

#17 Turning Toward, Failed Bids, Positive and Negative Feelings

Each of you takes a turn describing what you were feeling during a disagreement or discussion you had this week. You may either choose from the list below or come up with your own description. Remember to keep your comments simple and keep to the format: “*I feel...*” and avoid statements such as, “*I feel **like you**...*”

POSITIVE feelings: *How did you feel during this week?*

I felt calm.
I felt loved.
I felt appreciated.
I felt respected.
I felt happy.
I felt powerful.
I felt loving.
I felt optimistic.

I felt kind.
I felt in control.
I felt like we were making progress.
I felt connected to my partner.
I felt...
I felt...
I felt...
I felt...

NEGATIVE Feelings: *How did you feel this week?*

I felt defensive.
My feelings got hurt.
I felt excluded.
I felt angry.
I felt sad.
I felt misunderstood.
I felt criticized.
I felt like my partner didn't even like me.
I was afraid.
I was worried.
I felt like I was right and my partner was wrong.
I felt out of control.
I felt righteously indignant.
I felt unfairly picked on.
I felt unappreciated.
Other feelings (write in)
Other feelings (write in)

I felt unattractive.
I felt neglected.
I felt disgusted.
I was disapproving.
I was morally outraged.
I felt taken for granted.
I felt like leaving.
I was overwhelmed with emotion.
I felt excluded.
I felt powerless.
I felt like I had no influence.
I felt like my opinion didn't even matter.
I had no feelings at all.
I had no idea what I was feeling
I felt lonely
I felt alienated.

The Aftermath of Failed Bids (continued)

Subjective Realities:

- Summarize *your own* subjective reality. How did you see this week, in terms of wanting to get close or wanting to be separate and autonomous? What was your subjective reality?
- It is essential that each of you attempt to give some credence to your partner's views and subjective reality. Try to communicate that you understand how your partner sees things regarding bids for closeness. Share your subjective realities with each other and try to see how your partner's reality might make sense, given your partner's perspective.
- Think of wanting to get close as "*bids for turning toward.*"
- Think of wanting more autonomy ('space') as "*turn away.*"

How Can You Change the Way You Express Your Needs and Wants?

It is natural for each of us to make a fundamental error that the problems between us are it all our partner's fault. In fact, these problems create a "demon dance" that each of you participate in. It is a cycle that each of you have a part in. What is necessary to break this cycle or stop this dance is to be able to step out of either a defensive pattern ("*It wasn't my fault!*") or an attack pattern ("*It was all your fault!*")

Begin by each of you admitting to some role in keeping the problematic 'dance' going. Accept that you had a part in keeping distance between you, and increasing your loneliness. **Finding the right balance between closeness (connection) and separateness (autonomy) for you as a couple requires an understanding of this dance, and the role you play in it.**

- *What are your needs? How did you express them? Is there a better way to express these needs?*
- *How did you (or your partner) express the needs for closeness, or for dealing with loneliness?*
- *How did you (or your partner) express the need to be separate, autonomous ("have your own space") or independent? How did you express your feelings when you were feeling swamped and overwhelmed by your partner's needs?*
- *What is the conversation that you needed to have, but didn't? Do it now. What would you have said?*

Aftermath of Failed Bids

Part 3—What Were the Triggers?

Instructions: Say aloud which, if any, of the following items fit for you, while your partner listens. Then trade roles.

Events Related to Inclusion

- “I felt excluded. A great deal.”
- “No one was interested in me.”
- “I was being ignored.”
- “I was not important to my partner.”
- “If felt cold toward my partner.”
- “My partner was not happy to see me.”
- Others:

Events Related to Affection

- “I felt no affection toward me.”
- “My partner was cold towards me.”
- “I definitely felt rejected.”
- “I was criticized.”
- “I felt no affection toward my partner.”
- “I felt that my partner was not attracted to me.”
- Others:

Events Related to Influence

- “I had no power in this discussion.”
- “I felt helpless to affect how the conversation went.”
- “I felt there was a lack of respect toward me.”
- “My sense of dignity was being compromised.”
- “My partner was being domineering.”
- “I could not persuade my partner at all.”
- Others:

Aftermath of Failed Bids (continued)

Part 4—Do These Feelings Relate to your Past?

Some self-examination is necessary here to identify where the triggers come from in your own past. When people are under prolonged periods of stress, old patterns of thought and behavior can emerge, and old sensitivities can become heightened. Fighting in the relationship is a symptom of older patterns. This section is designed to help you see what potential past events may have set the conditions for turning away from one another. Take turns answering the following questions:

Q: How have I been responding lately when stressed?

Q: What sensitivities, thoughts, and feelings have I had lately in my relationship that may have influenced our friendship, so it's not work well this week?

Q: What issues am I particularly sensitive about, and what is the origin of these sensitivities?

- They come from the way I was treated in my family growing up. (Explain)
- They come from a previous relationship. (Explain)
- They come from past injuries I suffered. (Explain)
- They come from really hard times I endured. (Explain)
- They come from traumas I experienced. (Explain)
- They come from basic fears and insecurities I have. (Explain)
- They come from things and events I have not yet resolved or put aside. (Explain)
- They come from unrealized hopes I have. (Explain)
- They relate to ways I was treated in the past by other people. (Explain)
- They relate to things I have always thought about myself. (Explain)
- They relate to old nightmares or catastrophes I have worried about. (Explain)
- Other (Please explain)