

Distress – Understanding Me

A template for deeply understanding our distress for a more productive discussion.

1. Name Your Current Distress:

The incident/disagreement/issue that is upsetting me is:

It is making me feel:

2. Understanding the Core Issue Underneath Your Distress

a. Closeness:

Do we have a difference in

1. Ideas about **what** closeness should or shouldn't include? In what way?
2. Ideas about **who** closeness should and shouldn't include? In what way?
3. The **pace** at which we each expect to get close?
4. What constitutes being close (how we each feel we have to be with each other in order to feel close)? In what way?

Explain: _____

b. Assumptions:

Is an assumption at the root of your distress? If so, which one?

1. If my spouse really cares about me s/he will know what I want, (without me having to say), and will give it to me.
2. If I have to ask for what I need/want, even if it's given, it's not a real demonstration of care, and therefore it's inferior. (I won't be able to feel good about what they do.)
3. If I tell you what I need, expect or hope for, you, as my spouse will want to give it to me. You'll think, and see things like I do.
4. Marriage means getting all my needs met.
5. I'll still be able to have all the good things I had in my life while I was single.
6. The things that have made sense to me (to do) in the past, will make sense to my spouse too. You'll see things and think like I do.

7. The pain I experienced in the past (from family, friends, in school, etc.) will be behind me. Married life will heal it.
8. Good couples don't argue.

Which number applies here (if any)? Explain how it applies to your first answer of the tool:

c. Expectations:

Is your distress related to expectation you had?

- Roles/Chores
 - Finances
 - Work/career
 - Relationship with parents/family
 - Parenting
 - Family style
 - How to spend free time
 - Yiddishkeit
 - Intimacy
 - Family culture, values, rituals, goals
 - How I am Treated/How I treat my spouse
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I'm upset because I expected _____ and now I see that _____

Or we share an expectation but I expected my spouse to _____ because _____.

d. Decisions:

Are you upset about a particular decision or the decision-making process? Explain:

The decision I'm upset about is: _____

Whose decision do you think this was supposed to be?

Is that who made the decision? _____ If not, who made it? _____

Finish the following sentence(s):

I'm upset about the decision regarding: _____

This is because:

I thought the decision making belonged to _____ and that's not who/how things were decided. What happened was

OR

I agree that the decision was made by the appropriate person/in the appropriate way. I'm having difficulty because:

3.Scanning for Hidden Distresses:

What about the past situation makes this current issue or circumstances important or distressing? Ask yourself the following questions:

- Another time in my life that I have felt this way was: _____
- Another time in my life this type of incident happened (struggle around closeness with someone, an expectation not met or assumption that was met with disappointment, decision making conflict) is:

- Another person or situation in my life that has made me feel this way was:

- If I look at the current situation and the past one, they seem similar in the following ways:

I think that the past situation/person is responsible for _____ of how upset I am. Circle one:

- A) A lot B) some C) not much

Conclusions and Moving Forward

Now that I understand what's going on, I think what would be helpful for me to do is:

- A) Speaker-Listener-Curious Questioner tool (Unit 4)
- B) We-Statement tool
- C) Creating a Compromise tool
- D) Do nothing