

# FELLOWSHIP

**The goal of this worksheet is to increase your fellowship with your partner by understanding how past experiences affect your current relationship. Connecting your past to your present can make you feel vulnerable - which is uncomfortable for some people.**

**Research has found that when couples share vulnerable things with each other, and their partner responds with understanding, this is the key to relationship intimacy. This worksheet is an opportunity for you to share something vulnerable with each other, if you are ready for it. A good way to express this is to write a letter.**

Use this worksheet to write a letter of vulnerability. Write a letter to your partner explaining how past hurts in your life have affected how YOU are in your relationship. It is important to focus on hurts that you experienced with other people and not hurts between you and your partner. This is not the time to go into detail about hurts and misunderstandings between you and your partner. After you are done, share your letter with your partner and talk about how it affects your relationship.

## WHEN I WAS YOUNG...

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## THIS AFFECTS MY MARRIAGE...

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Pray together for your marriage at least twice this week.

# EXAMPLE LETTERS OF VULNERABILITY

When I was growing up my parents divorced when I was 9. I wanted my dad to stay with us so badly and like a lot of kids I thought it was my fault that he left. While my head knows now that it was his issues, and my mom's issues, that caused them to divorce, which had nothing to do with me. Yet sometimes in my heart I still feel guilty. So in my life I've always tried to be perfect to avoid another disaster like that from happening. I was a good student, at least the best I could be. So sometimes now if I do something that makes Jerry upset I feel really awful. It feels like my heart is going to explode just with looking at me. Like maybe if I do everything right Jerry will be happy and I'll never have to go through that again. This is a vulnerable spot for me.

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My mom was always doing her own things when I was growing up. She was busy with her volunteer work, or political things, or church or whatever. I never felt like I got enough time with her. I don't think she meant to do that, but it was hard on us. So I got into a lot of trouble when I was a teenager, because well, then she had to pay attention to me. I used drugs some, and my girlfriend had the abortion. This freaked her out, and made my life really hard. But I finally got her attention. So now in our marriage I sometimes overreact to things. I notice if Sheila is busy with things at her work or with our kids, I feel really lonely. I know I'm overreacting to things but it's like I can't help it. I mope, and whine and complain. This is hard on our marriage.

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My mom was always really attentive and helpful to us kids. She died a few years ago and I can honestly say she was my hero. But my dad, he was hard on us all. He yelled a lot and I felt like I was a horrible person. He used to say bad things to me – like swear at me and tell me I was just a pain, or I was making him crazy. For most of my childhood I was really a shy kid, afraid others might find out what a horrible person I was. Sometimes I still feel this way, even though I've grown out of it mostly. While my spouse has never even raised a voice or sworn or anything like that I still feel like I'm not a good person. I know this is hard on our relationship. I'm trying my best not to be that way