

"IT'S NOT ROCKET SCIENCE!"

THE
C A T R
THEORY™

THE 4 LEGS OF SUCCESSFUL PERSONAL
AND PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS



BOOK CLUB GUIDE & PERSONAL WORKBOOK

LAURIE THIBERT

THE CATR THEORY™

Book Club Guide & Personal Workbook

A 4-Week Journey to Transform Your Relationships

Laurie Thibert



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Dedication:

To everyone in our community
who wants to create healthy connections,

May this resource help you to plant seeds of goodness
as we learn to **CATR** our relationships.

Together, may we make love visible at every opportunity.

Thank you for building bridges across the divides.

Some days will be easier than others.

Let's keep going.



Welcome to Your CATR™ Journey!

Whether you're embarking on this journey solo or with a group, you're about to discover something powerful: relationships don't have to be as complicated as we've made them.

This guide is designed to work for you in whatever way serves you best:

- As an individual workbook for personal reflection and relationship growth
- As a book club discussion guide for groups meeting once a week for four weeks
- As a combination—doing personal work between group meetings

How to Get the Most Value from This Guide

For Individual Use:

- Set aside dedicated time each week to read the assigned chapters and complete the reflection exercises
- Because **The CATR Theory™** book is such a quick read, if you finish it in one sitting, revisit the assigned chapters each week, then reflect on how those aspects appear in your relationships
- Be honest with yourself, as this is your private space for growth
- Don't rush. Some prompts may take days to fully process
- Keep this workbook in a safe place where you can return to it as relationships evolve
- Consider sharing your insights with trusted partners when you feel ready

For Book Club/Group Use:

- Read the assigned chapters before each meeting
- Complete the personal reflection sections before the meeting and share what feels comfortable
- Create a safe, judgment-free space where everyone can be authentic
- Use the discussion questions to guide conversation, but follow the energy of the group
- Respect confidentiality; what's shared in the group stays in the group
- Encourage everyone to speak, but don't pressure anyone to share more than they're comfortable with

Creating the Highest Value Experience:

- **Be specific.** When reflecting on relationships, think of actual people and situations, not hypotheticals.
- **Practice empathy.** Try to see situations from your partner's perspective, even when it's uncomfortable.
- **Stay curious.** Ask yourself, 'What else might be true?' when exploring relationship challenges.
- **Take action.** Insight without action doesn't create change. Identify one small step you can take after each session.
- **Be patient with yourself.** Changing relationship patterns takes time. Celebrate small wins along the way.

A Note on the Format:

Each week includes:

- Chapter summaries to refresh your memory
- Personal reflection prompts with space for your honest thoughts
- 'Where It's Working Well' exercises to identify and celebrate healthy patterns
- 'Where There Are Cracks' explorations to pinpoint areas needing attention
- 'Repair Strategies' sections with practical next steps
- Discussion questions for groups or deeper personal contemplation

Who The CATR Theory Supports:

The **CATR** framework will support most relationships, both personally and professionally, for young and old alike, and even across cultures. This framework has proven to be a timeless blueprint for success.

Just as you would cater a dinner party for everyone to have a great experience, when we learn to **CATR** our relationships where both parties care about nurturing each other, the relationship, and themselves in the process, beautiful connection can thrive.

Results of using **The CATR Theory** will vary due to the willingness of one or both individuals to use the concepts and integrate them.

Relationships involving narcissism, trauma, and mental health disorders are outside the scope of this framework and may be best supported by mental health professionals. If you are in urgent need of support in the US, please call 988 for the National Mental Health and Suicide Hotline for assistance.

Throughout this workbook, we refer to “your partner” as the person you are in a relationship with and are exploring your connection with. It could be your significant other, family member, friend, colleague, or other connection.

Remember: You're worthy of dancing on the tables of fulfilling high-quality relationships. Let's give you the tools to make that happen!

With love and respect,

Laurie Thibert

Week 1:

Understanding The Foundation

Reading Assignment: Preface, Introduction + Chapter 1

Chapter Summaries

Preface: The Relationship Crisis

Research shows that strong relationships are the key to happiness—both personally and professionally. We've lost sight of how to create and maintain high-quality relationships, and when they break down, we don't know how to repair them. The good news? Relationships don't have to be as hard as we make them. Most are relatively simple once we recognize the patterns and understand how the pieces fit together.

Introduction: The Origin of The CATR Theory

The **CATR Theory** was born from my lived experience as a relationship specialist, along with the journey I shared with my son and the teenagers who shared our home. Distilling decades of experience into a simple framework that even young people can use to understand and repair their relationships. The framework has proved successful across both personal and professional scenarios.

Introduction: What Is The CATR Theory?

The **CATR Theory** states that relationships with consistently healthy and strong **Communication, Accountability, Trust, and Respect** will experience higher levels of collaboration, satisfaction, and long-term partnerships than those without these elements. Think of these four elements as the legs of a table—when all four are strong, the relationship is stable. When one or more legs have cracks, the relationship becomes

wobbly and at risk for collapse. The theory provides a simple diagnostic tool: identify which leg is cracked, and you'll see what needs repair.

Chapter 1: The Communication Leg

Communication is the foundation for all other legs. It includes **HOW** you communicate (respectfully and compassionately), **WHAT** you communicate (openly and honestly), and **WHEN** you communicate (proactively rather than reactively). Healthy communication creates safety—a space where both people can be vulnerable and authentic without fear. When the Communication Leg is working well, it becomes the cornerstone for everything else to evolve. When it's cracked, it undermines the other three legs.

Personal Reflection: Your Relationship Foundation

Before diving into the exercises, take a moment to identify 2-3 key relationships you want to focus on during this journey. They might be with a partner, family member, friend, colleague, or even yourself.

Relationship 1: _____

Relationship 2: _____

Relationship 3: _____

Where the Communication Leg Is Working Well

Think of a relationship where communication feels easy and authentic. What makes it work? Consider the HOW, WHAT, and WHEN aspects of the communication.

What aspects of communication are working well in this relationship?

How does having strong communication in this relationship make you feel?

When the Communication Leg Has Cracks

Now think of a relationship where communication feels challenging or broken. Let's explore what's happening. Again, consider the HOW, WHAT, and WHEN aspects of communication.

What communication challenges exist in this relationship? (Be specific)

How do these communication cracks make YOU feel?

From your partner's perspective, how might these communication patterns make THEM feel?

Repair Strategies: Strengthening Communication

What is ONE small change you could make in HOW you communicate with this person?

What conversation have you been avoiding that needs to happen? What's one step toward having it?

How can you create more safety for open, honest communication in this relationship?

Discussion Questions for Groups

- What resonated most with you about our story and the origin of **The CATR Theory**?
- Have you experienced a relationship that felt like a 'wobbly table'? Looking back, which leg(s) needed strengthening?
- What does 'safe communication' mean to you? What makes you feel safe to be vulnerable?
- How were you taught to communicate in your family growing up? How has that shaped your adult relationships?
- Share an example (without names) of when proactive communication prevented a problem vs. when reactive communication made things worse.

- What's one communication pattern you'd like to change? What support do you need?

Week 2:

Building Accountability & Trust

Reading Assignment: Chapters 2-3

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 2: The Accountability Leg

Accountability means following through on what you say you'll do—consistently and with high quality. It's about being reliable in both words (keeping agreements for what/how you will communicate) and actions (doing what you commit to doing). When accountability is strong, people know they can count on you. When it's weak, trust erodes quickly. Strong accountability requires clear expectations, consistent follow-through, and the courage to address issues when they arise.

Chapter 3: The Trust Leg

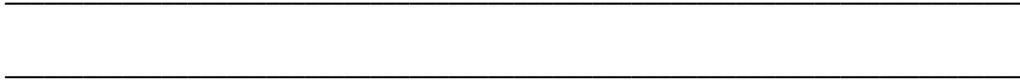
Trust is built over time through consistent experiences where communication is safe, and accountability is strong. Trust in communication means feeling safe to be vulnerable and authentic. It also means you can count on the communication to be consistently honest, respectful, and thoughtful. Trust in actions means believing your partner will follow through on commitments in a timely and quality manner. Trust is the glue that holds relationships together—without it, even good intentions fall apart. When trust is broken, it must be rebuilt slowly and intentionally through changed behavior, not just words.

Personal Reflection: Your Accountability & Trust Patterns

Where the Accountability Leg Is Working Well

Think of a relationship where you and the other person consistently follow through on commitments (both in words and actions).

What makes accountability strong in this relationship? What do you each do consistently?



How does this mutual accountability make you feel about the relationship?

Where the Accountability Leg Has Cracks

What accountability issues exist in a challenging relationship? Who's not following through? Note a few examples and the impact it has on the relationship.

How does this lack of accountability make YOU feel?

From your partner's view, what might they be experiencing? What might be preventing their follow-through?

Repair Strategies: Strengthening Accountability

What commitments have you made that you haven't followed through on? What's preventing you?

What's ONE commitment you can make and follow through on this week to rebuild accountability?

What conversation needs to happen about accountability in this relationship?

Where the Trust Leg Is Working Well

Think of someone you deeply trust. What specific behaviors or qualities built that trust?

How does having this trust impact your life and well-being?

Where the Trust Leg Has Cracks

In what relationship is trust broken or weak? What specific incidents damaged the trust?

How does this lack of trust make YOU feel? What do you fear?

From your partner's perspective, what might have contributed to the trust being broken?

If you are the person who broke the trust, what caused you to make the choice you did?

From your partner's perspective, how does this lack of trust make THEM feel? What do they fear?

Repair Strategies: Rebuilding Trust

Is this relationship worth the effort to rebuild trust? Why or why not?

What specific, consistent actions could you take to demonstrate trustworthiness?

What do you need from the other person to begin rebuilding trust?

Discussion Questions for Groups

- How do you define accountability in relationships? How was it modeled (or not) in your family?
- Share a time when someone's consistent accountability earned your trust. What did they do?
- What makes it hard for you to follow through sometimes? What helps you stay accountable?
- Have you experienced rebuilding trust after it was broken? What made the difference?
- How do you know when to keep investing in rebuilding trust vs. when to walk away?

- What's the connection between accountability and trust? How does weakness in one affect the other?

Week 3:

Cultivating Respect & Integration

Reading Assignment: Chapters 4-5

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 4: The Respect Leg

Respect is valuing someone and showing it through your actions—especially when it's inconvenient. It means honoring their boundaries, perspectives, and needs even when you disagree. Respect is demonstrated through how you speak to and about someone, how you treat their time and energy, and whether you show up for them when they need support. Without respect, the other three legs can't stand. Respect is the ultimate test of whether a relationship is worth maintaining.

Note: When we respect someone, we will show up for each other even when it is inconvenient, as long as:

1. What is requested does not violate the other's core values, OR
2. What is requested is not beyond what the other person is able or willing to give.

Chapter 5: How to CATR Your Relationship™

This chapter provides practical exercises and reflection questions to assess each leg of your relationships. It guides you through identifying what's working well, recognizing where cracks exist, and developing specific strategies for repair. The exercises help you see patterns from both your perspective and your partner's perspective—a crucial step in creating mutual understanding and sustainable change. The goal is to build your relational intelligence so you can proactively maintain healthy relationships.

Use the **CATR It™ Protocol** as a diagnostic tool whenever something feels off.

Ask yourself: 'Which leg is wobbly?' Then take intentional action to strengthen it.

CATR It! Protocol:

- **Step 1: Check the Foundation:**

Check to make sure the three I's are solid – **Intent, Interests, Investment**. If they are not solid, the relationship may not be sustainable unless both parties work to realign and commit to the relationship's success.

Intent – Interests - Investment

- **STEP 2:** Check the **Respect Leg**, to see if each leg is solid. (If the leg is not strong, move to the leg before it to uncover where a crack has occurred.)
- **STEP 3:** Check the **Trust Leg** for cracks.
- **STEP 4:** Check the **Accountability Leg** for cracks.
- **STEP 5:** Check the **Communication Leg** for cracks. (Run the scenario through the **HOT ART of Communication** filter – including **Listening to Learn** and the **Power of Positivity**.)

Respect→Trust→Accountability→Communication

- **STEP 6:** Identify the crack(s) and work with your partner to address how to fix it(them).

Remember: By focusing on the positives already in place and building on what is working, it shifts the perspective to a “glass ½ full view”, from which to “fill up” and increase your chances of success.

Personal Reflection: Respect & The Complete Picture

Where the Respect Leg Is Working Well

Think of a relationship where you feel genuinely valued and respected.

How does this person demonstrate respect for you? What specific actions show you're valued?

How does feeling respected impact your willingness to invest in this relationship?

Where the Respect Leg Has Cracks

What disrespectful behaviors are present in a challenging relationship?

How does this lack of respect make YOU feel? How does it affect your willingness to engage?

Are you showing respect to this person? What might they say about how you treat them?

Repair Strategies: Diagnosing and Repairing Respect

What boundaries need to be established or reinforced to ensure mutual respect?

What's one thing you can do to demonstrate more respect for this person this week?

Is there something you need to experience to feel more respected in the relationship?

If respect continues to be absent, what does that tell you about the relationship's future?

Repair Strategies: Clarifying Where the Crack Exists

Choose one of your key relationships where something just doesn't feel as healthy as it once did, though it is not abundantly clear where the crack may have formed.

Use the **CATR It! Protocol** above to clarify where the crack has occurred

The crack(s) may exist in more than one leg.

STEP 1: Check the Foundation

Is there a crack in the foundation? If so, what is the nature of the crack?

Consider:

- Do we both have good intent for each other and the relationship's success?
- Do we have common interests or shared values upon which to build connections?
- Do the shared values exist, though the way we engage with the values causes conflict?
- Are we both invested in the relationship's success (contributing time, energy, and resources)?

Is there a crack in the foundation? If so, what is the nature of the crack? What will it take for the foundation to become strong again?

STEP 2: Check the Respect Leg

Next: Start with the **Respect Leg** and work backwards. Do I respect my partner, and do I feel their respect? If not, check the other legs to see what is contributing to this crack.

STEP 3: Check the Trust Leg

What aspect of the **Trust Leg** has been broken or weakened? How does that make you and your partner feel?

STEP 4: Check the Accountability Leg

What aspect of the **Accountability Leg** has weakened the **Trust Leg** - is it regarding communication or actions? If it is regarding actions, what would you or your partner like to see differently?

(If it is regarding communication, proceed to the **Communication Leg**.)

STEP 5: Check the Communication Leg

Use the **HOT ART of Communication™** filter to uncover what parts are working and what parts are not regarding healthy communication:

- Honest
 - Open
 - Transparent
 - Accepting with Agreements
 - Respectful in Tone
 - Thoughtful
-
- **L2** – Listening to Learn
 - **P2** – Power of Positivity

What aspects of communication are working well in this relationship?

****Note:** Remember to focus on the glass ½ full to keep perspective on the overall health of the relationship. Positive or negative, you will find more of what you focus on.

What are the aspects that are not working for you or your partner?

What is one thing you can do to repair one of the cracks identified?

****Note:** Starting with the repair of the **Communication** and **Accountability Legs** will help to strengthen multiple legs.

Also, there may be times when you are not sure which leg the crack is in. i.e. it is communication, though you are not sure technically which leg has the crack.

Here is the good news...IT DOESN'T MATTER because "It's NOT Rocket Science!"

If you've identified what aspect of the communication needs repair, then work on that issue and watch it heal, potentially, all 4 legs!

Integration Exercise: The Complete CATR Assessment

Choose one of your key relationships. Rate each leg from 1-10 (1 = broken, 10 = thriving):

Communication: ____ / 10

What's working: _____

What needs work:

Accountability: ____ / 10

What's working: _____

What needs work:

Trust: ____ / 10

What's working: _____

What needs work:

Respect: ____ / 10

What's working: _____

What needs work:

Based on your assessment, which leg needs the most immediate attention?

What's your action plan to strengthen this leg over the next 30 days?

Discussion Questions for Groups

- How do you define respect in relationships? Is it different from kindness or politeness?
- Share an example of someone showing you respect when it was inconvenient for them. How did it impact you?
- When is it appropriate to walk away from a relationship that lacks respect?
- Looking at the **CATR** framework as a whole, which leg do you most often struggle with? Why?
- How has understanding the 'table legs' metaphor changed how you view your relationships?
- What's one relationship you're committed to strengthening? What's your first step?

Week 4:

Taking Action & Moving Forward

Reading Assignment: Chapters 6-9

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 6: Examples of CATR at Play

This chapter provides practical examples to demonstrate how **The CATR Theory** applies to ANY relationship. The exercises help you identify patterns from the parties' perspectives—a crucial step in fostering mutual understanding and lasting change. They show how using the **CATR** framework can help diagnose and repair most relationships.

Sometimes, the relationship has a broken foundation or framework that cannot be fixed. In such cases, it is better to let go of the relationship or reframe your engagement. The goal is to enhance your relational intelligence so you can actively nurture healthy relationships.

Chapters 7-9: Bringing It All Together

These final chapters summarize **The CATR Theory** framework and guide you in applying it to real relationships. You'll learn to assess each leg, identify what's working, what needs repair, and develop specific action steps. The conclusion emphasizes that transforming relationships—and ultimately our world—starts with how we show up for each other.

Additional tools and support systems are available to continue your growth journey.

Personal Reflection: Your Relationship Action Plan

Progress Check: What Has Shifted?

Looking back at the past three weeks, what insights have emerged for you?



What patterns have you noticed in your relationships that you weren't aware of before?

What small actions have you taken, and what impact have they had?

Your 30-Day Relationship Action Plan

Select 1-2 key relationships to focus on for the next 30 days.

Relationship #1: _____

Which CATR leg needs the most attention?

Specific actions I will take this week:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Conversation that needs to happen:

How I will measure progress:

Relationship #2: _____

Which CATR leg needs the most attention?

Specific actions I will take this week:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Conversation that needs to happen:

How I will measure progress:

Sustainability: Making CATR a Lifestyle

What daily or weekly practice will help you stay mindful of relationship health?

Who can support you in this journey? (accountability partner, therapist, book club members)

What will you do when you notice a relationship leg getting wobbly? (Use the **CATR IT! Protocol.**)

How will you celebrate progress and growth in your relationships?

Final Reflection: Dancing on Tables

Complete this sentence: Because of **The CATR Theory**, I now understand that...

What does 'dancing on the tables of fulfilling, high-quality relationships' mean to you now?

What commitment are you making to yourself about how you'll show up in relationships moving forward?

Discussion Questions for Groups

- What has been your biggest 'aha' moment during this book club journey?
- Share a specific action you've taken and the result. What surprised you?
- Which of the four **CATR** legs do you most want to continue working on? Why?
- How has your perspective on relationship challenges changed?
- What will you do differently the next time you sense a relationship getting wobbly?
- How will you keep the momentum going after this book club ends?
- What's one way this group has supported your growth that you're grateful for?

A Note of Encouragement

Congratulations on completing this journey through **The CATR Theory**! Whether you worked through this guide alone or with a group, you've invested in something that matters deeply: the quality of your relationships.

Remember:

- **Relationships don't have to be as complicated as we make them.**
- **Small cracks are easier to repair than big breaks.**
- **You now have a framework to identify what's working and what needs attention.**
- **Change happens one conversation, one action, one choice at a time.**

When relationships feel wobbly, don't panic—**CATR It!**™ Ask yourself which leg needs attention, then take intentional action to strengthen it.

This workbook is yours to return to again and again. As your relationships evolve, so will your insights. Keep coming b to these pages, keep practicing the tools, and keep showing up with intention.

Each day, ask yourself, “How can I make love visible today?”

Plant the seeds of goodness, even when it's hard, and watch the seeds grow. (Because whatever seeds we plant will grow, both positive...and negative. Choose positive.) Let's plant the seeds of love, compassion, empathy, gratitude, partnership, and peace, and watch them grow.

You are worthy of dancing on the tables of fulfilling, high-quality relationships. Now you have the tools and knowledge to make it happen.

Here's to your journey of connection, growth, joy, and ultimately ...love!

With love and respect,

Laurie Thibert

Additional Resources

Continue Your CATR Journey:

Between Us™ – Reflections to Strengthen Relationships (card game)

Designed to support conversations that reveal insights in Communication, Actions, Trust, Respect, Patience, and Reassurance. Ideal for personal relationships.

Visit: www.BuiltByOT.com

AIM – Aligned Insights Matter

Executive Coaching/Consulting for organizations using the CATR Your Relationships™ Playbook.

Visit: www.AlignedInsightsMatter.com

AIM² – Accountability in Motion

Gatherings where individuals support each other in accountability using The CATR Theory™ framework. A safe space to uplevel relationships both personally and professionally.

Visit: www.AlignedInsightsMatter.com/Resources

CATR IT!™ – Children's Book Series (Coming Soon)

Help children learn The CATR Theory™ from a young age to develop healthy relationships throughout their lives.

Visit: www.AlignedInsightsMatter.com/CATR-IT

A portion of the proceeds from **The CATR Theory™** supports:

- **Water Access Now** (www.WaterAccessNow.org)
- **Point Hope** (www.PointHope.org)
- **Help Us Adopt** (www.HelpUsAdopt.org)
- **Heart Cards Global** (www.HeartCardsGlobal.org)

Making Love Visible©

Thank you to June Dillinger for coining this beautiful concept. Learn more at www.makinglovevisible.com



THE CATR THEORY™

Transform your relationships from the inside out with this comprehensive companion to *The CATR Theory™*. Whether you're working solo or gathering with a book club, this interactive guide helps you apply Laurie Thibert's proven framework of Communication, Accountability, Trust, and Respect to your real-life connections.

Through four weeks of structured exploration, you'll identify what's working well in your relationships, discover where the cracks are forming, and develop practical strategies for repair. Each session includes chapter summaries, thoughtful reflection prompts, space to see situations from multiple perspectives, and discussion questions designed for both individual growth and meaningful group conversations.

This isn't just about understanding relationships—it's about transforming them. With assessment tools, action plans, and guided exercises, you'll build the Relational Intelligence (RQ) needed to create lasting, high-quality connections. You're worthy of dancing on the tables of fulfilling relationships. Now you have the workbook to make it happen.

