

**How to Manage Distancing**

**By: Dr. Bob Huizenga**

## How to Manage the Distancing

Take a couple minutes to reflect on or write out your responses to these questions:

To what degree do you believe you distance from your spouse?

All the time					Very Little
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What images or thoughts come to mind when you think of distancing from your spouse or partner?

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What type of feeling do you get when you think of distancing from your spouse or partner?

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What does it mean for you that you distance from your spouse or partner?

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What is your level of comfort when you think of distancing from your partner or spouse?

Comfortable					Uncomfortable
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Purpose:

This exercise enables the distancer to create the context for which the distancer and the relationship can move constructively toward resolution of the problem(s.)

The distancer will begin to understand and accept the powerful dynamics that generate the distancing.

This exercise enables one to begin making distinctions in one's behaviors and feelings.

#### Key Points:

- ✓ The exercise enables one to clarify the underlying concerns and dynamics without continuing to damage the relationship.
- ✓ No commitments or guarantees are expected or needed at this point in the resolution process.
- ✓ This exercise helps individuals and the couple move forward rather than remain stuck.
- ✓ This exercise enables one to move away from the pain, confusion, anger, resentment and hurt and toward clarity, understanding, acceptance and calm.

#### Benefits:

- ✓ You will begin to transform your feelings, becoming more hopeful, accepting and receptive.
  - ✓ You will experience more fully your personal power, being in control of your feelings and thoughts.
  - ✓ You will be able to stand back and acknowledge the larger picture and act with less reactivity.
1. You will make better decisions regarding your actions and the future of your marriage and family life.

#### Readiness to Engage Your Spouse or Partner

##### Instructions:

Check one or two items that best apply to you.

Do not share these with your spouse or partner.

☐

I feel inadequate when talking with you. You've always been a better talker than I. You can talk circles around me. When I'm talking with you, it's as if I can't keep up. I can't think straight and say what I want to say.

☐

You want me to express my feelings and I don't know how to do that. I'm terrible at expressing my feelings and feel very uncomfortable when doing so.

☐

You want me to talk about my feelings and I refuse! I'm not going down that

road, just because I don't want to. It's all psycho-babble I will hear anyway.

- ☐ You want me to talk which means move closer, which means warmth, which means sex, and I can't go there, and I don't want to start going there.
- ☐ You want me to talk about my feelings, and if I do I'm afraid I will hurt you. I can't be honest with you. You are too fragile. I don't want to hurt you.
- ☐ Talking is a trap. You're just gonna tell me what I'm doing wrong. You're going to go through a whole laundry list of how I must change and what I must change. I refuse to be scolded.
- ☐ We've "talked" before and it's gone nowhere. We've been there, done that. I can predict who will say what when, how the other will respond and how it will end. No thanks.
- ☐ Your spouse or partner is a problem solver, not a talker. Action is more important than talking. S/he may not understand the importance of your need to talk.
- ☐ Your spouse thinks through or internalizes problems and has less of a need to verbalize than you. S/he may not understand the importance of your need to talk.
- ☐ I'm outa here. The marriage or relationship is ended. I'm gone, but I don't want to take responsibility for going.
- ☐ I feel guilty. I know I did wrong but I don't want to apologize or face you. Seeing you reminds me of the worst part of my life.
- ☐ I want to avoid you and our situation. I want to run as far away as I can. Leave me alone.
- ☐ I want my absence to hurt you. I'm angry and being passive expresses my anger. It's the one way I can feel safe in expressing my resentment.
- ☐ I'm in control when I avoid you. Being passive is my strength in this marriage or relationship. You can't touch me when I'm passive.

Reflection:

Which of the above distinctions speaks most powerfully about distancing from your spouse or partner?

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What has this been like for you to do the exercise and reflect on distancing from your spouse?

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- ✓ Remind yourself periodically during the day of your underlying concerns.
- ✓ Go over the list before you sleep. Expand on any further reasons you may have for your need to pursue.
- ✓ Check the statements below when you believe you have met that specific goal.

- ☐ I feel less stuck as I identify the undercurrents of my life.
- ☐ I spend time each day reflecting on the item(s) I've checked.
- ☐ I am much better able to be in the presence of my spouse without negativity.
- ☐ Facing my situation with more clarity gives me a feeling of empowerment.
- ☐ I now believe I can formulate goals, something I can work toward.
- ☐ I experience the negative thoughts and feelings subsiding.
- ☐ I can relax and am better able to allow whatever happens to happen.
- ☐ It is good to take a positive step



I do not want you at this point to share your findings and thoughts with your spouse or partner.

You engage you. You don't engage the other.

Engage yourself means spending some time in the next day or two consciously and intentionally thinking about the above exercise; specifically the distinctions and shifts you desire.

Shift your focal point away from him/her to a degree. This, in itself, may be a significant shift. (Be aware that s/he will probably notice and may react. If able, plan your response if s/he reacts.)

Choose one shift and give that shift your full attention. What would that shift feel like? What would you be doing as you make that shift? What would that shift bring to you?

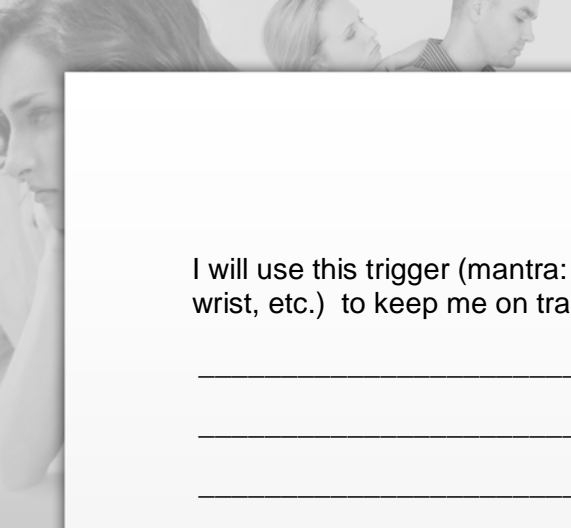
Reflect on and Answer these questions:

I will be most aware of these new distinctions and/or shifts at this time and place during the next day.

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I will use this trigger (mantra: I will do this, word: power, feel good, etc., rubber band around wrist, etc.) to keep me on track.

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Reflect on and Answer these Questions:

Evaluate what it was like to spend a day or two focusing on your desired shift and the distinctions you are beginning to make.

Notice any changes you experience in terms of your personal power, feelings and thoughts about yourself.

Remember, you are just beginning. Don't be upset or alarmed if you find it difficult to pinpoint change and shifts.

These questions will help you evaluate your experience:

On a scale of 1-10 (10 being as bad as it can get) I now rate my bad feelings as \_\_\_\_\_.

I notice this new thought coming to mind after the engagement.

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I notice this new image coming to mind after the engagement.

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I notice this feeling \_\_\_\_\_ located in this part of my body  
\_\_\_\_\_ emerging after the engagement.

I now think this of myself after the engagement.



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To review complete this checklist:

#### Review

- ☐ I better understand the underlying dynamics behind distancing.
- ☐ I felt less stuck and a little more hopeful in resolving this impasse in our marriage.
- ☐ I feel less the need to react negatively and distance.
- ☐ I can identify one or two specific reasons why I need to distance.
- ☐ I can identify a specific time when I want to distance.
- ☐ I am more able to relax around my spouse.
- ☐ I've given considerable thought to my need to distance
- ☐ I can identify in my body the uncomfortable feeling that tends to push me to distance.