

Ultimate Spiritual R&R Research Overview



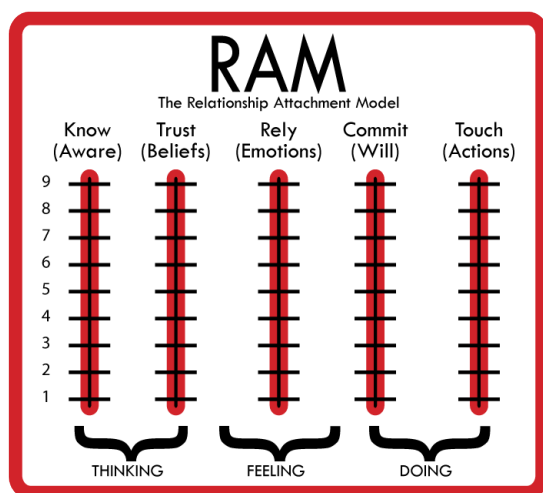
The following report summarizes the research on the Ultimate Spiritual R&R Program. For research summaries on the other programs offered by Love Thinks please visit www.lovethinks.com or email info@lovethinks.com.



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Overview of the Courses that teach the RAM

The Relationship Attachment Model™ (RAM) is an easy-to-understand, interactive model that provides a framework for integrating the basic systems of the



self, the connections in relationships, and the major psychological theories. First, this model proposes that there are five distinct and inter-related systems of self: a sensory system, a cognitive system, an affective/emotional system, a volitional system, and a tactile/sexual system. Second, each system contributes a unique connection to the overall experience of relationships: the sensory system contributes awareness within the self with the connection of knowing others; the cognitive system contributes beliefs within the self with the connection of trusting others; the affective/emotional system produces emotions within the self with the connection of relying on others; the volitional system produces a will within the self with the connection of commitments to others; and the tactile/sexual system contributes actions/expressions within the self with the contribution of touching others. The first two dynamics relate mostly to thinking processes

(sensory integration theory, cognitive theory, attachment theory, object relations theory); the third to feeling or affective processes (social exchange theory, emotionally-focused theory); and the last two relate mostly to behavioral processes (behavioral theories, sexual theories).

The RAM can explain the connections in four key relationships of life: how one relates with oneself, others, circumstances and spirituality. These four domains capture most life experiences.

COUNSELING WITH THE RAM

This course explains counseling theory and research integrated and supported by the RAM. It uses the RAM to provide a framework for understanding the counselor's relationship with a client/constituent in counseling and then a framework to understand the constituent's relationships with others, self, circumstances and spirituality. In the case of the former, the course teaches key areas to explore with a client (KNOW), ways to develop a therapeutic alliance and trust while formulating an accurate conceptualization of the client (TRUST); ways to determine the competency of the counselor to meet the needs of the client (RELY); ways to determine the plan to help the client (COMMIT) and follow-up with the client (TOUCH) to ensure that treatment/support/referrals are effective in client's life.

PICK (Premarital Interpersonal Choices & Knowledge)

This course applies the RAM to singles' romantic relationships with emphasizing healthy relationship development (each level should not exceed a previous level in developing relationships) and five crucial areas to explore to accurately KNOW a partner

from other relationships, compatibility potential and relationship skills).

LINKS (Lasting Intimacy through Nurturing, Knowledge & Skills)

This course applies the RAM to couples' relationships with emphasizing that the balance of the RAM connections will naturally fluctuate. The key is that couples regularly balance their imbalances by strengthening and setting goals with each of the five dynamics of the RAM in weekly "huddles."

OUR HOME RUNS (Families stepping up to the plate)

This course applies the RAM to family relationships to strengthen the ways that families communicate, respect, work and play together, support and build family resilience, and express affection and affirmation. Our Home Runs, like the LINKS course, also teaches a practical format using the RAM but in this case, for family meetings: Catch Up (know), Patch Up (trust/respect), Dream Up (rely through working and playing together), Back Up (commit & support), and Build Up (expressing affection & affirmations).

ULTIMATE SPIRITUAL RESILIENCY & RELATIONSHIPS (R&R)

The last course applies the RAM to the development of spirituality. This pluralistic course encourages individual exploration and small group interaction while emphasizing that spirituality is resilient to the proportion that it is a positive source of strength to the three other relationships of life: how one relates with him/herself, others, and the circumstances of life. Although all humans are spiritual beings, spirituality can also be developed and the RAM provides a practical framework for understanding this journey. This process begins with one's awareness of spirituality (KNOW) and his/her own spiritual values/beliefs (TRUST); the process of developing and deepening spirituality requires that these values and beliefs also become sources of strength (RELY) in how circumstances and emotions are managed; and finally, priorities and decisions (COMMIT), and relationships with others (TOUCH) need to be consistent with these spiritual values and beliefs.

MILITARY SETTINGS: CH-BOLC

Pastoral Counseling with the RAM is taught in Phase Two of the Army Chaplain Basic Officer Leadership Course. Chaplains are instructed in counseling theory and marriage and family relationship research in the first half of this course. Then they are taught how to conduct an initial counseling interview, form a conceptualization and simple treatment plan for a client/constituent, and determine competency, need for referral, follow-up and pastoral care.

Three certification courses are taught in Phase Three that apply the RAM to three key relationships: PICK for premarital romantic relationships; LINKS for couple relationships; and Our Home Runs for family relationships.

The use of the RAM provides a CONTINUITY of training in both pastoral care and the practical courses taught in Strong Bonds to help singles, couples and families build healthier and more resilient relationships.

MILITARY SETTINGS: C4

PICK and LINKS have been taught to Chaplain Captian's Career Course (C4) classes when it was determined that the majority of students have not received certification in these courses. If student-chaplains have been trained then updates of materials are provided and reviewed.

The Ultimate Spiritual R&R course is also taught to C4 classes to provide chaplains with a course that is consistent with principles in the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness resiliency training and able to be taught in pluralistic settings.

“ Ultimate Spiritual R&R is a great investment that is already allowing our chaplains to reengage in the spiritual dimension of CSF2 and develop the means for Soldiers to discover and define their own spiritual journey. ”

Chaplain (COL) Mike Dugal
USARPAC Command Chaplain



Overview of Ultimate Spiritual R&R workshop

OVERVIEW

Ultimate Spiritual Resiliency and Relationships (R & R) is a pluralistic spiritual course designed to engage participants in the exploration of their most meaningful spiritual values and beliefs, and to provide skills for accessing and using those values/beliefs in a more resilient management of their emotions and emotional reactions, perspective and meaning of life events, decisions and priorities, and in their interactions and relationships with others.

DESCRIPTION

Session One

Session One provides an overview of the entire course and begins with a brief class discussion about what it means to be resilient. Participants are asked to share with their small groups a challenging experience in which they were resilient (a success story). They are also asked to identify what helped them to be resilient (e.g. other people, a set of circumstances, something spiritual, some personal attribute or characteristic). Afterward, a representative from each group shares the list of what their members identified had helped them to increase their resiliency. The instructor writes these sources of resilience on the board. After all of the groups have shared their lists, the instructor points out that their ideas seem to fit into four areas. These four areas have the potential of contributing to personal resiliency depending on how one deals with or relates to them. These four “relationships of life” are the ways someone relates with his/her 1) circumstances; 2) self; 3) others; and 4) spirituality. The class is then led in a discussion about ways that spirituality has helped them with managing the other three areas (self, others and circumstances). This discussion concludes that their spirituality contributes to their personal resilience to the degree that it becomes a positive source for how

they relate with circumstances, self and others.

Four principles of the course are briefly explained to the class. First, people are spiritual beings (unique characteristics of being human are described as spiritual qualities). Second, people have the potential of developing spirituality. Therefore, spirituality is both a state of being and something that is dynamic, able to be developed. Third, religion can help (research is reviewed that demonstrates benefits of belonging to a religious community and engaging in religious practices). However, a strong disclaimer is made that this course is NOT a religion course. It is designed to help ALL individuals explore their spirituality and values, and to develop individuals explore their spirituality and values, and to develop skills for integrating those values in the ways they manage themselves, relate with others, and handle their circumstances. Fourth, participants are to be respectful of the views of others. The small group activities are opportunities for camaraderie and beneficial learning from others.

The class is led in a discussion about the ways that the participants have worked to develop their spirituality. A model of the connections in relationships, the Relationship Attachment Model (RAM) is introduced as a picture of how to develop spirituality. The first connection, what they know, has to do with the extent that they are aware of spirituality on a day-to-day basis. The second connection, the extent of their trust, is related to their spiritual values and beliefs. The third connection involves the ways that they actually rely on these spiritual values and have integrated them in their other relationships of life. The fourth connection has to do with the decisions and commitments that they make because of their spirituality. And the fifth connection involves the ways that their spirituality is “lived out” in their actions and relationships (how they

touch others and the world around them).

The next three sessions move from left to right in the RAM to provide a practical plan for strengthening spirituality and the ways that it helps the other three domains of life. Specifically, participants deepen their spirituality by involving their thinking, emotions and actions.

Session Two

- Participants learn how to develop spirituality in ways that impact “what they think” (know and trust) which includes increasing their awareness and mindfulness of self and of their core spiritual values.
- The session concludes with practicing a skill set to use their spiritual values to adjust their attitudes and the meanings they attribute to life events.

Session Three

- Focuses participants on how their spirituality alters what they rely on—the extent that their spiritual values are integrated into the ways they handle their impulses and “how they feel.”
- Participants are taught skills and led through a visualization exercise for managing emotional reactions and immediate thoughts consistent with their spiritual values.

Session Four

- Explains the last two dynamics of the RAM, commitment and touch and focuses on ways their spirituality impacts their actual decisions, commitments and expressions (“what they do”) in their three domains of life.
- This includes a spiritual discipline training plan, setting spiritual goals, and applying their core values to the ways they relate to others.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Provide a user-friendly pluralistic model for an ongoing development of spirituality.
2. Describe the four basic domains of life: ways you relate to yourself; ways you relate to others; ways you relate to your circumstances of life; and ways that you relate to a spiritual experience of life.
3. Integrate spiritual development with the ways one relates with the other three domains of life so

that spirituality becomes a source of strength and resiliency for the other three domains.

4. Provide a self-assessment model that individuals can regularly use to both gauge their spiritual development and determine practical steps to strengthen their spirituality and resiliency.
5. Improve spiritual skills related to a responsible awareness of self and others, a positive and resilient framing of circumstances and experiences, and attitudes for effective relationships and team-building.
6. Learn and practice spiritual skills for regulating emotional expressions, increasing will-power, deepening spiritual disciplines, and balancing the ways one gives to and receives from others.

COURSE FORMATS

There are four 1.5 hour sessions that can be taught in one day (session 1-2 in the morning, and 3-4 in the afternoon); or in two blocks of two sessions each; or in four separate modules. It is also possible to present portions of sessions in shorter blocks of time. However, the one-day format has the advantage of an increased rapport and openness that result from the group process.

TEACHING METHODS

There are four basic methods used to teach this course: 1) Individual work; 2) Class discussion; 3) Small table/group discussion and skill development; 4) Presentation of material and information by instructor.

INSTRUCTOR CERTIFICATION COURSE

The Ultimate Spiritual R&R certification course includes instructor lesson plans for the four sessions; a power point on CD; copy of the participant workbook and mini-RAM; a large instructor tri-fold RAM board; and a summary of the research used in the course. At this time, all certifications require attendance of a live certification training. Participants will also gain access to the private R&R instructor sections of the website for additional instructional materials and free downloads.



Ultimate Spiritual R&R

Army Program Evaluation Summary

The Ultimate Spiritual R&R (Resiliency & Relationships) course was piloted three times to a total of 81 participants at two bases: Fort Hood and Fort Jackson. Each site provided a different composition of participants. Fort Hood consisted of a mixture of participants who had varying degrees of religious/spiritual beliefs, Army experience, and rank. The first pilot at Fort Jackson was comprised of all Chaplains who were days away from graduating from their Chaplain Captain Career Coursework (C4). The third pilot at Fort Jackson was comprised of soldiers from the 171st training brigade. The different combinations of participant backgrounds and belief systems changed the feel of the course and the language used in group discussions. The first Ft. Jackson pilot consisted of all Chaplains predominately of the Protestant religious preference, therefore most of the stories and examples involved discussion about God. The Ft. Hood and second Ft. Jackson pilot participants were of mixed spiritual beliefs and backgrounds and discussions about God were virtually absent from the group discussions. These observations lend support to the utility of this course regardless of denominational identification, religious beliefs, spiritual beliefs, rank, and military experience. A brief overview of the combined findings is described below.

The participants were on average 39 years old with a range in age from 19-60 years old. Participants were predominately male (77.5%) and married (80.2%). Half of the sample was white 53.1% and 29.6% was African American. The majority of participants indicated that they were of the Protestant religious preference (70%); however between the three pilots participants identified as Muslim, Mormon, Jewish, and of no religious preference. Overall 47% of the sample indicated that they were very religious and 63% said they were very spiritual.

The majority of participants reported being satisfied with the Ultimate Spiritual R&R program (90%). Additionally,

90% would recommend the program to others, and 90% reported that they see the value of a course that helps them explore their spiritual beliefs. One participant commented, "I really enjoyed this class. I am more empowered to succeed emotionally, spiritually, and otherwise." Furthermore, 94% agreed that the program handled the "sensitive" nature of religion, faith, and spirituality in a non-offensive manner.

Finally, a retrospective pre-post design was used to examine whether the program had an effect on participants' beliefs about spirituality, intentions to use the skills taught in the course, and overall confidence in how to be resilient and overcome difficult life circumstances. Analyses indicated that there was a significant program effect for all of the items. These results are summarized in the table to follow. These findings are noteworthy because these significant differences suggested that the participants learned new information regarding how their spirituality serves to strengthen their emotional controls, relationships, control over their reactions, and resiliency.

Additional Comments:

- As a chaplain, this would give me a tool to engage soldiers concerning their spiritual life. I believe it works well with the comprehensive soldier fitness model.
- I think all soldiers in processing the installation should receive this course. This will also be a helpful tool during redeployment
- Great job! Great course and vitally important aspect of overall resiliency model.
- Very well done and well presented. I especially liked the exercises where we wrote out our beliefs/values.

***Since the 3 pilots, members in the Army continue to be trained in the R&R program and the program has been delivered to Army soldiers. Similarly significant and positive results have been found.*

Item	Before (Mean,SD)	After (Mean, SD)	T-value
I clearly know the spiritual values and beliefs I hold that relate to circumstances, myself, and others	2.14 (1.30)	1.39 (0.56)	5.39
I know how to find meaning in difficult and challenging life circumstances by using my spiritual values and beliefs	2.06 (1.23)	1.40 (0.63)	5.43
I intend on handling my emotional reactions consistent with my spiritual values and beliefs	2.35 (1.13)	1.43 (0.62)	7.72
I am motivated to practice my spiritual values and beliefs	2.08 (1.05)	1.35 (0.62)	6.68
I have a good understanding of my spiritual values and beliefs	2.04 (1.21)	1.40 (0.57)	5.20
I intend on developing strong supportive relationships	2.05 (0.92)	1.34 (0.58)	7.46
I have a spiritual responsibility to both give support to others and receive support from others	1.96 (1.05)	1.30 (0.49)	6.18
I know who I can turn to for support when I am down or very upset	1.88 (1.12)	1.49 (0.82)	4.12
I know how my spirituality can help me control my thinking and reactions even if I cannot control my circumstances	2.25 (1.18)	1.42 (0.59)	6.90
I know how to be resilient in the ways I spiritually handle difficult or challenging experiences	2.26 (1.19)	1.45 (0.62)	6.56
I feel hopeful about my life	1.60 (1.02)	1.25 (0.67)	3.81

Note: 1= strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3= slightly agree; 4= slightly disagree; 5= disagree; 6= strongly disagree; all items were significant at the $p < .0001$ level

“ All of my Ultimate Spiritual R&R workshop participants said they were much better equipped to be more resilient, and had new tools they could use daily to get/keep them on track with regards to their spiritual walk. Most commented that the pluralistic nature of the workshop was not what they expected, but a very pleasant surprise, taking them where they were at in their own spiritual journey vs. imposing the instructor’s spiritual values as “correct”. ”

Chaplain (COL) JOHN SHEDD
Command Chaplain/Space and Missile Defense Command

Ultimate Spiritual R&R

ANG Program Evaluation Summary

Three ANG pilots (169 FW, 122 FW, and 147 RW) were conducted with the Ultimate Spiritual R&R program in South Carolina (pilot 1; n = 25), Indiana (pilot 2; n = 27), and Texas (pilot 3; n = 26). In total, 78 participants volunteered and completed the Ultimate Spiritual R&R program and subsequent evaluation form. These participants included a blend of traditional and full-time Guardsmen comprised of ANG enlisted Airmen, senior NCOs, officers, a civilian, and chaplains. The majority of the participants were male (67%), white (71%), and married (82%). Overall, the participants were highly educated. Specifically, 39% either completed college or attended some graduate school. The religious make-up of the participants was primarily Protestant (81%); however between the three pilots various denominations with the Protestant category were identified (i.e. Lutheran, Baptist, Nondenominational, etc) and other participants identified as Catholic, Orthodox, and no religious preference. In addition, 32% of the participants considered themselves “very religious” while 39% considered themselves “very spiritual.”

Overall, satisfaction with the Ultimate Spiritual R&R program was high. Specifically, 95% of the total participants agreed that they were very satisfied with the program. Additionally, 92% agreed they learned new information, 87% agreed that they increased their understanding of the role of spirituality in developing emotional strength, and 87% agreed that they will become more resilient because of the skills taught in the R&R course. Finally, 96% agreed that the program handled the sensitive nature of religion, faith and spirituality in a non-offensive manner. One participant commented, “With many programs we in the military are exposed to during our careers, this program opens the door to future learning. It can be the catalyst of growth by expanding our horizons. It enables us to move outside the box.” Another participant said, “This program was well developed and develops tools to help individuals better cope with the

stressors of life both at home, work, military, etc.”

Finally, a retrospective pre-post design was used to examine whether the program had an effect on participants’ beliefs about spirituality, intentions to use the skills taught in the course, and overall confidence in how to be resilient and overcome difficult life circumstances. Analyses of the retrospective pre-post questions indicated that there was a significant program effect for all items, suggesting that the Ultimate Spiritual R&R program helped in developing participants’ beliefs about spirituality, resulted in intentions to use the skills taught in the course, and increased confidence in how to be resilient and overcome difficult circumstances. The results are summarized in the table to follow.

Additional Comments:

- This is a value added course. Members gain insight on how important spirituality is to relationships.
- I found the training very beneficial for me and feel that I have been helped greatly.
- Especially now with all the changes in the military, deployments, uncertainty I believe this course can help people to be able to cope with whatever circumstances that happen to them.
- I can see how it could be very valuable in helping people gain understanding of self and others. Great tools forcing ourselves to look in the mirror. This may be a good tool to use prior to deployments and basic training. The tools learned definitely are invaluable.
- I believe it helped me to become more self-aware and how to react and cope through significant events.

***Since the 3 pilots, members in the Air Force continue to be trained in the R&R program and the program has been delivered to Airmen. Similarly significant and positive results have been found.*

Item	Before (Mean,SD)	After (Mean, SD)	T-value
I clearly know the spiritual values and beliefs I hold that relate to circumstances, myself, and others	2.56 (1.09)	1.53 (0.66)	10.49
I know how to find meaning in difficult and challenging life circumstances by using my spiritual values and beliefs	2.38 (1.05)	1.42 (0.59)	8.98
I intend on handling my emotional reactions consistent with my spiritual values and beliefs	2.58 (0.93)	1.41 (0.57)	11.41
I am motivated to practice my spiritual values and beliefs	2.40 (1.02)	1.32 (0.57)	10.47
I have a good understanding of my spiritual values and beliefs	2.49 (1.13)	1.59 (0.78)	9.72
I intend on developing strong supportive relationships	2.44 (1.08)	1.49 (0.82)	9.51
I have a spiritual responsibility to both give support to others and receive support from others	2.37 (1.08)	1.40 (0.63)	8.55
I know who I can turn to for support when I am down or very upset	2.17 (1.09)	1.50 (0.80)	6.82
I know how my spirituality can help me control my thinking and reactions even if I cannot control my circumstances	2.41 (0.93)	1.42 (0.57)	12.25
I know how to be resilient in the ways I spiritually handle difficult or challenging experiences	2.59 (0.99)	1.51 (0.62)	11.00
I feel hopeful about my life	1.92 (1.07)	1.31 (0.78)	6.72

Note: 1= strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3= slightly agree; 4= slightly disagree; 5= disagree; 6= strongly disagree; all items were significant at the $p < .0001$ level



DR JOHN VAN EPP

author | speaker | trainer

about John

John Van Epp, PhD in Counseling Psychology, is the founder of Love Thinks, LLC and author of *How to Avoid Falling in Love with a Jerk*, published by McGraw-Hill. His pastoral background, twenty-five years of clinical experience and extensive research in premarital, marital and family relations have paved the way for his courses, *PICK (How to Avoid Falling for a Jerk)*, *Couple LINKS*, *Our Home Runs*, *Ultimate Spiritual R&R*, and *Pastoral Counseling with the RAM* to be taught in thousands of churches, singles organizations, military and educational settings and social agencies in all fifty states, ten countries and by more than 6,000 instructors certified by Dr. Van Epp.

Van Epp and his innovative Relationship Attachment Model, book and relationship courses were awarded the Smart Marriage Impact Award (2008) and have been featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Time Magazine*, *Psychology Today*, *O Magazine*, and *Cosmopolitan*; and he has appeared on the *CBS Early Show*, the *O'Reilly Factor*, *Fox News*, and *Focus on the Family*.

“EYE OPENING AND PRACTICAL, HOW TO AVOID FALLING IN LOVE WITH A JERK IS FOR ANYONE WHO’S TIRED OF DATING AND WANTS TO FINALLY FIND “THE ONE”.”

JOHN GRAY, AUTHOR OF *MEN ARE FROM MARS, WOMEN ARE FROM VENUS*

POPULATIONS SERVED

The United States Army, Navy, Coast Guard, Air Force, & Marines

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Incarcerated Youth & Adults

Faith-based Organizations & Churches

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Recovery Organizations & Programs

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“FROM A RICH CLINICAL AND ACADEMIC BACKGROUND, DR. VAN EPP IS ABLE TO EXPLAIN THEORY & RESEARCH WITH SUCH PRACTICAL INSIGHTS, PERSONAL STORIES, & A CONTAGIOUS SENSE OF HUMOR!”
US ARMY CHAPLAIN, LOVE THINKS INSTRUCTOR

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resources for developing healthy individuals & relationships



“

WITH ALL THE CHANGES IN THE MILITARY, I BELIEVE THAT LOVE THINKS PROGRAMS WILL HELP INDIVIDUALS, COUPLES, & FAMILIES COPE WITH WHATEVER CIRCUMSTANCES THEY FACE.”

US AIRMAN, ULTIMATE SPIRITUAL R&R INSTRUCTOR

PROGRAMS OFFERED

PICK a Partner Program: for singles

Couple LINKS: for committed couples

Ultimate Spiritual R&R: for all individuals

Our Home Runs: for families

Counseling with the RAM: for Lay & Professional Counselors

about Love Thinks

Love Thinks, LLC is dedicated to creating educational programs that teach how to build, strengthen, and manage relationships. You will find that the Relationship Attachment Model (RAM) provides a picture of love and closeness. When you understand what produces the feelings of love in your relationship, and how these dynamics work together, then you can manage your relationship, healing hurts and deepening intimacy.

Four programs use the RAM. The first is the PICK a Partner, aka *How To Avoid Falling for a Jerk(ette)* which teaches how to build a healthy relationship that keeps the head and heart working together. The *Couple LINKS* Program empowers couples to be active relationship managers and work together to keep their relationship strong and resilient. *Ultimate Spiritual R&R* teaches individuals how to use the RAM to develop their spirituality in ways that increase their ability to resiliently relate with three domains of life: self, others, and circumstances. And *Our Home Runs* helps families know how to stay connected while successfully running their homes.

“

THE RAM IS AN EXCELLENT TOOL. THE BEST TRAINING I'VE EVER RECEIVED. I HAVE A MASTERS IN COUNSELING & NEVER RECEIVED INSTRUCTION SO PRACTICAL, RELEVANT, AND USEFUL.”

CLINICAL COUNSELOR, LOVE THINKS INSTRUCTOR

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