

Coaching Tip: How to Develop More Emotional Intimacy in Your Relationships

Welcome to my coaching tip of the week on how to develop more emotional intimacy in your relationships.

One of my favorite exercises that I use with clients who have the desire to increase their satisfaction in their current intimate relationships is the “How to Get What You Want” tool. It’s actually an assignment I give to my clients to help them gain clarity about what they genuinely want or want more of, whether it’s with their current partner or with a future partner. When we are dissatisfied in our intimate relationships, we easily and often unconsciously point our finger at the other person, aka as the blame game. We say, “if only this person would behave differently, then I would feel better.” We might say, “if only he/she weren’t so cheap” or “if only he or she were more positive, then I would be at peace or I would be happy.” We do the same when we say, “I wish he were more affectionate, then I’d feel safe.” There is no greater entrapment than that because not only can you not control them, no matter how powerful your armies, but it contradicts your very reason for being your Essential Self.

My mentor, Brooke Castillo, would say we have an operating manual for how people should behave which is simply a dead-end path because it puts the other person in charge of your emotional life. So, if you have a client who either complains about their significant other or complains that they need a significant other to have the feelings they associate with intimacy (love, peace, freedom, closeness, security) this is a great tool.

In order for my clients to get in touch with what they want in their primary relationship, I will ask them to complete the following sentences:

I wish my partner were (more/less) _____

If only my partner was (more/less) _____

My partner should be (more/less) _____

My partner ought to be (more/less) _____

If I could wave a magic wand, I would want my partner to be (more/less)

After your client completes these sentences, ask her/him to circle back to each, cross out “my partner” and rewrite the sentence with “I could be,” leaving only the adjective. For example:

~~I wish my partner were~~ more romantic
I could be more romantic

~~I wish my partner were~~ less abrasive
I could be less abrasive

Ask them to consider what it would mean if they had more or less of these elements in their partnership.

For example:

What do you imagine you might feel if you expressed more romance either with your partner or yourself?

How do you imagine you might feel if you were less abrasive with your partner, with others or with yourself?

How might your relationship be different than it is today if you expressed your romance more often? If you were less abrasive?

Then ask your client to find 3-5 ways they could express more of those traits.

Example:

How can you be more romantic (with yourself or your partner)?

1. Buy myself flowers once a week
- 2.
- 3.

How can you be less abrasive (with your partner, yourself or others)?

1. Refrain from criticizing my partner when he/she doesn't give me what I want
- 2.
- 3.

Last, turtle step these actions. Ask your client to identify which of the elements they're craving the most. Ask if they would be willing to commit to taking one action step before your next session. So, it might be that they buy flowers for themselves or perhaps they show compassion to their partner and ask for what they need rather than expecting him/her to read their mind.

We all have heard the old adage that it takes two people to change a relationship but I believe that in many cases, it only takes one – you. When clients step up the authority in in the domain that's least satisfying or where they're complaining most, it not only gives them the confidence to take action in the other aspects of their life, but it also takes the burden off the relationship. In other words, when their partner sees that they're giving themselves what they want or taking the initiative to nourish the relationship without expectation, the pressure is no longer there which allows for greater intimacy and freedom.

Thank you for listening/reading my coaching tip of the week. Per usual, I'd love to hear how these tips are working for you and your clients. Please drop me a line and let me know at Jackie@jackiegartman.com.

See you in two weeks!

Jackie