



The past two weeks have probably been rough! We certainly applaud your efforts to do the hard work of looking back in order to move forward. You're doing great! Don't give up because it's going to start getting better this week. We are finally starting onto the **Connect Cycle**!

For some of you, you have been doing this same disconnect dance for a while. It is a chronic and rigid Cycle that takes effort, awareness, and continual motivation to break, while also working to create a different Cycle - one that connects you and leads to much more intimacy. It will require much patience and grace with one another. It will be necessary for you to humbly call on God to do the impossible in you. For what reason? So God gets the praise.

ACTION STEPS WEEK FOUR (do this Homework together):

STEP ONE:

Download the "Catch" graphic.

- Store it on your phone.
- Make it your screensaver picture.
- Print it and put it on your refrigerator and bathroom mirror.

You get the idea... You will want to be able to reference this until you have done this over and over and have become very comfortable knowing these steps as your natural tendency.

STEP TWO:

Read Together:

There are at least eight options of how one can demonstrate these attributes in the way they **CATCH** their partner in this moment. This week will review the first seven.

1 - VALIDATE: Telling your partner what makes sense to them from what they were telling themselves is validation. What about their story can you agree with? Words like: "it makes sense to me that..." and "I can understand where..." are appropriate here.

2 - EMPATHIC RESPONSE: Communicating to your partner that you understand the primary emotion they are feeling because you have felt this before. If they haven't actually given you a primary emotion, you can ask them how they may have felt at that moment. Better yet, as you drop yourself in the same scenario, you may even be able to insert for yourself the emotion and ask them if this is right, such as "Did you feel hurt?" The empathic response would look like this: "It must feel terrible to be hurt like that especially from me." Or, "When you hurt, it can feel like I'm against you." Don't underestimate these first two powerful steps. Once your partner knows that you "get it," the de-escalation can happen quickly.

3 - SOFT TOUCH: If your partner will allow it, you may want to gently reach for their hand or lightly touch their shoulder, arm, or leg. This may take some time before your partner will receive a physical act of comfort. If you are a partner that hasn't gotten comfortable with allowing physical comfort from your partner, you may want to chop down a few trees at first and try it.

ACTION STEPS WEEK FOUR (continued):

4 - CURIOUS QUESTION: If you need more information in order to understand the situation, ask a curious question. Remember, a curious question is supposed to have the motive of trying to understand, not be understood yourself. The CATCH is about your partner first.

5 - SAFE SPACE TO SHARE STORY: You may want to ask your partner if there is anything else they want to say to make them feel that they got it all out. This is especially important if they seem to not have de-escalated yet. You would continue to do steps 1-3 through this process each time.

6 - REPAIR: What part of this do you need to own? Apologize for this by naming what your offense is.
"I'm sorry that I hurt you by _____"

7 - REASSURE: Stating what you will do differently in the future is important. Sometimes, you will have to problem-solve this out before coming to an agreement on how this may need to look.

We will address number 8 in a future module.

STEP THREE:

Since understanding a "Soft Protest" and "Primary Emotion" is so elemental to the success of the Connect Cycle we are building, we're going to do an exercise to help us understand our partners a bit better.

HERE ARE THE GENERAL RULES:

1. All questions should be answered in reference to the relationship only.
2. Each person takes a turn with each sentence prompt.
3. Sit in a comfortable place facing one another.
4. When your partner is answering, no comments, feedback, or questions are allowed. Total silence, please.
5. No discussion of their answers now or later (for now anyway).

I feel loved when you

I feel appreciated when you

I am happiest when

I am saddest when

I am angriest when

In our marriage, I would like more

In our marriage, I would like less

I feel awkward when

I feel excited when

I feel close to you when

ACTION STEPS WEEK FOUR (continued):

- I feel distant from you when
- I am most afraid when
- The greatest concern I have about our marriage is
- A hurt in our marriage is/was
- A regret I have is
- I owe you amends (action of change) for
- What I like most about myself in our relationship is
- What I dislike most about myself in our relationship is
- The feelings I have difficulty sharing with you are feelings of
- The feelings I share most easily with you are feelings of
- Our marriage could be improved if I
- The most immediate thing that needs attention in our marriage is
- The best thing about our marriage is (can't be the children)

STEP FOUR:

Each of you answer these questions after the above exercise:

1. Were there any new things learned about your partner? If not new, then a reminder? If so, what?
2. Were there any themes or patterns, same answers said in a few different ways?
3. What was this experience like for you? How did you perceive your partner's experience?
4. How did it feel to know that your partner was not supposed to say anything in response to your answers?
5. Likewise, what was it like for you to withhold any comments to your partner's answers?
6. Did you feel any visceral responses ("Amy" activation- sucker-punches, etc.) at any time during the exercise? If so, during which question in particular? How do you make sense of this?

STEP FIVE:

End your time praying together for healing of these emotional triggers and for God to give you greater unity as you work together as co-regulators in your marriage.

REMINDER: Continue your mindset exercise from Module 1 every day to help shift your perspective!