

# The H.E.A.R. Process

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*Offended* – The person feeling the hurt,

*Offender* – The person who offended

Do the HEAR process when you are not tired and have time to focus!

## **Four Greatest Threats to Relationship.**

Avoid these actions they don't work!

- Criticism
- Defensiveness
- Contempt
- Withdrawal

## **H – Have the Offended identify the Hurt they are feeling**

- Focus on describing the unmet needs or feelings not on what the Offender did.
- Focus on one hurt at a time and leave out the details of the situation.
- Express how it feels without using the words “You ....” Use “I feel ...”
- Hurts don't have to make sense, they just are.

**Result:** Offended expresses a single hurt in a non-judgmental way and Offender has opportunity to hear unemotionally what the Offended felt.

## **E – Empathy is expressed to the Offended by the Offender**

- Offender is seeking to better understand the hurt of the Offended.
- Offender is not necessarily acknowledging guilt or intentions to hurt.
- Offender avoids facts, logic, reason, justification, defensiveness, evaluation.
- Offender recognizes and tries to appreciate the Offended's hurt.
- Offender may ask a few questions to understand the hurt better but they should focus on “Do you feel hurt about X?” What does it feel like inside?
- No WHY questions!

**Result:** Offender has opportunity to identify and validate the hurt without making a judgment as to whether it is justified. They both are acknowledging the Offended's feelings without necessarily understanding why.

## **A – Offender verbally accepts responsibility for their role in the situation**

- Offender says, “I was wrong to ....”
- Offender verbally commits to any change of behavior
- Offender is not saying they meant to cause hurt but that they did.
- Offender is not justifying their behavior or downplaying its impact.
  
- Offended considers the background of the hurt
  - When was the first time I remember feeling this hurt?
  - Who else has surfaced this hurt in the Offended?
  - Is this a historical hurt independent of the Offender?
  - Is there a pattern showing here?

**Result:** Offender acknowledges their part in the situation where the hurt occurred and chooses to change their future behavior. Offended considers the sources and causes of the hurt.

## **R – Offender verbally requests and received forgiveness from Offended**

- Offender: “I do not want to hurt you. I’m sorry I hurt you (or that you were hurt by what I said/did) will you forgive me for doing so?”
- This is a choice to reaffirm the importance of our relationship. It is not based on our feelings of whether we “feel” like giving or asking for forgiveness.
- Offended: “I forgive you”
- Touch/Hug/Kiss

**Result:** Offender asks for forgiveness. Offended forgives them. Both have a better understanding of the root issue and what to avoid in the future. There may still be emotions but the inner tension should be resolving.

## **FAQ**

### **What if they have hurt me so much, I can't forgive them?**

Is this relationship worth keeping? Many of us feel this way at times. If you don't resolve these hurts now, they will bleed over into other areas of your life and cause you greater pain. Hurt people, hurt people. If you can't forgive them, then you can't expect others to forgive you. God has forgiven you for the horrible things you've done to him, so ask him for the ability to move forward. Take each hurt and list it on a piece of paper. Schedule times to use the HEAR process for each one when you are both at your best.

### **I'm hurting too, why should I ask for forgiveness?**

This is normal for both of you to be hurt. Only people you care about can hurt you. First work on their hurt, then take time to work on yours. Disconnect your hurt from theirs. Do the mature thing and seek forgiveness so that you will be free.

### **What if I am not wrong?**

That is irrelevant because this is not about right/wrong or about assigning blame. Someone you care about is hurting. You need to focus on understanding their pain and help your relationship move forward.

### **What if I don't feel like forgiving them?**

Are you saying that keeping your hurt is more important than your relationship? Of course not! You know you want to be mature. Chose to forgive them and let the feelings follow. In mature people you find that a change of Actions precedes a change of Feelings.

### **What if there are multiple hurts?**

Address them One by One in a mutually relaxing environment. Schedule the time. The hurts didn't happen overnight, and they can be addressed over several days, weeks or months.

### **What if it is not working?**

- Review to see if you are following the guidelines closely.
  - Do you want to move forward?
  - Are you ready to resolve this?
  - Are you focusing on the person or their hurt?
  - Are you willing to forgive?
  - Are you trying to punish the offender?
  - Are you really trying to understand and show empathy?
  - Are you too tired or busy to do this now?
  - Is the hurt clear to both of you or, are you discussing several hurts at once?
- Drop the issue for an agreed upon time and come together to retry from the top.