

How to deal with

Negative History

in your marriage and family relationships

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When dealing with negative history with your loved one it's important to agree upon two things:

- 1) **We cannot the past.**
- 2) **We can validate the feelings that are PRESENT when negative history is recalled.**

Negative history - includes negative memories and feelings about past hurts and disappointments.

When you become skillful at the **four steps of validation**, you'll find that it can take less than 60 seconds to respond to negative history! It's fast! (see the handout on Validation).

Establish the following ground rule...

You can bring up negative history as often as you want - knowing that the validation of your feelings will be brief but powerful.

It's important to not have a "gag order" or "no talk rule" – about past hurts and events. Trying to silence or "forget" negative feelings will only create other problems. Whatever negative events your relationship has will always be a part of your history. So, it's important that everyone has a voice and there are no forbidden topics. This will help build your **emotional bridge**.

Rather than a nightmare that keeps returning again and again negative history can be an opportunity to connect. Possessing this new attitude can powerfully move your relationship forward.

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The four steps of validation are:

- A) I can see how you feel... (use feeling words here)
- B) Because I... (this is your confession or contribution to the hurt)
- C) Moving forward I will...
- D) I want you to feel... (use feeling words here again like – loved, safe, secure, adored respected, and valuable). (See the handout **Validation - of Your Loved One's Feelings**).

Example:

- A) **I can see how you'd feel...** hurt, embarrassed, unimportant and unsafe...
- B) **Because I...** was very harsh and critical towards you. I said horrible things to your family about you. I was completely out of line to do that.
- C) **Moving forward I will...** not criticize you to your family or anyone else. I'll turn my criticisms into polite request – asking you for what I want. I'll be kind and respectful to you.
- D) **I want you to feel...** Safe, secure, like the most important person in the entire world to me, treasured, and dearly loved.

Less frequent – Less intense

We are hoping that the pain and trauma of past hurts and wounds becomes less frequent and less intense – with time, validation, griefwork, connection and support and other forms of healing.

Like a graph that has a general downward trend there may be spikes from time to time when negative history is triggered, but in time the hurt will not be as intense or as frequent.

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