

Helping Her Heal Her Pain





In the healing process, a husband has one of the strongest influences for healing his wife's pain. Marriage is the most significant relationship that we have, and with the right tools, you can provide the support for her healing more than anyone else.

This workbook contains tools and perspectives to help you be there for her when she needs you the most.

Introduction

UNDERSTANDING HER PAIN

Her having space to give her trauma a voice is a part of what creates freedom from it. It helps our brain to organize and process through it to describe the impact and caused damage. Your role is to develop an understanding of her pain and be there to support her, which provides the reassurance and strength that you need.

Tool #1 – The Observer

When you listen to your wife share the pain she's experienced because of the addiction, your priority is to center your attention on her. Be aware of the shame that might come up for you, but decide to take on the role of the Observer and simply notice your emotional reaction, then direct your attention back to your wife. Try to understand and empathize with how she's been impacted, and don't disagree with how she feels – just hear her. Make the focus of the conversation about understanding her and respond in a way that helps her feel heard (options for responses are in the following section).

Tool #2 – The Compassionate Response

As you listen, your body language, facial expressions and response all convey a message. Help her to feel heard and that her pain matters to you..

When she shares, focusing your attention on what she needs will help you become an influence for healing. Create your own, choose or modify one or more of the following statements and after she shares, respond to her in this way:

“I can’t imagine how hard this must be for you – not being able to trust, feeling afraid and hurt because of my actions. I’m sorry, and I can understand why you feel so hurt.”

“It’s hard for me to see you hurting because of what I’ve done. Although it wasn’t my intention to cause you this pain, that’s exactly what has happened. I’m sorry, and I’m committed to getting and implementing the tools I need to make sure this doesn’t keep happening.

“I can see how _____ (scared, hurt, etc.,) you are and I understand that it’s because of what I’ve done. It’s sad knowing that you’re in this much pain, and I want to help in any way that I can. This has got to be very difficult for you. I’m sorry.”

******The words aren’t as important as the *feeling* that is connected to them. Be present, make eye contact, and really try to put yourself in her shoes as she shares. All she needs is for you to be moved by and care for her pain. If she feels your sincerity, that’s what heals.

After she shares and you respond, what was the experience like for you? What kind of an impact did it have on her?

Tool #3 The Power Reframe

Sometimes when they share or as you're continuing down the path of healing, you will be triggered into shame or blame. It's crucial to learn how to challenge and reframe the disempowering stories or negative beliefs that you might have as a result of your own life experiences and your current relationship dynamics.

Power Reframes are an important way to separate yourself from the situation, thus challenging the shame and negative beliefs. Below is the 3 steps to the Power Reframe with an example for each:

1. Identify the observable facts of a situation.

Example – My wife got angry and yelled at me about something that happened in the past.

2. What story are you telling yourself about the situation?

What meaning are you making out of the event?

I failed her and I'll never be able to do anything right. I'll be stuck paying for this forever.

3. Challenge the story and the meaning you are making and find a different, empowering meaning to give it.

Her being angry doesn't mean I failed her – it means she is hurting, and I can learn and apply the tools to resolve this situation and support her. If I don't know the tools, I'll ask someone who does.

Take each negative belief and story that you have connected to the situation, then reframe it by changing the meaning and challenging the disempowering perception.

1. Observable facts of a situation

2. What story are you telling yourself about the situation?
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3. Challenge what you are making that mean, the story,
and find another empowering meaning to give it.

Identify some of your unproductive responses to her trauma that you find yourself doing when you're triggered or afraid?

(Example: When I'm triggered and feel shame, I minimize what she is saying so it doesn't affect me so much. I blame and try to remove responsibility from myself because I feel bad.

What other ways can you respond that will help her feel supported and you feeling empowered and grounded?

What would the best version of you do in those moments?

Example: I can notice when I'm slipping into shame and take a step back and challenge it. Then I can turn my attention and focus on her and serve her in the way that she needs. I can support her in her pain.
