



RELATIONAL SPACE

A core concept of the DWCC



Place is important. It is precisely why we are a place-based community that is focused on the neighbourhoods between the Detroit River and Giles, Howard and Caron. We are a community focused on creating and supporting loving community within those spaces. The concept of relational space says that are different spaces with different benefits and limitations, with some being better for meeting new people and others better for deepening friendship.

“The spaces we inhabit and each thing within them hold our extended sense of self. But we not only shape our spaces, our spaces shape us and influence our sense of who we are. We live in relationship with the spaces we create. All relationships are by definition two-sided and provide a forum within which we come to know and direct ourselves.”

-Alison Bonds Shapiro

Joseph Myers’ book “The Search to Belong” is all about these four “spaces” in which we have a sense of belonging. Myers says that in all four spaces, we connect; we are committed and participate; we find the connection significant. So it’s not that we go from public to intimate in a journey of ever more valuable “belonging.” Rather, having a sense of belonging in all four spaces is essential for relational health.

PUBLIC SPACE is like being a Mac owner, or playing bingo every week with 200 others, or being a Lions fan. It occurs when people connect through an outside influence, and these kinds of relationships can carry great significance in our lives. Public relationships happen when we connect through outside influences or events. Here *strangers* move to *familiarity*.

SOCIAL SPACE is a bit more intimate than public space, but it’s still lacking the intensity and honesty of the personal and private spaces. It’s like knowing the barista at the local coffee shop or like a neighbour you might ask to pick up your mail while you’re away on vacation. Social relationships and spaces help us get to know people. Here *familiarity* moves to *acquaintances*.

PERSONAL SPACE is characterized by knowing and being known, like a blossoming friendship, or like a close friend with whom we share more about ourselves than we would an acquaintance. Personal space is inhabited by people who are close to us, and it’s a space where honesty, authenticity, and trust are important. Here *acquaintances* move to *friendships*.

PRIVATE SPACE is characterized by intimacy and trust, like marriage, or a very few close friends with whom we share intimate experiences, feelings, and thoughts. These are people who know the whole truth about us and accept us nonetheless. Intimate belonging is reserved for very few people. It is where the most intimate details about ourselves are revealed without the presence of shame.

