

Presence and Functioning

To become a well-differentiated, mature leader, one has to think from an “ I position” and focus on one’s own functioning while still staying connected to others. Self-differentiation is indeed good stewardship of the self. It is arranging what is necessary for your well-being and the health of the system. The first and most important thing as a leader is to learn to focus on and regulate yourself. This means you:

1. Define yourself to others **and** stay in touch with them (especially if they disagree)
2. Regulate your own anxiety (put the oxygen mask on you first)
3. Make a clear distinction between fact and feeling
4. Profess your own values and beliefs **without** attacking or judging others
5. Do **not** demand or expect that others should think, feel, or act like you do
6. Accept differences between others and yourself
7. Take responsibility for your own anger, frustration, or distress
8. Stop accusing others as the cause of your stress, distress, frustration
9. Live by your own goals rather than by others’ expectations of you
10. Refuse to coerce or threaten others to take responsibility for you (or your pain)
11. Refuse to be coerced or threatened by others to take responsibility for their pain
12. Form open, one-to-one relationships with people, avoid gossip and collusion
13. Change thoughts of victimization to thoughts of what you can do
14. Gain “space,” or “time,” or “another perspective” to get a clearer picture of things
15. Contain your own reactivity to the reactivity of others
16. Take a stand and maintain a calm, less anxious presence
17. Do not confuse closeness with sameness, or self-differentiation with isolation
18. Avoid thinking that sees others as either/or ; black/white; either good or bad
19. Look at how you have contributed to the problem
20. Accept anxiety, tension, and pain as part of the human learning process
21. Cultivate your own imagination rather than concentrate on the conditions you see
22. Stay in there, persevere, be uncommonly motivated to see it through
23. Be willing to learn, intrigued by life, and challenged by the mystery of life
24. Have a clear vision of what interests you
25. Use a wide repertoire of responses -- be resilient
26. Allow time for things to process, be patient
27. Accept solitude and standing alone as necessary sometimes
28. Focus on your response instead of the nature of the challenge
29. Restore yourself before taking any actions
30. Remember that your presence and functioning affects you and the entire system.

Adapted by Martha Creek from Healthy Congregations materials with permission