

The Couples Cure

Miraculous Recovery for Couples on the Brink

Phase 1: Getting Real With Yourself (Turning Inward)

Lesson 2: The Problem is Opportunity

This is where we're looking at how the problems in our relationships become the opportunity. This is part of the self-exploration. You have a vision now. You know how to remove the internal barriers and clear out the mental baggage that stops you from getting to your vision. You have the rules of pattern interrupt that are critical for the stage of disruption in phase one. You are shoring up the negative. You're tabling the hot-button issues for later, except when you have to use a repair or the feedback wheel in emergencies. You're connecting to yourself in your journaling. You're stacking the positives with gratitude. Noticing the things that are going well in your brag book and that kind of thing. That's kind of what we've been working on so far. What I've shared so far has been focused to help you get as stable as you can during this disruption phase because this is a very disorienting phase. The goal really for this phase or for the previous lesson is to give you what you need to get partner relationally inward because while you're looking inward, it might stir some things up. It's just better to keep possible in your relationship, that's part of the reason why we're holding off on some of the long-term problem solving until later and reflecting on your reactions and your patterns.

To kind of keep that going in lesson two, what we're going to do, we're going to continue the self-exploration while we're anchored in our vision. We're going to look at how you got here because we can learn from that. That's really what we're exploring -- *how did you get here? How is that playing out? What do I have to do to transform what feels like impossible problems?* We're doing this not so much from a strategy and relational tools standpoint, we're doing this from the standpoint of looking inward and really getting clear on why am I here in the first place. Now the premise of this lesson is that what you find to be the most painful and the frustrating parts about your marriage, even the things that you feel like, *this is the bane of my existence* or the things that you feel you just can't handle, like, sometimes people get in arguments or they're shut down and it feels truly unbearable. Those things are often what we actually need to grow in ways that will not only help our spouse but also help us heal and become better versions of ourselves. Let me explain.

The first premise of this lesson is that, and I love this quote by Terry Real: *"We Marry Our Unfinished Business"*

He is the author of *New Rules of Marriage*, if you did not know that already. He also wrote a really amazing book about the specific ways that depression impacts men called, *I Don't Want to Talk About It*, which is not something we deal with in this curriculum, but I highly recommend it if you think it applies. Succinctly, we marry our unfinished business. That's the shortest possible way to sort of capture the assumption and the premise that I'm building this whole lesson around and really what the program is based off of, is really looking at the reason why we picked our spouse. Even though it seems like they're the person that seems wrong for us because of how triggering they are. Now the implications of this, and I'm going to be going into this in more detail in this lesson, is because we marry our unfinished business is where you're stuck, is where you're going to find the answer. It's important now to reflect back and truly understand why and how you got here, the places that you're stuck, because then you'll have the power to change it. We want to get fully conscious. I want to help you get really conscious and see deeper into the roots of the symptoms that you're having. It's sort of like history, like, you want to really understand history in order to stop repeating it. We don't want to stay there and I'm very much not about staying stuck in the past. But we have to be able to look backwards in order to understand certain things that are going to really help us get traction moving forward. I'm going to break this down into three chunks to really understand and utilize this phenomenon, finish business in our relationship.

Number one we're going to talk about the source of where you are right now, like, why did you choose your spouse, symptoms of that, which is really the answer to what this phenomenon is and what it looks like, how to solve it. In other words like what can you do to transform the stuckness into an amazing opportunity for healing and growth. It sounds great but it's like, *how am I supposed to do that? How am I supposed to take the most unbearable triggering parts of my marriage and actually turn that into an opportunity?* It's definitely not a bypassing thing. We're really going to go deep with this and have a better understanding so that we can get traction in building the new story.

WHY YOU CHOSE YOUR SPOUSE

First, let's look at why did you choose your spouse. This is something that you probably thought of before. You might have asked yourself, *why am I with this person? Did I pick the wrong person? Why am I still stuck if we love each other? Or why have my efforts have not made a difference?* A lot of people come to this program really exploring and getting clarity especially if they're doing it on their own. I'm not even sure if this is the right person, to work you will definitely get clarity but it's not a standard rule of thumb in my book that if somebody is really triggering you that that means they're the wrong person. That does not necessarily mean that. There's other things we look at too. But you might be asking, a lot of people think if it's this hard then it must not be right. If they push my buttons this much then how can it be the right person? Some of you in this group are already exploring that in the context of this program. We've already talked about that question that at least on some level, we as humans tend to with whom we can recreate the experiences that were functional in our early years or our formative years out of a really deep-seated impulse to try to heal that or to try to give that old story a different ending. That is not something that we're usually conscious of, but this is something that I see happening over and over again. We pick people who will recreate the experiences that were not functional in our formative years. Even though we don't like those experiences, we're actually unconsciously recreating them starting with the choice of person that we're with.

The source of your problem is in some ways universal, like at least in the west, it is that way, where we're choosing our partner. There's these unconscious needs and desires and actually information that we're picking up on unconsciously that guide our decisions if it's not a marriage that has been set up or arranged in any other way. We really come to our adult relationships with some unmet needs or wounds from childhood, and that's true no matter what. But what I'm really trying to get at is not just that we come to our relationship with unmet needs from childhood or wounds from childhood, it's that we actually specifically pick the person who will activate that for us.

Now, Dr. Harville Hendrix, the author of *Getting the Love You Want*, he does an amazing job of breaking this down. He does what's called Imago Therapy. Maybe you've heard of this, he does a really good job of explaining this. This is really the source of the problem, he says:

- We are inherently drawn to people we know deep down will not meet our needs.
In fact, he goes so far as to say incompatibility is the very grounds for marriage, which seems sort of cruel and unfair. It seems like how could that be? Is that really love then? Like maybe it's just a complete psychological failure, this whole idea that we could marry for love. But that's not what he believes.
- Adults have an unconscious need to recreate the experience familiar to childhood.
Without realizing it, they're going to pick somebody who has the negative aspects or the negative traits of at least one of their caregivers, a parent or somebody that was raising them or a significant adult parental figure in their life.
- We re-enact the dynamics of childhood by falling in love with the same people who will drive us mad sometimes.
It's almost like our psyche is saying, "I only want what I need from the very person who can't give it to me." Sometimes we think, *I could have picked that other person who would have easily given that to me but that's not that interesting, that's boring.* They don't have any chemistry with that person. That's a psychological phenomenon, not a physical phenomenon, in my opinion. But that's another topic.
- We have a template for relationships, this is our way of being connected
How we grow up, we download all this information about what connection looks like, about what care looks like, about how communication works, that becomes our template for relationships. We just operate out of default from that template, half the time without even realizing it, like the fish and water analogy .
- We recreate what is familiar because it's in our unconscious programs
- We don't even see this. We think it's about our spouse
It's really easy for us to point the finger and say that they're the problem, *if they could just stop withholding this thing that I need or if they could just stop being this way or if they could just understand this one thing, it's so simple.* And we overlook. There might be truth to that, like, they might have some areas of growth as well. But the sticking point is that it's our stuff that's making it so particularly triggering. I'm going to get into that in a little bit.

We're actually drawn to partners who meet two conditions:

1. Their character is similar enough to that of one or both of our parents that with this person we can re-create our most familiar and most unresolved childhood drama.
It's not the positive stuff that we're choosing. It's the most unresolved childhood stuff. The person's character has to be similar enough to one or both of our parents or caregivers if we had to in our lives.
2. The person's character is dissimilar enough from that of our parents that with this person, the old drama carries within it the potential for a new and healthier outcome.
That's why on the surface, if you ask yourself, *how is my spouse similar to one of my parental figures?* You might think they're not at all because on the surface their personality is really different. They might have way more insight. They might have very different political views, or different personalities. Totally different on the surface. But underneath it, if how they're responding to you is activating old stuff and it's feeling familiar in the emotional experience of it, then they're meeting that first criteria. But because they're not exactly the same, you actually have that window of opportunity, which is what we're going to talk about in terms of transforming and getting that healthier outcome.

The Symptoms: Child States

What are the symptoms of this? So I was just talking about the source of that disconnect, the source of the drama, the source of the triggers, and that experience that so many married couples have of replaying the same argument. Just not being able to move forward, not being able to get unstuck no matter how much insight they have, that's the source. Now, we're going to look at the symptoms of this. How does this actually show up and recognize the signs that you can look for? If you're kind of thinking about this and you're like, *I don't know this doesn't really resonate, I don't think it's true for me*, this is what you can look at to see this might prompt you or give you some insights.

A lot of times when we're with our spouse who is activating any old drama from our childhood or unmet needs from our childhood, we will notice that when we get triggered we go into child states. Child states are essentially a way that we regress. It's basically emotional and cognitive states that we act out from the place of the adaptive child. I think we've talked about that before. There are some clues that will tell you that you are in a child state, that you will be having disproportionate reactions. It's the feeling of, *this is unbearable, I cannot bear it*. It's really old pain if it feels connected to like, *oh this is always how it is, here we go again*. That kind of old heavy pain where you even recognize like, *this isn't that big of a deal, if I were to tell a friend about it, they would think I was overreacting*. It's also where you feel like you keep doing the things that you know don't work and you keep doing it anyway or when you're just feeling really childish. I'm going to share with you what the child states are. There's going to be a full list in the exercise that you'll be doing to look at all the different child states. But I'm just going to share a few with you now so you kind of get an idea of what I'm talking about.

- Fear of saying what you feel, need, think and want
If it wasn't safe as a kid. If you felt like a burden or your mom or dad were going to get mad at you. If your emotions were treated as wrong unless you were happy, instead of recognizing from your adult self, *hey, this is a reasonable thing to ask* and even though you might know that intellectually, something in your gut stops you. You feel afraid to actually say what you feel or need or think or want.
- Intense angry outbursts, screaming, yelling
That's definitely a child state. Having a tantrum practically or just feeling like you cannot keep it together.
- Breaking agreement chronically
Chronic breaking agreements, that's a child state. Sort of like not being fully in your adult self and taking accountability for the experiences or having an awareness of how your behavior impacts other people. Seriously, don't beat yourself up if you recognize yourself in a lot of these because these are the most common ones, which is why I put them here. It's really normal for most adults to have child states that they recognize. It would be very unusual to find an adult that doesn't have some child states that they regress to sometimes when triggered, especially if they have not done this inner work.
- Fear of being swallowed up, controlled, or losing identity
Another fear is like being swallowed up or controlled or losing identity that can result in like rebelliousness. If that regression of being a teenager and acting like, *I'm not gonna do what you tell me, you're not the boss of me kind of thing*, fear of not having your own individuation, that fear of just being erased by the needs of the other person.

- Your partner is upset so you are immediately upset
If your partner is so upset that you're immediately upset or that they're just even a little upset and you're immediately upset. They're upset and then you're upset. That comes from childhood. That's that sense of like, *if my parent is not okay, I'm not okay*. When we're young, we do need our parents to be okay. It can be traumatic for a child not to see their parents cry in healthy situations that are just actually having sadness or whatever, but when you have a parent that is really emotionally unstable or dealing with a substance abuse problem or lots of trauma, as a child, it's very scary to feel like the adult in charge is not regulated inside their own selves. They're sort of like the anxious alpha experience. *I have to make them okay so that I can be okay*. That's really common and that leads to codependency as well.
- Frequent headaches, stomachaches, tensions, low energy, boredom with life
There's a thematic stuff of frequent headaches, stomachaches, tension, low energy, boredom with life, general malaise, feeling just like that stuck feeling, not feeling alive, but sometimes people will really have physical symptoms or just a loss of energy or not sleeping well. That's considered a child state.
- Feeling entitled to be taken care of
Feeling entitled to be taken care of beyond the sense of like, *I enjoy having a spouse that nurtures me*. But really just feeling entitled to be taken care of usually comes from the unmet need of, *I didn't have a parent that really took care of me and so that's something I'm trying to get. I'm trying to get my spouse to take care of me at the level that an attuned parent would for a young child*. And the expectation of that without awareness that's the entitlement.
- Feeling scared to be alone
- Unease and jealousy when your partner is passionate about other interests
Unease and jealousy when your partner is passionate about other interests or makes other friends, that sense of being threatened like, you have to be the only one. You know the only like person in that in your spouse's life. I don't mean only one as in like romantic, like a monogamous partner. I just mean feeling like you're not okay if they go hang out with friends because you automatically feel lost and forlorn and are unable to find a way to feel content by yourself. That would be a child state as well.

Now there's also ways of thinking that come from child states too. If you've said these things or you've thought these things, this is usually a symptom of being in a child state. These are just a few:

- I'm afraid to tell you because I'm worried what you will say
- If you don't want to do what I want, it means you don't love me
- You're punishing me
Either you've said it or you've thought it, like, *I feel like I'm being punished right now*. That whole way of thinking is definitely from a child state.
- I can never do it right
- I never get to talk
Just the disempowerment of that is not being in your fully functional adult because nobody gets to decide when you talk or when you don't talk. But if you felt as a child like there wasn't space for you, that'll come up.
- I can't be happy if my spouse isn't happy
I can't be happy if my spouse isn't happy that's kind of a similar thing to what we touched on earlier in the child states of needing them to be okay
- Maybe if I'm sweeter/calmer/smarter... they will love me.
Then this idea that maybe if I'm sweeter or calmer or smarter or some other different thing, more perfect, if I look better, all these different things that you can tell yourself, if I'm more this way then they will love me more, then I will be more worthy and then my connection will be secure. If you notice that you're operating from that like assumption and you're trying to chase after that from the outside in, that's a child state as well.

Like I said there's just a few here. There's going to be some more in the handout. It's really important to just be aware of that in terms of regression and knowing that sometimes it's going to be teenage-level child states. Sometimes going to be like, *I'm a three-year-old and I'm having a tantrum*. It's different for you depending on where the unmet need is. It's really like arrested development, that's kind of the concept of arrested development.

The Symptoms: Losing Strategies

Now the child states, a lot of times, lead to continuing to do things that no longer work or that never did work but you keep doing them anyway. If you're continuing to do things that are not working and you know you shouldn't and you know that they don't work, but in the moment you get triggered and you keep doing it, then you are definitely in a child state and you're engaging in what's called losing strategies. There's a lot of these but I'm going to be sharing the ones as identified by Terry Real in the *New Rules of Marriage*. And you're going to want to look at, *what am I doing here?* These are other examples of symptoms of how you might actually be unconscious in your relationship or that you are having some kind of unmet need or old drama that's getting activated and it leads to these losing strategies. It's also partly that you haven't been taught this stuff yet, that you may just not have learned these skills because of how you were raised. Most people are not taught the winning strategies, which we're going to get to later. But this is just a way for you to really look and say, *what are my symptoms?* If you're doing any of these losing strategies, there's a really good chance that your adaptive child is running the show.

- The need to be right

If you are in the kind of argument where you really feel like you can't stop unless you convince them. It can't just be *I agree or we agree to disagree*. It can't just be *I hear your point of view, here's mine, now what should we do given that*. It's like it's not over until you have convinced the other person that you're right. This can happen without you even realizing that that's what you're trying to do. It can be very unconscious like I said. It shows up as arguing about whose view is more accurate, what really happened, *no, that's not what happened; no, that's not what I said; no, that's not what's going on*. It also fuels self-righteous indignation. This is a big losing strategy. It's so much connected to that need to be validated that may not have been met as a child.

- Controlling your partner

The second losing strategy is controlling your partner. This can show up actually indirectly or directly. There's direct control where you're telling your partner what to do, you're telling them what they should or shouldn't be doing, you're threatening them, you're guilt-tripping them. Or it can be more indirect where you're sort of trying to control the choices that they choose from, or you're facilitating things in such a way as to orchestrate that they will do what it is that you want without having to actually say or make a request or give them the choice, that's another way that that can show up as well. If you do that, you know who you are. This always will backfire. Nobody likes to be controlled. It will always lead to some kind of retaliation or payback. Even if it's years later, it's going to come up in the form of resentment and silence like disconnection, no eye contact, just shutting down or resisting what it is that you're trying to create. It will come out somehow, some way. Just keep that in mind like if you feel really tempted to try to make it go your way and do it in a controlling way as opposed to a way that stays in your lane, which can feel very scary if you're used to doing this, it might feel tempting in the moment but in the long run it's going to hurt you.

- Unbridled self-expression

The third losing strategy is unbridled self-expression. This is just essentially what it sounds like, saying whatever is on your mind with no kindness or respect. It usually comes from a place of feeling completely justified like righteous rage, like, *how could you do this to me*. From that place of like, "Oh my god! I can't believe they did that. I have so much right to be mad that I get to say whatever I want, however I want to say it." It can be that. It can also just be very poor boundaries that which we haven't gotten into yet. And an emotional need for processing that's spilling out onto another person. It's definitely a losing strategy. It's definitely a symptom that you are not in your functional adult because you're not mindful and you're not respecting the other person in your unbridled self-expression. It might even be that you're just crying. There's nothing wrong with crying. But if while you're crying, you're repeating yourself, *how could you do this to me? What kind of person does this?* And going on and on in a critical way. But from a place of feeling like the victim and just not being able to stop and having it go on for hours at a time or feeling like you can just burst into the room and just say whatever is on your mind no matter how it's received or no matter what's going on, that's unbridled self-expression

- Retaliation

Then there's retaliation. This can be actually offending from the victim position. This is when people feel like, *I have been victimized, I have been hurt and I'm going to retaliate*. Sometimes it's conscious like, *I want to get back at them like, give them a taste of their own medicine*. Or you can be like, *they're going to do that, if they're going to play by those rules, two can play that game*. That's retaliation. You justify it because you say, "well, they did it, so now I get to do it." But if it's not in alignment with your values and you're doing it just to make a point, that's retaliation. Even if you think that it's not mean-spirited but it really is coming a lot of times from a place of having felt hurt and then not heard or very disempowered to repair. And if you don't know how to repair, which is an adult state and an adult skill, then you'll move into retaliation, which is obviously such a

child state. This also can be overt or covert. It can be very passive-aggressive. People can deny that that's what they're actually doing. You won't be able to put your finger on it. But if you've been retaliated against in a covert way, you know what I mean. You're like, *I really feel like they're doing that on purpose but they won't admit*. That's what it looks like when it's covert. Sometimes it's really direct and it's very clear and they'll tell you exactly what they're doing. Neither one is good.

- **Withdrawal**

Finally, the fifth losing strategy is withdrawal. This is different from taking a responsible timeout. This is not responsible distance taking and saying, "Hey, I need a break," or "you know what let's talk about this when we're both ready to talk about it," "I'm not capable of talking about this right now," or "now is not the best time or whatever," or "I need some time to myself," that's not what we're talking about. Withdrawal comes from a place of resignation. It comes from retaliation. It comes from sort of shutdown, stonewalling falls under this category. We're probably going to go into this more in detail at another lesson. I just wanted to kind of give you some things to be looking for right now. If you're asking yourself, *where are my unmet needs from childhood cropping up? Where are my unconscious wounds driving the show and responsible for my dynamics that are so triggering for me with my spouse?* This will give you an idea of what that is.

The Opportunity

After all this, if you've looked at this and you're like, *I see all these symptoms, I see my child states, I see my losing strategies*, that can seem sort of daunting. If our partner is that triggering to us, *are they just the wrong person? Like what am I supposed to do with that?* But I want to share with you where the opportunity is here. This is where Dr. Harville Hendrix, I'm going to bring him back up again, you know in his work, his whole point was that:

- **Incompatibilities are the very grounds for marriage. They are where the opportunities lie.**
The incompatibility is not just a psychological like cruel joke that we end up with the person who pushes our buttons the most. He says that the incompatibility itself is the very grounds for marriage. That is where the opportunities lie. Essentially, the point is there's an apparent paradox of choosing somebody who doesn't meet our needs in critical ways. The opportunity is to heal from the past around that. Therefore your incompatibilities are the areas where you clash, those are the exact opportunities for you to heal and they're also the opportunities for you to support the healing in your spouse as well
- **If your partner wants something from the part of you that was shut down in childhood, they've identified your strongest growth point.**
This is how it works: Let's say your partner wants something from you and it's from the part of you that was shut down in childhood and the part of you that was not able to grow or develop, then they've identified your strongest growth point and vice versa. If you want something from them that requires an underdeveloped part of them to step up and grow, then you've pointed out what they need to do.
- **You don't have to change who you are. *You become MORE of who you are.***
Here's the beauty is that you don't actually have to change who you are. When I talk about this with people, they're like, *yeah, but then I just have to change who I am. They want me to be a different person and I'm just not that person. I just want to be accepted and loved for who I am.* I just want to be really clear that you don't have to change who you are. You're not actually asking your spouse to change for you. It's just that if each person is willing to stretch into behavior that their spouse needs to feel met, then you get to grow the underdeveloped parts of yourself. So, then you become more of who you are. You become a better version of who you are, a more whole version of who you are. How this works is that if you give your partner the very thing on the other flip side actually, if you give your partner the very thing that you feel that you just can't give, or if you let go of something that you just don't think you can let go of, you end up getting a piece of yourself that you never had before. In that way, especially if you're doing it together, it's a mutual growth and healing process, where you grow, your partner heals and then they grow and you heal. In so doing, regardless of what they're doing, you become the best you. You become the most whole you. Even if you're doing this alone like if your spouse isn't involved. You know the power of shifting your default dynamics from doing this inner work is radical and the relationship can't change as a result, even if you're doing this on your own.

So, what does this actually look like? What do we do to make that happen?

There's a few things actually. There's a few things that you must be willing to do:

- Change your relationship to relationships

The first thing is you have to be willing to change your relationship to relationships. Here's what I mean by that. Because our areas of immaturity always represent the unfinished business from our childhood. They represent incomplete conversations with one or both of our parents and we're right to feel that way, by the way, for what we're lacking. It's not about blame. It's just about recognizing the impact that it had on us. But because those areas of childishness or immaturity are connected to the unfinished business, in order to feel finished, we have to feel functionally parented. We have to feel like we got what we needed, in order to be healthy. But instead of acting on this neater desire to get it from your spouse, what you should have had earlier in life at a certain developmental window that has now passed, that's what keeps you in your child states and drives your losing strategies and guarantees failure, instead of doing that, you end up doing it for yourself.

- Reparent yourself

That really means that you're re-parenting yourself. In this sense, you're changing your relationship to relationships because you're no longer looking at your spouse as the person who will meet all your old unmet needs. You're connecting to your functional adult within you. You're learning to soothe the adaptive child. You're reminding them, *look, I've got things under control. It's okay now. You're safe. I've got this.* This is developing a more nurturing relationship with ourselves. A lot of people did not get this opportunity just in normal day-to-day living.

- Release the attempts to get our spouse to heal our unmet needs from childhood

The other thing is you have to be willing to release the attempts at healing through getting your spouse to meet those unmet childhood needs. You have to release the attempts to get your spouse to heal your unmet needs from childhood. It's just because it doesn't work. It's not because you don't deserve it. It's just because it will never work. We think that if we can get from them what we crave, then we'll be healed and happy. That's sort of the myth that we operate from. In fact our healing comes from when we finally just give up. We actually just have to stop trying. That feels very confusing to people. It feels difficult. It feels counterintuitive, like, we've been spending all our time in this fight and now we're being told to give up, like, how does that work? I think what comes up for people is they think, *if I give up then does that mean I'll never have any of my needs met in my marriage?* No, it does not mean that. I promise you. It does not mean you will never have any of your needs met in marriage because there's a distinction to be made. I'm going to do that shortly. But what it means is that we can find growth and healing with our spouses by both letting go of hope for something that you just can't get anymore. Most people can't in a healthy adult relationship and by working on supporting them and doing the same thing. I'll tell you how to do this because that's sort of what you need now for the opportunity in looking at *how do I actually do this.*

The biggest question I get is, this is a common example, what if an unmet need from childhood is for example being hurt, feeling heard, that's an unmet need from childhood, and my spouse doesn't hear me. He doesn't empathize with me, he doesn't validate me, I don't feel heard or seen or understood. Am I just supposed to give up on ever being heard? That feels like, no way! What's the point of being in a relationship then? No, that is not what I mean. Being heard is both an unmet need from childhood and perhaps a life dream or part of your conscious relationship vision. This is where it gets a little tricky. The difference is that when the unmet need is driving the interaction, your reactions are overwhelming, they are distressing and they keep you in pain. Whereas, when you're in an adult space and you've truly grieved and released the pain of the old wounds and you've sort of given up on trying to get your spouse to see the light of day, then you can have disappointment if your need isn't met but it's no longer unbearable. It no longer causes so much upset. It's like the meaning changes and it's not rejection. It's not evidence of your invisibility. It's actually just a disappointing moment in the larger scheme of things. That's what the functional adult will see it as. It's the difference between going into child states and freaking out and melting down and feeling rage and just saying, "okay, that's not working right now. I'm going to spend my energy elsewhere."

So when you're trying to repair or try to see the connection or get a need met and you're operating from your vision in your conscious life dream, not from your unmet needs, but when you're trying to seek connection or get a need met from the place of your vision, from your conscious life dream, you're not going to be triggered and you're not going to instantly be sent back into child states. Then later on, you're going to learn the tools, if you haven't already learned some to navigate disappointment and come forward and rock the boat or speak up or repair or communicate in healthy ways, where you will be more likely to get your needs met. That's the irony of it all. That once we let go, we're more likely to actually have it. We will be centered within ourselves and able to bring the right energy and the skill where our emotions don't derail the skills that we learned. You have to know the difference or you're going to end up sabotaging yourself. There's a few things that you can do:

- Identify your unhealed wounds from childhood

You want to identify what are your unhealed wounds from childhood. Some of you already know that. Some of you have already identified that. You've already done some counseling or therapy. You're clear on that. There's probably more that can be uncovered in terms of the implications of that and how that plays out. So still keep an open mind in doing these exercises because I can't tell you how many times people that felt like, *you know what, I've already resolved all this*. They're peeling new layers up and there's always blind spots. But wherever you're at in this, if you don't know what they are, I'm going to help you try to identify those. That's something we can do in coaching as well. But you want to identify them and then how they show up within you. If you can't pinpoint it consciously and you're like, *well, I don't really know what those are*, one clue is looking at where do you get stuck the most emotionally.

- Where (what age) do you get stuck emotionally? What are your child states?

If you can think of like a fight you always have or an experience that you have with your spouse where you get stuck the most emotionally. There's certain emotional and behavioral responses that indicate that you're in that child state. You've already thought about that now, we've already kind of gone through that. There's a list you'll be looking at later. But if you've ever had a tantrum or if you've acted rebellious like a teenager, if you've been passive-aggressive, if you've acted out in ways that are childish, have a look at those and identify which ones can you relate to when you look over that sheet. *What are my child states? Where am I stuck?*

- What's at stake for you when you get triggered by your spouse?

This might give you a clue you know like what's at stake for you when you get triggered by your spouse as well. When you go back to those experiences and you're remembering, ask yourself, *what am I fighting for so hard? Why am I so upset? What is at stake for me?* That is also going to help you identify what is an unmet need. Something that feels at stake over and over again in every where you find opportunities to fight that battle and you find that that becomes what drives you in more than one situation. It's like it's not even about the thing that we're arguing about, it's deeper. Those kinds of things that are at stake for you that will give you a clue as well as to what are those unhealed wounds.

- How are your frustrations familiar? Where do they feel like old pain?

Also, you might just think about the frustrations that you have in your marriage that just feels super familiar. You might have already identified those like, *they're just like my dad or they're just like my mom*. But think about the frustrations and just ask yourself, *if you haven't made that connection, where are they familiar? Where does it feel like old pain? Which ones are they?* Some might just feel like annoyances. Some might just feel like, *we're just really incompatible about how we like to keep the house*. But that doesn't mean that it's linked to something older. So really think about what feels bigger, what feels like, *oh, I felt that way*. The feeling of it doesn't have to be the situation. It doesn't have to be the content of the conflict. It just has to be the same feeling. Anything that you feel that's negative in your marriage that you felt a lot as a child, that's going to be your clue as well. Write down all the ways in which your frustration and your marriage feel old. You want to write that down in your journal. So as you're listening to this, I hope that you're taking notes. See what comes up for you. Ask yourself what's at stake for you is being heard and what comes up as you're writing is like, *I see nobody ever listens to me, that's what comes into my mind when that happens*. That's probably connected to the past and that you had that inside of you in your template, your relationship template, before you even got together with your spouse.

- Identify how your unmet needs play out

- What are your losing strategies?

Then you're going to want to identify how your unmet needs play out and this is just your losing strategies. What are your losing strategies? What do you do to try to get those unmet needs that aren't working? If they were working, you wouldn't be in this program. How are you doing that? Get super conscious of all the ways that this happens.

- What do you do that doesn't work but you keep doing it anyways?

What do you do that doesn't work but you keep doing it anyways? Things that you might have tried to stop but you can't seem to stop once you get triggered. That feels like you have to do it even though in the moment, you're thinking, *I shouldn't say that*, but you can't help it. That's coming from the old place or you would be able to control it. Does that make sense? Then, *what is the child state behind that losing strategy?* You can ask yourself that question, too.

■ What are your fears or limiting beliefs?

You can also ask yourself, what are my limiting beliefs? What are the fears behind that? Then that is something you should be writing down, too, every time we're going through this and identifying more limiting beliefs. Even though we've already done this in a previous lesson, we want to clear those out. Even if you recognize it intellectually, if you have a really deep subconscious limiting belief that's holding you back, that has to be cleared out or the strategies that you're going to be learning will not stick.

IDENTIFY YOUR LIFE DREAMS

Then after you've done that, you want to identify what your life dreams are. This is what's going to help you separate out what you want to keep in your relationship vision, as opposed to give up on. Because on the one hand I'm saying, have a vision, think big, what do you really want. And then, with regards to this thing, I'm saying, give up on getting the unmet needs from childhood met through your spouse. That might actually be something that's on your relationship vision. This is where we have to be very discerning and separate out, *what am I going to hang on to as a life dream?* Even if it was an unmet need from childhood, that's okay because as we do this work, you'll be able to get that need met from your functional adult. It won't be driven by the unmet need from childhood even though it's there. That's the difference. But you really want to get rid of the things that you don't actually feel like are necessary and because they're not in your life dreams. So when people ask me, what does that mean? What are life dreams? What I really think about is like, these are things that are really important to you to feel like you've lived a full life. That you feel like are part of your destiny or part of your purpose or part of like, *this is who I am as an involving person. This is what I must have to feel healthy or happy.* These are questions you could ask yourself:

● What must you have to feel no regret on your deathbed?

Some of that is already in your relationship vision. But I want you to think about it, not just looking at your relationship vision, but thinking about it *right now* from a clean slate, just having listened to this lesson, before you reach for the relationship vision, just ask yourself that right now. You might actually come up with something new.

● What calls to you that makes you feel expanded even if fearful?

Like you might be scared. You might be like, *oh, I don't know about that*, but you feel pulled towards something. There's something you really want to learn. There's a goal that you really want to reach. There's experiences that you really want to have, what are those things? That's a clue as to what your life dreams are.

● What do you want most for your family legacy?

● Check your relationship vision.

Check your relationship vision after you've already answered these questions with a fresh mind, after listening to this training. Sometimes there's overlap here. Hopefully, you find that reinforcing and helpful and not confusing. But if you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask.

And then if you get stuck on knowing the difference between unmet needs and life dreams, some people ask that, and I've had people ask, *I really don't know what is what, I don't know the difference and I'm getting confused.* I break it down this way that might be helpful:

UNMET NEEDS

● Usually unconscious, old programs on the lookout for danger.

Unmet needs usually what those are unconscious. They're something that creeps up on us when we're not aware and they make us act in ways that we don't really want to act. We act outside of our values, with our unmet needs that are driving the show. These are old programs that are on the lookout for danger. They're looking at life through the lenses of the past and trying to keep you safe. That's not the same thing as a life dream. That's an unmet need. When we were kids, those needs were essential for survival. They're not necessarily now as adults. But it feels that way because our old programs don't know what's happening now versus what happened then because it has no sense of time. So an unmet need is unconscious and it's on the lookout for danger.

- Connected to limiting beliefs
- Not intelligent or creative. They keep repeating the same information and want things to remain the same. These impulses, this part of your mind is not really part of your brain. But this part of your mind is not intelligent or creative. Unmet needs will keep repeating the same information and they want things to remain the same. That's what's really ironic, is it? They want things to remain the same even though you're trying to give it a different ending. It's because the gratification comes from getting the different ending from the old story. It doesn't want the new ending with a new story. That's not what's appealing to our psyche. The subconscious like old programs, they want to get it from the person that they can't get it from. Do you know what I'm saying? It's going to keep repeating the same information and they're going to be very invested in keeping things the same for you.
- Make people feel overwhelmed, and go into fight or flight. They make people feel overwhelmed and they make people go into fight or flight. So when you get really overwhelmed and you feel like you want to lose it because you're not getting something that you feel like you need and you feel overwhelmed by negative emotion as a result of that, there's a good chance that that's not coming from a conscious life dream but an old wound. People will get overwhelmed. They get flooded. They go into fight or flight. So if you're going into fight or flight around something that you're trying to create, it's probably not coming from your conscious life dreams.
- Drive our "adaptive child" whose survival skills no longer serve us as adults. That's the thing to remember. It's called adaptive child because the skills that we learned, they were adaptive, they served a purpose. They served us at a given time when we had no other choice. It's just that now those skills that were sort of learned before we even could be aware of what we were doing, when the programs were installed into us before we even had a choice, they're just really strong unfortunately. But they don't serve us anymore. That's why we're doing the belief change work now.

LIFE DREAMS

- Consciously chosen goals
Life dreams, on the other hand, are consciously chosen goals. That's where we really think big, that's from the intelligent part of our brain. That's the part of our brain that can imagine and imagine new scenarios that you've never experienced before. It's not as powerful but it's far more creative. The life dreams come from our creative mind.
- Connected to purpose and healing
- The product of our intuition, our higher self, our spiritual expanding self, our functional adult.
Whatever you want to call it, life dreams are connected to our growth, to our health, to our evolution. When this functional adult is in charge and we're operating like trying to get our needs met from the place of our life dreams, and that consciousness that we're going to develop over time in this program, then you're going to know how to trust what you know. You're going to be able to integrate your insights and you're going to be able to execute strategy based on actually what works. When your functional adult is in charge, things are going to go well.
- The fuel that drives the new story you are creating
It's the fuel that drives the new story that you're creating, which you already did in a previous lesson, going through the breakthrough formula and really thinking about *what do I want*, not only for the big picture of my marriage but the new story that you can create around any dynamics that are problematic. Once you see where they overlap, you want to circle those. That's where the mindset and strategy is going to help you create a balanced adult version of getting those needs met and capturing them and saying, "I actually do want this in my life but I'm going to be doing it from a very different energy, from a different set of assumptions, with a different set of skills, and a very different emotional response." That comes later and I will teach that to you after we start to build some emotional connection. But for now, I just want you to be aware of what part of you is running the show. Once you're aware of that, and you have that second consciousness, which is what Terry Real calls it, like, *oh, there's my adaptive child. I'm not going to choose to enter into that. I'm going to step into this is what I know operating from my conscious place.* You're going to feel so much more in charge of yourself. So much more empowered and hopeful about the future. It's like actually pretty amazing. It feels like a superpower because at this stage, a lot of people are feeling bad about themselves because they just can't control their own responses or they feel like they're powerless. Just shifting into this place of empowerment and clarity, mentally, is just a game changer in and of itself. It will transform how you show up in

this program going forward.

EMBRACE THE OPPORTUNITY

The thing is just to embrace the opportunity. I think the biggest takeaway from all of this is that the greatest pain point in your relationship is the greatest opportunity for flipping the script. I really do believe in creating a new narrative and really operating from a different paradigm rather than fighting the existing paradigm of your relationship within the script. I'm not saying that we stay in the same paradigm, but we can flip the script. We can actually shift the paradigm by going into where is the greatest pain point and having more awareness around that. Making different choices around that and letting go of some of those things that don't serve you anymore. It is hard, I mean, it is hard that I think this is the hardest thing. This is the difference. This is what separates the people that are successful from the couples that are not. But it's nothing that you can't do, like, it's definitely nothing you cannot do, it's just a matter of emotionally being willing to not avoid these hard things. Because it is hard. It's hard to look at the stuff. It's hard to think about our unmet needs from childhood. It's hard to go back in time especially if it was painful or it feels a little bit like going backwards at this stage in the game, but I promise you, this is just helping us clear it out. Get really intentional. We're not going to throw the baby out with the bathwater. But we have to go back in, look at it, glean what's relevant, and then we're going to take that with us into the next lessons.

I truly believe that all successful people in all areas of life, they're not trying to avoid the hard things, and they're not measuring success by when things go well. They're measuring success based on how undeterred they are when things feel impossible. That's what success is. Success is saying, "this feels hard, I don't understand this. I failed at that but I'm going to keep going," or "I'm going to keep trying to understand this," "I'm going to be ready for these painful things." Not to avoid the next fight, not to say to yourself, "okay, I just want to try to never do that again and I just want to avoid those kinds of situations all together." Instead, what you want to do is you want to be ready for it. You want to say, "bring it on! I'm ready!" Embrace the opportunity to face those problems and challenges and frustrations with a new mindset, with a new awareness. It's in the moment of that difficulty that you find that muscle inside yourself. It's where you find your power. It's not through avoiding it and just making a decision and then thinking you're just going to flip a switch and say, "that's never going to happen again now, that I understand that." That's not how it works. None of creating a new story is realistic, if you think about it, it takes the willingness to be prepared for the frustrations and to utilize those times for learning and growth. I just want to welcome you to embrace the opportunity, take your time with this, and give yourself a lot of grace and space as you connect with some of these things. If you have a trauma history and you're going back in time and thinking about those things, painful experiences, give yourself some time to do that. Nurture yourself around it. Maybe find a place to do it by yourself. Do what nurtures you. Have some essential oils or a nice candle going or listen to some music. Do it in chunks if it feels overwhelming. Whatever you need to do. It's definitely something that you will serve you and you will not regret it.

That's it for lesson two. A lot of this is going to be in the homework. I will be posting the PDFs with the child states and the losing strategies and some of the questions that you can ask yourself. Then you're going to really just do some journaling around this. I really look forward to hearing what you guys come up with, what insights are you having. This is a time of rich insight. It's hard when we're holding up the mirror and we're looking at things in a new way that we regret like, all those times I acted like a three-year-old. I can remember times where I acted in ways that I am not proud of. But it's all good and there's no judgment here. It's all just to understand it and make different choices going forward. Just embrace this opportunity. I'm excited to hear what you guys learned in terms of your insights. I'm excited to hear your questions. I'm actually going to go to live Q&A right now and see if you guys have any questions for me. If you don't have any now or if you're watching this later and it's not live and you have questions, please post it in the Couple's Cure Facebook group and let me know what your questions are. Chances are, if you have a question, somebody else does as well. Alright you guys, I'm so glad you came and I will catch you in the next lesson.