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Scaling the Challenges with the 4 C's

(From Chapter Four of *The Touch Crisis: Navigating the Tricky Terrain of Bringing Healthy Touch Back To Our Culture* by Dawn Bennett)

In chapter four, we explored ways to be curious, compassionate, and to communicate. Commitment is key to create lasting changes. One way to embrace a high level of communication is to script or plan for ways to say *no*, the same way we played with scripts and ways to asked for touch in chapter three. Saying *no*, as well as knowing your go-to supports and resources, is an important part of self-care.

Communication

Exercise 1

Make a list of ways to say *no* to an action but *yes* to you for each category: Public, work, family of origin, partner/friend, child/children. Some of these can be the same no matter who you are talking to. Remember, you do not have to justify or explain why as a self-defense, but you can redirect or offer another option to say *yes* to the person. Even though your examples may include that, the most powerful *no* is *no*, *no thank you*, or something similar. Saying *not now* leaves a sense of ambiguity. If not now, when? So try to be clearer for yourself and for them. Use words that feel resonant and genuine for you.

Examples:

Public:

- No, but thank you for the offer.
- Oh, thanks for the hug offer, but I'd rather shake your hand.
- Thank you for showing your concern by touching my shoulder, but I feel better when people just listen.

Work:

- Thank you for that, but I prefer to touch only through handshakes at work.
- I am glad you want to connect. Some days I am not up for touch, so I would love it if you asked before touching me.



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Family/Friend/Partner

- I'm not up for a hug right now, but I really want to know how your day was.
- I'm all touched out today, but I'd love to go for a walk/sit on the couch/raincheck for tomorrow.
- I feel like I've given all day at work. I would love to spend time with you, but I need twenty minutes for myself first.
- I am trying to create new touch boundaries for myself, so since you are family, I am going to practice with you.

Children (this is all going to depend on age, personality, former boundaries, mood, etc.)

- Let's do some self-hug practice right now! You hug you and I'll hug me for a few seconds.
- You know how sometimes you need a bit of space and don't want your sister to touch you? I need a bit of space like that right now. How about we do that in five minutes?
- I would love to snuggle you now, but how about we do that after dinner when I can really spend time? How about a quick high-five to make our agreement?

Exercise 2

It's important to practice your *no* and *stop* before you have to use them—when you start enduring or you realize you do not want what is happening to continue. Think of one or two current situations or people that you would like to say *no* to. Create a couple phrases for each of them that can help you set boundaries *and* feel powerful, clear, and compassionate. These phrases can be used for touch situations and other situations where what you want and need is not being honored.

Examples:⁷⁴

- Stop.
- Please stop.
- Please pause. I am feeling _____ and would like to tune in for a moment and see what I really need/what is comfortable for me.
- I don't like _____. I would prefer _____.
- Hold on, I need a minute or two.



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- That is not feeling comfortable for me.
- I know that we do this often, but I feel I need more give-and-take. Can we set a time (later is often better if it is an emotionally charged situation) to see how we can both have what we want and need in this situation? (Note: Actually put it as a time/date and commit to it.)
- I want you to know that I value our connection, but I feel I need us to stop hugging at work. Would you be open to keeping it to just a handshake?
- Some days I am really energetically tapped. It would be so great for me if you could check in with me before touching me.
- I want our connection to be genuine. Will you stop touching me on the shoulder like that? I would really prefer _____.

Start using touch, communicating about touch, and be curious about others' needs. If someone hugs or touches you without asking for consent, commit to educating and redirecting with compassion—almost as a teacher would address a child who is learning—using a compassionate, playful, yet firm tone.

Extra Support for the Healing Journey

Exercise 3

Self-Care

A. In this process, emotions will emerge as well as old beliefs and patterns that may block you from expressing yourself. Identify ways you can emotionally care for yourself that feel self-nurturing, positive, and supportive. Try a gratitude walk—just walk around and start listing off aloud things you are grateful for—from the tiny things to the large things (i.e. I'm grateful that the sun is shining. I'm grateful that I had time to have an egg for breakfast. I'm grateful that I (or my partner or my children) have a job. I'm grateful that I don't have a job. I'm grateful that I have an amazing friend/partner. I'm grateful that I tried a new thing. I'm grateful that the birds are singing. I'm grateful that the birds are not singing. etc.). Perhaps for you, it feels more supportive and nurturing to journal, work out, scream into a pillow, take a few deep breaths and a tea break, or read positive affirmations about yourself. It may seem silly, but make a list right now. We can easily forget about simple tools (like deep breathing or journaling) when we are in the midst of strong emotion. Having a reminder resource somewhere where you see it regularly will help you remember to use your tools.



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B. On that same list, write the names of friends that will support you as well—people you can call when you feel triggered. If you are anything like me, when I need support, I can forget to reach out to others, or my head can tell me reaching out is too weak, or I know that person x is at work and my mind says there is no one else to call. It's not true, so have that list ready and force yourself to call someone.

Completing Chapter Three's Grid

Exercise 4

Return to exercise three from chapter three; and if you haven't already started increasing the amount, quality, or type of touch with the three people you listed, now is the time. Fill out that last column and commit. Create a deadline or a goal to keep you accountable. For example, for my roommate Jess, I may decide to talk to her this Saturday morning (when we are both home and not stressed out). For the massage therapist at work, I may choose to talk to her at our mutual lunch break on Thursday.

Visualize how great it will be when you communicate with that person, and set your intention for a positive interaction between you.

Once that is done, work towards setting goals and deadlines for completing the second section that includes public, work, and family. Notice what comes up for you as you make those decisions; and ask Dawn for support during your next appointment, if needed.