

Audio Track 2: Uncovering Your Survival Strategies and How They Impact Your Partner

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Try this: Uncovering your survival strategies and how it impacts your partner.

Take a moment to think of a time when you were having a disagreement with your partner. Not the worst disagreement you ever had. Something in the mild to moderate range. And then remember, if you can, how the problem started. Replaying the situation in your mind step by step, as if you were replaying a video of the incident on slow motion. And use the pause button to remember the feelings you were having and identify which strategies you used. Each of these defense strategies has a particular feel to it. You might pause for a moment and see what happens in your body as you remember being in each of these states. Notice what it feels like in your body when you're in flight mode. Or fight mode. Or freeze mode. This will help you recognize when you're in each mode in the future.

And as you identify these survival strategies, see if you can drop underneath the defensive strategies now and feel into what softer, more vulnerable feeling lies below them. What were you really trying to protect yourself from? Were you fighting off feeling like a bad person? Shame? Feeling unlovable? Feeling lonely? Feeling unseen? See what it is for you. And then consider, is this a familiar feeling?

Now imagine you had a friend who was feeling this way. What would you say to your friend? If you can, try offering yourself the same message, perhaps something like, "I'm here for you" or, "I see you" or, "You matter to me and I'll be there for you." See what it is for you and offer yourself your own kindness. If you can, you might also receive your own kind words. Let them in. And then you might pause and notice. How do you feel right now? Perhaps making a mental note to yourself about which strategies you used, what they felt like in your body. Was the softer feeling underneath. And what did you actually need at the time?

And then, if you like, we can explore how your survival instincts impact your partner. This time, imagine you were on the other side of the defensive behavior you identified in the last exercise. Your partner blamed you, left you, or reflexively apologized to you, for example. See if you can feel what it would be like to be on the receiving end of this behavior. Perhaps noticing what feelings you have. What it feels like in your body. Whether you want to get closer to your partner. And whether you're willing to be vulnerable. And as you open to the impact of these defensive behaviors, know that this is part of our wiring. It's part of human nature, but it isn't helpful. So we can set an intention to begin to learn something new.

Remember to acknowledge and appreciate yourself for opening and exploring your own patterns.

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