

Workbook Chapter Twenty-Four Trust Your Gut

Self-Assessment Tools:

Worksheet # 1: How To Identify The Source Of A Conflict

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Directions : This Worksheet should be used any time either of you over-reacts to a current conflict. This is a sure sign that the current conflict is bringing up feelings, thoughts or images from a previously unresolved conflict. Each of you needs to have a copy of this Worksheet before you identify the unresolved elements of an earlier conflict that is causing an over-reaction to the current conflict.

Each of you needs to work separately following the suggested steps until you have found the source of your current conflict. Ex: *"I am feeling very scared as a result of our conflict. I see that this is an over-reaction and I would like to take some time to see if I can remember when I felt this way before."*

Step #1: Take a Time-Out and Work Separately On Why You Are Over-Reacting. During your time-out you need to first pay attention to the symptoms of the over-reaction you are experiencing. Find the symptoms in your body or feelings that are causing the over-reaction you are experiencing. Each person who is triggered needs to identify the symptoms of his/her developmental trauma related to an intractable conflict. Here is a list of typical symptoms that people who are over-reacting to a current conflict might experience:

- a falling or sinking feeling
- a tightness in your gut or somewhere else in your body
- escalated feelings (your feelings are greater than the situation calls for)

Identify what feelings you are experiencing.

- feel like running away or pulling away from the current conflict
- feel immobilized or frozen
- feel weak or tired, wanting to just "space-out"
- feel like striking out against or blaming the other person
- the current conflict has a "familiar" ring to it

Step #2: Find Answers To The Following Questions

In your time-out, see if you can remember the elements of any previously unresolved conflicts that could be related in some way to your current conflict. Ask yourself the following questions. As you remember some of aspects of the previously unresolved conflict, write them down.

Here are some suggestions for how you can spend your time out. You both should have this list of what to do during a time-out, so make a copy of the instructions listed below for each of you to use.

1. Think about the current conflict and try to remember any past unresolved conflicts in your life where something familiar happened. It may just be a feeling or a passing thought or an image.
2. Write down what thoughts and feelings you are having that relate to some past conflict you experienced.

3. Think about what didn't get finished or resolved about the past conflict. Remember, this is your natural learning style in action. If you pay attention to your over-reaction, you have an opportunity to learn something new about yourself and what happened in any past unresolved conflict. Learn what prevented you from learning it then. Usually what was left unfinished falls into several categories.
4. Ask yourself some of the following questions:
 - Who was the other person?
 - How old were you when this happened?
 - What were you feeling in the midst of the past conflict?
 - How do the feelings you had then resemble the feelings you are having now?
 - Why do you think the past conflict did not get resolved?
 - What was needed to resolve the conflict that did not happen?
 - Was there something that you didn't get to say or do that would have resolved the conflict for you?
 - What did you wish the other person had said or done that would have resolved the conflict for you?
 - What did the other person say or do that made it difficult to resolve the conflict?
 - What did you say or do that made it difficult to resolve the conflict?

Step #3: Share What You Discovered With Your Partner

Take turns sharing what you discovered about what caused you to over-react to the current conflict that was part of unresolved conflicts in the past and are similar in some way to this conflict. Remember as much as you can about those previously unresolved conflicts. The emphasis here is not to seek blame for yourself or those involved in any earlier unresolved conflict. Your goal is to remember the feelings you had and anything else related to that earlier conflict. Notice how similar your feelings are those in your current conflict. See if you can recall anything else about the earlier conflict that triggered your over-reaction to the current conflict.

Ex: "I remembered a conflict I had with my father when I was five years old where he just yelled at me for doing something I didn't do and I did not have a chance to say even one word in my defense. I felt scared and angry that he accused me of something I didn't do and I could not even tell him my side of the story. I felt the same way when you yelled at me for doing something I didn't do intentionally."

Step #4: Agree To Help Each Other Complete Whatever Was Left Incomplete in the Past Unresolved Conflict

The focus in this step is on what you discovered was left incomplete in your unresolved conflicts from the past, and committing to help each other to complete whatever was left incomplete that you identified in Step#3. Step#5 contains suggestions for how you might handle what you discovered about your past unresolved conflict. It is necessary in this step that both of you agree on a plan for resolving whatever you discovered about your previously unresolved conflict.

Ex: "Are we agreed to work together using the Worksheet#4 to help each other resolve these unresolved feelings and thoughts stemming from our previously unresolved conflicts?"

Step #5: Decide How To Handle What You Discovered

Take turns suggesting how you would like to handle the feelings and information you discovered about any past unresolved conflict. You have several choices:

- Put what you learned aside for now and see if knowing what caused your over-reaction has allowed you to feel calm enough to continue to resolve the current conflict using one of the other Worksheets. Ex: *"This is important new information and I think we need to talk about it some more before deciding what to do with it. Is that okay with you?"*
- Develop a cooperative strategy for how each of you are going to resolve your past unresolved conflict to keep it from interfering in the future. Set a time and place in the near future where you will work together to resolve your left-over feelings and thoughts about the earlier unresolved conflict. Ex: *"I suggest we think about all this for a day or two and then get back together to decide how to move forward with this new information. Is that okay with you?"*
- Decide to work cooperatively now to resolve whatever was unresolved about the previous conflict. This requires you to use **Worksheet # 4: How To Resolve An Intractable Conflict At Its Source**. Follow the directions that go with that Worksheet. Ex: *Now that we know what needs to be resolved from your past unresolved conflict, I am willing to role play your father, to help you say and do what you were afraid to say and do to him in the original conflict. Is that okay with you to move forward and do it now, or do you need some more time to process it before trying to resolve it?*

Step #6: Decide To Resolve Your Current Conflict

After you have decided how you want to handle the information from the previously unresolved conflict, you can decide you can take steps to resolve your current conflict. Look at your current conflict and decide what kind of conflict it is (wants & needs or values & beliefs) and then agree to find a partnership resolution to it, using one of the appropriate Worksheets as a guide. Ex: *I agree use Worksheet #4 to role play your past unresolved conflict with your father and play the role of your father, who this time is willing to listen to you, so you can say all the things you didn't feel safe saying to him when you had an unresolved conflict with him. After we do that, let's see if there is anything else left to resolve in our current conflict."*

Case Example:

I had a young Danish women client, Katrina, who felt anxious and sometimes depressed in social situations. It was very difficult for her to ask for anything from others to help her meet her needs. She typically did things for others, secretly hoping they would do some things for her without her having to ask directly for what she wanted from them. This strategy that she learned from her grandmother, was not working.

We looked at where she learned to be that way and she quickly realized that her grandmother taught her to be nice to others, so they would like her. Her grandmother emphasized that people did not want to be with anyone who was demanding or needy. As a result, she became very passive and never asked anyone directly for help.

I shared this system with Cynthia and she immediately saw the power was her weakest orientation. She identified that what she had learned from her grandmother, was to be passive and not very powerful. She saw that she had to strengthen that orientation in order to make her life work better. She was not happy being passive.

So, I helped her develop a new strategy, of asking directly for what she wanted from others and to not agree to do things for others just to please them. She also did not have good ways to connect with others. She always held back when meeting new people. I suggested that she apply Newcomb's AB-X Theory. This is a way of increasing interpersonal attraction by when meeting someone new, (A&B) you begin by asking them lots of questions, until you find something you have in common with that person (X). By doing more of these two things, she has increased her personal power. She keeps a journal so she can track her progress.

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