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# The Five Agreements

#### Time Out

Say this out loud while making some eye contact several times with your partner:

(Say partner's name), if you say the phrase, "I need a Time Out", I will stop talking and let you leave the room. I will trust that we will talk later about the issue when you return. I trust that you will say, as you're leaving, how long before you return to the discussion. During the Time Out period I will also think of a *First Pants* statement', for me to say to you, as my first words, when we reconnect after the Time Out. This is a *no matter what* agreement for me. No matter what, I will follow my commitment to your emotional safety, and let you leave the room. I know this agreement may be the most important measuring stick for whether we can change as a couple.

(For those of you reading the phrase 'First Pants' for the first time, it's a simple three-step process to do whenever someone is upset with you. Own what your part in the problem is... connect with and acknowledge your partner's feeling, and make amends by apologizing and saying what you'll do about this in the future.)

# The Listening Exchange

Say this out loud to each other while making eye contact several times with partner:

<u>(Insert partner's name and make eye contact)</u>, If you say, "I'll listen to you if you listen to me, I will stop talking and follow the rules of the 'Listening Exchange' method. I'll know that if you say, 'Will you listen to me if I listen to you?', that I can trust that my point of view will be heard in full by you, after I listen to you. I want to see myself honoring the guidelines of the Listening Exchange. That means I will give you the floor, not interrupt you, and try to paraphrase what you've said. If I am too hurt, scared or angry to listen; then I will be honest about it and declare a Time Out, or respect your declaration of a Time Out.

I commit to the goal of wanting to understand your viewpoint and accepting your thoughts and feelings as real and valid for you. I do not have to agree with your thoughts about why you *think or feel* as you do. I want to avoid telling you that your feelings are inappropriate or saying "you shouldn't think or feel that way". I will not try to get you to understand my point of view until AFTER I've listened to you all the way through. I know that mutual understanding has to be good enough sometimes.

# **Couples Weekly Time Together**

Say this out loud to your partner. Remember to make some eye contact:

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# The Respect Agreement

Say this out loud to your partner making eye contact several times:

0 - 0 1 0 0
<u>"(Insert partner's name &amp; make eye contact)</u> , I do not want intimidation, disrespect or emotional
withdrawal to be a part of my relationship with you. I do not believe there is any justification for
disrespectful behavior, whether it's my behavior or yours. I am aware that sometimes my tone of voice can
be critical, aggressive, rejecting or filled with contempt. It makes sense for you to wonder, at these times, if
I love or care about you. Sometimes, my tone of voice or behavior comes across as if I think I'm your boss
or your parent. I will not argue with you about what I meant, or disagree with you in any way with your
feeling that my tone of voice felt disrespectful to you. Your word is final about whether you feel I am being
harsh or that you don't feel respected. You and I will each choose the phrase that we can each use from this
list. "That felt harsh." or "That felt disrespectful." "That felt mean." Or "Ouch." >
<u>•</u>

My phrase is .		1/11/	partner's	nhraca ic		
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If you say, <insert chosen phrase of your partner) I will stop do one of these five things:

- 1. I might simply apologize and hope that we can just move forward.
- 2. I could do a First Pants & Socks statement. (I will take **responsibility** for my behavior, show empathy for your thoughts & feelings, and make an action/amends statement. R-E-**A** Responsibility-Empathy-Action.)
- 3. I may do the First Pants statement and then try to say my point more respectfully using the Empathy Request.
- 4. I might say, "I'll listen to you if you listen to me." for a Listening Exchange.
- 5. I may take a Time Out.

# **Integrity Agreement**

The Fifth Agreement- Say out\_loud to your partner, periodically making some eye contact:

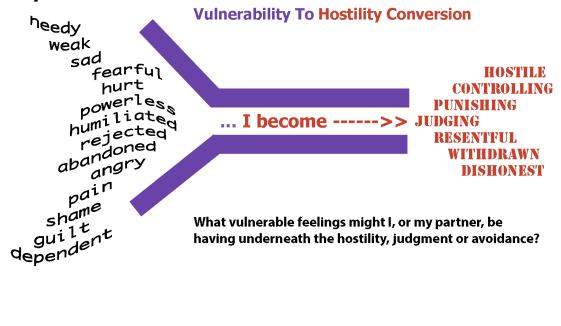
(Insert partner's name & make eye contact)\_\_\_, I am seeking progress and not perfection. If I cannot reasonably keep the other four agreements, then I want to see myself recognizing that I must be *'out of my* own control.' After all, I said I would follow my agreements with you. It is O.K. if you ask me to consider seeking help. I will consider your input. If I cannot do what I say, then I want to see myself seeking further professional help. This means that I want to see myself setting up professional appointments to:

- a) Seek out a licensed therapist with experience in anger management; or the problems I may have. If I have symptoms of depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder from childhood abuse or neglect, alcoholism/drug dependence or other behavioral addictions; then I want to see myself getting help for it by attending the appropriate self-help program.
- *Or* b) Go to a psychiatrist for a medication consultation.
- *Or* c) I'll find an anger management or violence group.



# When I cannot say I feel:

Frustrating relationships get better...





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Translating harsh, rejecting or withdrawing attitudes is difficult to do while the harsh energies are present. It can be done however! If you can't see the vulnerable feelings underneath the hostile/withdrawing attitudes of your partner, then take a time out and think for a moment. What's going on in my partner's life at this moment.... today... or this week... or this month. Connect with one of the vulnerable feelings on the left side of the Vulnerability To Hostility Conversion graphic, and speak to that vulnerable feeling tenderly. You may find that you are now the magician/therapist who helps your partner really let go of some painful stuff. If your partner feels alone or unsafe to talk about the vulnerable feelings, then the defensive hostile, rejecting and withdrawing attitude remains.

Please remember that you can do a Vulnerability To Hostility translation for YOUR harsh or rejecting behaviors. Often after an incident. If you connect to a vulnerable feeling, that was fueling a withdrawn or harsh attitude from you. If you can speak about the vulnerable feeling being masked by your irritability or withdrawal, your partner may come to understand, accept or forgive more quickly.

Many couples eventually get to the vulnerable feelings, but for at least one partner is just getting tired of all the trouble it takes to get there. Stating the vulnerable feeling is not an excuse or justification. It is simply a better understanding of the source of disturbance.

The Couples Exercise below is how we start off the Weekend Workshop.

### I Play A Role In Our Conflicts- Each Partner Fills Out Their Own Sheet

Check any of the following statements that could apply to you.

would make you feel as if I'm <i>totally</i> blaming you. I've made a mistake.	I want to learn to tell you more quickly, when I know
	rith you sometimes. I know that makes you think that I be to tell you what to do. That's not right, and I want to

I am aware that you have rarely heard me say, "I made a mistake." It would make sense that that

\_\_\_ I sometimes use emotional withdrawal or stone-walling as a way of punishing you and staying in control. It can be a way I keep power over you, even as you may seek to reconnect with me. It can also be my safe place. I see that it frustrates you. In the future, I want to see myself communicating more openly



with you, even when I'm angry. For instance, I may tell you I'm upset and don't want to talk with you now, but that I will talk with you in an hour.

I have difficulty saying that I might have done something that hurt you, saying that I'm aware that what I did, or did not do, has hurt you. I know that makes you think that I don't care about you, or that I'm
not accountable for my behavior. I want to see myself being more sensitive to how I may have hurt you in the future.
I have difficulty getting away from the idea that one of us is right, and that the other therefore is wrong I am self-centered when I do this. I can see how my attitude makes our conflicts worse. I understand that you might think that I think that I won't leave any room for your experience. I want to improve my ability to simply empathize with you. I want to stop judging what or who is right and wrong.
I have trouble seeing that your feelings are legitimate and that they make sense to you. When I cannot understand them I sometimes make you justify them, which I know makes you think that I think your feelings are crazy or stupid. I want to get better at accepting how you experience problems, without trying to invalidate your feelings by making you defend your thoughts and feelings.
I have betrayed your trust in the past. It makes sense for you to think I could do that again and for you to feel those feelings again at even small reminders of my dishonesty or inconsiderateness. I can understand how you might think it's extremely difficult to trust me again and for you to feel hopeless sometimes about letting your guard down. In the future I will do my best to not react badly when you have those feelings of being reminded. I will show that I can accept them by simply listening and by not trying to get you to change or let go of the feelings as
you are expressing them. My way of honoring, respecting and listening to you is my 'living amends' to you. I hope sometime in the future that you can forgive me.
I am aware that sometimes the tone of my voice sounds harsh and rejecting. I can see that it would be hard for you not to defend yourself when I speak that way. I know that makes you think that I have contempt or disrespect for you. Or, that I don't care about you. I want to work on speaking more respectfully to you. I am open to you saying, "Ouch!", "That felt harsh.", "That felt disrespectful.", or "That hurt." I want to learn to not argue with you about whether you experienced me as disrespectful. I will try to see what's true about it… even, if it is just that you felt it.
I become fearful and don't talk about it with you. I end up showing that I am angry, hurt or I withdraw from you. I can see how that would be confusing and frustrating for you. It makes sense for you to feel unnecessarily blamed when I later reveal that it's really something else that has me upset. I want to get better at talking with you about what I'm anxious about.
I can be insensitive to your feelings sometimes, and I've rarely admitted that I'm aware of how hurtful that can be for you. I want to see myself being more sensitive to how things affect you. I want to see myself being able to listen to you and I want to be able to accept it if you tell me that I have been insensitive.

to you.



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\_\_\_ Sometimes I know I can be selfish or insensitive and I rarely admit that I'm aware of how hurtful that can be for you. In the past, when you try to talk about feeling left I don't take you seriously. I want to make it safe for you to talk to me about this when I act that way. In the future I want to see myself making

it O.K. for you to say to me, "That felt insensitive or disrespectful." I'm going to try to take your feelings of being hurt more seriously. The way I will try to do that is to not argue with you when you talk about feeling hurt, scared or frustrated with me.

Another type of deception is not talking about how I feel. I know I withdraw emotionally from you. Even though I have my reasons, I do know that frustrates and hurts you. It also encourages you to pursue me more strongly. I may be hurt, disappointed or angry and I often do not tell you how I feel as I feel it. That makes you feel confused and unconnected to me. I want to improve generally in my willingness to communicate more about what's going on in my life, particularly how I'm feeling. I want to get better at not withdrawing from you.

When both of you are finished writing turn to your partner and read it, or say it in your own words. Alternate, by taking turns saying what you've checked for yourself. One partner reads from the first to the last checked item. The other reads their checked items from the last one backwards to their first one checked. Try to make eye contact while speaking. In the next chapter, you will see that each of the statements above is a *'First Pants & Socks'* statement.

### OWN IT -> CONNECT WITH OTHER -> ACTION/AMENDS

After this exercise, talk with your partner about your experience of doing it.

Did you notice any thoughts, feelings or body sensations while speaking or listening?

What did it make you think about yourself as you were **speaking** in this exercise?

What did it make you think of your partner as you **listened** to him, or her, speaking?

Is there some way you might see yourself using insights from this exercise that changes the way you could experience yourself, or your partner?

Is there power that comes from Own-> Connect-> Action?

Talk with each other about what you may have learned about yourself in this exercise.



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## Round Up "My Usual Suspects"

Use this card whenever you notice your partner is upset with you. You may think you've not done anything to upset your partner, but if you look at this card, you will find 'my part in this problem' about 80% of the time.

You know you have upset your partner when you hear that loud, parental, edgy tone of voice' or see that 'angry face'; or when you are on the receiving end of the 'silent treatment.' You can develop a reflex so quick, that the moment you your partner's irritation you are automatically already saying, "That's right I ...", or "You're right I ... ' or "Yes, I \_\_\_\_ ." This eliminates defensiveness. Sweeping your side of the street first earns you the right to explain, defend or get your partner to try to see your point of view.

Then, you fill in the blank with one of the following numbered lines. Then, match the statement number with the same number in the right column. Finally, make your socks statement by matching the number again from the list of Socks (action/amends) Statements.

#### What IS TRUE About What YOU Did?

#### **OWN**

What I did that is my part in this conflict. (Right pant leg)	
Each of these statements may begin with one of these phrases	s:
That's right I, or, "You're right, I" "Yes, I	

Then, fill in the space with one of the statements below:

- 1 was harsh or mean when I said, or did,
- 2 was selfish or inconsiderate when I said, or did
- 3- talked to you like I was your parent or your boss.
- 4 didn't include you or get your input on a decision I made.
- 5 was irresponsible when I did, or said,
- 6 raised my voice. Or, I yelled at you.
- 7 was intimidating or hostile when I
- 8 didn't do what I said I would do when I said
- 9 did it again. And, we've talked about this in the past.
- 10 interrupted you. I didn't let you finish your thoughts.
- 12 was defensive when you tried to tell me how you felt.
- 13 avoided or distracted from the issue you brought up.
- 14- minimized, denied, rationalized or justified my behavior.
- 15 made fun of your feelings or dismissed how you felt.
- 16 said I was ending the relationship again (Abandoning Language)
- 18 was mostly negative in the way I see you.
- 19 punished you for just expressing your needs or feelings.
- 20 withdrew emotionally from you. (Silent treatment.)
- 21 was aggressive when I was really feeling vulnerable.
- 22 was dishonest about \_\_\_\_\_ (including my feelings).
- 23 blamed you when I was mostly at fault.
- 24 tried to make you feel bad, when I was feeling threatened.

# What could that make my partner think or feel? (Left Pant leg) "It makes sense you would think or feel \_\_\_\_

**CONNECT WITH PARTNER** 

- 1 I didn't care about you in that moment.
- 2 I wanted to hurt you at that time.
- 3 powerless, scared or hurt.
- 4 sad, bad or mad.
- 5 I don't mean what I say, or do what I say.
- 6 I didn't respect you then.
- 7 that I think you are totally at fault for the problem.
- 8 that you can't trust me.
- 9 that I don't care about your experience of that situation.
- 10- that I think I am like your boss, or your parent.
- 11- that I think that I'm better than you.
- 12- that I care more about my pride than about how you feel.
- 13- that I'm not committed to you in this relationship.
- 14- that you can't disagree with me.
- 15- that you can't express your thoughts or feelings with me.
- 16- that I'm self-centered and inconsiderate.

#### ACTION/AMENDS

What I'm gong to do about this. (Socks= Action/Amends) The Socks (Action/Amends) statement often begins with

"I'm sorry. In the future \_\_\_\_\_. ."

- 1 I'll work on my problem of \_\_\_
- 2 I'll be mindful of that.
- 3 I'll keep that in mind.
- 4 I'll mean, and do what I say in the future.
- 5 I'll show you more respect in the future by
- 6 I'm not going to do that again.
- 7 I'll be more honest in the future.
- 8 I'll try to express myself more directly in the future.
- 9 I'll try to tell you when I feel hurt or vulnerable in the future.
- 10- I'll be more responsible in the future.
- 11- I'll call that therapist, psychiatrist or anger management group.

#### Own, Connect and Act

Own what you did, or said. Take responsibility for what is true.

#### CONNECT

Empathize with what your partner might think or feel because of what you did or said. Are they hurt, sad, scared or feeling unimportant? Then say it out loud.

#### **ACTION/AMENDS**

Say you're sorry and what you'll do now, or in the future to make up for what you did. Show you take this seriously and that you are making amends or working to change your behavior.





CONNECT



**ACTION/AMENDS** 



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# The following is a sample from Marc's RealHope For Couples Course Copyrighted © Marc Sadoff 2014

# Catching Yourself- Getting That 'Two Second Window To Think Knowing When YOU Need a Time Out

Focusing on yourself, circle the thoughts, feelings, behaviors and sensations you experience just before losing control:

I Start Thinking:	S/he's <i>trying</i> to make me mad.	My P.O.V. doesn't matter.	I don't care what you think.	
	Cha lun arusa harus	Disorientation.	Thinking only about how wrong	
	She knows how to push my buttons.	I can't think!	the other is.	
I know I'm wrong but I keep	Let me out of here.	He's not leaving this room until I finish!		
	defending.	I'm out of control!	Var afraid of locating the magnet	
	This is outrageously unfair!	She's so out of control!	I'm afraid of leaving the room. I won't stand for this!	
	S/he's just not going	S/he's just not	This isn't like me to act this way.	
	to get it.	listening.	S/he doesn't care at all about me	
S/	S/he's just crazy!	S/he is just mean!	or just wants to hurt me.	
	Thinking I know what will hurt him/her.	Thinking 'Here we go	Visualizing attacking the other.	
It doesn't matter what I say.		again!'	Picking a target.	
I Start Feeling:	Emotional and physical numbness.	Guilt or shame that I've hurt him or her.	Fear. Rage. Confusion. Cornered feelings	
	I am afraid of you.	Feeling innocently crucified.	Powerlessness	
	Command of surbat years on	,	Hopeless frustration.	
	Scared of what you, or other, may do next.	An INJUSTICE has	I'm a victim.	
Feeli	Feeling misunderstood or	occurred!	Illusion of power.	
	simply confused.			
I Get Sensations of:	Feeling a tight chest.	Tunnel vision.	Closed fists. Sweating.	
	Dry mouth.	Flushed cheeks	Headaches. Nausea.	
	I get a rush of adrenaline.	Nearing an explosion.	Rigidity. I stop breathing.	
	Heart rate goes up	Stomach gets tight.	I start breathing faster.	
	Electricity is running up or down my body	Electricity up my torso	I stop breathing. I breathe slower	



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Start Behaving:	Cursing	Pounding tables, doors	Threatening
	Trembling	or walls	Mocking
	Angry insults.	Rolling my eyes	Hostile name-calling
	Interrupting. Using	Screaming	Getting in her face
	abandoning language	Eye Twitching	Throwing things
	Saying 'Shut up!'	Saying something	Pacing
	Pointing my finger	I don't really mean!	

Of Rules Where is the line that you will draw about what behavior of yours is inexcusable and unacceptable to **YOU**? What's your limit regarding your own behavior? When would you want to see yourself stopping an unproductive argument? Can you see yourself being the one who says, "This is unproductive. I need a Time Out. I'll be back in an hour."? What shows more control? Blowing your stack? Or, taking a Time Out? Or doing what you usually do? What is it that you do not want to see yourself doing? And what's your limit about the other's behavior? While it's easy to predict that the trouble in using Time Outs is in getting the other person to respect it. To honor their word, and to let the other leave the room. But, in my experience, it's really hard to get the person who is scared or typically feels abused to call out the Time Out phrase. So at what point will you say, "I need a Time Out, I'll be back in an hour." And then leave the room yourself.

# My cues that I am starting to lose control are:

start thinking
start feeling
My body cues (sensations) are
[ start behaving (or saying)

**Find The Two Second Window Of Time To Think** before you speak. In this Two Second period of time that you delay speaking, you can ask yourself any of several possible questions.

#### Questions like:

My Book

1. What will be the likely response of the person?



- 2. What has happened in the past when I say or do these things I'm thinking about?
- 3. Is it possible I am about to say something I will have to take back?
- 4. Is it possible that what I am about to say will be difficult, or impossible, to take back?
- 5. Do I want to say what I am thinking about saying? ie. It's over! You're pathetic! crazy etc.
- 6. Is there some other way of looking at this? Will I be trying to take back these words?
- 7. WWJD? This could mean 'What would Jesus Do?' But, it could also mean, 'What would John do?' Where John (or Jane) is your mentor, your mother, your father, or someone you respect that you can picture yourself wanting to model your behavior after.
- 8. Do I want to go to jail?
- 9. Do I want to get divorced? Do I want to be a part time father/mother?
- 10. Imagine if your father, your mother, your best friend, your boss, your children or your God were to see and hear EXACTLY what you were about to say or do?
- 11. Apply the 'Golden Rule'- Would I be O.K. with my partner saying or doing the same thing I'm thinking about saying or doing?
- 12. Ask the 3 simple questions that make up the First Pants Then Shoes method:
  - a) How did I contribute to this problem?
  - b) How could it make sense that s/he could feel hurt, angry, scared.... that I \_\_\_\_\_? You may also simply observe signs and acknowledge those feelings, even if you do not know why your partner feels that way.
  - c) Do I regret what I did or said... and What am I going to do about it?
- 13. Will there be any possible bad consequences on my child(ren) if I say what I want?

Write down the one thought or image that has the most power to make you stop acting in a harsh manner? Add more thoughts and images or people to model after that you think might help you stop and take a Time Out when you start getting escalated in your hostile energy.

This is a short version of an exercise from the RealHope For Couples Program at http://shop.realhope.com/Download-BOTH-the-pdf-eBook-AND-Podcast-Combo01.htm

and http://www.RealHope.com/free\_tips/

If you think that you can benefit from some of the agreements and skills Marc has several options of learning these methods more firmly.

There is the Los Angeles RealHope Couples Weekend Seminar athttp://realhope.com/los-angeles-marriage-relationship-seminar-workshop/



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Or, some telephone or Skype sessions with Marc personally to coach you through learning the agreements and skills while working especially on issues that relate to your specific couple needs. Skype or Phone Sessions with Marc go here-

http://shop.realhope.com/Phone-Consultation-One-Hour-PhoneConsult-One-Hour.htm