

The Couples Cure

Miraculous Recovery for Couples on the Brink

Phase IV: Unity and Teamwork (side-by-side)

Lesson 11: Get on the Same Team

We're in the home stretch now. We're entering the final phase - Unity and Teamwork. This is where all of your hard work is going to come together and it gets to be really fun. This final phase is all about how to use the foundational tools that you've learned to come together side by side, facing out, onto life together and working as a team. Now, we can't really work as a team if we're not connected by a shared goal that's larger than what you each want individually. For the next lessons, in this final phase, what we're going to do, is we're going to dive into what teamwork really is, how to move into unity with each other, anchoring your commitments to yourself and the relationship as a whole and live in that space where you're both feeling energized by the relationship, instead of drained by the relationship and all the "work." This is the part where you end up feeling more alive, more creative, where the momentum of the work that you've done carries you and it's joyful and expansive.

The quote that I chose for this lesson is short and sweet. It goes like this. "A successful team beats with one heart." By Sarah-Jane Redmond. The reason I love this is it just captures this idea that both partners are connected by the same life force. When you can envision this and live accordingly, it really gets rid of any kind of power struggle. Teamwork is, basically, when you think about it, it's putting the greater good ahead of yourself while recognizing that the team win benefits you individually. Sometimes, we think of getting on the same team as putting the team or the "us" ahead of the individual, prioritizing the greater good over your individual desires. But that's a false dichotomy. When you prioritize the greater us and you put energy in thinking in terms of how that's going to impact the relationship as a whole, you win as well. If you think about sports teams or soccer, for example, if you're in a position where you're better suited to pass the ball and set up another player to win for the team, that's what you're going to do, if that's going to help the team. You're not going to put your own need or your own want to be the one who scores a goal ahead of what's going to serve the team and help them win faster. It's really bringing you beyond the me versus you. It's beyond convincing the other. It's really panning out and taking a higher vantage point that's going to elevate all the work that you do and that you have been doing. So, to kick off this next phase of unity and teamwork, we're going to dive into lesson 11, which is getting on the same team. Lesson 11 is broken down into three parts:

- Us Consciousness
- Neuroscience of harmony
- Things you can do to get on the same team

US CONSCIOUSNESS

Now, Us consciousness is ultimately just true partnership. It's the mentality that we're part of a "we" and we think about life from this place. The Us consciousness is an awareness of the other, in how you do things, not in a codependent sense but in an interdependent sense. Each of you is a whole individual. Each of you is taking 100% accountability for your part. You're taking ownership over your own reactions. You're not in a place of blame. You're in a really strong place. From that place, then when you move into the us consciousness, it's automatically not codependent. It's automatically more of an elevated way of looking at things. Like I said earlier, it takes you out of that me versus you mentality. Instead, each partner joins together. They're able to step back from the conflicts that come up because inevitably, there's going to be conflicts around a difference of opinion or different agendas and consider both partners needs at the same time. It's like looking for a win-win all the time. Not trying to convince, just saying, "Okay, here's what you want. I want this. How can we navigate this together?" "Is there a way we can both get what we want?" That's really the frame of mind that everything gets filtered through. It's not just sometimes you remember that it's like this deeply internalized mindset that every single thing that you consider gets processed through. What's most important about this way of thinking is that both people feel considered. Even if an issue isn't being solved right away, the questions that you're asking are live from that sense of being together on the same team and that sense of wholeness. Dr. Charlotte Kasl writes about this in her book, *If the Buddha Married*. She calls it the Us Place. Sometimes, I call it the Us-ness place. Whatever you call it, *it's essentially a state of being together with your partner while feeling unified by an energy beyond each of*

your individual wants or needs would dictate in the moment. There's four things that make up this Us consciousness:

- The whole is greater than the sum of its parts
It's this idea that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. We become more together than either of us could be alone. The team in a romantic partnership, it's more than two. You would think one plus one is two, but it's actually more than two. It becomes almost a shared body or a unified journey together. You're part of a couple. You're part of a greater whole. It's like you're separate but you're also able to merge into the union, not mixing into each other or losing yourself in it, but creating a new substance altogether. It's almost like gestalt therapy, if any of you have heard of that idea that the hole is greater than the sum of its parts. It really requires a perfect balance of union and separateness, which we're going to get into in just a second.
- Harmony - what you put in is matched or exceeded
The second thing about Us consciousness is that it really is all about harmony. Harmony is a kind of closeness. It's where you feel in sync with the other person's efforts. You feel that your inputs into the relationship are matched or exceeded. Whatever you put in, you're going to get something back. You're riding that wave of good feelings. You're riding the wave of expansion. It just feels really good. If you're in Us consciousness, it feels good. You don't feel like you're losing anything. You don't feel like you're in the one down position or compromising something that's really important to you. When you're in harmony, couples have a way easier time of sharing their experiences. For example, even if they're not physically together, they're going to still derive pleasure from interacting with each other by phone or text. They're still going to be feeling close and harmonious. They might be giving each other knowing looks or they have inside jokes. They're curious to hear from each other. There's just an easy flow of praise, validation, acknowledgement and recognition.
- Simultaneous goodwill for both oneself and one's partner
The third thing is that there's a sense of simultaneous goodwill for both oneself and one's partner. It's this consideration of the needs of your partner and your own needs at the same time. It's not one or the other. It's just both, and. And from that place, you negotiate your needs together with the assumption that your partner wants you to be happy. They want you to be happy, you want them to be happy. There's no clear line between conflict and loving. You can be loving even in the conflict that comes from a different opinion or a different desire to want to do something. There's a sense of safety in revealing your fears and your joys and your concerns because the bond that you have is solid. You can handle whatever strong emotions come up. There's just an innate sense of confidence. I mean, I don't know how else to say good will, it's just that sense of, "I want what's best for them and I assume that they want what's best for me as well."
- Perfect balance of union and separateness
Like I mentioned before, there's a perfect balance of union and separateness. This allows you to love without holding back. There's no fear of losing yourself. At the same time, you can be apart from the union while never feeling lonely because the Us is internalized. Your partner dwells within you, so you feel connected even when you're not together. That's that perfect balance I'm talking about.

One of the things I've talked about before, I know I have, at least with a few of you in this group, is the metaphor of the six and the nine (*Illustration shown at 8:13*). I thought it was worth bringing this in as an illustration so you can see this visually. I like this so much because you can see that both of them are right. It just depends on where they're standing, right? The guy that's looking at the nine is insisting that it's a nine. She's looking at a six and insisting that it's a six. Couples can stay in this place for a very long time. This illustration just captures the energetic gridlock that's so unnecessary. If you pan out, both are right and neither is wrong. You just have to be able to take a more elevated point of view to be able to see the bigger picture and that both are right. We can incorporate both of those points of view into the big picture and into the problem solving.

There's another wonderful metaphor, too. I've heard it as six blind men and the elephant (*Illustration shown at 9:08*). Some people have called it the six blind mice and the elephant. I'm not really sure. But this is a great illustration, where you can see each person is, through their sense of touch, feeling one aspect of this greater whole, which is the elephant. Then they're describing what they think it is based on what their senses are telling them. It's pretty clear that they are pretty sure of what it is and they're all saying very different things. It's hard to make sense of how does that all fit together and how are they going to actually problem solve if they're all operating from a very different assumption of what reality is or what's really going on. How are they supposed to come together? But again, you can see that if you pull back and say, "well, actually, if you can integrate all of these perceptions, if you can integrate every point of view and pan out again and see the bigger picture, we'll incorporate everybody's point of view in resolving the issue." If you don't, you're actually going to be missing out on a valuable vantage point. Each vantage point is important. The Us place is something that considers each vantage point. It's not something that just says

we're only going to go with this vantage point. "Hey, we're just going to go with a guy who thinks it's a rope," or "we're just going to go with a guy who thinks it's a fan." "We're going to incorporate every single point of view," that's what true teamwork is. Luckily in a partnership, it's usually just two people and so you don't have that many different points of view. But this is the moral of the story that each person's truth is just determined by their perspective. Each perspective is not wrong but you just have to elevate your vantage point and back up a little bit and say, "How can we incorporate them all?" Trusting that each person is pointing to one aspect of the truth of the situation. We don't want to ignore that point of view. We don't want to override that point of view. I think just the larger point of all this is that when we remember that none of us is the arbiter of objective truth and we know that we're just part of the whole, then we can think as a "we" more easily. We can live in harmony. We can live unified by a shared goal and guided by a sense of shared understanding of what's good for us rather than what is good for me because they're not actually mutually exclusive at all.

NEUROSCIENCE OF HARMONY

What I found interesting is there's actually a scientific explanation to the state of being. It's called the neuroscience of harmony. We're actually wired to connect this way and to be attuned to each other in this Us place biologically. Sometimes, we just have to get our old programming out of the way and the barriers out of the way, like we've been working on in order to get to that place. But it's actually our natural state of being. A lot of this work is just clearing out the old stuff that's blocking us from being able to enter into the Us place that is in our nature. That's the good news. It's evolved, in the sense that as a human, we are having to release some of our conditioning that might get in the way, but it is also natural. It's not that inaccessible. The neuroscience of harmony suggests that:

- **Close couples are vibrationally synchronized**
Basically, when couples are really deeply, emotionally connected, there's an actual sympathetic vibration between the two of them that allows them to synchronize their actions and to act in harmony. You know that feeling when you're really connected that you just are on the same page and you can just step in for the other and you don't even have to talk, that's what this is. It's that sense of connection. It's not just expressed in feelings but it's actually in our cells. That's because we actually have mirror neurons that make us wired to connect.
- **Our mirror neurons allow us to feel what others feel**
There's these specific nerve cells called mirror neurons. They're in the prefrontal cortex of our brain. They're literally buzzing. These neurons appear to be one of the basic biological mechanisms that allow us to actually feel what somebody else is experiencing. They're actually part of how we're wired to connect, our wire to connect heritage. It sets us up for more loving harmonious relationships. It's funny because this was actually discovered by accident. There was a researcher, I don't know the name but I should look that up, but this was discovered by a researcher who was eating an ice cream cone while he was mapping a monkey's brain. He saw that the monkey's brain lit up, as if he, like the monkey, was actually eating the ice cream cone himself. These mirror neurons are what actually allow us to empathize and feel what another feels. This is the scientific validation for emotional attachment.
- **This connection transcends conversation**
The implication of this that there's a tangible power and an ability to be able to look at each other and feel the presence of what the other is going through without even talking about it. This level of engagement and empathy it transcends conversation. It's happening on a level that's beyond our cognitive abilities. It's the foundation for that attachment concept that we talked about in the emotional connection lesson, that feeling of being felt, of being heard, of feeling safe in the truth of our experience. It's something that we feel. It's something that we can feel if it's not there and we can feel if it is there, beyond words, beyond intellectual reasoning. It's something that we feel on a cellular and vibrational level. I think, the point of all this is really just that the Us place is an actual powerful physical and emotional resonance within our partners. It's not something imagined. There is a scientific basis for it. Because we can feel what they feel and we can connect in ways that go beyond verbal connection, there's literally a field of information between us, which explains the energy that we feel sometimes. When I talk about the energy and changing our energy, that's really what we're talking about. That's why it feels like there's something greater than the sum of its parts. It's this connection that it can take you out or it can create intense harmony. That's what we're really going for is this attunement that we have with each other in the Us place. It's very evolved when the limiting beliefs have been cleared out. Sometimes it gets confused with attachment that's considered regressive or like a childlike type of attachment. But when you're really clear and you've cleared out the limiting beliefs and you are not letting the adaptive child take over and you're coming from that really intentional place, it's a very evolved state of connection. It creates a very strong sense of safety. It's primal and it's healthy.

HOW TO BE IN HARMONY?

There's actually five things that you can do to trigger those mirror neurons to fire so that you can get into harmony with your partner. And I'm going to go through these one by one.

1. Tell the microscopic truth

The first thing is to tell the microscopic truth. We talked about this already a little bit when I was sharing with you the healthy communication skills that we need to learn and really talking about revealing ourselves, as opposed to concealing. You've been exposed to this concept already, the whole idea of sharing from the I-place, doing a body scan and talking about what's going on with you. Thoughts, feelings, requests, the four-point structure and the feedback wheel. But this microscopic truth-telling, this is really a step deeper. What I'm talking about is the whole intention and your goal behind microscopic truth telling is to be 100% transparent in order to stop arguments. It's not just to repair. It's actually something that you do proactively to prevent conflict in the first place. As you know by now, obviously, when I'm talking about speaking truth, we're not talking about speaking the truth about your spouse. We're really sharing of ourselves and the microscopic truth about what's going on inside of us. Now, there's three things I want to share just to kind of help gain mastery over this because there's levels to this.

◆ Do NOT argue who said what, justify, or race for victim position.

When people first start telling the truth, they start talking about what the other person said, they might be justifying their actions or they might be vying for the victim position. It might sound something like, "No, I specifically remember you said this. It was a last Tuesday. I know that you said this xyz." Then the other person's like, "No, that's not what I said." You start arguing about what actually happened. That's like the first attempt at telling the truth but it's not actually the truth because you're arguing about something that can be argued with. The whole thing with microscopic truth is that there's absolutely no arguing with it. It's not an interpretation. And it's only about you.

Also an example of justifying and being right would be something along the lines of justifying why you did something or shaming the other person, saying, "It would be really nice if you learned how to give me some basic courtesy. You know my last husband never left his shorts lying around the kitchen," type of thing. Trying to show how you're right, that you have a valid point or racing for the victim position, which is like "You know what? If you had spent the day taking care of three kids you would understand why the house is a mess." And the other person's saying, "Yeah, but that's your whole job. At least you don't have to go to a stressful day job with a manager you hate, et cetera.. Et cetera." You might think at this level that you're speaking the truth but you're not yet. You're not really just actually tuning in and sharing what's going on inside of you, which cannot be argued with.

◆ Do NOT use vague labels, explain or analyze, or use negatives (describing in terms of what it's not)

The next level of truth-telling, which we also don't want to land it, but it's a step in the right direction, is using vague labels like, "Well, I'm feeling okay," or "I'm just really stressed out," or "I'm under a lot of pressure," "I'm just stressed," that might be partly true but it's very non-specific. It's not actually all that useful. Explaining and analyzing would be sort of explaining why you think you feel off or why you think something's going on, either within yourself or what's going on with the other person. "It's because the weather is bad," or "because I slept wrong," or "because this is what happened earlier today," or using negatives, which is describing your internal states through what it's not, by defining what it's not. Saying things like, "I'm not feeling bad," or if your spouse asks, "are you feeling angry?" And you're like, "No, I'm not angry," or "I'm not feeling good but I'm not feeling much of anything." You're kind of defining how you're feeling in terms of what it's not. That's a step in the right direction but it's not where you want to land.

◆ DO describe sensations, core feelings, specific thoughts/interpretations, or familiar patterns.

Microscopic truth is about describing your sensations, your core feelings, your specific thoughts and interpretations or your familiar patterns. Sensations would just be physical things like, "I feel a knot in my stomach," "my palms are sweaty," "my neck is tight," "I feel my heart racing." Core feelings are going to be things like your just emotions looking at the emotion wheel and picking core emotions, which is really only seven core emotions. It's not gonna be an interpretation. It's gonna be actual emotion like excited or scared or sad or hurt, that kind of thing. Then the specific thoughts and imaginings and interpretations, that's the meaning making that we were doing in the feedback wheel, what is the meaning that you're attaching to it. Something along the lines of like, "In my mind, I just heard myself say, 'Well, that's just so stupid.'" Those are thoughts. Those are interpretations. You just want to share those, right or wrong. You're not saying that you're identified with it, you're just observing it and sharing. The familiar patterns and experiences is really about if there's anything that feels familiar to another time in your life, like, "this tight feeling in my belly is a lot like how I used to feel at meal times as a kid, when I felt pressure or when I could tell something was off." Whatever it is, you want to really make that connection to not

only are you having this experience, not only are you having this sensation, but from your vantage point, it feels familiar. That's a really important piece of information to share when you want to have emotional intimacy because then we know "Oh! This could be an adaptive child thing," or "this could be just an area of sensitivity or a raw spot." It allows your partner to be more sensitive.

This is really important. If you put all of your communication under the category of microscopic truth telling and you abided by these guidelines right here, you would be golden. You can never go wrong if this is what you're living by.

2. Move out of positionality

The other thing you can do to move into harmony is to commit to moving out of positionality or gridlock, is another way of putting it. This is essentially about resisting the temptation to position yourself, in relation to what the other person is saying. For example, let's say they share their point of view, you don't have to share where you stand in relation to that, like, "I don't agree," or "here's what I think," unless you've agreed to share points of view for the purpose of finding a shared solution and that's the conversation that you're having. But otherwise, positioning yourself when your spouse is sharing something with you, it just structurally sets you up for opposition or conflict. For example, let's say your spouse says, "I really just can't stand how unfriendly these people are here," and they just share an observation. They're trying to reach out because something is unsettling them. You say, "I find everybody to be very friendly." There's nothing wrong with that. You're sharing your opinion, which is not wrong. That's your opinion. But that isn't really the point. The point is they shared about their experience. Being in harmony is to create rapport. To be on the same team is to accept and to be curious about their experience, as opposed to positioning yourself in opposition to their experience. It's like improv, if you've ever done an improv class. The rules of improv are that whatever the other person gives you, you have to work with. Like you're going to start the first part of the story then it's up them just throw something into the story then you have to work with that and build on it. You don't get to say, "I don't really like that idea, can you give me something else to work with." That's the magic of improv though. That's what we're going for here. You have to work with what they're giving you. That is what's real. You're only going to just add to it, as opposed to positioning yourself in relation to it, which puts you in that opposition of like, "here's where you are and here's where I am and it's not the same." Instead, it's more like a building like, "That's your experience. How can I lean into that?" "How can I embrace that?" "How can I build on that?" "And how can I create a sense of harmony and a sense of teamwork and a sense of like, 'I'm in your corner even if my point of view is different?'" That's really what we're going for. Your position is a given and so is theirs, it's irrelevant in terms of a solution. It's just information that needs to be integrated into a shared solution. It's not something to dispute. It's not something to assert. It's just, "here's where each of us stands and now what?"

There's a couple things that you can do that will help you move out of positionality or moving out of gridlock:

◆ Making peace with the differences

Number one is that there's an acceptance of differences. That ultimately is a lack of judgment. It's not just accepting differences. It's like, "I'm making peace with the differences while coming together to find a way forward." It's a very positive embracing attitude about differences. By now, hopefully, you've had some practice in this. But you get really good at like not wasting any energy on disputing anybody's position or asserting your own in relation to theirs. It's just coming together swiftly around that, making peace with those differences and your intention is to find a way forward no matter what.

◆ Redefining compromise

Another thing you can do to move out of positionality or move out of gridlock is to redefine what compromise actually means. One of the biggest barriers to getting out of your position or out of this where you're like butting heads, is the idea that compromise means that both of you have to lose something or that one of you is going to win and one of you is going to lose. That's like this old idea of compromise. If you operate from that assumption, you're going to go into it with a bad attitude. You're going in feeling one leg down. But if you operate on the other hand from the assumption and knowledge that you can alternate a win with each other or you can find a way where you're going to be more open, you're going to find a solution that can work for both of you. You will find the solution if you believe that you can. Most people don't even get there. They don't even get to thinking outside the box because they've already decided it's impossible. How I look at compromises is a balancing act between not relinquishing anything that you feel is absolutely essential. You get to hang on to your life dreams while also understanding that you must be willing to accept influence. It's that balancing act between standing firm on your values, standing firm on the non-negotiables for you in your life, while at the same time, being open to receiving influence and adjusting and adapting and moving in a different direction, if it serves the us. Then from that place and that mentality, it's really a mindset, you can come up with a compromise that you can try out and modify as needed.

I'll give you an example here of what that could look like. There was a couple that I worked with years ago. I'm going to call them Cindy and Tom. They were having ongoing arguments about the household. This was their biggest point of contention actually. It was like something they had not been able to resolve for years and the vast majority of their fights stemmed from this. Of course, it were perpetuated from the meaning that they were giving it. Basically, Cindy wanted to have an immaculate house. She could not stand clutter. Tom just wants her to relax and enjoy life and be like the house has lived in, so what if there's a coffee mug? So what if there's a little bit of clutter? He really wanted to have a lived in feeling space and not to feel like he always had to be cleaning up. It turned out that they really were holding different life dreams about their home environment and then the meaning they were attaching to. We're going to get to the live dreams in a minute. But essentially for her, it came down to order and security. For Tom, it was really about freedom. He was attached to that. That was what was at stake for him was freedom. For her, it was more about safety that comes from order and security. They both had some non-negotiable areas. She was going to be unwilling to tolerate dirty dishes or a messy bathroom because that was just dirty to her, that was beyond clutter, that was like dirty. He was not going to tolerate having to clean up his papers right after doing his work at home. He said, "that's just not what I want to do and I don't want to live that way. I want to finish and then I want to be able to walk away from it and just leave my papers and not have to then clean up right then and there." He wanted the freedom to do that without having to pay for it through a loss of connection to Cindy. As they discussed it and as they shared their positions, they realized that there were some things that they weren't willing to give on. But they also were able to identify their areas of flexibility. What Cindy noticed was that she was willing to tolerate a little bit of clutter, as long as it wasn't dirty. She was going to say like, "Fine! If it's just paper but not dirty dishes." Tom was willing to be more flexible by saying, "I'll pitch in more cleaning up around here. I'll clean the bathroom. I'll clean the kitchen, as long as you give me some slack around my own paperwork." They basically made this compromise that he's willing to help cleaning but he wants to have a few things lying around like his newspapers. They struck a compromise, which was for them, and they did this for a limited time period, which I highly recommend. Any compromise should be like, "let's try this for two weeks," "let's try this for a month and then we can always reevaluate." That allows you to move into the mentality of what's possible because you're living the question, as opposed to feeling like, "this decision is going to be what we do for the rest of our lives." Ultimately, what they decided was that they were going to each take responsibility for keeping the kitchen and bathrooms clean. Tom was going to do more than what he had been doing before. Cindy agreed to leave him alone about his papers and the clutter that wasn't dirty, except for once a week. Once a week, it was fine for her to bring it up. If he doesn't clean it up within that week, like actually I think it was like within three to four days of her mentioning it, then she gets to pile up his stuff and set it aside in his home office. That was an agreement that they made. That worked out pretty well because they both felt heard and what was at stake for each person got to be honored. And so they didn't really actually feel like they were losing anything.

Another way of looking at compromise, if you're going to look underneath and see what is at stake for each person and, "does it mean more to the other person than it does to me?" In that case, "am I willing to say, 'Okay, I'm going to just take one for the team, right.'" For example, let's say you're getting your first car with your partner. You really wanted a blue car. Your partner really wants to have a black car. You're in a gridlock around this, who decides, right? How do you compromise? You both feel really strongly about that. You really don't want a black car because of just the image that that conveys. You feel like that's really outside of your identity. How do you decide? One person's not going to get what they want, right? That's what we tend to think of. But if you go a step deeper and you find out that your husband, let's say it is your husband, or your partner, he has been dreaming about a black sports car since he was a kid. It's literally been something he's been drawing in his notebooks as a kid in school, it's something he's been fantasizing about and it's just been on his mind. It's like an unfulfilled life dream. And it means a lot. You think about why you want a blue car and you realize it's because it's part of your identity because you love blue and you just like the way blue makes you feel. You don't actually care that much about cars. You can get that color blue in other things. You can decorate your room blue. You can get blue accent pillows and be around the color blue and you can wear blue. But if cars aren't that important to you, you might just decide, "who cares? Like I'll just let him have the black car then if that's something that's so important to him." This way, you're looking at it as not that you're giving something up but that you're just making a loving choice that brings happiness to both of you. He gets what he wants. His joy makes you feel happy. It makes him feel grateful. Then he wants to reciprocate and be generous with you about something that matters more to you. That's why getting to the bottom of it and figuring out the *why* behind it, it might feel a little bit like you're changing the subject but it really allows you to have a deeper understanding and connection with each other and then work together as the same team. Nobody's losing when you look at it like this. The most important thing in all of this is to feel understood, to feel respected and to feel honored in your life dreams and to what matters most to you. and that actually brings us to our next point.

3. Find the Hidden Life Dream

Another way of staying in harmony is to really find the hidden life dream behind the conflict. Anytime you're in a conflict,

there's usually some like, unless it is just a power struggle, but if you tune into it and you try to look at *what's really at stake here, what is the life dream behind this conflict*, then you'll be able to find out, "is this just ego?" "Is this just I want to win?" "Is this because I'm attaching meaning to it that isn't there for my adapted child place?" Or "is there a true life dream here that I need to stand my ground on?" So part of this is really getting clear inside yourself and asking these questions:

◆ Why is this so important to you?

Why is this so important to me? What does it really mean to me? Why do I want this so bad?

◆ Anything from your past being triggered?

Is there anything from my past that's being triggered by this conflict? What is that about?

◆ What is it really about?

What is winning on this? What is getting what I want really about in this situation? For example, is it really about the dishes? Is it about sensitivity to clutter? Because some people really don't function well in clutter. Just because they aesthetically need a clear environment. So it's really about the energy that you're living in day to day and being in a clear space is really important to you. Is it that the dirty dishes in the sink are associated with neglect or chaos in your childhood? So you look at that and you think, "this means I'm not safe," "this means somebody else doesn't care about me," "I'm left holding the bag," "I'm doing more than my fair share." We can either try to get our spouse to change their actions and make requests of them or we can change the meaning that it has to us. In this example that I just gave with the dishes, if it turns out that it's just my association with dirty dishes from childhood that's running this, then maybe it really isn't a life dream. Maybe this is just about an unmet need from childhood. I don't need to get that met from my spouse. I can grieve it. I can release it. I can change the meaning that it has for me. So that my spouse can have something that they really care about, which is a sense of freedom in their own home and not to feel like everything has to be perfect.

Getting clear on it really is very important. I know we talked about this a little bit in the first couple of lessons of being able to distinguish between the unmet needs of childhood and what is a conscious life dream that you are taking a stand for. This is an opportunity to go deeper in this distinction. Now that you've done so much work between the beginning and now you're in the final phases, you should have a much greater self-awareness around what is your adaptive child, what are your losing strategies. If you are being guided by something that appears to be a life dream but it's actually not, it's just trying to master something from childhood. Finding the hidden life dream is going to be very important in being able to work together as a team anytime you get stuck.

4. Defuse Conflict with 7 Questions

One of the things that you can do to get at the hidden life dream and also diffuse conflict in general to stay in harmony is the seven questions that I love. I got these from Gay and Katie Hendricks in their book, *Conscious Loving*. I'm going to go through these a little bit one by one, but you will have the opportunity, this is going to be in the exercises. These are seven questions that are just gold, in terms of trying to diffuse a conflict. If there's like an issue that you keep coming up against or you just cannot see your way around, you just cannot imagine like how you're ever gonna get past it, if you go through all these seven questions, you're gonna have some kind of shift:

1. How do I feel?

The first question is, how do I feel? Sometimes, when you're in conflict, you're not tuning in. You're going back to the microscopic honesty piece, that's the first thing to go is that we're often not tuned into how we feel. We're in our head. We're analyzing. We're justifying. We're explaining. We forget to just tune back into, "how am I really feeling?" And sharing that. It's not concepts or thoughts. It's not positioning your argument. It's not about trying to make sense about why you're looking at it the way that you're looking at it. It's just about the emotion that you're having about this conflict and sticking with emotion words. Just like you do in an I-statement. Just like you do in the feedback wheel. Microscopic honesty, that's really what this is.

2. What do I want?

The second question is, what do I want? That's kind of thinking about the life dream, like, *what is the hope behind what I want? What is the wish?* It could even be something as simple as, "I really want us to find common ground," or "what I really want is for you to see my point of view," "what I really want is for you to understand why what I want matters or why it's valid." It could be, if you're really honest, if sometimes this is sneaking in there's like, "what I really want is for you to come around to my side," "my hope ultimately is that you would see you'd come around and say, 'I agree with you.'"

Whatever it is, whether you think it's right or wrong, just say what it is that you actually want and own your agenda in the conversation. Whether it's what you think you should want is not the issue, it's really just what are you honestly hoping for in this conversation.

3. How is the past coloring the present?

The next question is, how is the past coloring my present? We touched on this a little bit earlier. But I have an example, too. Another former client, Larry and Barbara. Larry was really afraid of his wife's anger. I mean, it could have been a really simple thing like she could be frustrated in traffic or something. But his mother used to use anger to manipulate the family when he was growing up and it was a very scary thing for him. He was really not able to see Barbara's anger or frustration in a neutral light. Anytime she expressed frustration, he would get wired into that past experience with his mom. He would just want to stop it. He would just want to shut down her communication. He would try to argue it away. He would just ignore her. Whatever he would do, basically, have the effect of dismissing her because it felt overwhelming to him. His initial agenda, his unconscious agenda, was just to stop her from expressing those feelings because it was triggering for him. So, this question, if he was going to ask himself, how was the past coloring my present when Barbara's expressing a valid frustration, he would be able to recognize, "This is actually an opportunity for me to release my history with my mom and to learn that there is a healthy way to express anger. There is an okay way to express frustration. It doesn't always mean that I'm unsafe. From that place, I can learn to hear my wife a little bit better." This question just helps generate insight. When both people are answering each of these questions, it's really powerful. I recommend that. I recommend if you're going to do it together, each of you gets to answer each question and you're not going to actually respond to what the other is saying, you're just going to share. "This is how I would answer this question what about you," and then you move to the next one. If you're just doing it on your own, of course, this is really just good for your own self-awareness.

4. What am I getting out of staying stuck?

Question number four is, what am I getting out of staying stuck? I love this question because everything has a payoff, everything. Even our most undesired circumstances, if it's a recurring thing and we continue to have the same experience, in spite of saying that we don't want to be having this experience, there's got to be some kind of payoff. It could be just as simple as comfort zone. It could be this is what's familiar. It could be it's confirming your beliefs about what's possible, even if they are limiting negative beliefs. It could be that the payoff is being right. It could be ego based. It could be anything. But if you ask this question, even if you don't know the answer right away, it's important to be asking this question and looking for the answer because things might pop into your awareness later in the day after asking this question. Even if you don't know the answer, you might come to it and be like, "I think this is what was going on for me." You'll never know unless you're willing to ask that question and to be open to the answers. I know that going through this, it might seem almost like you're backtracking or it might seem like you're changing the subject. Let's say for example, you're talking about a money issue and now all of a sudden you're bringing out the seven questions and you're going through all this stuff. You're wondering like, "How is this actually solving the issue that we're trying to solve?" The whole point of this is that when you shift gears a little bit, you go deeper underneath the surface. You talk about your feelings and how the past is playing into it and what the payoff is. It allows you to understand each other better. It allows you to move back into that emotional connection. It allows you to shift your paradigm. It allows you to create a deeper sense of harmony because you're just sharing. You're getting closer. In the sharing and in the answering the questions, you are hearing each other. You don't even have to solve the problem right that second. But first, it will like change your energy. Then, once you have that clarity, then you can come back to solving the problems. You'll have better answers available to you or if the least that would come of it is that you would have more good will towards the other person even if the solutions were not immediately available.

5. What do I need to say?

The fifth question is, what do I need to say? If there's anything that I have not been saying, either because I don't want to hurt my spouse's feelings or because I didn't have the right words for it, this is really going into some deeper truths. It might be something along the lines of, "sometimes I wonder if we have different life dreams and we shouldn't even be together." It could be something like, "sometimes I fantasize about not being together because I think life would be easier." That doesn't mean that's what you really want in the big picture. You're just admitting that the weaker part of your mind sometimes goes there. I think creating a safe space for that, this is advanced, to be able to to come into harmony while knowing sometimes we're having thoughts and feelings that we don't really want to be having. It doesn't actually reflect what we really desire in life. Sometimes I have thoughts about my children that do not reflect my values as a parent. I would never want me sharing my worst moments in my own mind with my spouse to be used against me later. This is a time of really honoring each other and moving out of non-judgment in this space. We've all been programmed to hold the truth inside. Most of us have anyways. We might have been conditioned that there's just certain things you can't say because I don't want my partner to react a certain way, I don't want them to get upset, I don't want them to take it personally. But

this is an amazing opportunity in a formal way to be able to bring out the truths that you've never even said before.

6. What agreements have I broken?

Number six is, what agreements have I broken? This is where you really need to own your part and acknowledge, "Maybe I haven't held up my end," "maybe I haven't done what I said I was gonna do," "maybe I told you I was gonna do this one thing and then I didn't do it. I didn't like how you reacted and then I focused on your reaction, but really we wouldn't have had that disagreement if I hadn't broken our agreement in the first place." This is the part of reckoning and really owning, copying to everything that you can own. Even if you feel like your spouse has a lot to own as well.

7. How can I be of service?

Finally, number seven is, how can I be of service? This is really looking at yourself in the relationship as a producer of love and positive energy, rather than a consumer of love and positive energy. How can I contribute to the harmony? How can I contribute to the whole that's greater than the sum of its parts? How can I contribute to the joint emotional bank account that will then allow for more generosity in the problem-solving process? Even if you went through these questions and you were really, let's say you only picked three or four of these questions to do, you wouldn't have to do all seven of them, I would recommend having this be one of them. This question number seven should always be a part of this process. This is the one that really paves the way for a connection and positivity and getting into the 5-to-1 ratio and helping your spouse really feel like you're a team player.

5. Choose your "battles"

The last thing that I want to share with you guys about how to be in harmony and get on the same team is this old adage of choosing your battles correctly. I want to reframe this a little bit because I shouldn't even say battles. In this phase, you weren't really wanting to think about it that way. It's not a battle. It's two people who are very different, who are collaborating in harmony and with the intention to serve the team. Instead, it would be better rephrased as observing and consciously choosing both your topic and the timing of things that need to be brought up. And there's really three components of this:

◆ Check your intention

Number one is to check your intention. *What is the intention behind what I'm going to bring up?* When people say pick your battles, most people are thinking like content of what they're about to bring out. I would say, first, you have to check in with what is my intention. "Is my intention to repair because I have resentment? And that's blocking connection right now. It's my responsibility to clear that out. That's why I'm bringing that up." Awesome! That's your intention. Your intention is to repair. You can use the feedback wheel. *Is your intention to convince the other person? Is your intention to show them the error of their ways?* This requires a high degree of honesty with self. We might think that our intentions are pure and they're not. They are to bolster ourselves or they are to poke holes in the other person's argument. You really want to check your intention, "what is my ultimate hope in bringing this up first?" You have to be able to ask that question and then answer that question honestly before you can decide when is the right time or what is the right topic to bring up.

◆ 48-hour rule

The other thing I would suggest is a 48-hour rule. If it's triggering and you're like, "Yep, this is something I got to bring up," hold off on it for 48 hours. This is just for the things that are triggering because I think that after 48 hours, you have a better idea of *is this something that I have to raise? Or is this something that I can let go of?* If you still feel like it's something you have to raise after 48 hours, then absolutely that is something that should be raised.

◆ Separate meaning from content

The final thing is to separate your meaning from the content of the actual issue. You want to bring up the issue of the dirty dishes and the mess in the house. You want to be sure before you bring it up that you have separated out the meaning from the content. The content is the dirty dishes and that "I don't want dirty dishes in the house." The meaning could be anything. It could be what we talked about before that, "I'm left alone holding the bag, I'm depressed and that's why I'm having to do the dishes. And so, we're not close because you haven't shared that with me," or whatever else it could mean, you want to make sure that you have that clear in your mind before you raise an issue.

REVIEW

That's basically it, you guys, those five things. Just a quick review:

1. Tell the microscopic truth
2. Move out of Positionality/gridlock
3. Find the hidden life dream
4. Use the 7 questions to defuse any conflict that keeps cropping up
5. Choose wisely what you're going to bring up and how you're going to bring it up

EXERCISES:

Choose at least 2 of the following to complete:

- The Harmonizing Process
- Finding the Life Dream hidden in Conflict
- The Us in Conflict Exercise
- The 7 Questions
- Microscopic Truth Telling Guidelines

There are actually four exercises for Lesson 11. Then there's one that is just reviewing the guidelines for microscopic truth telling. What I'd like you to do is just choose two of the four, not the microscopic truth telling guidelines, because that's just really clear what that is. It's nothing you have to do anything with. It just kind of is something that will guide you as you do that and practice that, however often that comes up. But in terms of the seven questions, the us in conflict exercise, the finding the life dream hidden in conflict exercise and the harmonizing process exercise, pick two of those. Get those done before lesson 12. Post in the group and let us know how it went. That's it. Then of course, if you want to do more than two, feel free. All right, you guys! I look forward to seeing you inside the next lesson!