

Aftermath of a Regrettable Event

This process comes from [John Gottman's research](#). These are the steps he and his researchers observed the Masters of Marriage using. They wouldn't necessarily use all 6 steps in a given interaction: in one situation they might just use steps 1-3; in another they might use 2,3 and 5. Etc. We teach all six just to give you an opportunity to learn them all.

I recommend you print the process out. Then carve out some time each week and practice this once a week for 10 weeks. Start with only mild-to-moderately 'charged' issues: the point is to learn the skills.

The more you practice, the easier it is to use when you truly need it.

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Instructions:

This exercise is a guide for processing and evaluating a regrettable event or discussion that did not go well. The goal is to increase understanding and to move toward a sense of resolution without falling back into the disagreement. We want to move from a hardened, pained place to something softer and more open.

The belief here is that there is no absolute “reality” in a disagreement but rather there are two equally-valid ‘subjective realities’. This form is designed to help you get at these two realities and to ease similar situations in the future.

Step One: Feelings

Each of you is to take turns describing what you were feeling during the disagreement.

You may either chose from the list below or come up with your own description.

Remember to keep your comments simple and keep to the format “I felt.....:”, avoiding statements such as, “I felt like you.....”

1. I felt defensive.
2. I felt listened to.
3. My feelings got hurt.
4. I felt understood.
5. I felt angry.
6. I felt sad.
7. I felt happy.
8. I felt misunderstood.
9. I felt criticized
10. I was worried.
11. I felt afraid.
12. I felt safe.
13. I was relaxed.
14. I felt I was right and my partner was wrong.
15. I felt that both of us were partly right.
16. I felt out of control.
17. I felt righteously indignant.
18. I felt we were both morally justified in our views.
19. I felt appreciated.
20. I felt unappreciated.
21. I was morally outraged.
22. I felt taken for granted.
23. I felt like leaving.
24. I felt like staying and talking this through.
25. I was overwhelmed with emotion.
26. I felt calm.
27. I felt powerful.

28. I felt powerless.
29. I felt lonely.
30. I felt alienated.
31. I felt like my opinions didn't even matter.
32. I had no idea what I was feeling.

Other feelings?

Step Two:

Share your subjective experience

Summarize your own reality about the disagreement. Share your story. What was the reality for you? Be mindful to describe the situation non-judgmentally.

Step Three:

Find something in your partner's story that you can understand

Now, try and see how your partner's subjective reality might make sense, given your partner's perspective. Tell your partner about one piece of his/her reality which makes sense to you. *"I can understand who you might feel (think)"*

Step Four:

Are you Flooded?

Check and see if either of you is flooded. If so, take a break and self-sooth before continuing.

Step Five:

Admitting your own role

It is essential that each of you take some responsibility for what happened. *"My role in this regrettable event was.. "*

Step Six:

