

MY EARLY RELATIONAL CHALLENGE

Our experiences with our caretakers in the past shapes the behavior and quality of our relationships in the present.

This exercise will help you discover your early relational challenge and connect it with the frustrations and desires you experience as you interact with significant others in the present.

Study the ten items in the two boxes below. **Select and CIRCLE the ONE (and only ONE)** that most represents your greatest early challenge.

If none of them describe your early challenge, write one that does in the box marked "other."

MY EARLY CHALLENGE

- To get free from feeling controlled by others.
- To express my own thoughts rather than what I should think.
- To express what I feel rather than what I should feel.
- To experience my thoughts and feelings as important.
- To do what I wanted to do rather than what I ought to.
- To experience feeling seen and valued rather than invisible.
- To be approached by others rather than feel alone / abandoned.
- To feel significant as a person.
- To get support for what I think or feel.
- To get someone interested in what I want and like.

OTHER

MY EARLY RELATIONAL NEED

The early relational challenge you identified on the previous page resulted in a relational need that you brought into your adult relationships. It is especially present in your adult intimate relationships and it also shows up in all your significant relationships.

Study the ten items in the two boxes below. **Select and CIRCLE the ONE (and only ONE) that best describes what you needed most from significant people in your early life.**

If none of them describe your early relational need, write one that does in the box marked "other."

MY EARLY NEED

- To have space and time to myself on a regular basis.
- To experience trust from others of my thinking and my decisions.
- To be asked what I feel and what I want.
- To experience genuine and reliable warmth when I need it.
- To experience that what I do and want is valued by others.
- To experience interest in me when I am talking.
- To be responded to when I ask for it.
- To ask me what I want, feel and think.
- To show curiosity about my experiences in life.
- To get love and gentle touch frequently and without having to ask.

OTHER

IMAGO DIALOGUE

EARLY RELATIONAL CHALLENGE AND NEED

MAKING AN APPOINTMENT

Sender: I would like to talk about my early relational challenge and the need I brought to my adult relationships. Is now a good time?

Receiver: Yes, I'm available now.

CONNECTING NON-VERBALLY

Makes eye contact and takes three deep breaths in sync.

SHARING A ONE WAY APPRECIATION

Sender: Before I start, I would like to share an appreciation I have of you. Is that ok?

Receiver: Yes.

Sender: I appreciate that.....

Receiver: *Mirrors:* If I got it. You appreciate

Checks for accuracy: Did I get it?

Thank you for sharing that.

Sender: Thanks for receiving it.

SHARING YOUR EARLY CHALLENGE

Sender: Now I would like to share my childhood challenge. When I was a child, I lived with caretakers who were generally **Neglectful or Intrusive** (**CIRCLE ONE**) and my relational challenge with them was – (*challenge you circled on MY EARLY RELATIONAL CHALLENGE page*).

A NOTE TO THE RECEIVER

If you get on overload, raise your hand and say: "I'm on overload, let me try to mirror back so far."



IMAGO DIALOGUE

EARLY RELATIONAL CHALLENGE AND NEED

MIRRORING THE EARLY CHALLENGE

Receiver: *Mirrors: Let me see if I've got it. When you were a child, you lived with caretakers who were _____ and your challenge with them was to _____.*

Checks for accuracy: Did I get it?

Sender: Yes, you got it (or, "You got most of it. I also said....")

Receiver: *Continues mirroring and checking for accuracy until the Sender says, "You got it."*

Asks: Is there more about that?

Checks for accuracy and continues asking, "Is there more about that?" until the Sender says, "There is no more."

Sender: Says: And when I remember that, I **feel**....

Receiver: *Mirrors the feelings: And when you remember that you **feel** ...*

Checks for accuracy: Did I get it?

Continues mirroring, checks for accuracy, and invites "more" until Sender says: "There is no more about that," or "That's all for now."

SHARING THE EARLY RELATIONAL NEED

Sender: And when I feel that feeling, I remember that what I needed most from them was _____ (*item circled on MY EARLY RELATIONAL NEED page*). Not getting that from them, I brought that need to my adult relationships.

IMAGO DIALOGUE

EARLY RELATIONAL CHALLENGE AND NEED

MIRRORING EARLY RELATIONSHIP NEED

Receiver: *Mirrors:* Let me see if I've got it. What you needed most from your caretakers was _____. Not getting that from them, you brought it to your adult relationships.

Checks for accuracy: Did I get it?

Sender: Yes, you got it (or, "Yes, and I also said").

Receiver: *Continues mirroring, checking for accuracy until the Sender says, "You got it."*

Shows curiosity and asks: Is there more about that?

Mirrors and checks for accuracy until the Sender says, "There is no more about that."

SUMMARIZING

Receiver: *Summarizes:* Let me see if I got **ALL** of that. In summary, your caretakers were generally _____ and the relational challenge you had with them was _____.

When you remember that, you **feel** _____,

What you needed from them was _____,
and not getting it from them, you brought _____ to your adult relationships.

Checks for accuracy: Did I get it all?

Sender: *Listens to the summary and verifies if accurate.*

Yes, you got me. -Or- The part you got was ... and I also said...

IMAGO DIALOGUE

EARLY RELATIONAL CHALLENGE AND NEED

VALIDATING

Receiver: *Validates:* You make sense, and what makes sense is that if your caretakers were _____, that your challenge would have been _____ and that your relationship need would be _____. And, not getting that in your early years, you would bring it to your adult relationships.

Is that an accurate validation?

Sender: *Receives the validation and verifies if accurate.*

EMPATHIZING

Receiver: *Expresses empathy:* And given that, I can imagine that if your relationship need to _____ was met in your adult relationships, you would feel _____ (glad, relieved, happy, connected, heard, etc.)

Is that your feeling?

Checks for additional feelings: Are there other feelings?

Sender: Yes (or, I also feel)

CLOSING DECLARATIONS

Receiver: Thank you for sharing with me your early relational challenge and need and how you would feel if that need was met in your adult relationships.

Sender: Thank you for listening.

If you are intimate partners, give each other a one-minute hug and make eye contact on release.

If your dialogue partner is a friend or acquaintance, make physical contact that is comfortable and appropriate for both of you.

SWITCHING ROLES

When all the steps are completed, switch roles and repeat the process.