

Recording 4 – When Your Partner is the One Who Becomes Frustrated or Upset First

Practice Sequence

1. Picture your partner accusing or blaming you about the specific thing that she's upset about. Think of the specific phrase that she might say until you can hear her saying it in your own mind.

What specific phrase can you imagine her saying? Write it down.

2. Calm your physiology
 - Loosen and relax all parts of your body while you engage in resistance breathing: Big inhales and long, slow-release exhales (up to 20 seconds)
 - Picture yourself remembering that there's no need to panic. People are critical of their partners all the time, but they don't usually stay that way in the presence of partners who know how to respond to criticism skillfully.
3. Picture yourself taking a big inhale, and then with the exhale, letting go of the urge to dispute, protest, interrupt, explain or justify (Do it right now, too).
4. Picture yourself letting the criticism pass by you while you zoom in on the legitimate want or need behind her criticism.

What is the legitimate want or need behind her criticism? Write it down.

5. Picture yourself making an explicit statement that communicates respect for the legitimate need behind her criticism.

What specific statement could you make? Write it down.

Practice saying this statement out loud.

6. Picture yourself explaining the logic behind your actions without implying that it is or was necessarily the “right” or “correct” way look at things. Picture yourself inviting her into a respectful discussion about your differences.
7. Picture her insisting that your logic or actions are wrong. As you picture this,
 - Pause, relax your body and slow your breathing.
 - Picture yourself letting go of the urge to debate the specifics of her argument.
 - Picture yourself challenging her assumption that you were wrong, and inviting her instead to consider that isn’t anything wrong with either of your expectations.

What specific words can you use to communicate this? Write them down.

Practice saying these words out loud.

8. Picture yourself...
 - looking for a solution that takes both of your perspectives into account,
 - offering to make an adjustment that is clearly a move in her direction
 - trying to offer her the most important part of what she wants but also retain the ability to do things somewhat the way you want as well.

Given what you anticipate that her complaint will be, what is an adjustment you could offer that might not be exactly what she wants but would be clearly a move in her direction? What specific words can you use to communicate this? Write them down.

9. Picture yourself being willing to go back and forth with her until you find something that you both can agree to.

(If you are worried that, in spite of your flexible and open-minded attitude, Xx will insist on having her own way or maintain that she is right and you are wrong, Recording 6 will help you mentally rehearse the skills needed to stand up for yourself respectfully.)