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Preface to the Third Edition xv

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I. SHIFTING GEARS 19

1. This feels awful. Can we start again and really listen to each other?
2. I know I'm being defensive. Can you say this in a less charged way so I can feel safe with you?
3. I wish you could hear this as me saying "yes" to myself—not "no" to you.
4. All I want is for you to listen to me with an open heart.
5. I am upset. This doesn't mean that you are a bad person . . . It means that if you could just listen, I would feel incredibly loved.
6. I have no idea what to do right now except to tell you that I am in a lot of pain, I know you are, too, and I want it to be friendlier between us.
7. I know you want to repair this, but right now I just need to be in my own space. Please—try not to take this personally. I love you.
8. I'm frankly confused about what's going on between us, and need a little time to sort this out. Is that okay with you?
9. I don't need you to see this exactly as I do. But I do need you to hear where I am coming from.
10. There's something really important I need to say to you, and I would like you to *truly* listen—not react (at least for five minutes, anyway).

11. Fear not . . . I'm not on a tear. I just want to say one simple thing.
12. I've been so focused on being heard, I didn't see how much sense you are really making.
13. I was making a big deal out of something that just isn't that important. I want to let it go.

II. SETTING LIMITS 51

14. I'm feeling very scared of you right now.
15. I am your friend. It's painful seeing how quickly I can become your enemy.
16. When you go on and on like that, I feel invisible to you.
17. Rather than just criticize me, can you tell me what you want in a more positive way?
18. I hate feeling that I have to walk on eggshells around you.
19. You are being a bully.
20. Talk to me like I'm someone you love.
21. Right now, I don't need a lecture. I need your love.

22. I know you're feeling nagged, but please stay . . . When you walk away from me, I feel discarded.
23. What you are saying is worth listening to, but I am so totally flooded, I can't take in one more thing. I wish I could, but I can't.
24. All I'm feeling right now is your "position." I need you to come back so I can relate to you—not your position.
25. I'm already feeling awful. Do you really think I haven't heard you?
26. I want us to stop what we are doing to each other. Both of us. Now . . .

III. FEELING VULNERABLE 85

27. When you talk to me that way, I just feel small.
28. I know I sounded extremely angry, but I was feeling more threatened than you could possibly have known.
29. I'm afraid to be real with you.

- 30. When you won't communicate with me, I feel like I'm nothing to you.
- 31. I'm embarrassed to say that I don't even remember what I'm arguing with you about.
- 32. It's frightening to me that we see things so differently.
- 33. I'm starting to disappear. It feels like there's no space for me.
- 34. It's hard admitting I might be wrong.
- 35. I'm afraid that if I say I'm sorry, you'll make everything all my fault.
- 36. Do you hate me?
- 37. I think I'm supposed to know how to do this, but honestly, I have no idea.
- 38. I feel like a total and complete idiot.
- 41. I realize I'm overreacting. Can you give me a minute to get sane again?
- 42. I know I've been relentless. I can understand why you'd want to get away from me.
- 43. I know I haven't made it very safe for you. Please don't give up on me.
- 44. You are not being crazy. I can see why you'd be upset with me.
- 45. You are so upset, I probably don't fully understand my impact on you. Please tell me—I want to understand.
- 46. I'm probably sounding like a parent right now, and I can appreciate that it's a turnoff.
- 47. I was just reacting to you as if you were my mother, and I know that you're not.
- 48. I was just reacting to you as if you were my father, and I know that you're not.
- 49. I'm probably [sounding . . . looking . . . carrying on] like your mother right now, and I can appreciate how [frightening . . . disturbing . . . annoying] that must be for you.
- 50. I'm probably [sounding . . . looking . . .

IV. TAKING RESPONSIBILITY 119

- 39. I can see that I've missed the point. Please give me another chance.
- 40. I can see that my anger has been destructive and that I've really hurt you.

carrying on] like your father right now, and I can appreciate how [frightening . . . disturbing . . . annoying] that must be for you.

51. I'm probably acting like _____ right now, and I can appreciate how disturbing that might be for you.
52. I'm probably acting like _____ right now, and I can appreciate how disturbing that might be for you.

V. GIVING INFORMATION 153

53. I don't feel heard.
54. I know I'm pretty shut down right now . . . but I promise I'll be back.
55. I'm in knots. I'm afraid to tell you my truth, and it's horrible feeling that I have to humor you.
56. I beg you to hear this as me truly wanting you to register my feelings—*not* as an attack on you.
57. You don't have to agree with me, but it hurts when you don't take me seriously.

58. You didn't do anything wrong. I know it's my own craziness—trust me to get through it.
59. When you are so intense, it's hard to take in what might be valid about what you are saying.
60. You are taking up so much space right now, it feels like there is no room for me.
61. Your behavior embarrassed me. I'm trying to tell you, not to make you feel bad, but so I can feel close to you again.
62. Your behavior was threatening to me. I'm trying to tell you about it, not to make you feel bad, but so I can feel safe with you again.
63. It feels like I can do no right by you.

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64. When you treat me this way, it feels like you don't respect me. Is that true?
65. When you say things like that, it sounds like you are thinking of ending our

wrong. I know
trust me to get

se, it's hard to
valid about what

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is no room for me.
assed me. I'm
to make you feel
close to you

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about it, not to
it so I can feel

o right by you.

relationship. Is that what you really
mean?

66. What can I say that would make you
feel understood?

67. Tell me the truth—am I responding in
the way you need me to right now?

68. Are you in the space to talk?

69. You seem so [prickly . . . defensive . . .
enraged] that I feel pulled to do or say
anything to calm you down. Is that
what you really want?

70. I can absolutely see why you'd be
annoyed with me, but can you give me
some sign that we're still friends?

71. It would mean a lot to me if you could
just repeat back to me what you think
I'm trying to get across.

74. I know what I said was hurtful. I truly
didn't mean it and would do anything
to take it back.

75. I'm sorry that I've been acting as if
everything's all your fault.

76. I feel embarrassed about how I spoke
to you.

77. Please—can you forgive me?

78. Even though I've been arguing my
position like a crazy person, I now see
where your point of view makes sense.

79. I'm sorry I made such a big deal out of
something so unimportant.

80. You have no idea how much I regret
the direction I took this in. I'm really
sorry.

81. I'm so sorry I couldn't hear you sooner.

82. I'm sorry that I acted as if there was
only my reality.

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his way, it feels like
e. Is that true?
; like that, it sounds
of ending our

VII. APOLOGIZING 203

72. I'm sorry.

73. I know I've really hurt you. What can
I do that would help you trust me
again?

VIII. LOVING 233

83. Right now, I'd do anything for you to
know how much I love you.

84. I love you. And despite how it looks, I don't want our relationship to be a fight.
85. You don't have to be miserable to get me to take you seriously. Talk to me like I'm a friend who wants to do right by you.
86. I am not _____, who hurt you in the past. I am _____, who loves you now.
87. I am not _____, who hurt you in the past. I am _____, who loves you now.
88. I am not _____, who left you in the past. I am _____, who isn't going anywhere without you.
89. You are precious. And you deserve to be treated that way.
90. I love you and can't stand seeing you so unhappy.
91. I know I sounded like a maniac, but my love for you is still and deep.
92. I love you. I hate fighting. Can't we just hug?
93. I treasure you.

IX. MAKING UP 261

94. I can see how upset you are, and I feel terrible.
95. It would mean a lot if you could just say, "I'm sorry." Or do or say something that shows me that you care about what happened.
96. I'm worried that there's no space to make it better between us.
97. We need a new perspective. Let's take a break and each get clearer about what really matters here. Okay?
98. I would love it if we could just be quiet and hold each other.
99. I feel really crummy about what happened. Could we just make up?
100. I want to hug you, and I'm not sure I am welcome. May I come closer?
101. I forgive you completely. It never happened.

X. MAKING

102. I want to me liking me.
103. I'd love it if v
104. I want to mal first I need to please don't t you been avo day so that to
105. When we are something is v wrong—we jus sync . . .
106. When you give you think I'm ju laid," it feels lik
107. I know I behave to have sex just Can we clear th
108. I'm making up r feeling sexually to make love to upset with me. L this time.

X. MAKING LOVE 283

102. I want to make love—but only if you are liking me.
103. I'd love it if we could go slow.
104. I want to make love with you, too, but first I need to ask you something—and please don't hate me for asking—have you been avoiding conflict with me all day so that tonight doesn't get derailed?
105. When we are out of sync, you act like something is very wrong. Nothing's wrong—we just need to get back in sync . . .
106. When you give me the message that you think I'm just a guy "looking to get laid," it feels like you don't see me.
107. I know I behaved badly, but I don't want to have sex just to make it up to you. Can we clear things first?
108. I'm making up right now that you are feeling sexually deprived. My pattern is to make love to keep you from being upset with me. Let's do it differently this time.
109. I know you like to verbally process what's going on in our relationship first—but right now, if we could just touch each other, it could help me be more present with you.
110. I would love to share a sexual fantasy I have with you and I want it to bring us closer.
111. It's true. I'm not in a space to be sexual right now. Still, I love you and don't want you to make more of it than there really is (i.e., like this is the beginning of the end!) . . . Okay?
112. I'm terrified of pressuring you, but I'm worried that if we keep ignoring that we haven't made love in forever, we'll be past the point of no return. Talk to me about it . . . That's all I ask.
113. I'm thinking that you're thinking that I should know what you are wanting right now. I wish I did, honey, but I don't.
114. I'm out of words, and maybe even you are, too. Please, just be with me.

XI. DEEPENING TRUST 315

115. I want to hear what's upsetting you—but you need to start slow . . . Okay?
116. I know I was off—but I'm worried you would rather clobber me than get close again.
117. I'm not going to clobber you. I only want to repair this with you.
118. My need for you to see my good intentions was so overpowering. I acted like you didn't exist. I feel terrible.
119. I need you to give me some space to be human.
120. I need to be able to risk sharing my distrust with you. It's the only way I am ever going to trust you.
121. I want you to tell me when you are not trusting me. It's the only way you are ever going to trust me.

122. I know it's hard to trust me when I've been so on the fence about us.
123. I know you feel awful—but it's not enough. I need you to really, really know what it was like for me.
124. It's hard to trust you when you don't do what you say you'll do.
125. When you sound annoyed when I bring it up again, I feel I have to pretend I'm past it—and I'm not.
126. Honey, I feel myself starting to get triggered. What can we do to move this in a different direction?
127. Before we go on, first you have to tell me you love me.

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