

The Couples Cure

Miraculous Recovery for Couples on the Brink

Phase II: Authentic Self-Expression (Inside-Out)

Lesson 5: REPAIR -- Resentment, Trust and Forgiveness

For lesson 5, like I said, we're still in phase two, where you're coming out of yourselves a little bit more, you are moving out of self-protection, you've learned how to create emotional connection and that's safety, which is so important. One of the things that comes up when we do this emotional connection work is that partners will realize that some of their disconnection is coming from hurts from the past, resentments and then injuries that have not been repaired fully. Maybe they've been patched over. Maybe they've been partially healed but they haven't been fully healed. So for this lesson, we're going to look at how to repair so that you can really move forward in the creation of your new story without anything getting in the way and really finish the last chapter on the old story. This is going to almost always involve some kind of repair, to clear out resentments, to forgive the deep betrayals, and to build trust going forward. By clearing things out, we're truly moving forward and making sure not to repeat the past. I think that this quote sums it up really well: "We repeat what we don't repair." *Christine Langley-Obaugh*

I'll say that again, **we repeat what we don't repair**. This is so true. You probably already have experience with this. If we don't clear it out and there's still some like lingering hurts, lingering resentments, they're going to keep cropping back up again. They're going to block the emotional connection. They're going to make that vulnerability more difficult, that we learned in the last lesson. You're going to end up seeing things in the present moment through the lenses of that old hurt. That's going to keep us stuck in the old dynamics.

In looking at repair, we first have to look at what are the three things that are involved here - resentment, forgiveness and trust. They really go together but they're different obviously. There's different nuances but they're all interconnected. I want to start with resentment first. This is the thing that comes up the most. In the beginning, I ask you to table the hot button issues, right? I say, if there's something that's really loaded, avoid that for now, table it, put it in your journal and only if it's absolutely necessary and you must use the feedback wheel, then you can. Well, now is the time. Now is the time where we're going to bring some of this stuff up. Tackle some of these challenges. In lesson six, we'll be getting into the communication tools that will help you even further. But you're ready now. You have the foundation now to start bringing up some of these hurts and clear them out.

RESENTMENT

What is resentment?

- Leftover residual feelings about something that has been experienced as a transgression.
It may be that you're still hurt a little bit or still a lot or that you're bothered by an expectation to just move on. Even if you feel like you have healed and moved on, you might still have resentments about expectations or feeling like there wasn't enough acknowledgement in the hurts in the past.
- Resistance to loving in the present moment
The other thing resentment is essentially its resistance to loving in the present moment. It's a resistance because when there's resentment, we don't want to do the actions that we are supposed to take. We don't want to do the steps required. There's internal resistance even if I give you the steps and I say, here's what to do. You might have noticed this in the emotional connection lesson. There's going to be internal barriers that get in the way. Resentment will tell you things like, *why should I have to do that?*
- Block to the future
It's a block to the future essentially. You'll notice yourself thinking, *I'm still too mad. Why should I have to move on then I'm letting them off the hook? I don't want to condone what happened by clearing out resentments.* Sometimes, we hang on and it

stops us to loving in the present moment. It's a block to the future.

- Saboteur of healthy relationships

In that way, it's a saboteur of healthy relationships. It's really like a poison. If resentment builds up too much, then you get to the point where you really can't heal anymore. It's just too late. It's that point where people leave because it either feels just too overwhelming or the relationship has just died because there's just been so much toxicity from accumulated resentment and hurts that have not been healed. That's why it's so important to know how to clear it out so it doesn't compound and also just know what to do in the future when things come up again.

“The difference between real acceptance and just backing away from an issue, or away from the whole relationship, is resentment.” *Terry Real*

In other words, if you're backing down, if you're shutting down, if you're going into avoidance just to keep the peace, but you're really not okay with something, you're going to be resentful. That's a choice, right? Anytime you go along with something that you're not really okay with, you are choosing to become resentful. You're not actually doing anybody any favors, we talked about this in the boundaries lesson. There's certain thoughts that will creep in, and I mentioned one of them earlier, but you'll be thinking things like, *is this resentment a problem? Like I might have a little bit of resentment but I'm just not sure if it's at the level that I would need to bring it up or that would require repair.* Thoughts like, *why should I be nice after all that they've done? Why should I act like everything is fine? Am I supposed to just stuff my feelings? Why should I have to do all the work here?* Usually those questions that we ask ourselves, they're really supported by fear underneath. Fear of losing power, fear of losing what matters the most, fear of not having something really important to us, that we have high stakes in for our future. If you have resentment at this stage even after establishing emotional connection, you definitely want to clear that stuff out. I'm going to share with you how.

TRUST

But first, we need to touch on trust because that's the whole reason why we need repair. The only reason we ever need to repair is because we feel hurt, like, our trust has been broken, that we have been betrayed. So I really want to address this. I think we all sort of intuitively know what trust is, but betrayals of trust are about a lot of things. It's not just about faithfulness. Trust is something that we have when we know we can count on somebody. When they're there for us in a reliable manner. It's really built in the very small things, the agreements that are made and then kept over time, like day to day, and the demonstration and consistent ways that our partners are there for us. If we see that, then we have trust. That's what builds trust.

If we look at the dictionary definition, trust is:

- “A firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something.”

In this way, we see that trust is really earned. It's sustained over time. Consistency is a very big ingredient of trust.

- A strong sense of confidence that your partner has your best interests at heart.

Relationally speaking, trust is primarily a strong sense of confidence that your partner has your best interests at heart. Interestingly enough, when we think of trust, we do think of beliefs that we hold, but John Gottman says it's actually not an idea or belief. It's a composite of actions. We trust because of what our partners do, not because of what they say and vice versa.

- Provides confirmation that your spouse is there for you.

Gottman says, it's really the crux of the question of *are you there for me?* If our spouse is answering yes to that question in the way that they are showing up, that's what builds trust. This idea of course is so much overlapping with what we talked about with Dr. Johnson and emotional connection, that definition of emotional connection that knowing my spouse is there for me in those important ways. If you know that your spouse is there for you, that you can rely on them, or be there for you, that is trust.

Specifically, trust is built by a few things:

- Prevention AND reparation of betrayal. Prevention occurs through *rituals of connection*. Reparation occurs through attunement, empathy, and turning toward your spouse.

The prevention piece is through the rituals of connection, which I'm going to get to later. That's one of the primary ways. Then reparation is in a nutshell that's done through attunement and empathy and that turning toward energy that we give our spouse when they're having a difficult emotion. If they're having a hard time and we turn towards them or even just turn towards them day to day to reach out, and we show interest and that kind of attunement to them on a day-to-day basis, that will help repair breaches of trust.

- Effective repair. This is the process by which we're able to heal from minor transgressions. Effective repair is also a trust builder. We talked about the feedback wheel as one of those things. That's the process by which we can heal for minor transgressions. If you've been doing that thus far, you know how good that feels. You know how that does build trust. You know it's okay because right now even if I'm upset about something or even if we're disconnected in this moment, I know that we can come back together and we can repair that. When you know that you can have effective repair, you are not going to be perceiving things through the lens of betrayal. You're just not going to be worried about it in the same way. It's like no big deal, and this, like I said, this is for minor transgressions.
- Forgiveness. For heavy-duty injuries that require a process of healing conversations. Then, there's forgiveness and that's really for heavy-duty injuries that requires a process of healing conversations. It's not just something that happens in one event or just a decision or one 10-minute conversation. Forgiveness usually takes more time and is a lot more challenging. But the reparation that comes through forgiveness is super powerful in rebuilding trust.

BETRAYAL

On the flip side, I want to just talk about betrayal a little bit, what that really means and some examples of betrayal.

Betrayals occurs with:

- Breaches of trust
That could be anything, from not keeping an agreement, it could be talking to other people about your spouse and they're not in the loop, so they feel left out or they feel they're not included. It could be really anything. Anytime you feel like, *I trusted them and I can't believe they did that.* That's a betrayal.
- Damage to connection
It can also be a damage of connection, which is the failure to answer 'yes' to the question of, "Can I trust you to be there for me in very important ways?" "Can I trust you to be there for me when I'm upset or to choose me over your friends?" "Can I trust you to stay sober?" "Can I trust you to help me with things around the house or to be involved with the kids?" If you don't feel like the answer is yes to those things, that can feel like a betrayal. Even just feeling like your spouse isn't present with the family, those things can damage connection. We feel like they're not there and that's a betrayal.
- Negative judgments of our partner
These are more hurtful in a lot of ways than breaking an agreement that we've made. We don't tend to think about this when we think about betrayal. But when we're in conflict with our spouse and we get to the point where one of you is saying, "you know what, I'm out of here," "I'm sick of this," "I'm not taking this anymore," "I can do better than this," "You're so selfish, you're always like this." Or if you're making negative comparisons between your partner and somebody else, anytime you're judging or negatively evaluating the character of your spouse or vice versa, that's a heavy duty form of betrayal. That requires repair.

Let's get into some examples, in case you're wondering. If you have hurt feelings about something and you're like, *does this constitute betrayal?* Because this isn't how we normally think about betrayal. So I'm just going to give some quick examples:

- Violation of commitment
This is where your commitment to your partner is conditional. There's still some part of you maybe that's waiting for someone better to come along. You might be checking out other people. You might talk to others in a way that suggests you're still available. You could be sick a lot or just not there. If you're sick a lot, it takes you out of the game a little bit, right? You're just not available. If you are picking arguments that put distance between you, like, money issues or work issues, things like that, and then those arguments then become a reason for you to say, "I really don't think this is going to work." When the going gets tough, you consider going. That's a violation of commitment and that feels like a big betrayal. It really hurts if one of you is

threatening to leave. I'm not saying that it's a betrayal to share with your spouse that you're just not sure and you really are having doubts, in a really honest and loving way, doubts about the future of the relationship. That's not what I'm talking about, I'm talking more about when every time you fight, you threaten to break up. That's what I'm talking about.

- Betrayals of emotional exclusivity

Also betrayals of emotional exclusivity fall under this category. That's like when you're really overtly flirting with somebody or you develop a primary emotional attachment with somebody outside of the marriage, this is emotional affairs essentially.

- Secret, lies, deceptions

Secrets, lies, and any kind of deception is a form of betrayal obviously. But that can include lies of omission, not keeping your spouse in the loop on what's going on. It can be active deception. It can be violations of confidence. It can be broken promises. It can even be inconsistencies. Sometimes you're honest, sometimes you're not. They're that inconsistency about honesty, is a form of betrayal.

- Coalitions against your partner

Another form of betrayal is when you form a coalition against your partner. That's where you have an alliance with somebody over against your partner that ends up hurting them or excluding them. If you, for example, talk to their family negatively about them and it's a family member that they really have a difficult relationship with or even talking negatively behind their back to your friends all the time, where you're giving permission to other people to talk crap about your spouse, that you're not protecting them, that's a betrayal. You're really there on the outside.

- Disinterest

We don't tend to think of this but if your spouse is really not expressing interest in what you're saying or if you're rejecting your partner's thoughts or their feelings or anything that's going on in their inner life, that can be extremely hurtful and is a form of betrayal. Disinterest is like not asking follow-up questions, not making eye contact, verbally and non-verbally indicating that you don't really care what they have to say or that you're secretly judging what they're saying and not saying it overtly but that can be felt.

- Unfairness or lack of care

This is where when we get into like inequity, if resources and time and responsibilities are not shared equally. If you feel like you're doing all of the work around the house and you can't get your spouse to care about that. Or if there's inequity around one spouse has permission to make decisions about how they're going to spend their free time without checking with the other person, but the other spouse doesn't have that power or ability because they're stuck with the kids when the other person makes that decision, that kind of thing. Any kind of inequity around resources, time or responsibilities, that's unfairness. Also, if partners are not offering emotional support or understanding, that can cause a lot of hurt and frustration. If you're sharing something that's challenging, and we talked about this already in the emotional connection piece.

- Betrayal of Affection

Another form of betrayal is betrayal of affection, which is a lack of affection or essentially coldness or unresponsiveness to bids for connection. This could be in the form of holding hands, this could be hugs, things like that. Obviously, if you have resentment, you're not going to be open to bids for connection or physical affection or things like that. What I'm really talking about is chronic long-standing unresponsiveness or the lack of initiation. You maybe respond when they initiate but you never initiate affection. That feels like a betrayal.

- Lack of sexual interest

Ignoring your partner's needs for sexual intimacy, physical closeness, or touch is another form of betrayal. I'm not talking about temporarily. I'm not talking about the kind of lack of sexual interest that might come from differences in libido or a loss of emotional connection, where there needs to be some kind of repair before that can happen. I'm really talking about in this situation, where you're just going years and years ignoring your partner's needs and not even trying to figure out, *how can we find a middle ground? How can we find a way to honor what each of us needs?* That feels like a betrayal. Sometimes, we know the spouse who isn't having any sexual interest, they feel like their spouse only just wants sex and don't really understand that it's about more than that most of the time. Even if it's not always being expressed the right way. Most of the time it is way more than that. It's about emotional connection. It is about feeling like, *we're together and we are each other's person. You desire me and you want to be close to me.*

- Abuse

Abuse obviously is a really obvious form of betrayal and that comes in all kinds of styles. Forms like social isolation, sexual degradation, extreme jealousy and control, humiliation in front of other people, belittling comments or jokes that really hurt your feelings, to overt threats or property damage or physical abuse or verbal abuse, this is an extreme form of betrayal obviously. When you're verbally abusing your spouse or if they verbally abuse you. This happens even with spouses who are not abusive people. Even spouses who are not abusive and there isn't a pattern of abuse, can engage in abusive behaviors sometimes. It's really important to say that and admit that because otherwise, there will be a denial. Like "I will look at the fact that I just was abusive to my spouse because I'm not an abuser." Then your identity and your ego gets mixed in with it. It makes it a lot harder to look at that.

- Disrespect

This is when your spouse doesn't really cherish you or you're not really cherishing your spouse. It's two things - they're not expressing pride in you, they're not expressing fondness or admiration towards you most of the time and instead they're expressing negativity. They're behaving in contemptuous ways most of the time. There's hardly ever any expression of fondness or admiration or affection.

- Not meeting each other's needs

This is the kind of betrayal where partners will basically really go against the idea that they should even try to meet their spouse's needs to the best of their ability. I have to say, I mean just as a disclaimer, we are not always going to be able to meet our partners every single need. That's part of being in an adult relationship, is sometimes things aren't going to line up. Sometimes we're going to want something that they can't give us right now. But I'm really talking about the kind of betrayal where one spouse is acting as though the relationship does not entail any kind of sacrifice or giving at times. It's a failure to put your spouse's needs on the foreground every now and then. Sometimes, we just have to give a little, and go out of our comfort zone. If you're never doing that and acting like, *this is my life. I don't want any infringements upon me*, that's not a real relationship. That's what I'm talking about when I say not meeting each other's needs.

- Breaking sacred promises and vows

And then, finally, breaking sacred promises and vows. This is of course very obvious. I'm not talking about something minor. I'm talking about something that's really important to both of you or at least one of you, that the other has agreed to honor. It's not like, *hey, you didn't take out the garbage and you said you would*. It's really more something that you hold very sacred and that you feel hurt by. That's a very individual thing. That's a very personal thing. That could be different from one couple to the next.

The thing to remember as you listen to these examples of betrayal, in case you're worrying, *like, oh, my gosh I can relate to so many of these, this is terrible*. Just know that most couples do experience betrayals of some kind. The solution is just to know what they are and commit to being aware of them and making some changes to build trust and to repair the hurts. If you see, *gosh, there have been betrayals here. Let's talk about how we can repair these hurts so that we can turn the page and move forward. How can I commit to ways where we're going to be avoiding these things in the future?* Here's the thing, we can't heal from the past, if the things are still happening that remind us of the past. There has to be enough of a change for us to truly turn the page. That's why having a new story and building that proactively is so important. You want to be on the lookout for how you could be potentially betraying your spouse that you didn't realize before. Commit to not doing that anymore. If you suspect that that's happened by really bring it up to them and be willing to say, "I think that this has hurt you. I think that this has been processed as a betrayal and let's repair that."

REPARATIONS

Let's talk about what repair actually is. How to repair and then how to build trust over time, which is really the antidote to betrayal in the long term. Now, above, when I was talking about trust, and I said trust is built by several things, a couple of major things is prevention, which are rituals of connection and then repair. I want to start with repair first. Repair after hurts is the most powerful way to rebuild trust, which that surprised me. This was what was found in Gottman's research, that it's actually being hurt and then repairing after the hurt, that builds trust. It's not about never hurting your spouse. This is what Terry Real says as well, true intimacy comes from not perfect harmony, it comes from being able to repair or come back into harmony after you have fallen out and to know how to do that, and to do that consistently and to be willing to do that, is the most powerful way to rebuild trust. What exactly is this? How do we repair? The thing that I want to really highlight and to keep in mind is that, as I

alluded to earlier, betrayals will happen. They just simply will. The predictive factor of whether or not a couple is going to stay together and if it's going to be a healthy relationship, is not if they have betrayals. It's really their ability or their capacity to learn how to have effective repair. One of the statistics that came out of Gottman's research is that even among highly negative newlyweds, 85% of those who could effectively repair stayed, happily married. This is of course super important in the first year of marriage. First year of marriage is when most divorces happen, statistically speaking. That I thought was really interesting. It's not even about never being negative or hurting each other's feelings, it's really about can you come back from that. Can you truly clean the slate and not have those things build.

So, what is repair and what does repair actually do? Repair:

- Keeps couples together by allowing both partners to feel validated.

It allows couples to stay together by providing validation and generating a sense of compassion and understanding. The process of repair is exactly that. Being able to repair like, when you think about the feedback wheel, if you've used that, it's that generosity of feeling, like, *this person heard me and they understand*, and because it's a one-way street, that you can receive that empathy. That's the idea. And so a lot of times, that's even more important than the request that comes with the repair. When we make a request and say, "hey, can you do this differently in the future?" "Can you be mindful of this in the future?" That's powerful but sometimes people repair just from feeling heard. Just from feeling heard in and of itself will do the trick most of the time.

- Expands the capacity to be light-hearted during conflict.

Repair also expands the capacity to be light-hearted during conflict, which is so overlooked, I think. When you're really connected and you trust each other and you know how to repair, you can laugh about it in the middle or shortly after. You can repair with really minor things. I'm going to get into that in a little bit.

- Can be anything that works.

What I also found interesting is that repair can be anything that works. It can be accomplished through humor, touch, apologizing, or even just shifting gears, it's really whatever works for you. For example, you might be in the middle of an argument and your spouse says, "I don't think either one of us is listening, why don't we just try that again?" Or it could be as simple as, "you know what I need a break, let's come back later," and that might just be enough. You come back later and you're done, that can happen. Unless it's you know something that's been building for a long time. The idea is is that once you learn how to do this, that's where you can get. You can come forward and say, "hey, I'm sorry. I wish I hadn't said that. Let's have a do-over." Or you can even just make a joke or a silly face that makes your partner laugh. You crack a joke and you move on. The key here, and what Gottman was saying is that, the effectiveness of repair and the attempt to repair has less to do with the nature of the repair attempt itself. Meaning the technique that you use does the intention behind it and the trust that you have with each other. For example, a perfectly worded feedback wheel can fail but a clumsy attempt can still succeed. He found that, when he was teaching couples reflective listening and he was teaching them empathy skills, that didn't actually work statistically or predictably as well, as whatever they were able to figure out worked for themselves. That's because the effectiveness of the repair is determined by the person who's receiving it. In particular, the amount of "money" that they have in their emotional bank account, their joint emotional bank account. If the partner who's trying to repair has been a really good friend of their spouse and they've been doing nice things, they've been supportive, they've been kind and loving over time then they can far more easily repair a broken connection. It doesn't take much because the context in which the disconnection or the hurt happened is overall a positive context. That really has to do with setting the stage with rituals of connection, which I'm going to share in a little bit.

Generally, when I talk about repair, I'm talking about things that fall under resentments category, not like the really big things. I'm talking about resentments, which is they matter and they accumulate but they're a little bit more minor than when we get into forgiveness. If you need repair, the thing to keep in mind is that you're actually responsible for that. Each person in the relationship is responsible for getting the repair that they need. It's up to you to get that. It's up to you to come forward and say, "I'm feeling like I need some repair," or "I feel like I need to fix this. I'm not feeling connected." And like I suggested, there's a difference between repair and forgiveness. Even though you could say that repair is a form of forgiveness or that forgiveness is a form of repair. It falls under that category. But I see them as different by levels of degree because repair is quicker. It's for more minor things. Forgiveness is for those big larger massive betrayals.

Some things just to know about repair:

- Clears the out old resentments.

It's like we talked about, it's really to clear out the resentments. That's going to be required in any healthy relationship. This has to happen.

- Occurs through self-expression and requests.

Repair occurs through how we express ourselves and make a request. It's usually just one conversation. You make a request, you share your feelings, you get a little acknowledgement or validation around that and your request might be granted and then you move on. The request is designed, in this case, to really be able to let it go. So, you have to be careful with that and asking yourself, *what do I really need? What am I asking for? So that I don't need to bring it up again. If I could ask for one thing and I were to receive that, what would it be that would help me really move on and not feel the need to bring it up again or to lump it in with other things or patterns or criticisms or the old story?*

- Is best achieved using the Feedback Wheel.

And then, repair, in my opinion, is best achieved using the feedback wheel for this. That's the technique that you can use. I've already taught you that. That allows you to clear things out and not build up. But like Gottman said, that's not the only way to repair. You can find what works for you and you can talk about that with each other, *this is what would help me*. To be able to ask for that, that's the most important thing, is to be able to come forward, ask for repair and to be able to articulate what you need for that. You learn that over time. You might learn, *my spouse will accept a joke or my spouse will accept if I hug them. If I just come up and give them a big hug, then we don't even have to talk about it*. But if you feel like you're not able to do that, I really still believe the feedback wheel is the best way to go. You stick with one thing. You use the structure and you follow it exactly. The reason why it works is because the emphasis is, it's not on blaming your spouse or your partner, you're focusing on your own feelings. You're telling your spouse or your partner, *what is the issue for you? What are you resentful about? What does it represent for you? What is the meaning you're making? How are you feeling? And then what do you need?* Your partner's role is going to be to try to deepen their understanding of what made that experience painful for you and vice versa.

Just to kind of recap, if you haven't had a lot of practice with this, and this PDF will be in the lesson, that you can pull this up and use this as a guideline, but it's essentially focusing on four point structure:

1. Here's what happened that triggered me. Here's what was hurtful. The events only. The facts only. No interpretation in part one. Something that could be recorded on a video camera.
2. The story I told myself about that. The meaning that I gave it, where my brain went when I heard that or saw that the impact that it had. My thinking around it. The interpretation. That's part two.
3. *How do you feel?* Emotions only, no interpretations. There's not that many core emotions. There's an emotion wheel that you can look at if you're struggling with like what is the emotion? A lot of times, people get right to anger or frustration but usually there's something underneath that. You want to tune into *what are those emotions that I'm having?*
4. *What do I need?* It's like an I-statement, only better. It's better than an I-statement because it will separate out your interpretation and the story from the feelings, which is something that an I-statement does not do. Most communication attempts or repair attempts will be derailed because you're still identified with the story in the expression of the feelings. Then your spouse will argue with you. They don't see it that way. Then it becomes about that. You really need to be able to separate out the meaning that you give it from the emotions that you have and when you can do that, that is a game changer. I know I've talked about this before but I really can't emphasize that enough.

The other thing you want to remember is, it's short and sweet. Two sentences for each section. Ideally it's going to be a one-way street, if you're doing this program together and your spouse is amenable to following the rules for the feedback structure, it's a one-way street. It has to be agreed upon by both people beforehand. If you haven't seen it yet, I'll tag you in the Facebook group. Just let me know. You can watch the video that Terry Real did on this. You can print out the PDF to use for this going forward.

FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is just like repair, only it's more of a process. It takes a lot more than repair. Like I said before, it's for bigger injuries, really big hurts that are very difficult to move on from, and that's much different than resentment. This is going to take some empathy and accountability. Generally speaking, we really need our partner's active participation in this, that they need to be a part of it. Even more than in the feedback wheel, because we can still repair without getting a whole lot from our spouse in the feedback wheel, in that repair process. Or if you come up with something more lighthearted, like a hug or a joke or whatever, but this, this is going to require our partners to, if they betrayed us, if we're the hurt spouse and we need to go to them for this process, they have to be actively involved. It can be one long conversation. It can be a series of conversations especially if there's infidelity or if there's just been really chronic hurt, it might take more than one conversation.

But before we get into that, I do want to define forgiveness and be clear what I mean when I say forgiveness. I think there are a lot of definitions. There's a lot of associations that you could potentially have when you think of forgiveness. How I think of forgiveness:

- The choice to NOT allow the past to frame the present moment.
It's the choice to say, "that's not going to inform me and my choices going forward." It doesn't mean that you're not going to maybe still have feelings about it or anything like that.
- Not forgetting.
It's not forgetting. A lot of people think forgive and forget, they go together. You don't have to forget to forgive.
- Not condoning or excusing.
It's not condoning or excusing something that happened that was a betrayal. Don't put any pressure on yourself around that.
- For YOU.
Forgiveness is for you to not carry that energy with you because if you are in this program and you are doing the work, it is going to sabotage you. Presuming that your intention is to create a new story because you're in this program, lack of forgiveness is going to work against you.
- No longer arguing with reality.
And the final thing is that forgiveness is the willingness to stop arguing with reality. It's the decision to say, "I'm not going to focus anymore on what never should have happened. I'm not going to keep asking how could that happen." It's really moving into acceptance. It's not condoning. It's not saying it's okay. It's just saying, "it is. This is, it happened. This is true. Given that this is true, I'm going to make choices to no longer be beholden to it." When you're not arguing with what happened anymore, then you can move into the feelings and the emotions and processing if there's grief or if there's hurt or the feelings that you can move through that, as opposed to staying stuck in the meaning making of it all. I hope that makes sense. It's really just a release of something that you're carrying with you that's hurting you and it's hurting the chances for something new to develop. People can recover from heavy betrayals. People can come out the other side. Couples can come out the other side much better and much stronger, with a much better foundation. It really is that sort of willingness to move into the present moment.

Forgiveness Conversation

Now I am going to share with you a forgiveness conversation. It's a structure of a way to talk about what has happened, that can help you move into forgiveness. You would need to ask your spouse to join you. Sit down and agree to have the conversation. Give yourself plenty of time. Be willing to, especially if you're the one that was the injuring partner or the one that betrayed your partner, you have to be willing to be very actively involved in taking ownership of the process, not of what happened, not just saying, "I'm sorry and that this is true that this happened and I won't do it again." It's not just about reassurance. It's about the active participation in the healing of our spouse.

There's a six step process. It's not as simple as it sounds. It is quite involved but this is the basic breakdown:

1. The hurt partner speaks to their pain.
Whoever the hurt partner is, speaks to their pain. They're just gonna say, "here's what hurt me." If you're the one that's

dealing with something that you have to forgive, you're gonna be sharing that pain how this impacted you, what it meant to you, why it hurt you, what was at stake for you. Just be able to talk about your pain. Even if you've already done this before, it's okay to do it again.

2. The injuring partner stays present and acknowledges the pain.

The injuring partner is going to stay present and acknowledge the pain and remain very curious. If you're the one that's being told something, if you're the one that betrayed your spouse, let's say, you don't really agree with their interpretation. You may not even think about it the way that they're thinking about it. And as you're listening to your spouse, you have this urge to like want to argue or defend yourself or explain or say, "this is why it was only because of this," you have to resist that urge. This is the part where you own your part as much as you can. Find what you can own. You're just really listening and acknowledging, staying present and acknowledging is the entire goal for that second part. Anything else that pops up, you table. If you've done the feedback wheel, you've already had practice in this on a small level, but this is especially hard when you're having a forgiveness conversation. It can be really difficult to bear witness to the pain that we caused. It can be very difficult to do that. That's just part of the process and it's absolutely necessary.

3. The hurt partner commits to reversing the "never again" stance.

Your partner will then commit to reversing the "never again stance" that came from the injury. In other words, if you were betrayed, you might have thought to yourself, *you know what? I'm never going to come to you for reassurance again. I'm never going to open myself up to you again. I'm never going to trust you again.* As the hurt spouse, you're going to want to seek a willingness inside yourself and a commitment to trust again. As long as your spouse is willing to participate in the healing and as long as they are engaging in new behaviors and building the new story with you. Obviously you cannot turn the page if the same behaviors are still happening. If your spouse is continuing to betray you, then it's absolutely okay to say, "I'm not going to open up to this person." But if you are creating a new story together and you're healing together and they're doing the work and right now they're not betraying you, then the only way to trust again is to trust again. There's just no other way. It's a leap of faith, really. Because I hear people say, "well, how can I trust this person again? How can I?" And you're looking to the past to say, "because my trust was broken, I cannot trust again." The truth of the matter is that, as I've said before, when you're using the past as evidence for what is possible in the future, you aren't going to create anything new. You are going to stay stuck. It's very difficult, I'm not denying, but it's absolutely possible! It's totally possible. I have seen spouses come back from heavy betrayal. They come out stronger and better with a way better foundation. They come out transformed. If your spouse is truly transforming and they're the ones that betrayed you, and you know that they're doing the work for the transformation, then it's definitely worth it to stay the course. Unless you see that in the moment, they're giving you any reason to not have that willingness, to reverse that never again stance. The injuring partner takes ownership.

4. The fourth step is that the injuring partner is going to take ownership of the injury.

Not just ownership of the injury that occurred but expressing true regret and remorse. This can't be defensive. It can't be detached, like, "I'm sorry, okay. I said I was sorry." That's not enough. It has to be genuine. It has to be real. You have to be willing to do that more than once. "I am so sorry. I really see the hurt that I caused and if I could do it over again, I wish I could take it away." Real heart-centered remorse. You can't bypass that. And it's okay, like I said before, it's not a sign that it's not working if you have to have this conversation more than once, especially in the case of infidelity. Sometimes we have to have that conversation more than once and sometimes we need to hear that more than once to feel like we can move forward.

5. The hurt partner identifies what they need right now to bring closure.

If you're the hurt spouse, you're going to be asking, "what do I really need from this person to be able to feel better? To be able to connect to my willingness to reverse the 'never again' stance?" If you're the listening partner and you're hearing about the injuries and you're expressing remorse and they're not being direct and you're not really hearing clearly from them, you can ask yourself, *what can I do to help you through this? What can I do in the future? How can I help you heal?* And to really engage the willingness to be a part of the healing of your hurt spouse.

6. Together, both partners create a new story about the trauma and how they confronted it and healed as a team.

Then together, both partners are going to create a new story about the trauma and the impact that it had, and a new story about how they confronted it and healed it as a team. This is so important because now it becomes part of your new narrative. You're able to look back on it and say, "you know what, my spouse hurt me in this way and then this is what they did to make amends," "This is what we did," "This is how we healed it." The narrative becomes, *I'm able to forgive.* The narrative becomes, *I am forgiven. I am able to be forgiven or I'm able to heal my partner's wounds or we're able to grow from this experience. We're able to learn and actually get closer and we're capable of creating a new foundation on which to build our relationship because we've come through this.* It's like that emotional connection piece, rewriting the story together as a team.

Like I said it's only six steps but it's pretty involved. It could be a long conversation. You may have to pause it if you feel like it's getting to be too intense or you need to take a break or it's too long and you have to finish it later and you don't feel resolved. A good place to stop is after the third part. That's okay, you can just come back to it later. There's going to be a PDF for this process that you can print out and go through this process. This is a really personal process. How this is going to play out is going to be very personal to your unique situation and who you are and who your spouse is and how this works. By now, my hope is that you have enough of an emotional connection. You have enough of an awareness of your own triggers, your own sensitivities, your limiting beliefs, your boundaries. All of the self-awareness and stuff that you've already been working on should really give you a strong foundation to be able to have this conversation successfully. If you're struggling with this, I'm happy to guide you through it. It could be something we do on a joint call. This can be guided if you feel like you're going to get derailed.

I love this quote about forgiveness. This is by Marianne Williamson, from her book called Return to Love, which I really like. I personally got a lot out of that book. If you haven't read it, I recommend it. *"Forgiveness is the choice to see people as they are NOW. By letting go of the past, we make room for miracles to replace our grievances."* That's the tagline of this program, Miraculous Recovery for Couples on the Brink. It does feel like a miracle. It really does feel like a miracle, when things that were such an issue before, that you felt you could never get past or an old narrative that felt so entrenched, has been transcended and now you have something new. And issues are now non-issues. It feels like a miracle when that happens. But it starts with willingness. If you're thinking, *gosh, I just don't know how to do this. I want to, like I get it theoretically, but it's a bitter thing for me. I just don't know if I can*, that's okay. Just be willing to find out. You don't have to say, like, *I'm ready for forgiveness*. You just have to be willing, to be ready. If that makes sense. There's a difference. Moving into that willingness and being open to it, if you do have a really hurt heart in your relationship, softening that and just being willing, like, *I'm not there yet, but I'm willing to get there*. That's a great start if you're struggling.

PREVENTION

Now, we're going to move into prevention. This is actually a really important way to restore trust or to build trust over time, is to just prevent them in the first place. Like I said before, this is done through consistency and actions over time. It happens through rituals of connection. These are going to set the standard for connection on a day-to-day basis. They become the fabric of your relationship that's part of the new story. The most effective way of doing this is really similar to what I was talking about earlier, in terms of stacking the positives, in phase one. When I said you really want to stack the positives because there's things that we're still working on that we haven't cleared up. We want to just bring that ratio of positive to negative into a better balance. But now we're going to take that principle. It's going to be ramped up, especially around areas where there's still hurt and there's a need for rebuilding trust.

Prevention happens through rituals of connection:

- Write a list of cherishing behaviors

The first thing you're going to do is you're going to write a list of cherishing behaviors. This is going to be identifying behaviors that from your partner that make you feel valued and connected. You're going to write down, *what do I like from them? What makes me feel like they've got my back? What makes me feel like I can trust them with my heart? What makes me feel loved?* Just have a big brainstorm on what those things are. Like, *I love it when you greet me at the door or you're smiling at me or I feel loved when you give me a shoulder rub* or anything that makes you feel good. Both of you should do this ideally if you're doing it together. Even if you're not doing it together, you can ask your spouse to write a list of what makes them feel cherished as well. Then just think about it really carefully.

- Exchange the list

Then you can exchange the list. If you're not doing this with your spouse, you can like guess what it would be for them. Most of the time, we do know at least a few things that would mean a lot to our spouse. Sometimes that's not the case if we have a spouse that has not communicated those things to us. But most of the time, we can accurately guess at least a few things that would be on our partner's list. If we can't then I recommend asking, *what is it? Is it humor? Is it touch? Is it space?* It could be different for them than it is for you. It's like that whole love languages thing. We tend to want to give what our spouse or we tend to give our spouse what we would want. It really might not be what helps them feel close or cherished.

- Incorporate those things every day

You exchange the list and then you're going to make a conscious effort to incorporate those things on that list each and every day. It doesn't have to be everything on the list each and every day but one thing each and every day. This is going to feel

forced at first but it's going to start to become natural. It works of course better if both of you are doing it, but honestly, I have seen so much impact from just one person doing this. You're going to see shifts if you focus on just your part. So, still ask your spouse, *what helps them feel loved and cherished* and implement that. They might do that on their own, too. It's really hard. The law of reciprocity suggests that when we really feel like someone is doing a lot for us, we do want to reciprocate. That is natural unless we have some precondition that would get in the way of that. Most people would want to reciprocate. If you have to put it on your calendar, do that. If you have to put alerts in your phone, that's okay. It's just like when we rehearse something, when we want to bring something up and we have to practice it and it feels forced or inauthentic. This is just part of learning anything new.

It's never going to feel natural and built in if it's not already a habit. Don't let the forced feeling or the inorganic nature of putting it on your calendar stop you. Everything is hard until it's easy. That's something that you can do right now, like you can literally be like, *what do I need to do get it in my alerts, have it be a recurring thing and it will pop up on my phone?* We're not going to remember if we don't have the new story yet. We have to give ourselves those external prompts and the reminders and the structure, to be able to incorporate some of these things in building these rituals of connection.

So that's it you guys! It may seem simple but it's really not. This is so important. So for this week, I want to go over the exercises for this week in this lesson - Exercises for Repair:

1. Clearing Resentment

There's the clearing resentment exercise, which is that all that is, is the feedback wheel and talking to your spouse about what helps repair. Having a conversation, either letting your spouse know what you need for repair or asking them what they need for repair, if they're the ones that are holding resentment towards you and that's blocking some of the changes that you're trying to create, having a conversation about those things that can lead to what Gottman was saying, which is it really works best what you decide you need. I want you to build on the feedback wheel. I still am a proponent of the feedback wheel. But in clearing resentment, it's really being able to identify what helps you. If it's just a hug or a joke or anything like that. I suppose it depends on what the thing is. But I want you to do that first.

2. Forgiveness Conversation

Then have a forgiveness conversation about something big. If it feels like too much to do, if you're doing this together and it feels like too much to each of you go in the same week, then just alternate. Say this week, one person was going to go first and be the the person raising the thing that they need to forgive their spouse for and then you switch it the following week.

3. Rituals of Connection

Then finally, there's the rituals of connection, where you're going to be writing that list of cherishing behaviors. You're going to be exchanging that list with your spouse, if you're doing it together. Literally getting it into a place where you know that you can internalize it and actualize it. It's not just something in theory, something that you know that would work if only you did it, but it actually is something that you're doing.

There will be PDFs for this in the lessons that you guys can access. They're not really lengthy as you can see but sometimes it's just nice to be able to print something off and have that physical piece of paper to guide you and not to have to refer back to the video lesson when you're actually doing it.

That's it you guys! Thanks for tuning in. I wish you luck on this! Don't hesitate to reach out if you need support around this. Get excited because when you've done this and you come out the other side, you're going to feel so much lighter. Then you're going to be ready for some of the communication stuff, that we're going to move into next. Good luck! I'll catch you in the next lesson.