Handout

**Capitalizing**

Research by Shelly Gable suggests that support between friends during *good* times is as important as support during bad times.

We all know the importance of supporting, consoling, and reassuring a friend who shares some bad things that happened to her. We know the importance of this type of response to bad news.

It is about time that we learn how to respond to a friend when she blurts out something good that happened to her. This is where Shelly Gable's research helps us.

Let's assume that your friend says, “I got an A for my online course assignment!”

There are four basic ways you can respond to this good news:

**1. Passive Destructive**

**Characteristics of the Response:** You change the topic. You become jealous.

**Examples:** Looks like it's going to rain. Your room is in shambles.

**2. Passive Constructive**

**Characteristics of the Response:** Your friend knows that you are happy for her. You don't make a big deal. You say little. You ignore additional details.

**Examples:** That's nice. Good job!

**3. Active Destructive**

**Characteristics of the Response:** You are disinterested. You don't care. You focus on how you feel. You are jealous. You don't pay attention. You find problems associated with your friend's good news. You de-emphasize the achievement. You point out the potential downside. You put your friend down. You begin preaching against pride and vanity.

**Examples:** Everybody gets an A in those online courses.  An A in a course does not translate to an A in life. Now you have to work harder to maintain your grades. Just a fluke.

**4. Active Constructive**

**Characteristics of the Response:** Your friend feels that you are as happy as she is. You ask a lot of questions about the good news. You are enthusiastic. You comment on your friend's talents. You ask for more details. You share your friend's good news with others. You point out how deserving you friend is.

**Examples:** Best news I heard this week. This is the beginning of a lot of As. You must be proud of yourself. This is not surprising. With all of the hard studying you did, you deserve it.

Shelly Gable calls the last type of response—the active constructive one—*capitalizing*. This type of response strengthens your relationship. It makes your friend happy. And, it makes you happy also.

In working with capitalization, I have found that it is the first, immediate, and spontaneous response to good news that is important. So it does not work if you say something like,

Remember last Friday when you said you got an A, I said, “Don't gloat. Everybody gets an A in those online assignments.”? What I really meant to say was, “I am so proud of you. You're a great student.”

I am making this statement based on subjective personal experience but I am sure that someone has empirical data to support it.

So remember the next time you hear some good news about your partner, friend, family members, or co-worker, react *immediately* in an *active* and *constructive* fashion.

To make it easy for you to remember this prescription, we've rearranged the three important features to form the acronym CIA.