All people need to feel¹:

- **Significant**
- **Competent**
- **Likeable**

We need to feel these things both from people we know well and people we don’t. We need to feel these things at work, at home, and in relationships.

- If our **significance** is challenged, we will feel ignored. When we feel ignored, we tend to react in ways that either force others to notice or include us, or we will remove ourselves from the situation—either physically or otherwise.

- If our competence is challenged, we will experience humiliation. When we feel humiliated, we tend to react in ways that either force our ability to control a situation or we will refuse to take any responsibility for the current situation or what happens next.

- If our **likeability** is challenged, we experience rejection. When we feel rejected, we tend to either force people to understand us more by telling them or giving them reasons to like us, or we reject them equally.

**These are defensive responses.**

How can we keep our defensive responses from getting in the way or resolving issues?

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¹ Adapted from *Radical Collaboration: Five Essential Skills to Overcome Defensiveness and Build Successful Relationships*, Tamm & Luyet, (2004), Collins.
What are your responses when your significance, competency or likeability are challenged? Check all that apply.

| Physical responses | __ tight stomach  
|                   | __ fast breathing/heartbeat  
|                   | __ suddenly tired or sleepy  
|                   | __ inappropriate laughter or giggling  
|                   | __ addictive behaviour (alcohol, drugs, shopping, gambling, food, etc.)  
|                   | __ skin temperature change (cold/clammy; hot/sweaty)  
|                   | __ becoming physically immobile or shaking  

| Communication responses | __ Taking offence/denial/attacking  
|                         | __ Wanting to be right (“No question about it”)  
|                         | __ Wanting the last word/flooding with information to prove point  
|                         | __ Endless explaining/rationalising  
|                         | __ Withdrawal into silence  
|                         | __ use of sarcasm  
|                         | __ Being highly critical (making fun of others, belittling ideas)  
|                         | __ Blaming and/or cynicism  
|                         | __ Selective deafness  
|                         | __ “I’m aware of that, leave me alone!” (defence of awareness)  
|                         | __ Speaking too fast or too loudly  
|                         | __ dominating the conversation  
|                         | __ Teaching or preaching  

| Emotional responses | __ Obsessive thinking  
|                    | __ Emotional rigidity (If I feel it, it must be true)  
|                    | __ Jumping to conclusions  
|                    | __ Mind reading  
|                    | __ Magnifying or minimising everything  
|                    | __ All or nothing thinking (inability to compromise)  
|                    | __ Personalising everything  
|                    | __ Being too nice  
|                    | __ Playing “Poor me.”  

FairWay