



Fear Dance Parent Version

Love Deeply Tool



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DISCOVERING YOUR CORE FEAR

“And he (Adam) said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.”(Genesis 3:10)

1. Describe a **recent conflict**, argument or negative situation with your child – something that really “pushed your buttons.”

2. How did you **feel** in response to this conflict or situation? How did that conflict or argument make you feel? Check all that apply – but put a “**star**” beside the most important feelings:

- | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure | <input type="checkbox"/> Disappointed | <input type="checkbox"/> Disgusted | <input type="checkbox"/> Embarrassed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Apathetic | <input type="checkbox"/> Wearied | <input type="checkbox"/> Resentful | <input type="checkbox"/> Frightened |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Puzzled | <input type="checkbox"/> Torn up | <input type="checkbox"/> Bitter | <input type="checkbox"/> Anxious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Upset | <input type="checkbox"/> Shame | <input type="checkbox"/> Fed up | <input type="checkbox"/> Horrified |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sullen | <input type="checkbox"/> Uncomfortable | <input type="checkbox"/> Frustrated | <input type="checkbox"/> Disturbed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sad | <input type="checkbox"/> Confused | <input type="checkbox"/> Miserable | <input type="checkbox"/> Furious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hurt | <input type="checkbox"/> Worried | <input type="checkbox"/> Guilty | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |



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3. How did this conflict make you feel about yourself? What did the conflict say about you? What was the “self” message – the message that it sent to you? What were the buttons that got pushed? **Circle** all that apply, but “**star**” the most important feeling you felt about yourself.

“As a result of the conflict, I felt...”

What that feeling sounds like:

Rejected

My child doesn't want me; my child doesn't need me; I am not necessary in this relationship; my child does not desire me; I feel unwanted.

Abandoned

I will be alone; my child will ultimately leave me; I will be left alone to care for myself; my child won't be committed to me for life.

Disconnected

We will become emotionally detached or separated.

Like a failure

I am not successful at being a parent; I will not perform right or correctly; I will not live up to expectations; I will fall short in my relationships; I am not good enough.



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Helpless/powerless

I cannot do anything to change my child or my situation; I do not possess the power, resources, capacity, or ability to get what I want; I will be controlled by my child.

Defective

Something is wrong with me; I am the problem.



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Inadequate

I am not capable; I am incompetent.

Inferior

Everyone else is better than I am; I am less valuable or important than others.

Invalidated

Who I am, what I think, what I do, or how I feel is not valued.

Unloved

My child doesn't love me anymore; my child has no affection or desire for me; my relationship lacks warm attachment, admiration, enthusiasm, or devotion; I feel as if we are just housemates – that there are no connective feelings between us.

Dissatisfied

I will not experience satisfaction within the relationship; I will exist in misery for the rest of my life; I will not be pleased with in my relationship; I feel no joy in my relationship.

Cheated

My child will take advantage of me; my child will withhold something I need; I won't get what I want.

Worthless/devalued

I am useless; I have no value to my child.



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Don't measure up

I am never able to meet my child's expectations of me; I am not good enough as a parent.

Unaccepted

My child does not accept me; my child is not pleased with me; my child does not approve of me.

Judged

I am always being unfairly judged or misjudged; my child forms faulty or negative opinions about me; I am always being evaluated; my child does not approve of me.

Humiliated

This relationship is extremely destructive to my self-respect or dignity.

Ignored

My child will not pay attention to me; I will be unknown in my relationship; I feel neglected.

Unimportant

I am not important to my child; I am irrelevant, insignificant, or of little priority to my child.

Other:



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4. What do you do when you feel _____ (insert the most important feeling from question #3) How do you **react** when you feel that way? Identity your common **coping strategies** to deal with your “buttons” being pushed. **Check** all that apply – but “**star**” the most important reactions:

Withdrawal

You avoid others or alienate yourself without resolution; you sulk, use the silent treatment.

Escalation

Your emotions spiral out of control; you argue, raise your voice, fly into a rage.

Earn-it mode

You try to do more to earn others' love and care.

Negative beliefs

You believe your child is far worse than is really the case; you attribute negative motives to your child.

Blaming

You place responsibility on others, not accepting fault; you're convinced the problem is your child's fault.

Exaggeration

You make overstatements or enlarge your words beyond bounds or the truth.

Tantrums

You have a fit of bad temper.



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Denial

You refuse to admit the truth or reality.

Invalidation

You devalue your child; you do not appreciate who your child is, what he or she feels or thinks or does.

Defensiveness

Instead of listening, you defend yourself by trying to provide an explanation.

Clinginess

You develop a strong emotional attachment or dependence on your child.

Passive-aggression

You display negative emotions, resentment, and aggression in unassertive ways, such as procrastination and stubbornness.

Caretaking

You become responsible for others by giving physical or emotional care and support to the point you are doing everything for your child and your child does nothing to care for himself or herself.

Acting out

You engage in negative behaviors or addictions like drug or alcohol abuse, rebellious behavior, excessive shopping or spending, or overeating.



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Fix-it mode

You focus almost exclusively on what is needed to solve the problem.

Complain/criticize

You express unhappiness or make accusations; you present a “laundry list” of faults about your child.

Striking out

You become verbally or physically aggressive, possibly abusive.

Manipulation

You pursue your child to get them to do what you want; you control your child for your own advantage.

Anger or rage

You display strong feelings of displeasure or violent and uncontrolled emotions.

Catastrophize

You use dramatic, exaggerated expressions to depict that the relationship is in danger or that it has failed.

Emotionally shut down

You numb out emotionally; you become devoid of emotion, or you have no regard for another’s needs or troubles.

Humor

You use humor as a way of not dealing with the issue at hand.

Sarcasm

You use negative humor, hurtful words, belittling comments, cutting remarks, or demeaning statements.



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Minimization

You assert that your child is overreacting to an issue; you intentionally underestimate, downplay, or soft pedal the issue.

Rationalization

You attempt to make your actions seem reasonable; you try to attribute your behavior to credible motives; you try to provide believable but untrue reasons for your conduct.

Indifference

You are cold and show no concern.

Abdication

You give away responsibilities.

Self-abandonment

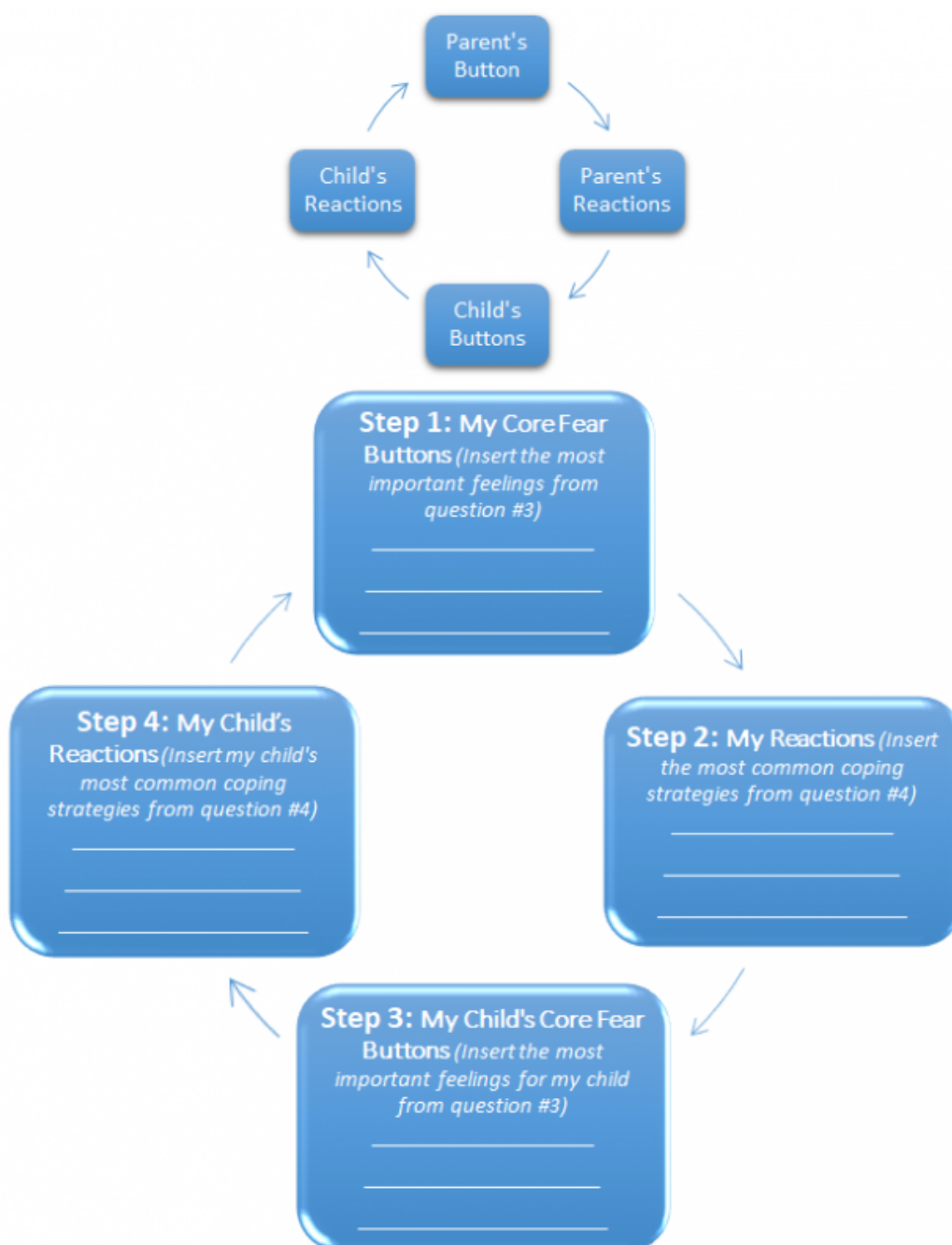
You desert yourself; you neglect you; you run yourself down.

Other:



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THE FEAR DANCE





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Step 5: Discuss How This Plays Out In Your Conflicts

How Do You Stop The Fear Cycle?

1. Accept the fact that “my journey” – to become the man or woman God created and called me to be – is 100% my responsibility.

Being a young adult means that I am fully capable of being personally and fully responsible for my own mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being.

2. Identify and control what I can control and surrender what I can't:
God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference” (Serenity Prayer) a. My focus should first be on me and my stuff.

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(Matt. 7:2-5) (2) For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. (3) And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? (4) Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? (5) Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.



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- b. I can control my buttons and how I react to others.
- c. Release our loved ones from being responsible for us.

1) Create Space – either internally or physically

(James 1:19) Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

2) Identify your emotions, feelings, buttons, fears, hurts etc.

- a. Identify the lies I am believing
- b. Choose to believe what is true based on what God says about you.
- c. Ask yourself: what did I do to contribute to my buttons getting pushed or staying pushed?
- d. Choose to respond. Call time out and decide together on a time to return.



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(Gal 5:1)

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

(2Tim 1:7)

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

(Rom 12:18)

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

(Phil. 4:13)

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

(Gal. 6:5)

For every man shall bear his own burden.

Fears can provide useful information when they are uncovered, acknowledged, and addressed. For your heart to heal you must first discover what has been written on your heart. Consider this when discussing the following questions.

- What are the topics most common in your conflicts?
- Which core fears did you identify after completing the Discovering Your Core Fear Buttons exercise?



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Most Important Feeling (Star) _____

Additional Feelings _____

- Fears (buttons) are often the result of negative messages written on the “tablets of our hearts.” Can you identify several of the negative messages from your past? Where did they come from? What does the Lord say about you and these messages?
- When you and your child are in the “fear cycle,” what are your reactions?
- Your reaction is intended to get a certain result. What result are you trying to achieve through your reaction? What is motivating that desired result?
- It is important to realize that we bring our half of the Fear Dance (our “buttons” and our “reactions”) into every relationship, even our relationship with the Lord. The good news is God doesn’t have any buttons and therefore isn’t reactive. Reflect on how your “buttons/ fears” and “reactions” impact your spiritual journey.

SAFETY DISCUSSION

As we learn about our fear dance, we need to recognize that our “buttons” cause us to feel unsafe and we react because we don’t like the way we feel. Our reactions generally push our child’s “buttons” causing them to feel unsafe and we begin to spin around and around. Discuss, as a parent-child relationship, how this Fear Cycle affects your ability to keep your heart open to each other.



Thank You!

We hope you found this tool helpful for you and your partner. If you're looking for more helpful resources like this one, check out our website.

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