

Self-Soothing

- (1) If an argument is getting out of hand and you feel flooded, it is important for you to take a break. During this break it is important for you to avoid thoughts of righteous indignation and innocent victimhood. Spend your time doing something soothing and distracting, like listening to music or exercising. You may also try the following exercise.
1. Sit in a comfortable chair, or lie on your back on the floor.
 2. Focus on controlling your breathing. Usually when you get flooded you either hold your breath a lot or breath shallowly. So close your eyes and focus on taking deep breaths.
 3. Relax your muscles. One at a time, tightly squeeze the muscle groups that seem tense (usually your forehead and jaw, neck, shoulders, arms and back). Hold for two seconds then release.
 4. Let the tension flow out of each muscle group, and get the muscle group to feel heavy by imagining that it is.
 5. Let the tension flow out of each (now-heavy) muscle group, and get that muscle group to feel warm. One way is to keep your eyes closed and focus on one calming vision or idea. Many people find it effective to think of a place they associate with calmness, like a forest, a lake, or a beach. Imagine this place as vividly as you can. Keep focused on this calming vision for about thirty seconds.
 6. Find a personal image that brings all this soothing to mind.

Gottman, John and Nan Silver: **The Seven Principles For Making Marriage Work: A Practical Guide From the Country's Foremost Relationship Expert** (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999).

Soothing Each Other

- (1) After you have completed the self-soothing exercise and if you feel that you have the energy too, it would be of tremendous benefit to your marriage if you can take a few moments to soothe each other.

Talk earnestly about the following questions.

1. What makes me (you) feel flooded?
2. How do I (you) typically bring up issues or irritability or complaints?
3. Do I (you) store things up?
4. Is there anything I can do that soothes you?
5. Is there anything you can do that soothes me?
6. What signals can we develop for letting the other know when we feel flooded? Can we take breaks?

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