

THE "PERFECT" MARRIAGE

SHARED BY JENNA LAVIK

Tools for Conflict Management

The Lawik Team





OUR STRESSORS

- Deaths of 4 Grandparents
- Husband went to grad school
- Birth of 3 children (including set of twins)
- 3 Moves
- Husband working 60+ hours/week including nights and weekends
- Murder of Friend
- Infertility
- Perimenopause
- Weight gain
- Nephew diagnosed with cancer



CONFLICT!!!!



→ Diffuse Physiological Arousal (DPA) or Emotional Flooding

- ◆ Fight/Flight/Freeze kicks in (Sympathetic Nervous System)
- ◆ Very difficult to problem solve or think critically
- ◆ Only hear and see signal of danger; nothing else
- ◆ As result, we're likely to attack or be defensive verbally
- ◆ Empathy and creative thinking fly out the window, along with positive communication skills

→ Self Soothe

- ◆ Below 100 heart beats per min optimal for conflict resolution
- ◆ Take a Break
 - Out of hearing/visual rang
 - Say when you'll return
 - Predetermine a "I need a break" sign
 - 20-30 minute to 24 hours break
 - Avoid distress-maintaining thoughts “
 - DISTRACT!!!

THE AFTERMATH OF A FIGHT/REGRETTABLE INCIDENT

If this is your first time using [The Aftermath of a Fight](#) exercise, start by asking yourself the following questions.

1. Am I ready to process this regrettable incident? According to Julie Gottman, “processing” means that you can talk about the incident without getting back into it again.
2. Have my emotions been calm today and can I have a calm conversation about this incident? It’s helpful to think of watching this incident on your TV. This can help create some emotional distance necessary to discuss what occurred.
3. Am I willing to seek to understand my partner’s experience of the event and validate that each of our emotional realities are legitimate? Hint: Don’t focus on “the facts.”
4. Am I willing to speak from my experience without trying to persuade my partner?
5. Am I willing to [ATTUNE](#) to my partner’s feelings and what the event meant to them?
6. Are we in a distraction free space where we can be fully present with each other?

When my partner and I are both able to respond yes to all of these questions, we begin processing our regrettable incident using the five steps outlined below.

STEP 1: FEELINGS- SHARE HOW YOU FELT, BUT NOT WHY YET. ALOUD. I FELT...

- Defensive
- Not listened to
- Feelings not hurt
- Totally flooded
- Angry
- Sad
- Unloved
- Misunderstood
- Criticized
- Took a complaint personally
- Like you didn't even like me
- Not cared about
- Worried
- Afraid
- Unsafe
- Tense
- I was right and you were wrong
- Both of us were partly right
- Out of control
- Frustrated
- Righteously indignant
- Morally justified
- Unfairly picked on
- Unappreciated
- Disliked
- Unattractive
- Stupid
- Morally outraged
- Taken for granted
- Like leaving
- Like staying and talking this through
- Overwhelmed with emotion
- Not calm
- Stubborn
- Powerless
- I had no influence
- I wanted to win
- My opinions didn't even matter
- There was a lot of give and take
- I had no feelings at all
- I had no idea what I was feeling
- Lonely
- Alienated
- Ashamed
- Guilty
- Culpable
- Abandoned
- Disloyal
- Exhausted
- Foolish
- Overwhelmed
- Remorseful
- Shocked
- Tired
- I wanted to run

STEP 2: REALITIES - SUBJECTIVE REALITY AND VALIDATION

1. Take turns describing your perceptions, your own reality of what happened during the regrettable incident. Describe only what YOU saw, heard and felt, not what you think your partner meant or felt. Avoid attack and blame. Talk about what you might have needed from your partner. Describe your perceptions like a reporter, giving an objective moment-by-moment description. Say “I heard you say,” rather than, “You said.” This leaves room for your partner to correct anything missed or misunderstood.
2. Summarize and then validate your partner’s reality by saying something like, “It makes sense to me now why you saw it this way, and what you needs were.” Use empathy by saying something like, “I can see why this upset you.” Validation doesn’t mean you agree, but that you can understand even a part of your partner’s experience of the incident.
3. Do both partner feel understood? If yes, move on. If no, ask, “What do I need to know to understand your perspective better?” After summarizing and validating, ask your partner, “Did I get it?” and “Is there anything else?”

STEP 3: TRIGGERS

1. Share what escalated the interaction for you. What events in the interaction triggered a big reaction for you?
2. As you rewind the video tape of your memory, stop at a point where you had a similar set of feelings triggered in the past. Now, tell the story of that past moment to your partner, so your partner can understand why that is a trigger for you.
3. Continue to share your stories-it will help your partner to understand you. As you think about your early history or childhood, is there another story you remember that relates to what got triggered in you, your “enduring vulnerabilities?” Your partner needs to know you, so that your partner can be more sensitive to you.

STEP 3: TRIGGERS CON'T

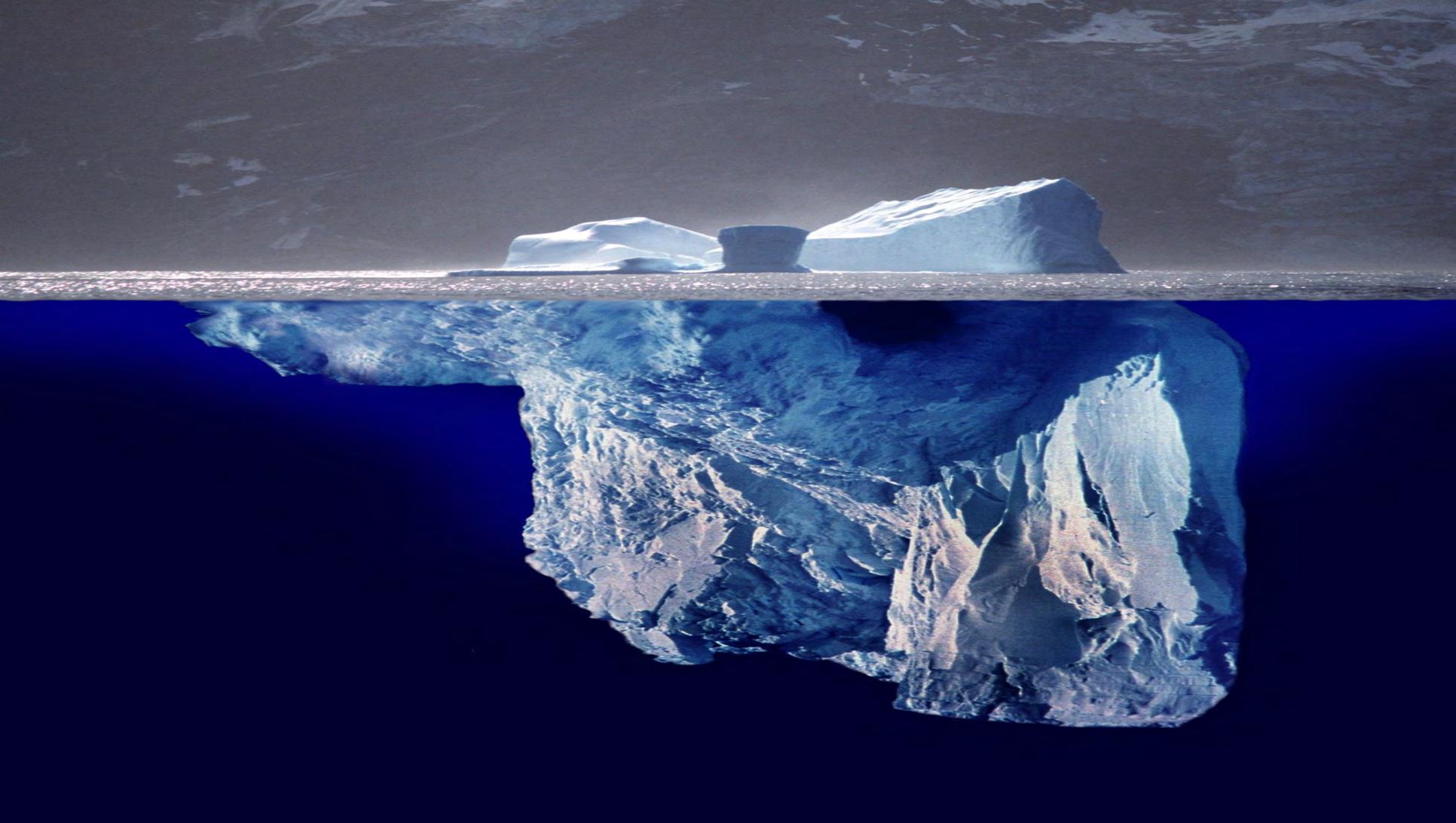
Examples of Triggers:

- I felt judged. I'm very sensitive to that.
- I felt excluded. I'm very sensitive to that.
- I felt criticized. I'm very sensitive to that.
- I felt flooded.
- I felt ashamed.
- I felt lonely.
- I felt belittled.
- I felt disrespected.
- I felt powerless.
- I felt out of control

VALIDATION:

- Does your part of your partner's triggers and story make sense to you?

***EMOTIONAL
SCAR TISSUE***



STEP 4: TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

1. Under ideal conditions, you might have done better at talking about this issue. What set you up for the miscommunication? What was your state of mind?

What set me up:

- I'd been very stressed and irritable
- I'd not expressed much appreciation towards you.
- I'd take you for granted.
- I'd been overly sensitive.
- I'd been overly critical.
- I'd not shared very much of my inner world.
- I'd not been emotionally available.
- I'd been turning away more.
- I'd been getting easily upset.
- I'd been depressed.
- I'd had a chip on my shoulder.
- I'd not been very affectionate.
- I'd not made time for good things between us.
- I'd not been a very good listener.
- I'd not asked for what I needed.
- I'd been feeling a bit like a martyr.
- I'd needed to be alone.
- I'd not wanted to take care of anybody.
- I'd been very preoccupied.
- I hadn't felt very much confidence in myself.
- I'd been running on empty.

Read aloud items that were true for you on this list

STEP 4: TAKE RESPONSIBILITY CON'T

2. Specifically what do you REGRET, and specifically, what was your CONTRIBUTION to this regrettable incident or fight? What do you wish to apologize for? Make your apology specific to what you regret saying or doing.

Examples:

I'M SORRY THAT....

- I overreacted when (I said or did....)
- I was really grumpy when I....
- I was defensive when I....
- I was so negative when I....
- I attacked you when I....
- I didn't listen to you when I....
- I wasn't respectful when I.....
- I was unreasonable when I.....

- If you accept your partner's apology, say so. If not, way what you still need.
- What do you need to hear for you to accept apology?
- Be SPECIFIC

STEP 5: CONSTRUCTIVE PLANS

- Have open conversation with your partner.
- What is ONE thing your PARTNER can do differently to avoid an incident like this from happening again and/or to make discussion of issue better?
- Then while it's still your turn, share ONE thing YOU can do to make it better next time.
- Remember to make this a positive and actionable request.
- Be as agreeable as possible to the plans suggested by partner.

THE STRESS REDUCING CONVERSATION

- 1. Take Turns.** Each partner gets to be the “complainer” for fifteen minutes.
- 2. Don’t give unsolicited advice.** The major rule when helping your partner de-stress is that understanding must precede advice.
- 3. Show genuine interest.** Don’t let your mind or eyes wander. Try to stay intently focused on your partner.
- 4. Communicate your understanding.** Let your partner know that you can and are empathizing with what they are saying.
- 5. Take your partner’s side.** This means being supportive, even if you think that part of his or her perspective is unreasonable.
- 6. Express a “we against others” attitude.** Let him or her know that the two of you are in this together. That you are a team.
- 7. Express affection.** Hold your partner, put an arm on his or her shoulder, and say, “I love you.”
- 8. Validate emotions.** Let your partner know that his or her feelings make sense to you by telling them just that.

STATE OF THE UNION MEETING

- Select one hour/wk- Keep time sacred
- Ask what went right this week?
- Give each other 5 appreciations- Try to be specific
- Discuss any issues that may have arisen
 - Use a soft startup and listen non defensively
 - Use Aftermath of a Fight if needed
- End by each asking, “What can I do to make you feel loved this coming week?”

RESOURCES

Books:

Cloud, Henry and John Townsend. *Boundaries in Marriage*. Michigan: Zondervan, 1999. Print.

Johnson, Sue. *Hold Me Tight*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2008. Print.

Cron, Ian Morgan and Suzanne Stabile. *The Road Back to You: An Enneagram Journey to Self-Discovery*. Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2016. Print.

Stabile, Suzanne. *The Path Between Us: An Enneagram Journey to Healthy Relationships*. Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2018. Print.

RESOURCES

Counseling:

- The Center for Christian Counseling- Justin Bangert
 - (608) 274-8294
 - www.christiancounselingmadison.com
- Living Well Counseling Services:
 - www.lwcounseling.com
 - (608) 223-1506
- Michelle Owen, LPC
 - (608)285-2974