

Read This First

Sample Form for the Restructuring Frustrations Exercise

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Restructuring Frustration Form

The following is a sample of a completed Restructuring Frustrations Form. This will give you an idea of how to fill it out.

This Restructuring Frustration Exercise was completed by: Jack

Step 1: The Components of the Frustrating Event

1. The Trigger for my frustration was...

When I got home, no one was home and no message was left.

2. When that happens, I start imagining...

She forgot, maybe an accident. She always forgets. Other things and people are more important. I will never be remembered in the way I would like.

3. And I start feeling...

disappointed, anxious.

4. And then I find myself...

When she comes home I shake my head, look sad and angry!
Eventually scold her and get in an argument.

5. What I'm really afraid of is...

This will continue to happen and I will spend many minutes and hours wondering, worrying, frustrated. I will be living with someone who will not ever extend themselves to meet a need of mine.

Step 2: The History Connection

6. And all this reminds me of...

Few in any memories of anyone asking me how I was doing, how they could help, how I felt about something that was happening to me or to the family. For a year I was a latch-key kid. Hated it.

7. When that happened, I felt...

sad, lonely, a little proud of being independent.

8. I learned to cope and protect myself by...

being independent, making my life work, not getting in the way, trying to not make trouble for the family. Sometimes pouted and complained.

9. And so I developed a need to be with someone who would...

remember things that are important to me and be sensitive and kind toward them. Keep me in the loop.

Step 3: Non Demand Behavior Change Requests

I have some requests for you. They are not demands or requirements or shoulds or musts. I will be very grateful if you are willing to do some of these requests.

10. It would be helpful and healing if you would...

Leave a note or voice mail when you will be home late or be sure to take and turn on your cell phone when you are out in the evening.

11. It would be helpful and healing if you would...

Once a week for the next month, out of the blue, say to me, "I'm remembering that it's important to you for me to leave a message when I'm going to be late and to take and have my cell phone turned on. I want to do that for you."

12. It would be helpful and healing if you would...

Once a month tell me something you remember or believe is important to me. Then say, "I like knowing what is important to you."

Step 4: Self-Growth Worksheet--My Responsibility in all of this.

13. I want you to know that I know that you are not responsible for all of the intensity of my feelings about the trigger. My childhood experience makes me particularly sensitive to the trigger.

I want you to know that the intensity of my upset is not all your fault. Where my past makes me sensitive to the "trigger" and make me misinterpret you is...

Not being informed or included as a kid makes me particularly sensitive to when you forget to inform me.

14. My immediate interpretation or automatic thoughts about you when the "trigger" occurred were negative. I imagined

She forgot, maybe an accident. She always forgets. Other things and people are more important. I will never be remembered in the way I would like.

When I reflect again about my initial interpretations, there are clearly some examples that would suggest evidence to the contrary. For example:

You do a lot that includes me, informs me, shows that you think about me. There are many times when you call and take your cell phone. You keep me up to date on what is happen with the kids. You have often left me notes when you will be gone for a while.

15. So far I have been sharing with you the impact the trigger has had on me and why and what I would like to be different. When I try to see the trigger behavior "through your eyes" and histories and sensitivites, another explanation for your doing the "trigger" behavior might be...

You thought you told me, thought you would be home earlier, can't find your cell phone, etc. You have a lot on your mind and sometimes forget. Your history with your family makes it embarrassing for you to leave a meeting to call me.

16. When the trigger happened, I reacted by...

When she comes home I shake my head, look sad and angry!
Eventually scold her and get in an argument.

Should this happen again, I'm intending to respond differently by...

Greet her warmly. Later say, I know you try really hard to remember to let me know when you are late. I waited an hour tonight not knowing where you were. Just a friendly reminder to take your cell phone with you and have it turned on.

17. In case you are unable or unwilling or just forget to do the Non-Demand Behavior Change Requests, I will do what I can to take care of myself. Some of my ideas about this are...

When this happens again, figure the probabilities and distract myself with TV, a book, etc. Remind myself of the contradictory evidence and that she is touching an old wound, not creating all the pain herself.

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