

MARRIAGE EXERCISE #12 - CONFIDENCE

MAKING YOURSELF SAFE

Rationale

By her nature, your wife wrestles with fear. Most specifically, fear of being cut off or disconnected from those she loves. We men often violate confidences our wives assume for us. We say things 'out of school' that embarrass her, that divulge things about her she doesn't want told, and sometimes, we dismiss or trivialize things she tells us that are really important to her. As a result, we're not *safe* to her. Not safe enough to share her innermost thoughts, hopes, dreams, and fears.

Challenge Assignment

This month's assignment is going to require a lot of courage . . . and some thick skin on your part.

Wait until a time when you and your wife can have a quiet conversation without the kids or other distractions. When the time is right, here's the question you're to ask . . .

"Honey, I want you and I to be best friends forever. But I know we can't be best friends unless I'm *safe* for you. Am I safe? Can you trust me with you? Where do I fail and let you down?"

Listen carefully to her answer. Don't let her off the hook with a superficial answer. This will be as hard for her to answer as it is for you to ask, because she doesn't want to hurt your feelings. And if you're not really safe for her, it's likely because you react badly when she says things you don't want to hear.

Don't argue. Whatever she says, write it down *word for word*. You can ask clarifying questions, but don't argue or push back. Perception isn't always reality, but it's functional reality. If she perceives you a certain way, that's the 'you' she's going to respond to. Just capture her perceptions. Make no promises to change, or do better, nothing like that. Just thank her for being honest with you.

Bring your notes to the next group and be ready to share what she told you with the group. What can you do to win her confidence? Be practical here. Don't try to solve the problem . . . set goals instead. Together with the group, you can craft a plan to

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become safe to your wife over time. And that will make a huge difference in your friendship and your marriage.

Debrief

Can our wives tell us something really, really personal to her . . . and know we won't laugh . . . or try to fix her? That we'll understand and have empathy for her?

Share with the group how your wife responded to the question "Am I safe?" Share what you learned and what you plan to do to become safer for your wife. Then encourage each man to share the specifics of what he'd done to lose his wife's trust and how they plan to become safer and more trustworthy for their wife's heart.