

Overcoming the Fear of Engagement

By: Dr. Bob Huizenga

Overcoming Your Fear of Engagement

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

To what degree are you afraid to engage your spouse?

Very Much So					Very Little
<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 your fear of engaging your spouse or partner?

What type of feeling do you get when you think of the fear of engaging your spouse or partner?

What does it mean for you to fear engaging your spouse or partner?

What is your level of comfort when you think the fear of engaging your partner or spouse?

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

Key Points:

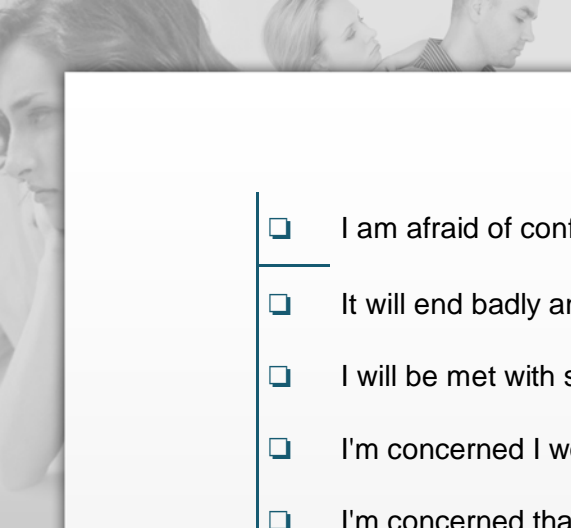
1. This exercise helps you identify specific fears and barriers to engaging your spouse or significant other in a positive manner.
2. Begin to note and identify when and where your fears or blocks emerge in communication with your spouse.
3. Begin to make shifts and alter your fears, enabling you to communicate more powerfully with your spouse or significant other.
4. Share this exercise with your spouse if s/he is there and receptive.
5. Invite your spouse to disclose his/her fears and barriers that hinder honesty. Listen. Accept. Make no judgments.

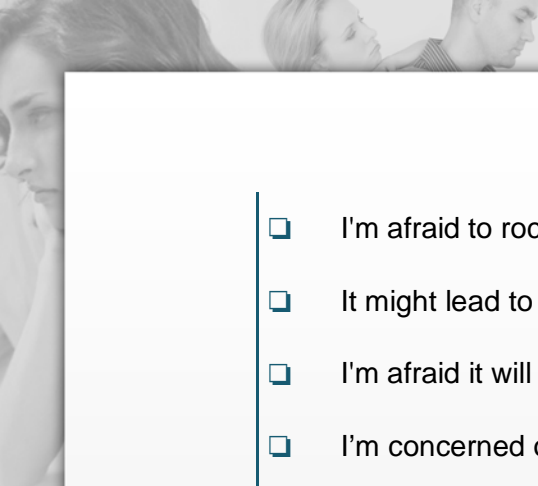
Readiness to Engage Your Spouse or Partner

Instructions:

1. Read through the list and check the top 5 blocks or fears that apply to you.
2. Note any patterns or consistent behaviors that block your communication.
3. Print a copy for your spouse or significant other.
4. Let him/her know you have completed the exercise and what you discovered about you.
5. Hand the copy to him/her and invite him/her to participate.
6. Click the link at the end of this exercise to fill out survey regarding usefulness of this exercise.

- ☐ I fear talking will stir feelings of being put down
- ☐ I believe I can't talk as well as you
- ☐ I don't know how to respond to your feelings and thoughts
- ☐ I'm afraid I will feel the tension and freeze
- ☐ I'm afraid I will feel the tension and lash out
- ☐ I'm afraid I will feel the tension and say something stupid
- ☐ I'm concerned that old painful feelings will emerge

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- ☐ I am afraid of conflict
 - ☐ It will end badly and both of us will feel rotten
 - ☐ I will be met with silence and that will frustrate me
 - ☐ I'm concerned I won't be able to believe what you say
 - ☐ I'm concerned that what I say will be appeased or patronized
 - ☐ I'm concerned I won't know how to respond when I feel brushed off
 - ☐ I'm afraid I might get physically hurt
 - ☐ I'm afraid the conversation might get out of control
 - ☐ I'm concerned my words or expressions will be misinterpreted
 - ☐ I'm concerned I won't be heard adequately
 - ☐ I'm concerned I won't be able to say what I really want to say
 - ☐ I'm concerned I won't have the space or freedom to say what I need to say
 - ☐ I'm concerned there will be uncomfortable silence
 - ☐ I'm concerned I will get hooked by your body language
 - ☐ I'm concerned I will walk away feeling guilty, or it's all my fault
 - ☐ I'm concerned we will go round in circles and get nowhere
 - ☐ I've almost given up
 - ☐ I will end up feeling like a kid and I hate that
 - ☐ I dread the thought of talking about my feelings
 - ☐ I'm afraid I will feel overwhelmed
 - ☐ I'm concerned I won't verbalize in a way you understand
 - ☐ I'm concerned that what I say will not be important
 - ☐ I'm concerned I will not be able to understand you

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- ☐ I'm afraid to rock the boat
 - ☐ It might lead to sex and I don't want that
 - ☐ I'm afraid it will end with me feeling like a bad person
 - ☐ I'm concerned our talking will hasten the end of our marriage
 - ☐ There will be nothing positive for me to find
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- ☐ I'm concerned our differences will drive us apart
 - ☐ I'm afraid the honesty will be scary
 - ☐ I must be careful what I say
 - ☐ I don't want to hurt your feelings
 - ☐ I'm afraid I can't put into words what I want to say
 - ☐ I don't want to talk about the past
 - ☐ I'm fearful others will find out what we talk about



Reflection:

Which of the above distinctions speaks most powerfully about the fear of engaging your spouse or partner?

What has this been like for you to do the exercise and reflect on your fear of engaging your spouse?

In the next step begin to make the mental and behavioral shifts that will place you on a more productive and effective path to marriage and love construction or reconstruction.

The constructive belief may not make full sense to you at this point. However as you proceed through the rebuilding steps you will see and experience the validity and power of each constructive belief.

Take a couple moments to check where you fit presently on these shifts that are important to your success in speaking your voice.

Destructive Belief	Check what you believe now	Constructive Belief
I've said it all and nothing happens. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I'm only beginning to explore all that I can say to my spouse. <input type="checkbox"/>
My spouse won't listen to me. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I haven't discovered an effective way to get my spouse to hear and understand me. <input type="checkbox"/>
I'm afraid s/he will bolt if I say what I really want to say <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	S/he will respect me if I say accurately what I truly want to say <input type="checkbox"/>
I get tongue-tied when I try to say what I truly want to say. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I can learn to state powerfully and slowly what I truly want to say. <input type="checkbox"/>
I get angry and frustrated when I start talking about important issues. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I can charge neutral. <input type="checkbox"/>
I'm afraid we will start arguing if I let him/her know what's on my mind. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I can state what's on my mind without attaching or inviting an argument. <input type="checkbox"/>

If you want to take this a little further:
List other shifts you would like to make:

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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.

Engaging your spouse means sharing the above exercise in constructive ways.

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

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.

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.

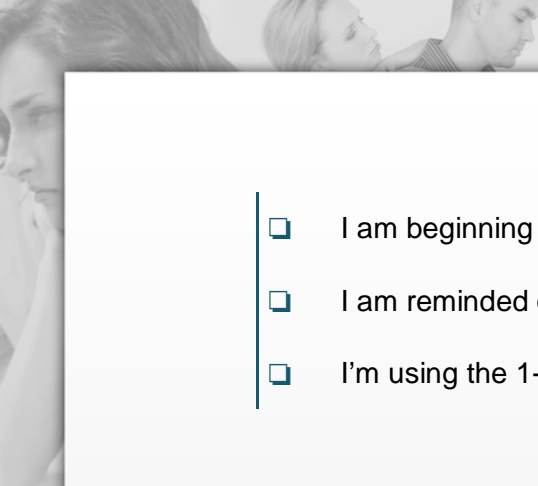
I notice this new image coming to mind after the engagement.

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

I now think this of myself after the engagement.

Review checklist:

Review	
<input type="checkbox"/>	I've identified my top 5 fears.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I'm noting a pattern in myself.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I'm able to take a fearful belief and identify the belief I would like to have and live by.

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- ☐ I am beginning to understand myself much better, and that feels very good.
 - ☐ I am reminded of the Ground Hog Process each day and that keeps me on track.
 - ☐ I'm using the 1-10 scale to monitor my progress.