

Processing Your Fights and Regrettable Incidents

(adapted from a John Gottman exercise)

Instructions: This form is a guide for processing what happened after a fight or regrettable incident. It is designed to increase understanding between the two of you.

Each party has a right to their perspective.

The goal is to process what happened without getting back into the fight and to discover a way to make the next fight just a little better.

Operate from this premise:

- Understanding comes before persuasion:
 - Try to understand your partner's reality completely and not argue for your own reality.

Talk about and accept what each of you were feeling

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| 1. I felt defensive. | 17. I felt I was right and you were wrong. | 31. I felt like staying and talking this through. |
| 2. I felt unheard. | 18. I felt that both of us were partly right. | 32. I was overwhelmed with emotion. |
| 3. My feelings got hurt. | 19. I felt out of control. | 33. I felt unsettled. |
| 4. I felt totally flooded. | 20. I felt frustrated. | 34. I felt stubborn. |
| 5. I felt angry. | 21. I felt righteously indignant. | 35. I felt powerless. |
| 6. I felt sad. | 22. I felt we were both morally justified in our views. | 36. I felt I had no influence. |
| 7. I felt unloved | 23. I felt unfairly picked on. | 37. I wanted to win this one. |
| 8. I felt misunderstood. | 24. I felt disliked. | 38. I felt like my opinions didn't even matter. |
| 9. I felt criticized. | 25. I felt unappreciated. | 39. There was a lot of give and take. |
| 10. I took complaints personally. | 26. I felt unattractive. | 40. I had no feelings at all. |
| 11. I felt like you didn't like me. | 27. I felt stupid. | 41. I had no idea what I was feeling. |
| 12. I felt uncared about. | 28. I was morally outraged. | 42. I felt lonely. |
| 13. I was worried. | 29. I felt taken for granted. | 43. I felt alienated. |
| 14. I felt afraid. | 30. I felt like leaving. | 44. I was inflexible |
| 15. I felt unsafe. | | |
| 16. I was tense. | | |

Discuss and validate each subjective reality

- **Take turns describing how you each saw the situation, what was your perspective.**
 - Don't try to restate your point. Imagine you're watching a video of the interaction; try to describe what you see.
 - Focus on your feelings and the needs you had in this situation (perhaps unexpressed).
 - Try to listen compassionately.

- **Find something in your partner's story that you can understand.**

- Now, try and see how your partner's subjective reality might make sense, given your partner's perspective.
- Tell your partner about one piece of his/her reality which makes sense to you.

- **Are you flooded, otherwise known as emotionally overwhelmed?**

- Check and see if either of you is flooded (emotionally overwhelmed)
- If so, take a break and self-soothe before continuing.

Admitting your own role.

(What role did you play in this fight or incident?)

- **Take turns identifying what role you played in the fight or incident...**

- Don't point out what your mate did, just how you contributed.
- Here are some examples to choose from:

What set me up

1. I have been very stressed and irritable lately.
2. I have not expressed much appreciation toward you lately.
3. I have taken you for granted.
4. I have been overly sensitive lately.
5. I have been overly critical lately.
6. I have not shared very much of my inner world.
7. I have not been emotionally available.
8. I have been more typically turning away from you.
9. I have been getting easily upset.
10. I have been depressed lately.
11. I've had a chip on my shoulder lately.

12. I have not been very affectionate.
13. I have not made time for good things between us.
14. I have not been a very good listener.
15. I have not asked for what I need.
16. I have been feeling a bit like a martyr.
17. I have needed to be alone.
18. I have not wanted to take care of anybody.
19. I have been very preoccupied.
20. I have been very stressed lately.
21. I haven't felt much confidence in myself.
22. I've been running on empty.

Take turns identifying your personal triggers.

- **What escalated the interaction?**

- Put in your own words what escalated the interaction for you.
- These are often old and familiar feelings.
- Here are some categories:

Possible triggers

<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ I felt excluded○ I felt powerless○ I felt unheard○ I couldn't ask for what I needed○ I felt scolded○ I felt judged○ I felt blamed○ I felt disrespected○ I felt no affection○ I felt unsafe○ I felt uncared for○ I felt lonely○ Once again, I was the bad guy and you were innocent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ I was not getting taken care of very well○ This felt so unfair to me○ I had trouble with your anger or yelling○ I had trouble with your sadness or despair○ I felt trapped○ I felt you had no passion for me○ I couldn't ask for what I needed○ I felt unloved○ I felt controlled○ I felt manipulated○ You were not there for me when I was vulnerable and needed you○ I couldn't just talk about my feelings without you going ballistic
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- **Try to understand your triggers.**

- **Take turns: trying to identify the source of the trigger.**

- Rewind the “videotape” of your life in your mind.
- Stop at an incident you remember from your childhood, or past in general (not in this relationship), in which you got triggered in the same way or had some of these very same feelings as you did this time.
- Tell the story of that incident, how it happened, and what you felt.
- Listen to your partner’s story with empathy.

- **Overall, what was your contribution to the incident?**

- Take turns admitting your contribution to the fight or

Figure out how to make it better the next time...

- Take turns stating...
 - What is one thing your partner could do differently next time?
 - What is one way that you can make it better next time?

Record your interaction:

Go to <http://www.911marriageonline.com/4daychallenge/> and record what you learned from processing your discussion. Only one of you needs to post. A paragraph is sufficient. Be sure to make a post for each of the four days you process an incident.