

THERAPIST TOOLBOX



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The Attachment Injury Resolution Model — From the Inside Out

This personal exercise, adapted from *Love Sense*, p. 238-239, can help therapists to experience EFT's Attachment Injury Resolution Model (AIRM) from the inside out. An *attachment injury* is defined as a specific incident of betrayal or abandonment in a crucial moment of need that shatters an attachment bond. The AIRM is the healing path to forgiveness and resolution after an attachment injury.

As clinicians, our attachment injurious experiences can impact our therapy. Johnson's process, described in *Love Sense*, can both bring the AIRM alive and also help with unresolved hurts that therapists may be facing. I felt a searing burn for years after an incident of abandonment by a dear friend. Even though she was not ready to discuss the incident with me, I found the process below to be healing and liberating. Exploring my emotions and needs around this injury, I began the experience of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Part 1:

Remember a time when you felt hurt or disconnected in a relationship with a loved one:

- What was the most catastrophic, most shattering

thing that the other person said or did?

- What was most threatening or painful about the incident? (Fear of abandonment or rejection?)
- Can you pinpoint the exact moment of injury/ the exact moment that hurt the most?
- How did it change you/your sense of the relationship? What suddenly snapped/broke? What did you lose?
- Let yourself experience these moments and the emotions that come up for you.

Part 2:

Imagine what it would be like to tell this person about the threat you felt in that situation and the message or action you needed. See this person's face. See yourself sitting opposite him or her and beginning to speak.

- What would you have needed at that time to turn the hurt and fear around?
- What did you long to hear or have that person do?
- Now, for a moment, imagine that person magically turning to you and doing just that.

- Give a name to what you would feel inside in response (e.g. intense relief, deep comfort, dissipation of fear).
- Imagine yourself doing this and being able to send a clear message back to the other while keeping your emotional balance. If you can do so, you have just primed your attachment system and rehearsed your part of a *Hold Me Tight®/Forgiving Injuries* conversation.
- If you had a hard time sending clear messages back to the other (e.g., about your fears and needs), see if you can determine what got in your way the most. Common blocks that people identify, some listed below, are things that may also come up for your couples:
 - Cannot keep focus (too hard to stay with feelings — get abstract or tangential).
 - Imagine sharing — but suddenly get flooded — risk seems too great.
 - Flip into anger and blaming — proving other person wrong.
 - Imagining the other's face feels too difficult

— leading to a desire to run and hide.

- Find oneself telling the other person that you will never trust again, that you will never let the other hurt you again. You want to protect yourself. You refuse to share your fears and needs until he or she proves worthy of your trust.

Now reflect on this overall experience. How are you feeling about the injury now? Do you feel ready to approach the other person to ask if they would be willing to discuss the incident with you? Some people may be unavailable or unwilling to engage in conversation. Imagine a safe place to keep talking about this if you need to. Savour for a few moments, your courage in exploring your pain and your needs and creating an imagined experience of sharing it with the other person. Appreciate yourself for stepping into the very process into which you are likely to invite some of your clients.

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