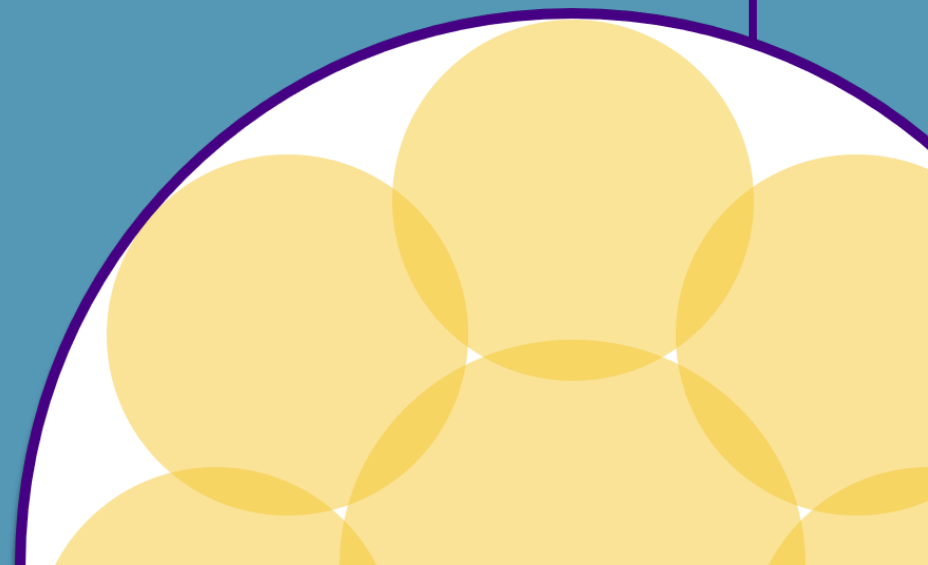


# Communicating Non-Defensively

Jennifer Testa



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# Objectives

- Recognize the signs of defensiveness in ourselves and others
- Understand how defensiveness can result in a ‘defensiveness chain’
- Take responsibility for the way we communicate by increasing our self-awareness and recognizing our own tendency to get defensive

# The goal...



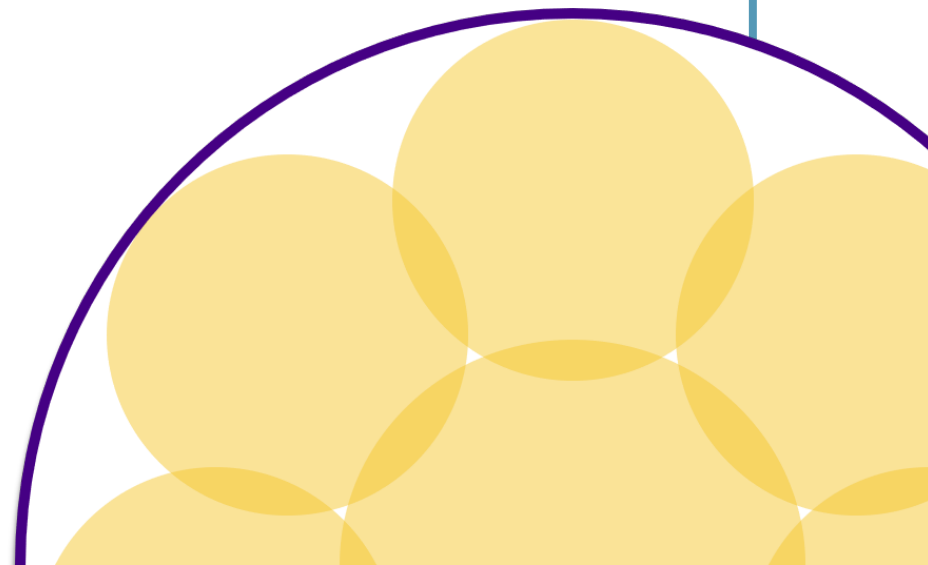
# The reality...



# What is defensiveness?



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# Defensiveness definition

Someone on the defensive is concerned with justifying their actions or words. They have a defensive attitude as they try to protect themselves. If you know that to defend is to protect, you have an idea of what defensiveness means. When a person is acting defensive, they're trying to protect or justify themselves.

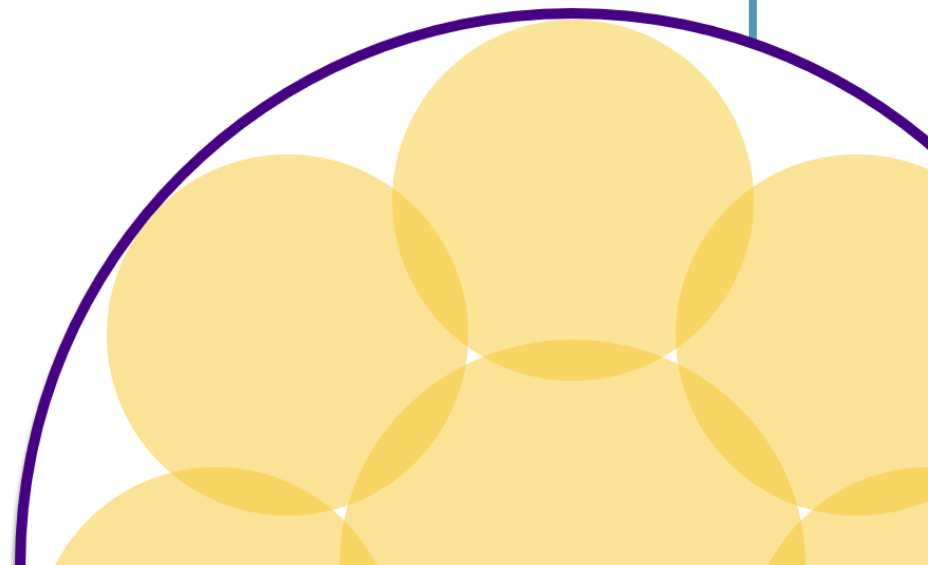
# Defensiveness definition

Someone on the defensive is concerned with justifying their actions or words. They have a defensive attitude as they try to **protect** themselves. If you know that to defend is to **protect**, you have an idea of what defensiveness means. When a person is acting defensive, they're trying to **protect** or justify themselves.

# What does defensiveness look like?



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# Defensive behaviors

- They appear to not be listening to you.
- They make a lot of excuses.
- They blame you for the problem.
- They say that you did the same thing that you're unhappy about them doing.
- They talk a lot about why you caused the problem.
- They focus on things you've done wrong at other times rather than the current issue.
- They try to tell you how you feel.

# FIGHT

Protection through CONFLICT



# FLIGHT

Protection through ESCAPE



# FREEZE

Protection through DISCONNECTION



# FAWN

Protection through PLACATION

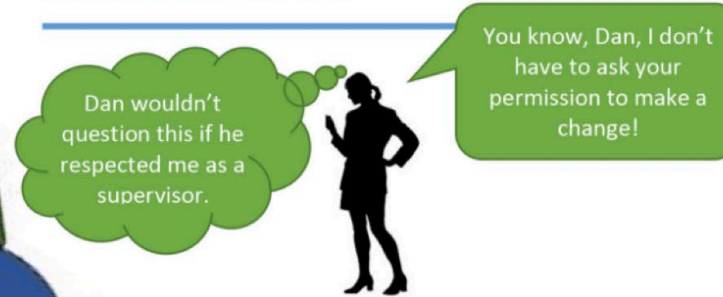


Dan is upset with his supervisor, Jessica, because she moved him from one work team to another without discussing it with him.

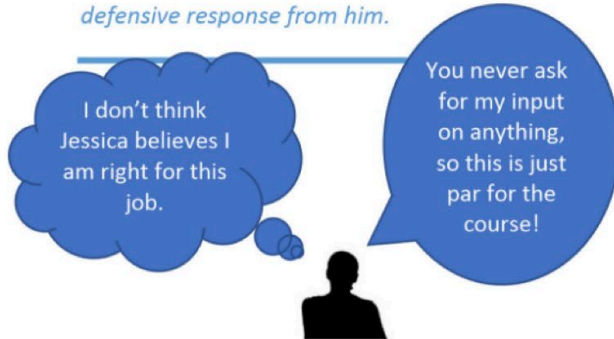
*Link 1: Dan approaches Jessica.*



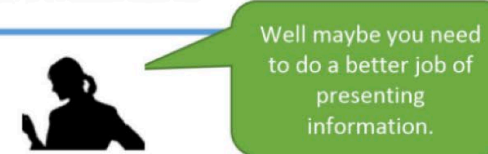
*Link 2: Jessica perceives Dan's comment as an attack and reacts defensively.*



*Link 3: Dan perceives Jessica's defensive reaction as a threat, which provokes a defensive response from him.*



*Link 4: Jessica now feels even more insecure about her supervisory skills, so the defensiveness continues...this time with a counterattack.*

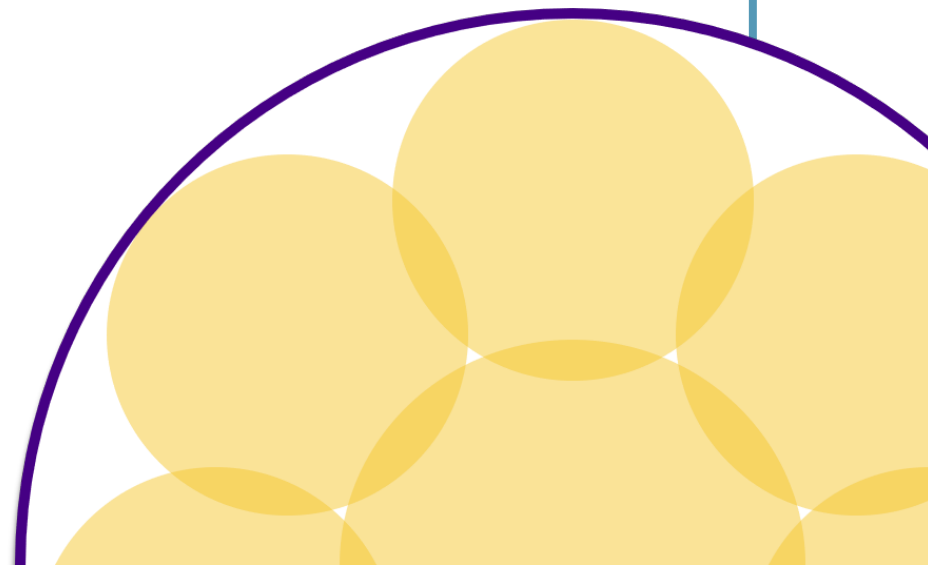


And on and on it goes....

# What causes defensiveness?



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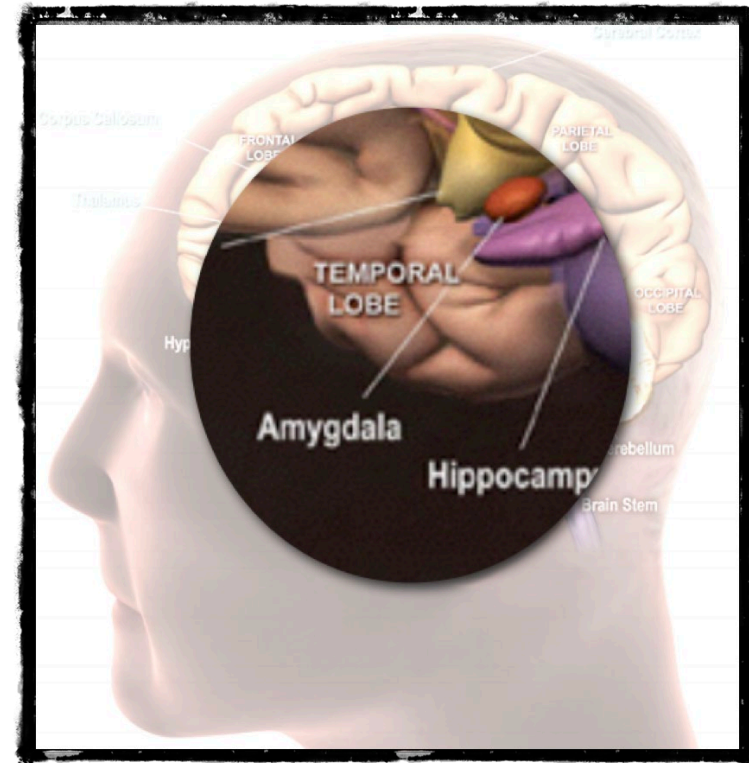


# But first, the good news.

- Everyone is defensive. Everyone.
- It is often unconscious and automatic.

# Brain factor #: the amygdala

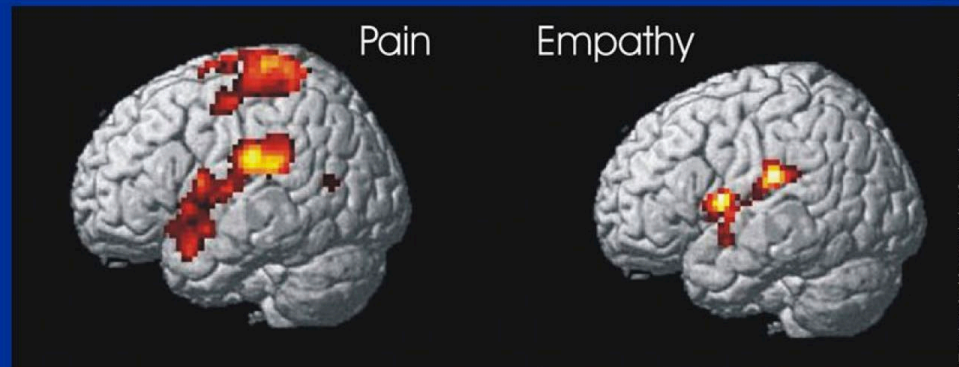
- A roughly almond-shaped mass of gray matter inside each cerebral hemisphere, involved with the experiencing of emotions.
- “When you think of the amygdala, you should think of one word. Fear.”
- Asks first, “Is it safe?”



# Brain factor #2: mirror neurons

## Mirror Neurons

Neuroscientists discovered mirror neurons in the brains of animals and humans that are active during observational learning.



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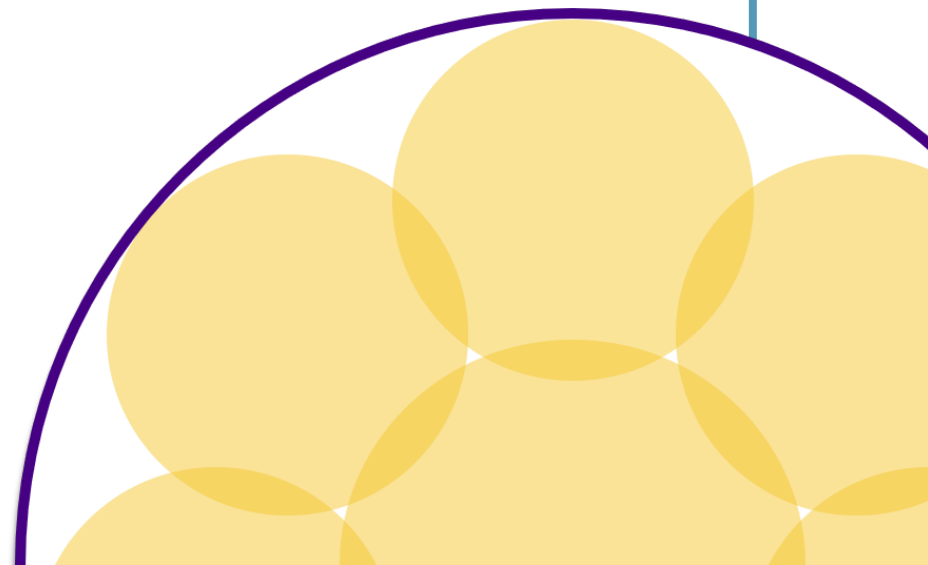
# So what?

1. Defensiveness is biological... and chemical... and psychological.
2. Safety 1st – always.
3. Your brain thinks it's you.
4. Pain is pain to your brain.

# What can we do?



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# #1 Control yourself

Compassionate truth-telling is a value that recognizes the importance of being consistently honest and straightforward for building trust in our interpersonal relationships while at the same time understanding the dignity and worth of every individual.



## #2 Check yourself





## #3 Repeat yourself

A phrase, statement, or otherwise form of communication that is redundant, repeated to the point of annoying, or rephrased as to where it means the same thing.







# #4 Forgive Yourself



## Gauging Your Self Esteem

*“The maintenance and enhancement of the perceived self are the motives behind all behavior.” ~ A.W. Combs*

**Non-defensive communication is closely linked to high self-esteem. The following exercise is designed to help empower you in the way you communicate with others.**

**Fill out your answers to the questions below as completely and honestly as you can.**

Think of a situation in your professional or private life when you communicated defensively. What did the person say that provoked your defensiveness?

How did this make you feel?