

Relationship Revolution

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SESSION 1

Your Blueprint

SESSION 2

Your Intimacy

SESSION 3

Your Security

SESSION 4

Your Contentment

SESSION 5

Your Maturity

SESSION 6

Your Outlook

Your Maturity

ACTIVITY SHEET



Over the course of marriage, it's vital that your relationship adapts, grows and matures. You enhance the maturity of your relationship by learning more about yourself and your spouse. When you learn what makes each other tick, what triggers insecurity and brings about resolve, you can better pre-empt destructive reactionary habits, overcome offence and respond with wisdom.



SESSION OBJECTIVES

This session is designed to help you:

- (a)** Understand each other's core fears and reactions
- (b)** Become aware of and pre-empt destructive habits
- (c)** Learn to let go of hurt and overcome offences

Mature Versus Immature

“To be capable of real love means becoming mature,
with realistic expectations of the other person.”

JOHN SANFORD

Over the course of marriage, couples that develop maturity learn to deal with disappointments, grow from disagreements and become less able to be offended. Whereas relationships that don't mature often become fraught with conflict. Their emotional wounds end up in a discoloration of the entire relationship, resulting in small issues being blown out of proportion. If one thing is bad, everything becomes bad. The key differentiating factors between mature and immature relationships are:

Mature Relationships

Governed by selfless values
(e.g., being patient, kind, trusting, generous
and ultimately, honouring)

Immature Relationships

Governed by selfish values
(e.g., being needy, demanding, distrustful and
ultimately, dishonouring)





Consider the list of examples below. Can you differentiate mature from immature behaviours?

	Mature	Immature
Looks for things to complement		
Looks for things to complain about		
Seeks to make a valuable contribution		
Is able to see things from the other's perspective		
Is easily offended		
Exaggerates or minimises the facts		
Sacrifices their personal desire to be right all the time		
Has an unrelenting desire to change the other person		
Endeavours to champion and celebrate each other's wins		
Has a need to keep score of each other's failures		
Looks for someone else to complete them (or compete with them)		
Wins the argument at the expense of intimacy and unity		
Endeavours to be complementary in their role and responsibility		
Is perpetually dissatisfied		
Seeks to preserve intimacy and prioritises unity		
Gives the benefit of the doubt		
Is listening, caring, understanding and accepting		
Has unrealistic expectations or unrelenting standards		
Is impatient and intolerant of mistakes		
Is ready and willing to pick up the pieces when mistakes are made		
Engages judgemental, jealous and controlling behaviours		
Deals with disappointments by extending grace		
Maintains an open and flexible mindset		
Develops empathy (by placing oneself in the other's shoes)		
Engages black or white, all or nothing thinking		
Believes the best about one another and rarely takes offence		

Immature love

**PUTS YOUR MARRIAGE
INTO QUICKSAND**

Mature love

**PUTS YOUR MARRIAGE
ON A FIRM FOUNDATION**

The Core Fear Dance

Research from the National Institute of Marriage has found the vast majority of conflict in marriage comes as a result of immature, idiosyncratic reactions to personally held core fears. A core fear is like an emotional hot button, that when pressed, can trigger feelings of insecurity, vulnerability and instability. As a consequence, when someone 'presses your buttons', you're likely going to exhibit a core fear reaction. Core fear reactions, in turn, can trigger core fears in your spouse, and now you have commenced the core fear dance.



Core Fears

Core fears are strong emotions (linked with your perception of reality) that are most often felt when your spouse has knowingly or unknowingly said or done something that relates to you. Everyone has core fears, but it takes humility to acknowledge them. Understanding what specifically triggers you is one of the most helpful things you can do to both avoid being hurt and avoid hurting your spouse (by your reaction).



How many of the following common core fears do you identify with?

	✓		✓
Disappointed or despairing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Powerless, helpless or uncertain	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unfairly treated or taken advantage of	<input type="checkbox"/>	Inadequate or unprepared	<input type="checkbox"/>
Controlled, manipulated or bullied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Interrupted or impeded	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unheard, doubted or misunderstood	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rejected, abandoned or shut-out	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blamed, guilty or ashamed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lied to, deceived or betrayed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Excluded or isolated	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nagged, lectured, interrogated	<input type="checkbox"/>
Humiliated or embarrassed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Uncared for, unloved or lonely	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taken for granted or unappreciated	<input type="checkbox"/>	Obligated or burdened	<input type="checkbox"/>



Core Fear Reactions

Once your core fear buttons have been pressed, this in turn triggers a core fear reaction. The problem is, the reactions you offer are often times exaggerated, disproportionate or unfitting. Some of the most common core fear reactions identified by the National Institute of Marriage are listed below.



How many of the following common core fear reactions do you identify with?

	✓		✓
Withdrawal	<input type="checkbox"/>	Defensiveness	<input type="checkbox"/>
Escalation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Clinginess	<input type="checkbox"/>
Belittling	<input type="checkbox"/>	Passive-aggressive	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sarcasm	<input type="checkbox"/>	Caretaking or fix it modes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blaming	<input type="checkbox"/>	Acting out	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tantrums	<input type="checkbox"/>	Complaining	<input type="checkbox"/>
Denial	<input type="checkbox"/>	Aggressive	<input type="checkbox"/>
Numbness	<input type="checkbox"/>	Self-Loathing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Victim mentality	<input type="checkbox"/>	Manipulative	<input type="checkbox"/>



Core Fear Solutions

When triggered emotionally, while it might seem you are reacting to our spouse, you're in actual fact reacting to your own core fears. The way to end the core fear dance is to:

1

Recognise your own core fears

2

Become aware of specific triggers

3

Take ownership of the role you play in making yourself and your spouse feel safe

4

Ascertain specifically why these core fears are hot buttons for you

5

Become aware of your most likely reaction when your buttons are pressed

6

Identify the real underlying 'need' that can possibly be met

7

Develop healthy alternative reactions



Answer the following questions and take turns in sharing your answers:



NOTE: BE UNDERSTANDING

Listen without judgement. Rather, show empathy and compassion. Employ both your effective and affective listening skills. Seek to understand the origins of each other's sensitivities and brainstorm alternative ways to effectively manage emotions.

1. Choose one core fear that you each may have:

Husband

Wife

2. Thinking carefully, what specific words, interactions, tones, circumstances and actions (or inactions) occur between you and your spouse, that tend to trigger this core fear?

Husband

Wife

Your core fears were likely developed prior to marriage. As such, you may well have brought your core fears into your marriage with you. Therefore, your core fears are exactly that, they are YOURS. The interactions with your spouse may be the trigger for your core fears, but your reaction is likely due to something that's pre-existing. Therefore, it's important to take responsibility for both your fear and your reaction when triggered.

3. What responsibility do you have in keeping yourself from being hurt, as well as keeping your spouse from being hurt (whether in triggering them, or reacting to your own triggers)?

Husband

Wife

4. Have a think about why this core fear may be so triggering for you. How and when did it first develop? Discuss with your spouse the possible origins of your core fear, as well as the likely reasons for your sensitivity.

Childhood and/or previous experiences	Things you have witnessed in others
Fears role modelled to you by your parents	Time's you've felt overwhelmed

5. Identify one or more reactions you may have when triggered:

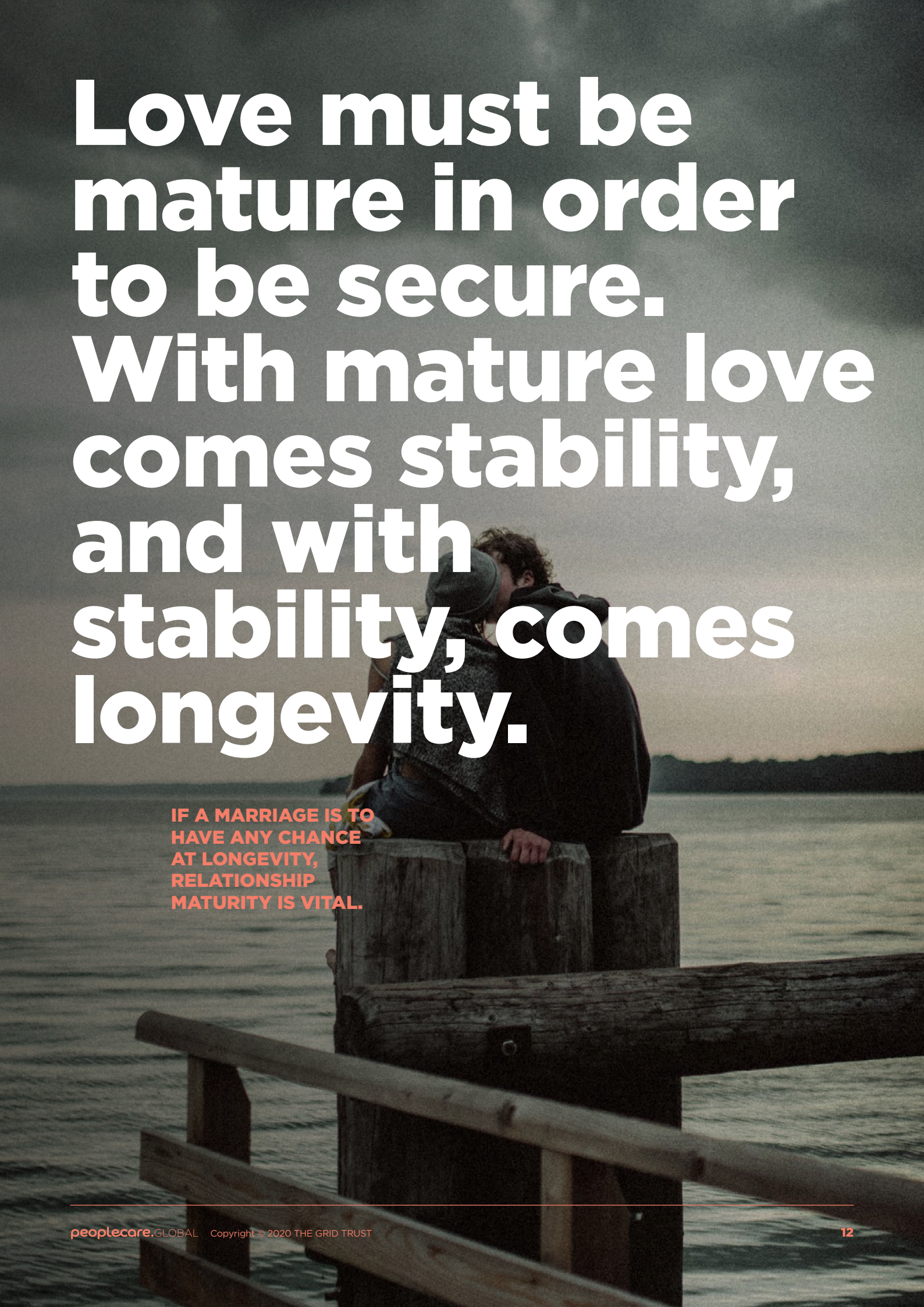
Husband	Wife

6. What's the real underlying need that can possibly be met?

Husband	Wife

7. What healthy alternative reactions could you develop?

Husband	Wife
What can you do to better manage your emotions when feeling triggered?	What can you do to better manage your emotions when feeling triggered?
What is one thing your wife could do to help when you're feeling triggered?	What is one thing your husband could do to help when you're feeling triggered?

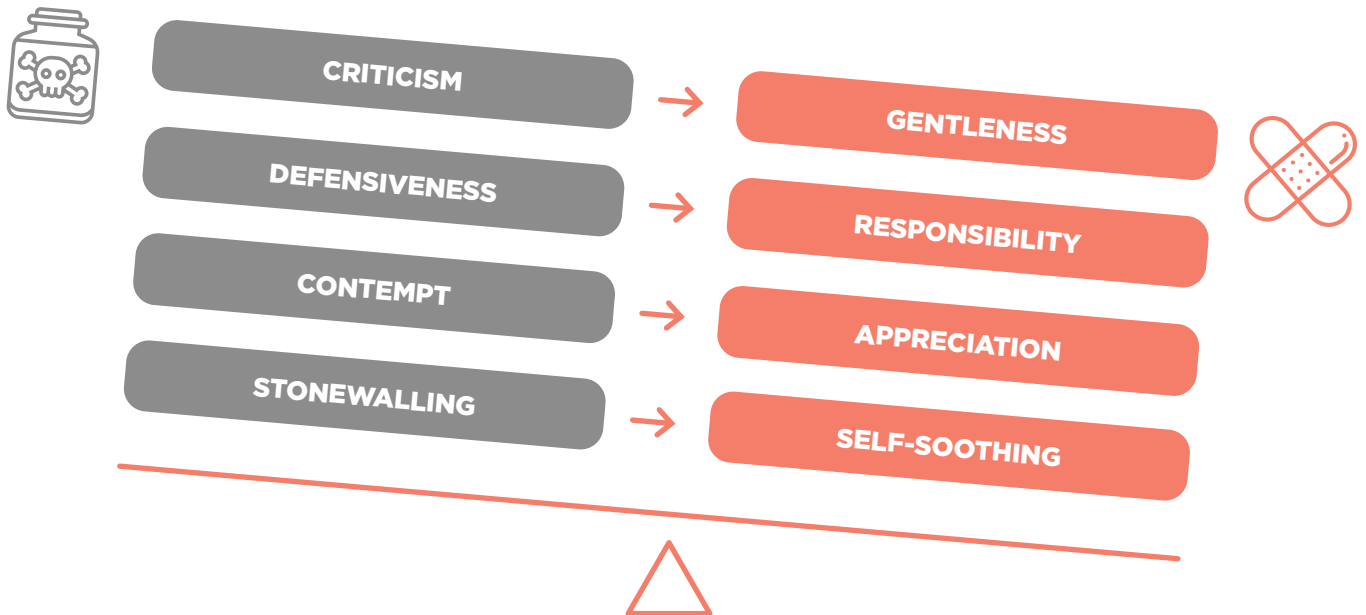
A couple is seen from behind, sitting on a wooden pier. The man is wearing a dark hoodie and a grey beanie, and the woman is wearing a grey sweater. They are embracing each other. The pier is made of dark wood and extends into a body of water. The background shows a calm sea and a distant shoreline under a soft, hazy sky.

**Love must be
mature in order
to be secure.
With mature love
comes stability,
and with
stability, comes
longevity.**

**IF A MARRIAGE IS TO
HAVE ANY CHANCE
AT LONGEVITY,
RELATIONSHIP
MATURITY IS VITAL.**

Avoiding the Apocalypse

Not all core fear reactions are equal. According to research, four are more destructive than others. These include criticism, defensiveness, contempt or stonewalling. Dr John Gottman calls these the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, because if allowed to run unguided, they poison your marriage with more than 90% certainty. Fortunately, there is an antidote to each poison.



TRANSITION TIME

Consider the following examples. Are there any poisonous reactions in this list that you recognise of yourself? Identify any transitions you need to make from 'poison' to 'antidote.'

POISON

CRITICISM: "You are seriously so messy. You never clean up after yourself. I can't clean up for you, I've got too much to do?"

DEFENSIVENESS: "Well lucky you. I didn't have the same upbringing as you now, did I? Besides, no one's perfect?"

CONTEMPT: "What - is there something wrong with you? Even our 7-year-old can make toast without burning it."

STONEWALLING: After several minutes of not saying anything, you get up and leave. You can't deal with this anymore.

ANTIDOTE

GENTLENESS: "Would you please be so kind as to help clean up tonight? It's quite a mess in here and I've still got lots to do."

RESPONSIBILITY: "I see where you're coming from. I apologise if that was immature of me to behave that way."

APPRECIATION: "Smells like a BBQ in here. I love that smell. Thanks for fixing breakfast for us. Let me remake the toast."

SELF-SOOTHING: "I want to hear what you're saying, but first I've got to clear my head. I just need fresh air. I'll be back."

Overcoming Offence

If we really want to discontinue the core-fear dance, survive the four horsemen of the apocalypse and truly develop a mature marriage, we must learn to successfully manage offence. To do that, we have to maintain a positive attitude and readily forgive. We have to let go of any and all hurt, pain or bitterness. Forgiveness sets both ourselves and our spouse free from the mistakes that we've made. Forgiveness allows us to move forward without offence; without grudges or resentment that otherwise would hinder our growth. Forgiving someone is to STOP blaming and start taking responsibility for the future of your marriage. Forgiveness is letting go of the lust for retaliation, and instead, wanting the best for your spouse. Forgiveness takes place in an instance, but healing can often take time. You know that you have truly been able to heal when you remember what transpired, but you no longer feel the pain that used to go along with that memory. This is called a testimony.

FORGIVENESS IS

Accepting what has happened, but choosing not to negatively dwell on it.

A conscious daily choice to let go of painful memories, hurt or bitterness.

Trusting God for healing and to make things right. Wishing the best for our spouse.

A gift given with no strings attached - even when underserved.

FORGIVENESS IS NOT

Justifying or making excuses for what has happened.

Requiring apology or remorse before extending grace.

Forgetting (you'll always have the memory, but keep no record of wrong).

Having to put up with continued abuse or betrayal.



What's one thing you need to let go of and consciously decide not to dwell on anymore?

Husband

Wife

**IT'S NOT
UNTIL YOU
EXTEND
THE GIFT OF
FORGIVENESS
THAT YOU
DISCOVER
THE GIFT
IS REALLY
INTENDED
FOR YOU.**