch
Express your emotions	Give something away	Seek out experts
Look beyond yourself	Fulfill that promise	Consider different perspectives
Invest in people	Cease complaining today	Critique peer advice
Cultivate close friendships	Wake up earlier	Think before speaking
Schedule your priorities	Create a schedule	Sit in silence
Make eye contact	Write a letter	Admit your mistakes
Don't give up	Join spiritual community	Update your wardrobe
Trim your beard	Consume less calories	Floss your teeth
Make your bed	Sweat every day	Stop viewing pornography
Call a friend	Don't blame others	Drink less beer
See a counselor	Stop making excuses	Never post criticism
Write down goals	Eat more veggies	Focus on becoming
Establish a budget	Clean your room	Develop your talents
Be on time	Put others first	Maximize every moment
Compliment your critic	Do not procrastinate	Embrace your limits
Laugh hard often	Count to 100	Establish exercise routine
Sing out loud	Pay off debt	Start a journal
Don't hold grudges	Limit social media	Initiate with strangers
Quit name calling	Resolve conflict quickly	Take a risk
Share that secret	Prioritize your family	Avoid divisive people
Show your appreciation	Celebrate others' successes	Talk to yourself
Resist the temptation	Consider the source	Learn something new
Establish dating standards	Ask him/her out	Express your spirituality
Drink more water	Stop justifying addictions	Tend to details
Follow the directions	Do it now	Be problem solver
Beat the deadline	Develop mission statement	Daily review values
Proofread your emails	Open your heart	Be fully present
Iron your shirt	Squeeze a shoulder	Develop character first
Talk to God	Give money away	Drop numbing entertainment
Practice saying no	Seek sexual consent	Explore new places



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Dr. Michael Brown is the Founder, Lead Coach, and Chief Consultant of **DMB Coaching**.

Over the past two decades through national leadership as a management consultant, life coach, motivational speaker, and organizational architect, Michael has engaged thousands of university and community clients in exploring their purposes, relationships, and directions, with special emphasis on developing in each of the Twelve Dimensions ® of Life.

Michael travels extensively regionally and nationally – sharing with college students, higher education professionals, business leaders, and faith communities his insights on human development, life management, dynamic relationships, social justice, redesigning and rebranding organizations for success, and his original Lifegiver ® Leadership Model.

Having studied journalism [B.A.] and political science at Ohio University; counseling and communication [M.Min] at Moody Theological Seminary in Chicago; and higher education administration [Ph.D.] at Bowling Green State University, Dr. Brown is the author of the “Twenty-One Father-Son Conversations About Love, Dating, Marriage, and Sexuality.”

Michael has a passion for leading the charge with his wife (Teresa) of 26 years, four sons, and five daughters to be a force of positive change within culture. The Brown Family has served as a household for dozens of foster children over the past 15 years and were selected as the 2008 Bowling Green Family of the Year. Michael’s personal hobbies include rigorous exercise, presidential politics, people watching, and peanut butter.

