

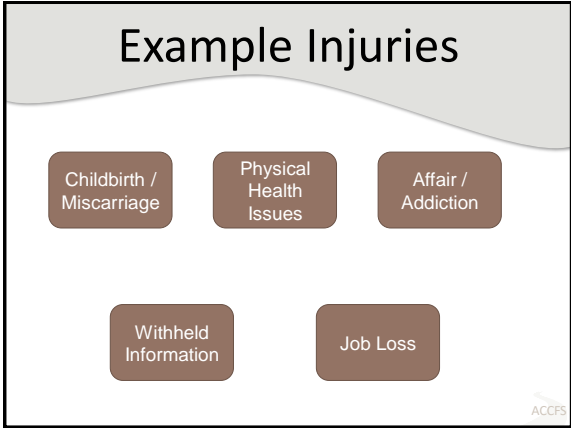
Colossians 3:12-14 "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

Outline

- What are relational injuries?
- How do relational injuries impact the individual?
Impact the relationship?
- How do we have a conversation about relational injuries?

Relational Injuries

- A specific relational incident where one spouse violates the expectation that the other will offer care / comfort in time of urgent need.
- "Violations of human connection" (Herman, 1992) – through abandonment or betrayal at crucial moments of need.
- This may not be apparent to both.



Physical vs. Emotional

- Visible
- Ignore – gets worse.
- Must clean – remove dirt.
- Surface healing with infection causes sickness.
- If not treated, attracts flies.
- It takes time to heal.
- Visible in behavior.
- Ignore – gets worse.
- Express pain – confess sin.
- Pretending without healing causes greater problems.
- If not treated, attracts sin.
- It takes time to heal.

Adapted from Healing the Wounds of Trauma by Harriet Hill, Margaret Hill, Richard Bagge, and Pat Mierzma

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Individual Impact

- Injuries can be associated with fear and helplessness that block deeper intimacy, trust and connection.
- Leads to hypervigilance, painful memories, minimizing, numbing, silence.
- Emotions are more than feelings.

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Relational Impact

- Relationship seen as insecure.
- Spouse seen as undependable.
- Posture of minimizing risk, rather than connection.
- Injuring spouse may withdraw, becoming defensive or minimize when incident comes up.
- Injuring spouse is trying to be “good” spouse – never enough.
- Hurt spouse loses predictability / control feels crazy.
- Injury can be from injuring spouse being overwhelmed / frozen.

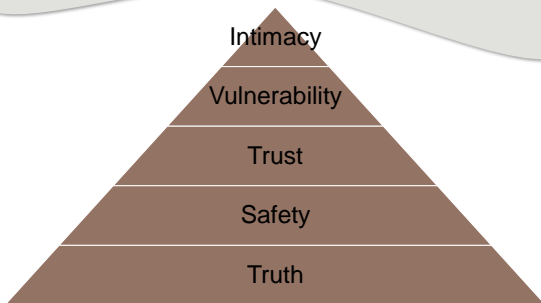
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Deep Distress

Psalm 38: 8-10 "I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart. Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee. My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me."

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Relational Injury Repair



Drake & Caudill, Full Disclosure (2019)

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Conversation for Knowing Through Hurts

Stop → Remove → Respond → Shift → Walk

Seven Conversations to Enrich Your Marriage (Relationship, 2019)

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Step 1 - Stop

Injured spouse:

- Stop attacking / avoiding and invite spouse to hear your experience.
- Share your hurt without blame and seek to risk sharing longing.
- *"I am really wanting to share with you something I have had a hard time talking about. Can you find some time for us to talk?"*

Injuring spouse:

- Decide to stop defending or justifying.
- Acknowledge you have done something to injure spouse.
- Seek to hear spouse's vulnerability - note what this evokes in you.
- *"You are important to me, and your experience is important to me. I want to hear your hurt regarding..."*

Seven Conversations to Enrich Your Marriage (InRelationship, 2019)

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Step 2 – Remove

Injured spouse:

- Remove shield, share story, hurt, and meaning made.
- Express depth of your loneliness, grief, despair you felt.
- *"The worst part of that experience for me was..."*
- *"I started to think _____ about myself and _____ about relationship."*

Injuring spouse:

- Remove shield to hear and feel spouse's pain and sadness.
- *Imagine entering spouse's world, feeling what they are feeling.*
- *Lean forward, maintain eye contact, nod, be present.*

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Step 3 - Respond

Injuring spouse:

- Respond by expressing sorrow / remorse for how your actions affected spouse, inflicted pain.
- Offer Apology.



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5 Elements of Apology

"I really let you down, didn't I? I wasn't there for you, I am so sorry, Susan. I got all overwhelmed and left you on your own. It's hard for me to admit this. I don't want to see myself as that kind of person, the kind of husband, who would let you down like this. But I did it. It makes sense you were angry. I never saw my support as that important. But I know now that I hurt you very badly. I wasn't sure what to do, so I wavered and did nothing. I want to try to make this better. If you will let me."

Created For Connection (Johnson And Sandletter, 2016)

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Step 3 – Respond

Injured spouse:

- Respond with what you need for closure and healing.
- Can you accept apology?
- *"Thanks for understanding. When my fears or doubts come up again, I need reassurance you will listen to them. You can provide this reassurance through holding me or validation that my fears make sense."*

Injuring spouse:

- Respond gently and empathetically to your spouse's need.
- *"You are important to me. I can and want to do this for you. Please remind me if I miss parts or you desire more reassurance."*

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Step 4 – Shift

Injuring spouse:

- Share your experience of injuring event and what was occurring within you in a gentle, caring manner.
- *Invite - "Would you be open to hearing my experience in this event?"*
- *If injured spouse is open - "What I felt that moment was..., which is why I responded the way I did. I see now how what I did was deeply hurtful to you. I see how this felt like I was pushing you away."*

Philippians 2:3-4 "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

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Step 4 – Shift

Injured spouse:

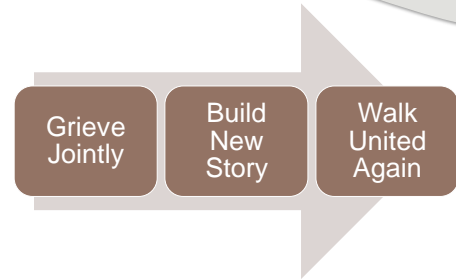
- Empathetically listen to what your spouse was experiencing when they injured you. Seek not to dismiss or reject their experience.
- Seek to enter your spouse's inner world, feel what they were feeling.
- *"I understand now how you thought/felt...in that event. It does make sense. I feel...when I hear that was your experience. Thanks for sharing with me."*

Injuring spouse – Offer apology if appropriate. Help spouse know that while there is a reason you did what you did – you still acknowledge and take responsibility for how it injured your spouse.

Seven Conversations to Enrich Your Marriage (InRelationship, 2019)

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Step 5 – Walk



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Final Thoughts

- It is not so much the absence of injuries as much as it is the ability to repair injuries when they happen.
- The goal is forgiveness **and** repair / deeper knowing.
- Conversation for knowing through hurts may happen over time.
- Take it slow, be patient, and remind each other you are in this together.

James 1:3 "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience."

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