

ABOUT THE EXERCISE

The ACT ON THE PINCH exercise is an opportunity to select a minor irritation from the recent past (go back as far as necessary to find one) and explore ALL of your feelings related to that irritation. Ideally you are doing this with a partner and they will explore and share all of their feelings as well. Be particularly aware of any hurt or fear or other vulnerable feeling that you each experienced.

In a workshop setting, you would each have a copy of the exercise to write on, and you would be given ten minutes or so to identify and write down your feelings. Then you would share your writings with each other, and spend 15 minutes or more in a dialogue about your feelings.

Share gently. Remind yourself that you each have the other's best interest at heart, and your partner's feelings are very important to you. Use blame-free I-messages to create empathy rather than defensiveness. (Focus your comments primarily on your own vulnerable feelings rather than on your partner's behavior.)

An important part of the exercise is the opportunity to validate each other's feelings. It's not necessary to agree with your partner's point of view in order to understand why your partner would be feeling as they do. Sharing that understanding with each other is part of what rescues your closeness. For example, "If I were in your shoes, I might feel the same way."

ACT ON THE PINCH

To keep the heart paths clear

(Use blame-free I-messages to create empathy rather than defensiveness.)

PINCH: I felt some anger (I felt a pinch) when:

VULNERABLE FEELINGS LIKE HURT, FEAR, SHAME,
EMBARRASSMENT, ETC.: I also felt some:

(TRADE PAPERS AND ADDRESS EACH OTHER'S FEELINGS BELOW)

I CAN SEE HOW you could feel:

I MIGHT HAVE FELT the same way if I were you.

Criticism, Anger, Blame

Criticism, anger, blame
All affect us much the same
Sucking tender closeness dry
Leaving our defenses high

Taming criticism best?
Turn it into a request
Blame has such a minus gain
That we simply must refrain

Anger can be tamed as well
Share it but there's more to tell
Underneath is hurt or fear
Sharing that can bring us near

Closeness is a precious gift
Subject to distracted drift
Let's at least attempt to tame
Criticism, anger, blame