

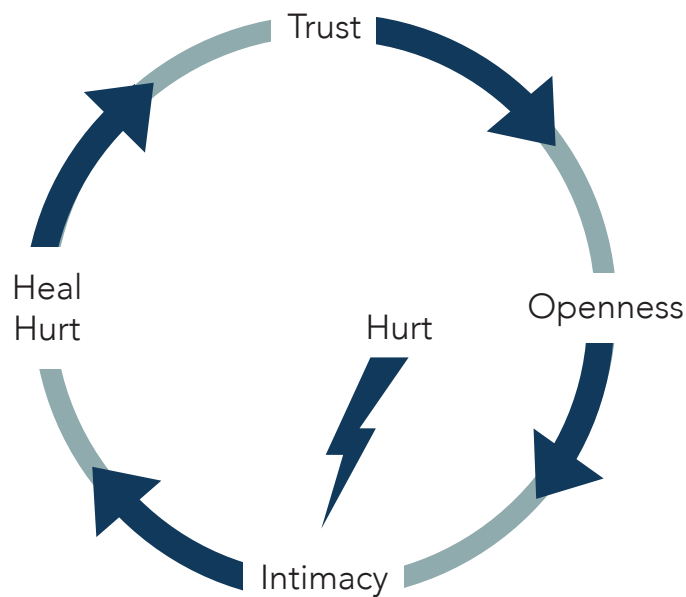
WEEK FOUR

**THE POWER
OF FORGIVENESS**



WHY IS FORGIVENESS IMPORTANT?

- To say sorry and forgive is so important because we will all hurt our partner
- Dealing with hurt is vital to intimacy
- Relationships grow through trust and intimacy
- Hurt undermines trust and openness



REACTION TO HURT

1. ANGER

- Some are like rhinos – they attack when provoked
- Some are like hedgehogs - they withdraw when threatened

2. RETALIATION

- To let our partner feel what the hurt felt like

3. FEAR

- We withdraw so as not to feel hurt again

4. GUILT

- Both partners will always cause hurt

In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. Ephesians 4:26-27

COMPLETE EXERCISE 1 (PAGE 28) AS A GROUP

COMPLETE EXERCISE 2 (PAGE 29) AS A COUPLE

WHAT HAPPENS IF HURT OR ANGER IS BURIED?



PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

- Disturbed sleep, appetite affected, medical conditions e.g. ulcers, high blood pressure, pain



BEHAVIOURAL SYMPTOMS

- Inability to relax, low sexual desire, quick temper/intolerance, escape through drugs, alcohol, pornography etc., escape into work/children/religious activity etc.



EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS

- Loss of positive emotions, low self-esteem/depression, shut down, fear of confrontation

PROCESS OF HEALING THE HURT

1. IDENTIFY THE HURT

- Take the initiative to resolve anger and hurt
- Recognise how you have caused pain in your partner
- Be prepared to tell your partner when you have been hurt

2. APOLOGISE

- Take responsibility
- Resist the urge to make excuses or blame your partner
- Confess to God and receive forgiveness
- Apologise to each other

3. FORGIVE (Ephesians 4:31-32)

4. START WITH A FRESH PAGE (1 Corinthians 13:5)

5. MAKE A DECISION NOT TO HURT AGAIN

“If your brother or sister sins against you, go and show them their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over.” Matthew 18:15

COMPLETE EXERCISE 3 (PAGE 31)

EXERCISE 1: RHINOS & HEDGEHOGS

Identify whether you are a rhino or a hedgehog. If you're not sure, ask your partner.

EXERCISE 2: HANDLING ANGER

The purpose of this exercise is to help you recognise how each of you typically responds when you feel hurt and how you display anger.

1. Put a number between 0 and 4 in the box against each statement to indicate how true that statement is **for you**. Then add up columns A and B.

0 = never 1 = rarely 2 = sometimes 3 = often 4 = always

When I am hurt, I ...	A	B
1. Keep the peace at any price.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Overreact and go on the attack	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Fail to admit I am angry or hurt	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Apologise because I must have caused it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Become controlling and bossy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Give my husband/wife the silent treatment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Am quick to blame others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Retaliate by becoming confrontational	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Withdraw and shut down emotionally	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Want to run away and hide	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Lose control/become explosive by shouting/slamming doors, etc.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Say things I regret later.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Try to ignore my feelings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Become cold and clinical or sarcastic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Say things to hurt my partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Withhold physical affection/sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Demand immediate discussion of issue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Hurl accusations to take the focus off my responsibility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Feel I don't have a right to be angry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Bring up past hurt not related to the issue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

TOTALS A B

	MY SCORE	MY PARTNER'S SCORE
A = Rhino Behaviour	_____	_____
B = Hedgehog Behaviour	_____	_____

Now look at each other's scores and discuss them, especially your differences.



2. At times of disagreement, what words or phrases are you aware that you use, if any, that hurt your partner?

What words or phrases does your partner use, if any, that hurt you?
(This question is especially important if either or both of you recognise that you react like the rhino.)

3. At times of disagreement, are you and your partner able to express your views and feelings?

If not, how could you help your partner to do so?
(This question is especially important if either or both of you recognise that you react like the hedgehog.)

EXERCISE 3: IDENTIFYING UNRESOLVED HURT

This exercise concentrates particularly on identifying the areas of hurt and seeking to understand each other's feelings better. The homework focuses on apology and forgiveness.

Try to identify your partner's hurt

Think about ways in which you have hurt your partner and affected the marriage that have not been resolved between you. Think back to when you were going out, when you were engaged and early times of your marriage, as well as recent times.

- What have I failed to do that I should be doing?
- What have I done (or am doing) that I should not do?
- Where have I failed to meet my husband's/wife's needs?
- What have I said that has been hurtful?
- What have I left unsaid that could have shown love and encouragement?

Don't make excuses or blame your partner. The following examples show the difference:



Making excuses / blaming your partner:

I know I criticised you in front of the children yesterday, but I wouldn't have done so if you hadn't made us twenty minutes late.



Proper apology:

I hurt you by criticising you in front of the children yesterday, it was unkind of me. I am sorry.



Making excuses or blaming your partner:

I know I was grumpy and rude towards you last night, but you don't understand what intense pressure I've been under at work over the past two weeks.



Making excuses or blaming your partner:

I was selfish and insensitive of me to be rude and grumpy towards you last night. I am sorry to have hurt you.

Write a list of things that come to mind. Be specific.

(Example: I have stopped being affectionate and rejected your initiatives to make love; I have fallen asleep in front of the television instead of talking to you; I have been out more consistently with work colleagues or friends than we have together as a couple).

Identify your own hurt

Identify how your partner has hurt you. The cause of the pain could be recent or a long time ago. Your partner might or might not have been aware of hurting you, and it could have been one incident or repeated many times. Make sure you are specific and that you describe how you felt. Use 'I' sentences.

(Example: I felt unsupported and unappreciated when you didn't notice the hard work I put into decorating the house for Christmas. I was hurt when you didn't say anything special about my promotion. I haven't got over the fact that you lied to me on the night we first went out together. I felt rejected when you went out to the pub the night we got back from honeymoon. I feel frustrated because you don't discuss financial decisions with me.)

1. When you have both finished, exchange your lists.
2. Read silently the ways you have hurt each other.
3. One of you 'reflect back' to your partner the reason for their hurt and the feelings it produced in them, without trying to interpret what they have written or to defend yourself. To clarify what they feel, ask questions such as: "What did you mean by that?" or 'Is there anything else you would like to say?'
4. Then the other partner should 'reflect back' in the same way. Make sure each of you has an understanding of the feelings that are described.
5. Return the lists to each other. Then add to or revise your list of the ways you have hurt your partner. Spend some time considering every aspect of their hurt. Try to see it through your partner's eyes.
6. Throughout the coming week, allow God the opportunity to show you new insights into why your partner feels hurt and your part in causing it.

It is important to do the homework in order to complete the process of 'getting rid of bitterness, rage & anger' (*Ephesians 4:31*) by apologising and forgiving.

Set aside two hours of marriage time together sometime before the next session for the following two exercises.

EXERCISE 1: HEALING UNRESOLVED HURT

Do steps 1 – 4 on your own and then do steps 5-8 together.

1. Identify your partner's deepest hurt

Refer back to your list of your partner's hurts and write down the primary way in which you have hurt your husband/wife.

(Example: I hurt my husband/wife through making a joke about the misunderstanding between us; my husband/wife was hurt when I paid more attention to my work than to him/her.)

One of the primary ways I have hurt my husband/wife is:

2. Try to understand your partner's feelings

With regard to this hurt, my husband/wife feels:

(Example: ridiculed, humiliated, unaffirmed, criticised, rejected, unloved, undervalued.)

3. Recognise your responsibility (refuse to make excuses or to blame your husband or wife)

- I did it
- It was wrong
- I need to be forgiven by God and by my husband/wife
- I need to be prepared to change

From now on, with God's help, I intent to:

Now repeat steps 1 – 3 with any other ways you have hurt your husband / wife.

“... now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us.” 2 Corinthians 7: 9

4. Confess your sins to God

Be specific – “Lord God, I have hurt You and my husband/wife by:

This was wrong and I ask You to forgive me. Thank you for taking my guilt on the cross and for giving me a new start. I ask You to help me to be the husband/wife You want me to be”.

Believe God's promise of forgiveness and cleansing.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

5. Say sorry to each other

"I am so sorry for _____

"I know it hurts you and makes you feel: _____

"From now on I intent to: _____

"Please forgive me."

6. Forgive each other

- Say to your husband/wife. "I forgive you".
- For some people, this is a struggle; it can be helpful first to express to God In writing our desire to forgive our husband/wife for particular hurts:

e.g., Dear Lord, thank You that You know all about me and love me. Thank you for being ready to forgive me for the ways I have hurt others. You know how hurt and angry I felt when my husband/wife criticised me when I'd done my best. I choose to let go of my anger and resentment. I want to put my desire to retaliate into Your hands and ask You to help my husband/wife to change. I choose to forgive him/her as You have forgiven me. Please heal the hurt with your love.

"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Luke 11: 4

7. Comfort and pray for each other

- This is very valuable when you have made yourselves vulnerable to each other.
- This brings healing to the hurt
- Pray that your husband/wife will know freedom from guilt

8. Do something you both enjoy together

- In this way you will start to replace the negative emotions with positive ones

