

Rachel's Ouch Technique

This technique is designed to take care of small hurts as they occur instead of letting small hurts build to larger ones where the end result is an explosion.

The idea is this: when you experience your partner in a hurtful way, you say "ouch," or a word agreed upon ahead of time. When your partner says "ouch," the person who created the ouch will stop and consider the following:

1. Is what you said really a disguised, sideways (indirect) anger or frustration? If it sideways anger, can you apologize for it? Then you can let your partner know, in an adult and responsible way, what your real anger is related to.

2. If you didn't have any sideways anger, and you accidentally sent something that felt hurtful even though that wasn't your intention, you can apologize for "tripping" your partner.

Tripping: Picture yourself in a schoolyard when you were 8. Someone runs by and because you are sitting with your legs straight out, they accidentally trip over your legs and fall. You would apologize for tripping them even though you didn't intend to. So, tripping in a relationship is when you accidentally trip up your partner without intending to.

Sideways/Indirect anger: Virtually anytime you don't say "I feel angry/frustrated because..." you are probably sending "sideways" anger. It can look like sarcasm, short temperedness, withdrawing or withholding, passive aggressive behavior or shutting down. Many times we are not

aware that we have this anger, and so we end up sending "sideways" anger. It can be very helpful to recognize and examine our own ways of sending indirect or sideways anger so that we can acknowledge it when it is happening and be more direct in the future.

This technique is designed to be short and easy and to dissipate anger that can come out later in larger and more damaging ways.

Remember: If you are the one who got "ouched" and your partner is unclear of what they may have done, your goal is to help them acknowledge their "ouch", not to punish them for it. So, try to be clear and contain your reactivity when sharing what the perceived hurt was. This gives the "Oucher" a chance to really look at their own motivation without just being reactive to you.

Good luck!!

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