1. EXERCISE: THEN AND NOW

Adapted from “[Making Marriage Simple](http://makingmarriagesimple.com/)” by Harville Hendrix & Helen laKelly Hunt

1. Create a set date night or date day once or twice a week (for example, Tuesday evening and/ or Saturday afternoon). Choose a truth and do the exercise connected with that truth during this scheduled time together.

\*Note: We recommend continuing to do the exercises Ritual of Appreciations and Train Your Brain throughout the exercise program (and even the remainder of your relationship!).

2. Retreat time! Plan a trip to a fun location or take a break in your own home. Create a schedule in advance for working on the exercises together.

KNOWLEDGE IS NOT ENOUGH

The act of building a Partnership Marriage is deeply empowering. Ultimately, it all comes down to you. Through the building of a healthy relationship, you and your partner have the power to create the marriage of your dreams. Engaging in this work enables you to rewire your brain, so that you’re primed to enjoy even more of the amazing stuff your marriage and your life have to offer.

As you continue this work, there will be days— and even weeks at a time— when you’ll feel on top of the world, as if you’ve got this whole Partnership Marriage down pat. Then there will be those moments when all you want to do is throw in the towel. This is absolutely normal. Please, don’t despair when frustrations surface. Instead, be gentle with yourself. You are stretching into new territory, and your brain is pressing the Reset button, trying to make you go back to the old way of doing things. Take some time off, have fun with each other, then start up the program again.

Knowledge may be power. But it isn’t enough. We learned the hard way that insight alone only goes so far. It is by **committing to practicing the tools every day** that the real shifts begin to happen. And it is the cumulative impact of these shifts that leads to deep connection. If you’re like just about every other couple, you’ll probably have different levels of commitment (and enthusiasm) about going through the exercises. Generally this means Turtles (who are less inclined to follow directions) may need to stretch a bit. And Hailstorms (who tend to get overzealous about diving in and getting things done) may need to contain themselves just a tad.

**Truth #1: Romantic Love Is a Trick**

Your hormones during the Romantic Love stage, conspiring with your unconscious, caused you to fall in love with someone whose behaviors will trigger your early childhood wounds. Now, as an adult— in a committed partnership and using the tools you’ll be learning— you have the opportunity to create a different, happier outcome. Nothing has gone wrong. Romantic Love is just the first stage of couplehood. It’s supposed to fade.

The first step is seeing the similarity between your partner and your parents/carers. You might not get this right away. Remember, it isn’t that your partner will look or necessarily even act like your parents. It’s that you will feel the same way with your partner that you felt with your parents .Exploring this connection between past and present helps replace blame with curiosity and understanding, and creates the foundation of your present work with each other.

1. Write down the frustrations you remember that you had with your childhood caregivers and how you felt. The frustrations can be a specific event or a general experience. Caregivers include whoever was responsible for your care when you were a child, for example, a parent, older sibling, relative, or babysitter.

 2. List the ongoing frustrations you have with your partner and how these make you feel. List as many as you can— including both petty annoyances and those things that really irritate you.

3. Look over the two lists, noting any similarities.

FRUSTRATIONS THEN & NOW

My Childhood Frustrations Feeling( s)

* When my father criticized me all the time (general) Not good enough.
* When my older brother forgot my birthday (specific) Angry/ unimportant.

My Frustrations with My Partner Feeling( s)

* When you complain that the house is messy and disorganized (general) Not good enough.
* When I made a special meal for us last Friday and you played

computer games for two hours (specific) Angry/ unimportant.

Talk over the similarities between the two lists with your partner. As you share, you’ll notice the curiosity growing between you. Be curious instead of furious. It’s hard to feel curious and frustrated at the same time. You will learn tools to practice how to turn the more challenging frustrations you have with your partner into specific requests for growth and healing.

**Remember: Ninety percent of our frustrations with our partner come from experiences from our past. That means only 10 percent of the frustrations you currently have are about each other.**