



**Create a Safe Place in Your Marriage Suspend
Judgment**

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Introduction

Creating a Safe Place in Your Marriage – Suspending Judgment

This exercise enables you to create an atmosphere of safety and greater emotional comfort with your spouse. You want to eradicate the fear and mistrust, the banging, pushing and pulling against each other that often results in turmoil and pain.

Feeling safe with your spouse and your spouse with you is necessary for growth and healing to emerge.

The Cold North Wind

I'm often reminded of one of Aesop's fables. Remember this one:

The cold winter wind noticed a man walking down a path wearing a winter coat. The wind said to the sun, "I bet I can make that man take off his coat before you." The sun said, "OK, give it a try."

The cold north wind blew on the man. The wind blew and blew. And, the harder the cold north wind blew, the more the man clutched tightly his coat.

Finally, after exhaustion, the cold north wind gave up and said to the sun, "OK, your turn."

The sun gently, without effort, let its warm rays shine on the man, who soon loosened his grip, took off the coat, slung it over his shoulder and continued down the road.

So, it is that in MOST marriages, this warmth precedes intimacy. Please note I said MOST. In some types of marriages this strategy will backfire. More on that later.

Take a deep relaxing breath, anticipate the good things that will happen to you and get started.

Key Points

- Suspending judgment enables you to remove yourself from the immediacy of negative feelings and thoughts and see the larger picture.
- You strengthen the part of you that can objectively evaluate your situation, which removes you from your pain and agony.
- You gain control of your feelings and thoughts with the ability to suspend negative judgment
- Your life will more and more be based on reality and not upon your reactivity or neediness.
- You will achieve internal freedom by moving away from all or nothing mentality to appreciating the subtle differences of others and life in general.



Benefits for You

- You will live with less reactivity and loss of control when facing difficult situations.
- You will experience your personal power and have greater positive influence in relationships.
- You will decrease the tension and negative feelings in your life.
- Negative images and memories will lose their power in your life.

The Suspending Judgment Checklist

Here are new ways of thinking about your spouse. This new information will enable you to make shifts which can radically change your view of him/her and your future together.

Choose one or two of the positive statements you would like most to be part of your view of your spouse or partner.

I was initially attracted to him/her for a variety of reasons.

S/he is a mixture of the good, the bad and the ugly – just like me.

S/he is doing his/her best.

S/he is doing all s/he can right now to manage our difficult situation.

S/he has a “little girl/boy inside.”

S/he has many redeeming qualities.

Deep down, s/he probably wants the same things I want.

S/he probably wants to learn better how to get what s/he wants.

It must really suck sometimes to be him/her.

S/he has many qualities I truly admire.

S/he has developed “walls” – just as I have.

S/he was given to me for some purpose.

S/he employs coping behaviors that go way back – long before I met him/her.

S/he is no different than anyone else – trying to find his/her way in life.

Carve out time to reflect and address what you just checked. Is writing a way you learn? Journaling? If so, use that strategy. Are you a person of action and learn through what you do? If so, plan 2-3 actions you can take during the day which will expedite Suspending Judgment.

Are you a thinker? Do you learn by reflecting? Use your “down time” – driving, working out, walking, coffee break, pre-sleep, etc. to reflect on the distinctions and statements in this exercise.

Comments from those who used this checklist:

- I like this exercise It truly helps put my spouse in a different light. I especially like that once I worked on these things that I can appreciate him more and not feel like I need "all or nothing" from him. I can see differences in how he acts towards me. I realize that this is a process. I can't wait to read more!!
- I have been trying to understand my husband's infidelity for over 18 months now. When I looked at your list I recognized alot of the lessons I have learned in that time. Yes, that perspective does lead to a better personal place. To think around the list is a good way to reinforce it - and in the early days it is much needed.
- It helped me a lot! Yesterday I tried to focus on some of the thoughts in the checklist and refrain myself from judging everything he says or does. I just listen to him and believe he was sincere and that he is doing his best to fix our marriage. I realized I am overreacting and I have to see the larger picture in order to start reconnecting with him.
- He is committed to us and our relationship but during this month our needs have been so different. He is trying to focus on the future and show me how much I mean to him. I have needed to express how angry and hurt I am and to understand what actually happened and why. I think there are things I'll still need to process but also know that I have to join him in looking ahead if we are going to recover fully. This trauma can't be all I think about all day every day like it has been for the last month. The Suspend Negative Judgment Checklist came at a perfect moment. It has given me a tool that seems to be working.
- I like what you have here. I never thought about these things. I think you've got something good here. Helpful in just seconds, wish i could have read this 2 months ago.

Shifts to Implement

Once you “get” the power of suspending judgment you can begin to make significant shifts in how you think about your other.

Begin to make the mental shifts that you 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 place a checkmark in the box that most closely fit where you are now relative to the two opposing beliefs.

Destructive Belief	Check what you believe now			Constructive Belief	
If only s/he would change. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I will learn how to get the response I want from him/her. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
S/he drives me crazy! <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am extremely pleased how I can control my thoughts and the good feelings generated. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
S/he is not romantic enough. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There are good reasons for him/her withholding affection. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
S/he's a jerk! <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	S/he is a mixture of the good, bad and ugly, just like me. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I hate this marriage. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I want to understand what s/he triggers so strongly in me. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
S/he is always doing something that irritates me. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	S/he is doing all s/he can to manage a troubled relationship now. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

	→	
	→	
	→	
	→	
	→	
	→	

Further Reflection (...if you so desire!)

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?



Notes:

Review

Review	
<input type="checkbox"/>	I am much more aware during the day of the judgments I hold.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I feel more in control of my thoughts and feelings.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I see more “grey” and think less in black and white terms of judgment.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I was able to focus on 2 positive statements from the checklist in step 2 and hold those thoughts for an extended period of time.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I’ve identified one constructive shift and want to use it to create a better atmosphere in my marriage.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I’ve discovered a trigger that keeps me on target in suspending judgment.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I feel better knowing I can make small shifts each day to create what I truly want.