

# The Couples Cure

## Miraculous Recovery for Couples on the Brink

### Phase III: Receiving and The Art of Acceptance

### Lesson 10: Receiving Influence

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Hello! Welcome back to Lesson 10 - Accepting influence or receiving influence. I use these terms interchangeably. I know you just finished going through the art of acceptance, including holding space for your spouse, radical listening and speaking non-defensively. From this place, after you've been able to practice that a little bit, it is so much easier. Once you've removed those defenses and gotten yourself out of the way, it's so much easier to receive influence from our spouse or partner towards the end of being able to come together as a team. This ability to receive influence is actually a massive component and big predictor of a healthy relationship. Accepting influence is essentially the capacity to change course. It's the ability to shift in response to new information and release your position in the face of other variables. This is actually a form of intelligence. It's a form of emotional intelligence.

Albert Einstein said, "The measure of intelligence is the ability to change." This is spot on! The capacity to change indicates the ability to assimilate input from outside of your paradigm in order to function at an optimal level and interact with your environment in a responsive reciprocal and nuanced way. There's another quote by Einstein, that maybe you've also heard, "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them." I think this is relevant as well. If the way that you're thinking now is part of the old paradigm of your relationship, that paradigm within which you have these specific challenges that brought you to this program. As you know from the belief change work, we have to be willing to change how we think, how we process information, how we integrate, the values and wishes and thoughts and feelings of our spouse, in order to transcend what's not working. This is all about the ability to change. But really, what I'm talking about is shifting in the most fundamental way, in terms of the process of interacting relationally. It's not to change the essence of who you are, your identity or your values or your personality. Just very specifically for this lesson, when we're talking about change and receiving influence, we're talking about the degree to which we can receive influence will determine the evolution and success of our relationships.

To the extent that we can receive influence, we will determine the success of our relationships, for the long term. Given that, and I will share you a little bit about the research in how Dr. John Gottman came to this conclusion, but first, I just want to share with you briefly what we're going to be talking about in this lesson. We're going to talk about:

- What Receiving Influence is
- Why it is critical for a healthy relationship
- What it looks like
- The most common barriers to accepting influence
- How to Accept Influence

#### WHAT IS RECEIVING INFLUENCE?

Receiving influence is made of four things:

- Listening to their ideas  
It is the willingness to listen to your spouse's ideas. Even if you don't want to do it the way that they suggest. Maybe you don't want to do it the way they're saying at all. But, if you just listen, say, "that's a good thought! Thanks for that idea," or "That makes sense! Good point! I'll take that on board." It's the idea that, "I'm not going to immediately reject it even if I don't agree with it. I'm going to express an openness to at least hearing what they have to say first."
- Sometimes doing things their way  
It also means, sometimes, willing to do things their way, even beyond listening. Sometimes, we might listen to what they have to say but we're still going to take a stand for what we care about them, if it's something that's high stakes. But truly receiving

influence is not just listening. It means actually sometimes doing things the way that they want to. That means trusting that your partner might be right sometimes. It means trusting that it's going to be okay, right? It means sometimes doing things their way, even if you have a different point of view or you would rather do it a different way. It's basically just deciding to go along with something for the sake of creating a sense of togetherness and support. When you lend your energy to your spouse's ideas, that is the very essence of support. If it's not that big of a deal to you, in terms of the content of their wish, if it really isn't a huge thing, then just go ahead. Think about where you can do that. I think, sometimes, people resist for the principle of the thing. They resist maybe because they don't like to feel controlled or because they feel like they're not getting anything out of it personally, so why should they have to do that? Or maybe it's just a habit, right? But if you think of it as an act of giving and support, that's what's going to create the connection. That connection will return the favor. Unless, you're with an abusive person. Unless you're with someone that have a personality that is narcissistic and they have to have complete power and control, this is something that you will get a ton back from.

- Involving your partner in your decision-making process

Receiving influence also means involving your partner in your decision-making process. Let's say you're working on something. You're mobilizing a project, you're planning a trip, whatever it is, even if it's something that has mutually been agreed upon that that's your thing, that you're going to be taking the lead on. If you just involve them in the process, whether it's the finances, paying the bills, whatever's on your mind, if you just share your process with them or involve them in the process in some way. Either by opening up about it or by just, "Just heads up, I wanted to keep you in the loop on this," or if it's asking a question about something, there's something about that openness to share your process that makes a huge difference. It shows that you are willing to accept influence.

- Conveying respect for each other's points of view

Finally, it's conveying respect for your spouse's point of view. Even when you completely disagree, like it absolutely is not what you think, it's not how you see it, but still having respect for their vantage point. You remember, each of our vantage points is informed by our own unique life path our own experiences. That's a really big part of receiving influence is recognizing "they have a respectable point of view, even if I don't agree with it." Simply based on the fact that this person came by it honestly. This person has had lived experiences that would lead them to this point of view. And so, that receiving their point of view is nothing less than receiving them. If you don't receive it or respect it, it's essentially rejecting them on a fundamental level. That's what we oftentimes do is we want to be like, "That's not what I would do," or "that doesn't make any sense," or "that's so not me," "I don't get it." The ability to let that go is relinquishing your desire to position yourself in relation to their ideas. It's just the ability to say, "You know what? That makes sense that you would see it that way and I see value in that. I can see why you would see it that way." I know we talked about this already in the acceptance lesson but it's really just that explicit expression of "Look, even though you have a different point of view, I can still treat you with respect." That's where we really level up in terms of the ability to collaborate and work together, which that's really what phase four is going to be. We are setting the tone and setting the stage for moving into side by side collaboration and co-creation of your life.

## WHY IS IT NECESSARY?

Now, one caveat I wanted to make here is that receiving influence should not be mistakenly assumed to mean like just giving over to your spouse's whims all the time. It's not random. It's not complete surrender, to just like, "Whatever you want, I'm just going to go along with it." That's not what this is. It's really more about developing your ability to find a point of agreement in the other person's position. That said, let's move into why accepting influence is necessary. Accepting influence is necessary because it is:

- A strong predictor of happy, healthy relationships

In fact, statistically speaking, it is a huge and strong predictor of a happy, healthy relationships. There's an abundance of data that shows this to be true, particularly with men and particularly in John Gottman's study. Now, this does work both ways, as there are plenty of women who have great difficulty receiving influence. I, myself, am one of them, historically speaking. But Dr. Gottman's research shows that when a man is not willing to share power or influence with his wife, especially like in heterosexual relationships, chances are very high that it won't work. He says that they were able to see in the research that they did even in the first few months of marriage that there was a correlation between men who allow their wives to influence them and their happier, long-term marriages as compared to the men who were not willing to accept influence from their wife. He says that they were able to see that even in the first few months of marriage, men who allow their wives to influence them have happier marriages. They're less likely to divorce than men who resist their wives influence. Statistically speaking, when a man is not willing to share power with his partner, there's an 81% chance that his marriage will self-destruct. That is from his research. I want to talk about this a little bit because there is this gender component to his research. Women accept

influence more often and more automatically than men do in relationships. I know that this is kind of treading on dangerous territory. It sounds a little bit like we're making huge stereotypes. But the gender difference really is just because most women are raised to be more accommodating, more self-sacrificing, more relational, more supportive in nature, in terms of what their role is. Whereas, men tend to be raised to be more independent and encouraged to find their own solutions to situations rather than collaborating. It's just about how men and women's identities are formed differently. Because of that, when men accept influence, they're being much more conscientious of overriding their automatic thought process. Their automatic thought process might be more independent, more autonomous, more asserting their influence, instead of taking a step back. It's a little bit harder for them to accept that influence not because there's something wrong with them or just because they're men. It's just because they've been trained to be rewarded for being the one who influences, the one who leads and who has an insoluble sense of self and gets respect for those things. It's hard to give that up when you've been taught that you're lame or that you're just not a man without those things. Like I said, this is just in general, but that is shown by the research to be more difficult for men to do. That's really an area that men can get a lot of bang for their buck, if they focus on that. A lot of times, especially in marriages, where husbands will say, "You know, I would be fine if my wife was happy." This is probably why. And if you worked on this, you would probably be able to turn things around, radically, with just focusing that on that alone.

I'm going to give just a real small example of what this would look like. Let's say you ask your husband, "Hey, can you make sure the knives are dry before you put them away? That way they won't get rusty." He says, "Sure! I'll try to remember that next time!" That's receiving influence. As opposed to saying, "Well, it's fine. There's air dryer. That doesn't make any sense." It's just such a tiny example of a difference between what it looks like to receive a little influence, to be open to that input or suggestion, versus totally blocking it or rejecting it or denying it. When it gets to situations that are more loaded and the stakes are higher than drying out your knives, of course, that's when the problems really come in the relationship. You might notice that this pattern of sort of like just resisting the other person's suggestion is so habitual and chronic. If you were to start tracking it, you might be shocked at how many times that happens.

- **Increases our own influence**

Receiving influence is necessary because this is going to increase our own influence on our spouse and in situations. This is because what ends up happening is that you get an absence of power struggles. When you accept influence from others and you show willingness to do that, the power struggle dissipates within your partner. They're going to in turn be more likely to hear your point of view. You're going to be able to listen to each other and make decisions together. Your openness to influence is proportional to your willingness to seek win-win solutions to conflict. I'll say that again. **Your openness to influence is directly proportional to your willingness to seek win-win solutions to conflicts.** That's really what this is all about. It's really about getting on the same team.

- **Without this ability, you can't get on the same team**

Receiving influence is absolutely crucial to get on the same team. If you're stuck in asserting your position or if you're spending energy on rejecting your spouse's position, then you're just trapped in your positions. You're on parallel paths. Each of you is calling out to the other to come over to your path. But the paths never converge. But once you're willing to accept influence, then you're opening that pathway. The paths converge. You come together. Now, you're walking your paths together. Each of you is able to take what you brought with you on the path into this joint path. It's like transcending that positionality. It's like coming together and being able to say, "Hey, we can find something that works for both of us."

## WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

How do we know that we are receiving influence? There's a few different ways that this can show up, and a few different ways that you can tell that you're receiving influence from your partner or that you can tell if you are open to influence from your partner. Receiving influence looks like:

- **Considering your partner's opinion**

You can tell if somebody's accepting influence because they might pause to consider what the person is saying. You can see from their facial expression that they're thinking about what was said even if they don't necessarily agree, they're at least considering. They might ask questions. They might say specifically, "Okay, huh! Let me think about that." That's what that looks like or sounds like.

- **Yielding to win**

The other thing that it looks like is yielding to win. It's a mentality that comes along with folks who are willing to say, "I'm

willing to concede for this, on this, because I know that it's going to have a larger win at the end." It's losing a battle but win the war, even though I really hate that analogy. But you get what I'm saying. That's really when you're actively searching your partner's request for something that you can relinquish. Like thinking, "All right! What can I give up?" "What can I do?" "What can I concede?" Like you don't want to be penny-wise and pound foolish. If you were going to extrapolate that metaphor under relationships, yielding to win is like keeping the big picture in mind and remembering that this is a long game.

- Being open to learning our partner's emotion

The third way that you can receive influence is to be open to learning your partner's emotions. This is really developing emotional intelligence. That goes hand in hand. The emotional intelligence is basically the use of emotions to enhance the thinking process. This would be to recognize the meaning of your partner's emotions. Be able to use that to solve problems. In order to do that though, you do have to want to learn. You have to be open to learning before you actually can learn about your partner's emotions. It takes a little bit of effort to figure that out, like get to the bottom of what that means to them. When you're thinking through the use of emotions, that is emotional intelligence. If you're engaging that faculty, it's going to be so much more likely that you'll be able to receive influence. You'll just be able to take it on board. You'll be able to move into a new dance with your spouse. That's what's going to help you really set the foundation for getting on the same team, which I keep talking about. That's really what it's all about. That's what all of phase 4 is going to be about.

- Willing to share power

Another way to tell if you're accepting influence or if your spouse is accepting influence is the willingness to share power with your partner. This could be something super simple: "What are we going to make for breakfast?" "What are we going to eat today?" "Where are we going to go?" Or it could be a really big decision. Whatever it is, if you're often hearing from your spouse, "You don't listen to me," or "you never care what I have to say," or "you never consult me before making plans," then you're at higher risk of your relationship ending, especially if you're a man, just statistically speaking. Just ask yourself, "Are you just waiting until your partner's done so that you can then like assert your point of view and you're not really engaged in what they have to say?" Sometimes, accepting influence is just as simple as listening or demonstrating that you've heard what they've had to say. We're going to get into that later. But it's just that willingness to accommodate or adjust what you're going to do just a little bit for the other person.

## BARRIERS TO RECEIVING INFLUENCE

This is all well and good. But, the truth of the matter is that as nice as this sounds, there are barriers that will crop up and get in the way of being able to do this. That's why this is such an issue in relationships. So, let's go over the barriers. There's four main barriers that will get in the way of being able to accept influence or that might be getting in the way of your spouse accepting influence:

- Insecurity

That's basically that you feel like it's going to make you look bad or that you're going to be losing something, there's shame involved, it might feel like a compromise and that's probably around some limiting beliefs. If you feel like your insecurities getting triggered when you receive influence from your partner, then I would definitely encourage you to go back to the belief change work. Let me know what's coming up for you and we can try to get at the heart of the matter. A lot of times, resisting influence is really just about protecting something. It's just about keeping security and preventing some perceived loss that comes from a sense of insecurity.

- Fear of loss of control (losing oneself)

Another barrier is fear of loss of control or losing one's self. Accepting influence can really feel like you're moving along with something. You're being carried away with something. You're being swayed. That can feel like you're losing control, if you're not really securing your foundations solidly with your belief statements and in your grounding, in your self-care. But if you've been doing all the work as you've gone through the lessons, you're in such a much better position to be able to accept influence without having to worry about losing control.

- Fear of giving up what's most important

Another fear that comes up is, "Am I going to give something up that's super important to me?" "Do I have to sacrifice my dearly held values in order to show that I can receive influence?" That could be around a logistical thing or it could be around a life dream, a big life dream. If you're making plans or you're sharing your power about what to do, making a decision about parenting or where to spend your money or where to live, accepting influence can feel like, "Wow! I'm going to give something

up that really matters to me and I need to fight for this.” That’s where the teamwork is going to come in handy. I will share that with you in a little while. But this is a really big one. Think about if you’re resisting influence, is there something that you are afraid you’re going to have to give up that is too important? Are you sort of lumping everything together and in the state of resistance all the time? Even though there’s some things you could probably give on and even though there’s some that you can’t, that’s okay. We don’t have to give up our deal breakers.

- Subconscious entitlement or assumptions

The final thing that crops up a lot and is a big barrier to receiving influence is subconscious programming and subconscious entitlement or assumptions. It just could be underneath the surface. It’s something that is beneath your awareness. You might just feel entitled in your relationship to be able to make the decisions based on the dynamic, based on the history, based on the roles that you grew up watching. Even just based on the assumption that your spouse is fine with it because they’re not saying anything about it. It could be very well intentioned. It’s really not about that. It’s really just about looking at, “Is there some unconscious program that’s having me just make decisions and not even consider my spouse or to repeatedly sort of wall off to influence?” That’s not so much about control. It’s not so much about fear. But it’s just the way it is, unconsciously, in my mind that it’s like, “it matches the template of my experience in some way. and I’m just acting it out even though I’m not even aware of it.” Be aware of those. Once we are able to clear these out with the belief work, it is so much easier to accept influence and get on the same team.

## HOW TO ACCEPT INFLUENCE?

Now that you understand the theory behind it and you’re familiar with the concepts, let’s talk about how to accept influence, actually, putting this into practice and executing this. There are six things that you can do that will pave the way for you being able to set the tone in your relationship to accept influence and have that just be part of the fabric of your relationship:

- Keep an open mind

You want to have an open mind. This basically just means that you’re gonna get curious, you’re going to just be open to what they have to say. You can get curious actively and ask them questions, like, “Could you explain your thinking to me?” Or “tell me why this is so important to you,” or “what would you do if it was totally up to you?” “How would you handle this?” If you’re in the middle of conflict, you can ask, “What are you afraid of in this situation?” “What’s at stake for you?” If you don’t want to be that proactive, you can just sit still and listen and visualize. Keeping like an open space between you. Literally imagine keeping an open mind. That way, just from the energy of that, even when you’re not asking questions, when you’re in that place mentally and energetically, they can feel it. You’re creating an alliance. That’s going to keep the barriers down and the connection strong.

- Show willingness to consider

The other thing you can do is show a willingness to consider. Even when you think you cannot move on something or if you think you just can’t give on something because it’s such an important issue to you, you can still show willingness to consider. That means sending a message that you’re honoring what they’re saying, you’re respecting their opinions, you’re staying in a place of caring. You can’t really fake this. This is something you really have to be meaning, it’s a heart-centered thing. You have to actually be considering, in your own mind, what they’re saying. Imagining, “well, what would that look like if I did actually take on what they’re saying?” You might have to pause. You might have to just stop and receive. How that looks to them is you’re probably going to be making eye contact like we talked about earlier, the body language of nodding to what the person is saying or asking questions from the us place, “What would it look like if we did it this way?” “Is there a way that we could do this in a way that works for both of us?” We’ve talked about this before. It’s essentially that willingness to consider right at the outset. This takes a lot of strength because you have to know that you’re not going to be losing your position. You’re not going to be losing anything. When you have that sort of quiet confidence like, “I’m going to stay strong in my position but I am so strong within that, that I don’t have to put up walls. I don’t have to fight. I don’t have to go into fight or flight. I don’t have to get defensive. I don’t have to get panicky about this. I don’t have to worry about what this means because I’m still certain in my own stance and my own position. From that place of quiet confidence, I’m really able to consider what they have to say without feeling threatened,” if that makes sense.

- Express appreciation of input

Another thing you can do is express appreciation of their input. Even if you don’t actually follow their input or don’t actually do anything with it. Now, this is very similar to showing a willingness to consider. This is more like after the fact, when you’ve discussed it with each other, you can let them know that you really consider what they’ve contributed as valuable to the

discussion, even if you disagree. It's a mindset of treating it as a real contribution. We talked about that a little bit earlier as well and just saying, "I see your point of view. Thank you for that." But this, what I'm talking about here is a little bit more proactive than just considering and keeping an open mind. This is actually an overt expression of appreciation of their input, regardless of what the outcome is. That is so huge, like so many of my clients, and even my own marriage, I've seen this happen again and again, where it's really just about being heard half the time. Even if you don't get your way, if you feel like you're being heard and considered, that means so much. A lot of times, what we're really fighting about is wanting to be heard, wanting to feel significant, wanting to have that connection, wanting to know that you matter. Even if you don't actually come to a resolution, you can table it and know, "it's okay because we still value each other's opinion."

- **Adopting without giving everything up**

The other thing you can do is adopt the belief that you can receive influence without giving everything up. This is sort of what I was talking about where you get that really strong stance where you can show the willingness to consider because you know that you're not really giving everything up. You have to actually condition the belief that you can receive influence without giving up what matters to you. You might even have to go back and do the breakthrough formula, that's in lesson one. Identify some of these beliefs that you need to internalize. Whatever it is that you need to know, like, "I'm not under threat," stated positively, of course, and present tense. But like something along the lines of, "I hold firm and what I value the most, yet I can still receive what they are bringing to the table." It's not taking away. It's not like there's only so much room in the pie. There's always more that we can integrate without taking anything away. That's infinite in a relationship. And that's the beauty of a really nuanced teamwork alliance in our marriage is that there's no limit to how much we can integrate and say, "How do we fit this in and how can we make this work?"

- **Actively seek common ground**

The other thing you can do is actively seek the common ground. That's just really looking for, "Okay, where do my values align with what they're saying?" "Where is the spirit behind what they want? Matching the spirit behind what I want." It's sort of like when you think about co-parenting, I always think of this example - if both of you have the shared goal of raising responsible, respectful, high-functioning children, but you have a different idea about how that's going to look. First, you align with what your ultimate goal is, the what and the why. There's usually going to be some overlap there. We're going to get into that in more detail in phase four. But looking for, "I can get on board with why you want to do that. I might disagree with how we're going to accomplish that. But first, let's find where we overlap." That is so important because then, at least, you're remembering like, "this is something that we can get to." It just might take more than one conversation. That way, you don't get discouraged. That way, you don't give up right away. Sometimes, people think that if they can't figure it out in 10 minutes, it's hopeless. But sometimes, these things really require hashing it out across multiple conversations in a week or a couple weeks or even months, depending on how complex the issue is.

- **Start small**

That said, start small. Don't start with the most complex, hot button issues. You want to figure out which things don't really matter that much to you, like ask yourself, "what are the areas where I really don't have that much to lose, where it doesn't matter that much to me? I have a preference but I don't care probably as much as my spouse. So maybe that's something I can just say yes to." Find something small and practice doing that. That's going to help you develop the muscle. If you have any feelings that come up when you say yes to something or if you feel uncomfortable around receiving influence, even on something small, then this is a great way to bring that to the surface, to bring your awareness to that without the stakes being so high, where the walls are then going to go up again. If the stakes are lower, then we're able to address that and remove the barrier and gain greater insight and figure out what's in the way. That's what the coaching is for. Then with that awareness, we can bring that into the higher stakes issue. You've already conditioned those muscles. It's so much easier. We kind of phase into that and reach out to me if you want help identifying what these things are. Ultimately, you can put all of these things into practice with anything in your relationship. You will be able to come to the table without feeling threatened, without feeling scared, and without any kind of power struggle.

## EXERCISES FOR RECEIVING INFLUENCE

For this lesson, I do have four things in the exercises:

- **Receiving Influence**

You're gonna answer all these questions true or false, tally up your score and kind of get a sense of where you rank on the scale of receiving influence. That's just to increase your awareness.

- Receiving Influence Observation Exercise

This is a journaling exercise. These are some specific questions that you're going to answer for yourself after you practice receiving influence. Your spouse doesn't even have to know you're doing this. This is just something that you can practice on your own. Then you're going to answer the questions. It's pretty self-explanatory on that PDF, so that you can identify where your patterns are.

- Accepting Influence Discussion Question

Then, if you're doing it with your spouse, you're going to want to do the accepting influence discussion questions. This is really fun actually. This is where you get to ask and answer each of your things that will help you understand where you get stuck, how the other person perceives you, in terms of receiving influence, and can just bring you closer and having a shared understanding. Basically, setting the tone and creating the culture of reciprocity around influence in your relationship.

- Contract to Accept Influence

Then finally, the contract to accept influence. That's something that you can do on your own or that's something you can actually do together with your spouse, either way.

Have fun with these, you guys. Thanks for tuning in. Let me know how it goes. And I will catch you in the next lesson.