

Relationship Revolution

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Security is the state of feeling safe, stable and protected. In other words, the kind of peace of mind, and comfort of heart that's free from uncertainty, threat and anxiety. Developing relational security is like a building project that's made up of three essential components: the foundation, the structure and the roof.



SESSION OBJECTIVES

This session is designed to help you:

- (a)** Create a blueprint for building healthy attachments
- (b)** Establish a foundation of faithfulness
- (c)** Understand how to foster trust and personal safety

Your Building Blueprint

Research shows that the blueprint we use to build a relationship is often established long before our relationship even started! If, when growing up, we formed an insecure attachment style with our family, our relationship building endeavours may be hindered:

ANXIOUS-PREOCCUPIED ATTACHMENT STYLE

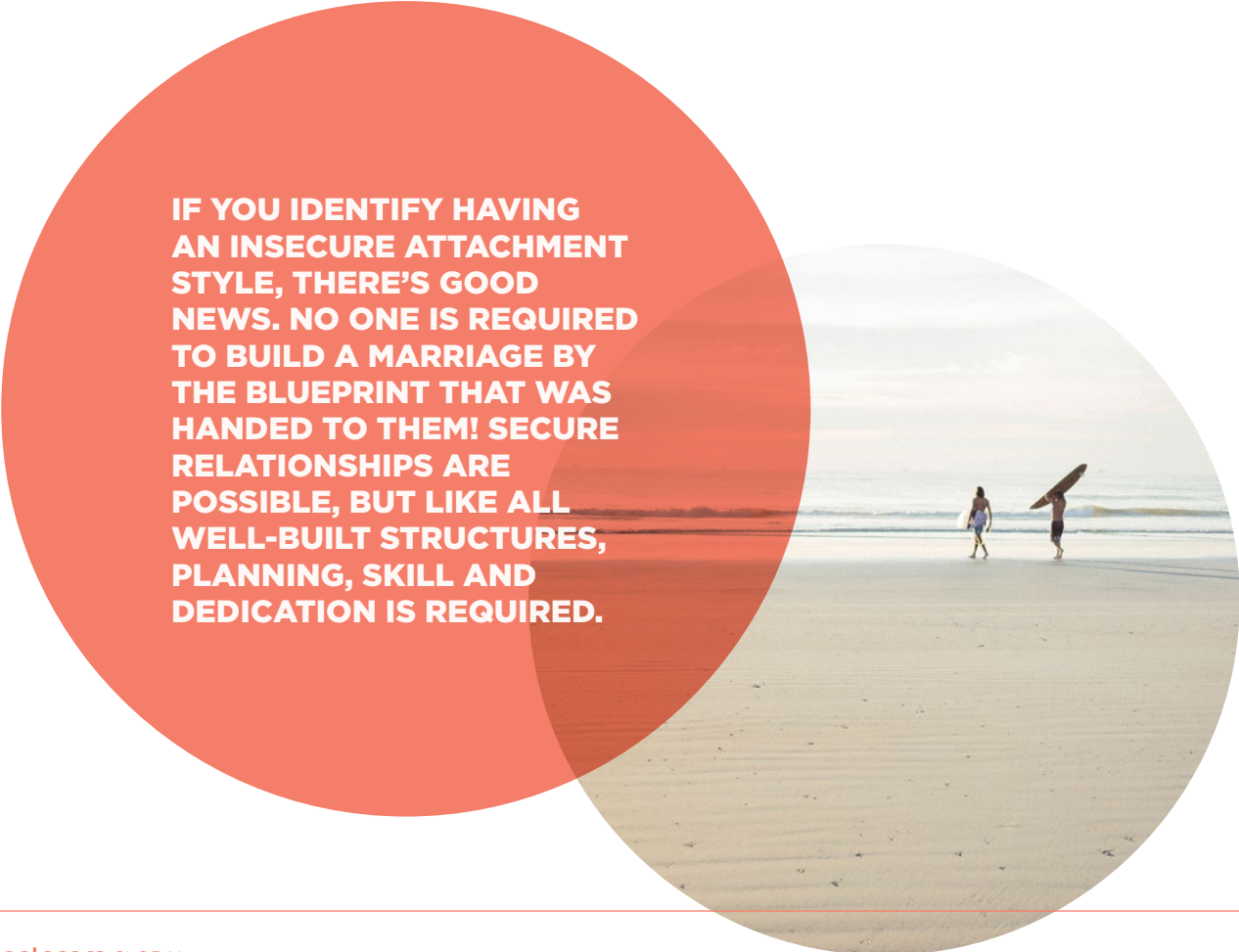
This blueprint is thought to come about when parents or caregivers have been inconsistent in their availability. When the child grows up, they find it very difficult to build trust. As a result, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to establish a roof of personal safety over the marriage.

DISMISSIVE-AVOIDANT ATTACHMENT STYLE

This blueprint is thought to come about when parents or caregivers have been neglectful. As such, the child learns to be independent and self-reliant from a young age. When the child grows up, they can be dismissive of their spouse's input, resulting in a spouse feeling redundant, isolated or lonely within the walls of their marriage.

FEARFUL-AVOIDANT ATTACHMENT STYLE

This blueprint is thought to come about when children have been abused, abandoned, or betrayed, resulting in mistrust and paranoia. Most relationships built using this blueprint are characterised by mistrust, doubt and paranoia. As a result, every good thing built upon this sinking sand foundation will likely be swallowed up by conflict.



IF YOU IDENTIFY HAVING AN INSECURE ATTACHMENT STYLE, THERE'S GOOD NEWS. NO ONE IS REQUIRED TO BUILD A MARRIAGE BY THE BLUEPRINT THAT WAS HANDED TO THEM! SECURE RELATIONSHIPS ARE POSSIBLE, BUT LIKE ALL WELL-BUILT STRUCTURES, PLANNING, SKILL AND DEDICATION IS REQUIRED.



Secure Attachment:

**A HOUSE THAT STANDS
THE TEST OF TIME MUST
HAVE A FOUNDATION
OF FAITHFULNESS,
WALLS OF TRUST AND
A ROOF THAT OFFERS
PERSONAL SAFETY.**

Foundation of Faithfulness

In marriage, faithfulness is the foundation upon which the building stands. Therefore, faithfulness is essential for the integrity of the entire structure. Like any building, the deeper the foundations go, the taller the structure can be built. Answer the following questions and see what areas of faithfulness you already possess (and can capitalise on) as well as areas that may need improving. After rating yourself, allow your spouse to rate you as well. Where you find a positive match, these are your areas of strength. Where there is a mismatch, these become an opportunity to discuss areas for possible improvement.

NOTE: GUARD YOUR HEART It takes great humility to receive honest feedback. If you disagree with a rating your spouse has given, rather than being offended, use it as an opportunity to learn why they think or feel that way. Rather than argue, ask them how you can improve.



Husbands to rate themselves

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

I am a man of my word. I do what I say.			
I show affection in both good times and bad.			
I am kind with my words, even when frustrated.			
I extend kind gestures towards my wife.			
I intentionally think, 'How can I bless my wife?'.			
I am affectionate (kissing, hugging, holding hands).			
I speak encouraging words to my wife.			
When my wife is feeling stressed, I lean in towards her.			
I take an interest in the challenges she may face.			
I give my wife my undivided attention.			



Wives to rate their Husbands

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

He is a man of his word. He does what he says.			
He shows me affection in both good times and bad.			
He is kind with his words, even when frustrated.			
He extends kind gestures towards me.			
He intentionally thinks how he can bless me.			
He is affectionate (kissing, hugging, holding hands).			
He speaks encouraging words to me.			
When I'm feeling stressed, he leans in towards me.			
He takes an interest in the challenges I may face.			
He gives me his undivided attention.			

Wives to rate themselves

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

I am a woman of my word. I do what I say.			
I show affection in both good times and bad.			
I am kind with my words, even when frustrated.			
I extend kind gestures towards my husband.			
I intentionally think, 'How can I bless my husband?'			
I am affectionate (kissing, hugging, holding hands).			
I speak encouraging words to my husband.			
When he is feeling stressed, I lean in towards him.			
I take an interest in the challenges he may face.			
I give my husband my undivided attention.			



Husbands to rate their wives

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

She is a woman of her word. She does what she says.			
She shows me affection in both good times and bad.			
She is kind with her words, even when frustrated.			
She extends kind gestures towards me.			
She intentionally thinks, how she can bless me.			
She is affectionate (kissing, hugging, holding hands).			
She speaks encouraging words to me.			
When I'm feeling stressed, she leans in towards me.			
She takes an interest in the challenges I may face.			
She gives me her undivided attention.			

Based on the questions above, what areas of strength do you have?

HUSBAND:

WIFE:

NB: Help your spouse identify their answers

Based on the questions above, what areas of faithfulness could you work on:

HUSBAND:

WIFE:

NB: Help your spouse identify their answers

Walls of Trust

Trust is the structure that makes relational security possible. The Hebrew word Emunah, the Greek word Pistis, and the Latin word Fidelis, have nuanced differences, but each throughout the ages have communicated the idea of faithful and reliable. The virtue of not just being faithful, but also having faith in your spouse, provides a solid base to build upon. For example, the Proverbs speak of a virtuous woman, whereby “Her husband has full confidence in her.” To what degree do you trust and have full confidence in your spouse?



Consider the following questions and take turns in communicating your answers:

1. Over the course of your relationship, what actions have stood out to you that has helped you develop trust in your spouse?

NB: Ideas may include being reliable (mature and responsible), being integrous (following through on promises) and being transparent (honest communication including owning up to mistakes made).

2. What things do you believe are personally important for strengthening your bond of trust, that could be enhanced even further?

NB: Ideas may include fulfilling responsibilities (dependable), being forthright (offering information to allay concerns) and taking precautions (avoiding risky situations, having accountability, being wise).

3. Just like love and honour, trust is not merely ‘earned’, rather it’s a gift that’s given. In what ways could you better communicate the trust you have in your spouse?

NB: Ideas may include encouraging actions of integrity (celebrating wins), avoiding controlling behaviour or paranoid questioning, and being your spouse’s safe place to fall (receiving confessions with grace).

When talking about romance and relationships, King Solomon asserts,
“it’s the little foxes that ruin the vineyards”
Song of Solomon 2:15

FIXING THE LITTLE FOXES

Sometimes in the busyness of life, we fail to live up to the small agreements we have made. We think it’s not a big deal, and indeed, it shouldn’t be. Everyone slips up, forgets or becomes incapacitated at times. However, if the little foxes are frequent visitors to your vineyard, over time, they can be incredibly destructive. Using the guide below, create an action plan to fix the little foxes. Identify an action, commitment or obligation that perhaps you regularly fail to follow through on. What needs to change for you to live up to your responsibility?



What are the little foxes that need fixing?	
What gets in the way of fulfilling your responsibility?	
What can you do to deal with the distraction?	
When, where and how will you fix the little foxes?	

Roof of Safety

A safe relationship is one that offers protection. It's knowing you can relax, because security is assured. However, like termites, mistrust eats away at and destabilises everything a couple builds. Termites are to safety, what little foxes are to trust. Termites may be small and mostly hidden, but collectively, bite by tiny bite, termites eat the framework that makes a house strong. We termite-proof our relationship by paying attention to the symptoms. Just as an inspector taps on your walls and carefully listens, relational research has shown that 'paying careful attention' is one of the biggest protective factors for marriage. We not only need to pay careful attention to each other's needs and concerns, but also be aware of when our spouse is vying for our attention.

Moreover, we need to pay careful attention to how we respond. Often times, a spouse can be vying for our attention (whether out of need for connection, emotional intimacy or support), but our response jeopardises their safety. Therefore, we have a primary responsibility to protect our spouse from ourselves.



Termites are to safety, what little foxes are to trust.

MISTRUST STARTS OUT WITH SMALL ACTIONS (OR INACTION), THAT BITE AWAY AT A PERSON'S DEPENDABILITY. WITH EACH BITE, THE FRAMEWORK THAT ONCE STRENGTHENED THE RELATIONSHIP CAN OVERTIME BECOME A HAZARDOUS DANGER ZONE. A TERMITE RIDDEN HOUSE CANNOT STAND.

Pay careful attention

When facing high levels of stress, receiving upsetting news or experiencing frustrating things, how safe are you? Rather than being emotionally reactive, successful couples learn to be proactive. U

nderstand that the more emotional you get, the less intelligent you become, your communication style and problem-solving capacity will be jeopardised. Therefore, learn to delay your response. By giving yourself some breathing room, you're in a better position to pay careful attention to what you say or do. The less emotionally reactive you become, the smarter you are and the safer your relationship. Consider the following 'unsafe' scenarios and see if you can come up with a safer response.



Criticising with Blame

This unsafe style of communication jumps to conclusions and reactively makes a personal attack. The solution is to change the blame-oriented criticism with constructive enquiry.

EXAMPLE: A husband hugs his wife for a little longer and closer than she was expecting. His wife responds by saying, "Why do you always have to turn a hug into asking for sex? What is wrong with you?"

A safer response:

Minimising Response

This unsafe style of communication pretends the issue isn't so important, or that the person's feelings aren't so strong. The solution is to offer empathy or ask a question to find out why it's important to your spouse.

EXAMPLE: A wife's close work colleague moves to a new city, which is greatly upsetting. Her husband responds by saying, "Come on. It's not that bad. She wasn't that good of a friend anyway. I don't know what you're so upset about."

A safer response:



Defensive Response

This unsafe style of communication deflects blame or emphasises victimisation. The solution is to accept some responsibility. Taking responsibility is not merely owning the problem, it's taking ownership of the solution.

EXAMPLE: Wife complains that her husband has forgotten to put the bins out (as he had promised) two weeks in a row. The rubbish is now backing up. Husband responds by saying, "I'm bad at remembering such trivial things. Besides, don't you know I've got a lot on my plate at the moment. I can't handle your nagging."

A safer response:

Fixing Response

This unsafe style of communication jumps in with solutions before fully hearing the issue. The solution is to hold off and ask more questions, and then feedback what you understand before offering support. Rather than problem solving, this is an opportunity to connect.

EXAMPLE: Wife has come home feeling disappointed that she's been removed from an exciting project her team was about to start. Her husband responds by saying, "You know what you need to do. Tell your boss that you'll consult legal advice if he doesn't reconsider."

A safer response:

Mocking Response

Contempt is the ultimate unsafe communication style. It attempts to cajole or get the other person to feel silly for their feelings, in order to trivialise the problem. Rather than helping, mocking makes the situation even worse. The solution is to offer concern, and to learn to pay careful attention to our own judgemental attitudes.

EXAMPLE: A husband is anxious about an up and coming dentist appointment and is thinking of cancelling. His wife says "I can't believe Mr Brave over here is so afraid of an itty-bitty dentist appointment. Shall I call the WAAmbulance?"

A safer response:

Safe place to fall

Making a commitment to be each other's "safe place" to fall, is like a safety net that will catch you in case of unforeseen circumstances, relationship storms or personal mistakes. This is no small commitment because it requires 'faith' that you are safe with the other person, and 'trust' that what you share will not be used against you. This is why faithfulness and trust form the foundation and structure upon which the roof of safety is built. Personal safety in marriage may be measured by the degree to which difficult conversations can be successfully navigated. Difficult conversations may be about hot-button topics, such as old arguments that were never resolved, or confessions that may need to be made, or past hurts and hang ups that are still in the process of healing. Such conversations are often avoided due to a fear of judgement, embarrassment, rejection or attack. However, in a secure marriage, they are seen as an opportunity for growth.

**DO YOU HAVE THE
LEVEL OF COMMITMENT
NECESSARY TO WEATHER
STORMS, THE EMOTIONAL
STABILITY TO EXTEND
GRACE, AND THE
SPIRITUAL MATURITY TO
RESOLVE, REPAIR AND
RECONCILE PROBLEMS?**



UNRESOLVED ISSUES, DIFFERENCES AND DISPUTES

To truly be a safe place for your spouse to fall, you agree to:

- (a) Work together and brainstorm mutually beneficial outcomes
- (b) Be delicate and sensitive with each other's emotions
- (c) Problem solve, overcome offense and where possible, resolve conflict

DISCLOSURES, CONFESSIONS AND APOLOGIES

To truly be a safe place for your spouse to fall, you agree to:

- (a) Extend grace and forgiveness, rather than judgment and condemnation
- (b) Convey appreciation for the courage to be honest and transparent
- (c) Embrace the opportunity to pray together, and where required, seek help together

HURTS AND HANG UPS

To truly be a safe place for your spouse to fall, you agree to:

- (a) Understand that while forgiveness takes place in an instant, healing can take time
- (b) Where required, convey genuine remorse, repentance and a bid for reconciliation
- (c) Extend love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (in accordance with the fruit of God's Spirit; Galatians 5:22)



NOTE: EXERCISE WISDOM

It's one thing to feel ready to invite your spouse to be your 'safe place to fall', it's a whole other thing for them to be ready to catch you in case you fall. Not everyone has the commitment, emotional stability, and spiritual maturity to be on the receiving end of complete transparency. However, that should be the goal for every healthy marriage. If one or both of you don't feel safe to be a confidant, then don't judge or rush one another. Rather, invite friends and mentors that serve as your confidant and accountability partners, until such time that the marriage is secure enough. When eventually you've developed a firm foundation of faith and the structure of trust to lay on a roof of security, then you can become each other's safe place to fall.