



## Remaining Relational to

# BUILD JOY

Below is a **relational mode checklist** based on the work of Karl Lehman M.D. ([www.kclehman.com](http://www.kclehman.com)). This list helps us assess whether or not our brains are ready to connect and build joy with God and others. If we respond with a “yes” to any one of these statements, it is likely that we are not in relational mode.

- I just want to make a problem, person or feeling go away.
- I don't want to listen to what others feel or say.
- My mind is “locked onto” something upsetting.
- I don't want to be connected to \_\_\_\_\_? (someone I usually like)
- I just want to get away or fight ... or I freeze.
- I more aggressively interrogate, judge and/or try to fix others.

To get back to a place where we are ready to relationally connect with God and those around us, we can:

1. Engage in a quieting exercise (like the soulful breathing we have been practicing)
2. Engage in appreciation and gratitude exercises

It will take time and practice for us to distinguish when our relational brains are turned on and the moments they are turned off. The contrast and outcomes between the two is significant.

“Joy in the bible and to the brain is relational. It means, I'm glad to be with you.”

– DR. JIM WILDER,  
NEUROTHEOLOGIAN

“Building Joy means getting closer to God and to people. While it is a very authentic process that cannot be fabricated, here are some ‘joy-building’ ideas to first practice with our families and friends; then extend to (others).

1. Smile whenever you greet those you love, and use sincere voice tones.
2. Ask questions that invite others to tell you truthfully how they are doing, and what they are thinking. Listen intently, without interruption.
3. Take a sincere interest in really knowing the other person. Work hard to understand the other’s fears, joys, passions, talents, and pain.
4. Treat each other with dignity and respect. When ending a discussion, try to make both people feel affirmed.
5. Use touch whenever appropriate: Hold hands, link arms, give hugs, and use physical connection as effectively as you can.
6. Discover what brings the person joy: a time to talk, encouraging notes, a helping hand, or evening walks. Custom fit your attempts to bring joy.
7. Give them little surprises that will cause their eyes to light up, and let your eyes light up, too! The joy builds as the glances go back and forth.
8. Cherish babies and children by establishing through words and actions that you are authentically ‘glad to be with them.’”

### Other ideas and encouragements for building joy:

- Join loved ones in laughter whenever possible, engage them in eye to eye contact and enjoy together what is bringing laughter.
- Make fun a priority and value it as important.
- Put screens away while eating meals together, to encourage face to face communication and make space for relational engagement.
- At the end of each day, share a highlight from your day and ask others for a highlight from theirs.
- Attune to others’ emotions. Validate pain and difficulty. Be present with them in their hardships and messiness. Mirroring the heart of God, let them know you are glad to be with them.

## Brainstorm Joy-Building IDEAS