

VENTING

When to Use

Whenever you feel tension and might leak it on others. Or when you start to:

Complain about something	Whine	Grumble	Lament
Make someone wrong	Be Negative	Criticize	Act stressed-out

What to do

1. Ask Permission.

Always tell your partner that you'd like to release tension by venting and **ask** if your partner is in a space to hear you, or would like to name another time. If your partner seems tense, you may ask your partner if he/she would like to **vent**.

2. Release the Emotional Tension

Partner A:

- Without looking into Partner B's eyes, start expressing your feelings.
- Let Go! Exaggerate! Say all the things you have been thinking, no matter how irrational, after all it is emotional not rational, you want to get it all out.
- Don't expect for Partner B to respond or say anything.
- Look for any tension from the past that may now also be triggered. Let out the tension about the past - tell your mother, father, prior partner, child, boss, colleague, friend, etc., whatever you need to say about your pain from them.
- Don't stop until you feel a release, or there's no more to say, the charge is gone.
- Let Partner B know when you are done.

Partner B:

- It's important that Partner A know you are a supportive listener, so refrain from saying anything, making noises (exasperation, etc.), or movements which might convey disapproval or lack of support. (You do not have to agree, but listen.)
- Protect your well-being while you're listening by
 - Writing everything down
 - Thinking of your favorite place
 - Taking deep breaths through your nose
 - Remembering that this is for the good of the relationship
 - Remembering that your partner is healing something
 - Remembering that you will both feel better later
- Don't interrupt until Partner A is done (unless you're not feeling safe). Don't respond to any questions from Partner A. Just supportively listen. Remember that your partner is releasing tension, a gift, so that you both can connect lovingly.

3. Following your release, be sure to receive: Validation Empathy Find solutions

4. Always End by Appreciating Each Other with Words and a Hug.

Partner A: Thank your partner for listening/being there for you.

Partner B.: Thank your partner for using a safe tool rather than leaking tension.

Checklist for *Venting* Tension Safely

- I have your Permission to express my Feelings?
- You agree we won't look at each other during my Venting?
- You won't Interrupt me until I'm done?
- You won't make fun of me or use what I say against me after we're finished?
- You won't tell anyone what I say here without my permission?
- If you're triggered, you agree to release your tension before we end?
- You agree to make yourself safe while I Vent?
- So, do I have your permission to really let go and be irrational about my feelings, until I get a release?

Loving Remarks: (even If I don't feel loving right now)

I'm venting so that:

- we can have a better relationship
- we both can feel better
- we can get back to loving feelings
- we don't have to feel this tension

- _____.

Your Own Words

Checklist for *Venting* Tension Safely

- I have your Permission to express my Feelings?
- You agree we won't look at each other during my Venting?
- You won't Interrupt me until I'm done?
- You won't make fun of me or use what I say against me after we're finished?
- You won't tell anyone what I say here without my permission?
- If you're triggered, you agree to release your tension before we end?
- You agree to make yourself safe while I Vent?
- So, do I have your permission to really let go and be irrational about my feelings, until I get a release?

Loving Remarks: (even If I don't feel loving right now)

I'm venting so that:

- we can have a better relationship
- we both can feel better
- we can get back to loving feelings
- we don't have to feel this tension

- _____ .

Your Own Words

LETTING GO OF GRUDGES

or

Everything I Needed To Say And Didn't

I. The following exercises (adapted from "Feelings First" by Dr. John Gray) can help you detect layers of feelings that are present with respect to some "hot" issues for you in a relationship. Through John Gray calls it "The Love Letter," it may at first seem anything but that. It is a process of "unmasking," of peeling away the hierarchy of negative feelings that so often prevent us from experiencing caring, love, understanding and compassion which may lie buried beneath.

Before proceeding, think of an issue in a relationship about which you have some strong, upsetting feelings, in which you are holding a grudge. For this first time, let it be about someone other than your partner, such as a parent, a child, a friend, a colleague, a boss, etc. Now start a fresh page in your journal and entitle it "Everything I Needed To Say And Didn't." You won't actually be sending this letter although you may decide to share it with your partner by having your partner read it aloud to you. Write it now anyway. The purpose is to express whatever emotions are in the way of a better relationship. Following the format, start with "Anger and Blame" and, sticking with the same issue, complete as many of the sentence stems in each category as you can.

Don't edit your feelings or try to be nice or reasonable or even rational. And don't bother to defend or explain your point of view—that is, don't intellectualize the issue; merely let all your emotions hang out. The purpose is to take the opportunity to release whatever pent-up anger, resentment, or wounded pride may be preventing the flow of more tender or forgiving emotions. Above all, do not leave the letter unfinished; carry it through to the fifth and final category.

If you are holding a grudge, you definitely won't feel positive feelings at the beginning of the letter. In fact, the more upset you are the better—as long as you make an honest effort to get in touch with, examine, and express all of your feelings in each of the five categories.

LETTING GO OF GRUDGES

or

Everything I Needed To Say And Didn't

I. The following exercises (adapted from "Feelings First" by Dr. John Gray) can help you detect layers of feelings that are present with respect to some "hot" issues for you in a relationship. Through John Gray calls it "The Love Letter," it may at first seem anything but that. It is a process of "unmasking," of peeling away the hierarchy of negative feelings that so often prevent us from experiencing caring, love, understanding and compassion which may lie buried beneath.

Before proceeding, think of an issue in a relationship about which you have some strong, upsetting feelings, in which you are holding a grudge. For this first time, let it be about someone other than your partner, such as a parent, a child, a friend, a colleague, a boss, etc. Now start a fresh page in your journal and entitle it "Everything I Needed To Say And Didn't." You won't actually be sending this letter although you may decide to share it with your partner by having your partner read it aloud to you. Write it now anyway. The purpose is to express whatever emotions are in the way of a better relationship. Following the format, start with "Anger and Blame" and, sticking with the same issue, complete as many of the sentence stems in each category as you can.

Don't edit your feelings or try to be nice or reasonable or even rational. And don't bother to defend or explain your point of view—that is, don't intellectualize the issue; merely let all your emotions hang out. The purpose is to take the opportunity to release whatever pent-up anger, resentment, or wounded pride may be preventing the flow of more tender or forgiving emotions. Above all, do not leave the letter unfinished; carry it through to the fifth and final category.

If you are holding a grudge, you definitely won't feel positive feelings at the beginning of the letter. In fact, the more upset you are the better—as long as you make an honest effort to get in touch with, examine, and express all of your feelings in each of the five categories.

If you are holding a grudge, you definitely won't feel positive feelings at the beginning of the **letter**. In fact, the more upset you are the better -- as long as you make an honest effort to **get** in touch with, examine, and express all your feelings in each of the five categories.

1. ANGER AND BLAME

I resent ---

I'm outraged by ---

I'm fed up with ---

I can't stand ---

I can't forgive you for ---

I needed ---

2. HURT AND SADNESS

I feel hurt by ---

I feel sad when ---

I am disappointed because --- I feel awful because ---

I want ---

3. FEAR AND INSECURITY

I am anxious because ---

I am afraid that ---

What scares me is ---

I'm worried about ---

I want ---

4. GUILT AND RESPONSIBILITY

I regret ---

I may be to blame for ---

I feel sympathy for ---

I didn't mean to ---

Please forgive me for ---

I wish ---

5. FORGIVENESS, UNDERSTANDING, DESIRE AND LOVE

I appreciate ---

I realize ---

I value ---

I love ---

I hope ---

Review your letter carefully, making sure that it truly does express all your emotions on this issue. Review it also for balance. If it gets skimpier as it progresses (plenty of expression at the beginning but very little at the end) it may mean that you're fixated on anger; if it's fat in the middle but lean at both ends you may be stuck on your own fear and guilt; if it's bottom heavy, you may be repressing your tougher emotions. Work at it until

session six letting go of grudges

you've been completely honest with yourself. By gauging the balance in each of the five sections, you alone can judge how well you've explored and how honestly you've acknowledged the entire range of your feelings!

REFLECTION

Having written this letter, see what you are feeling now towards the recipient as compared to when you began? Do you find that you are any less angry, any more able to forgive, to let go of grudges? Are you any more able to think of useful solutions? Are you in touch with any more positive feelings towards the person you wrote to? That is what writing this letter is about. It is an important part of getting in touch with the range of your emotions in behalf of being able to think more clearly, understand more deeply and to more constructively seek solutions to resolve your anger and conflict. Use this technique anytime you are upset to help you feel and think yourself through to a more useful solution. It can be done in a few minutes, if need be, by just writing one line for each of the above categories! Write what this felt like for you in your journal.