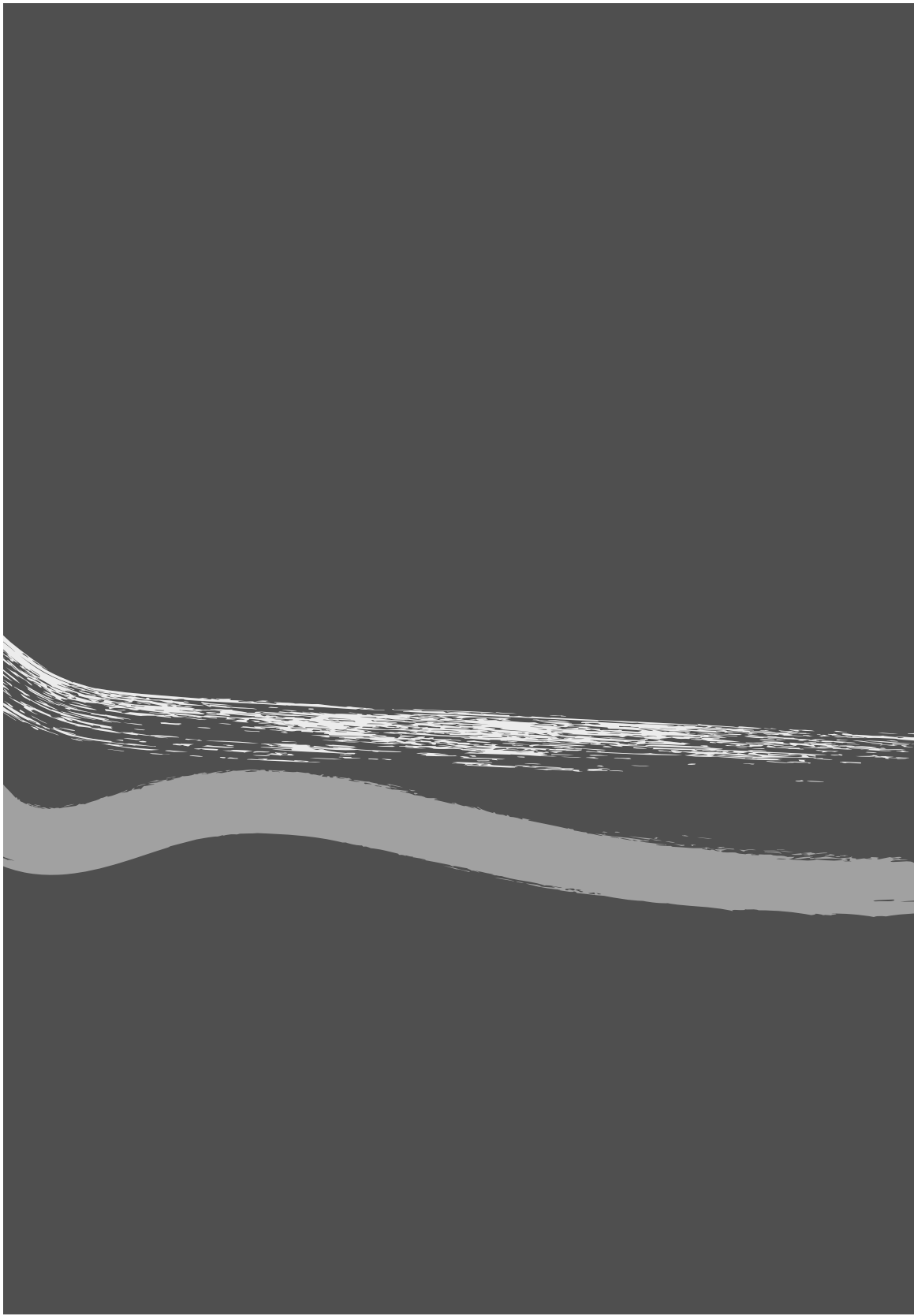


Session 2

Conflict





RECAP



- Tell each other something new that you learned about marriage on Session 1 and something new you learned about your partner.
- Then tell each other what it felt like to be listened to in Session 1, Conversation 5, "Effective Listening" (on page 15).

Session 2 – Conflict

Expecting conflict

Conflict is inevitable in every relationship

- we're different - with different backgrounds, different desires, different priorities, different personalities
- we're all naturally self-centered to some degree

The issue isn't whether we'll disagree; the issue is how we deal with those disagreements. The really important thing for every couple is to have the tools to resolve conflict constructively.

Managing anger

Anger is not wrong in itself; it is how we manage our anger that can be damaging.

Two animals help to illustrate two inappropriate and unhelpful ways of managing our anger:

- **rhinos:** let you know they're angry right away—they go on the attack
- **hedgehogs:** tend to hide their anger—they're likely to become quiet and withdraw
- both are damaging and ineffective ways of resolving conflict



Rhinos and hedgehogs can learn to air disagreements in a constructive way without hurting each other in the process.

CONVERSATION 1

10 minutes



RHINOS AND HEDGEHOGS

Ask yourself if you have more rhino or more hedgehog tendencies when you are angry. If you are not sure, check with your partner who may have a better idea!

Talk about how each of you typically responds when you feel hurt and how you display anger.

Recognizing and accepting our differences

Some of our differences have to do with our personality:

- more cautious / more impulsive
- organized / go with the flow
- take charge / prefer to support
- more extroverted / more introverted
- like to save money / like spending money

One personality preference isn't better or worse than the other—it's just different.

We can't expect our partner to change to be like us.

By recognizing and accepting our differences, we can learn to appreciate each other's strengths and support each other's weaknesses. In that way, we can work together effectively as a team.

CONVERSATION 2

10 minutes



RECOGNIZING YOUR DIFFERENCES

1. Mark against each issue where on the line your partner's and your own preferences each lie, e.g., *N = Nicky; S = Sila*

Money	S	N
	<i>Spend</i>	<i>Save</i>
Punctuality	S	N
	<i>Arrive early</i>	<i>Nearly late</i>

ISSUE	PREFERENCE
Money	Spend Save
Holidays	Adventure Rest
People	Spend time with others Spend time alone
Sleeping	Go to bed late Get up early
Tidiness	Keep everything tidy/under control Be relaxed/live in a mess
Disagreements	Pick a fight Keep the peace
TV	Keep it on Throw it out
Relaxation	Go out Be at home
Punctuality	Arrive early Nearly late
Planning	Make plans/stick to them Be flexible/change plans
Organization	Organized Disorganized
Decisions	Impulsive Cautious
Family	See often See rarely
Friends	Long list A few close ones
Music	Like it on constantly Only at certain times
Talking	Talkative Quiet
Change	Enjoy change Resist change
Initiative	Like to initiate Prefer to respond to others' ideas
Focus	Goal focused Relationship focused

2. Discuss how your differences can be complementary in your relationship.

Looking for solutions together

See that you're on the same side.

Look for an "us" solution.

Be ready to press the "pause button"

- is this the right time?
- is this the right place?



The 10 o'clock rule

The 10 o'clock rule can be called into play by either you or your partner if you are having an argument late in the evening. It means the argument has to be paused and postponed until a better time.

Looking for a solution together requires a shift of thinking to see that we're on the same side, not opposite sides, then discussing the issue together and looking for a solution that works for us.

Five steps to finding a solution

1. Identify and focus on the issue causing conflict

Take the issue that is causing conflict from between you.

Put it out in front of you and work on it together.

2. Use “I” statements

Avoid labeling—for example: “*You always...*” / “*You never...*”

Describe your feelings—for example: “*I feel upset by...*”

3. Listen to each other

Try to understand and value each other’s perspective.

Take turns to talk.

4. Brainstorm possible solutions

Talk about different possibilities.

It may help to write a list.

5. Choose the best solution for now and review later

If it doesn’t work, try another solution.

If you can’t find a solution together, ask for help.

CONVERSATION 3

10 minutes



USING THE FIVE STEPS

1. What patterns of resolving, or failing to resolve, conflict did you observe in your parents' (or main caregivers') marriage?
2. What are the trigger points for conflict in your relationship?
3. What causes conflict to escalate and what helps each of you to hit the "pause button"?
4. Which is the most important of the five steps for resolving conflict for each of you?

Process for healing hurt

Hurt is inevitable in marriage and this hurt must be healed if our relationship is to flourish.

There is a simple but powerful process for healing:

1. Talk about the hurt

Tell your partner when they have upset you.

Don't hold on to hurt or allow self-pity and resentment to build up.

Try asking each other regularly, "Is there anything you need to forgive me for?"

2. Say sorry

Pride can make it hard to say sorry.

Apologizing means taking responsibility for our wrong words or actions.

Do you find it hard to tell your partner when they have upset you or to say sorry when you have hurt them?



3. Forgive

Forgiveness is the greatest force for healing in a marriage.

Forgiveness IS NOT:

- forgetting the hurt happened
- pretending it doesn't matter
- failing to confront our partner's wrong and hurtful behavior

"[Love] keeps no record of wrongs."

– 1 CORINTHIANS 13:5

Forgiveness IS:

- facing the wrong done to us
- recognizing the emotions inside
- choosing not to hold the offence against our partner
- giving up our self-pity

Forgiveness is first and foremost a choice, not a feeling

- new feelings follow forgiveness
- forgiveness is a process—we often need to keep on forgiving (sometimes on a daily basis)
- forgiveness deals with anger and resentment—although we might still feel hurt until healing is complete

“

The word resentment expresses what happens if the cycle of blame goes uninterrupted. It means literally, “to feel again”; resentment clings to the past, relives it over and over, picks each fresh scab so that the wound never heals.

WHAT'S SO AMAZING ABOUT GRACE? BY PHILIP YANCEY

“Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”

— COLOSSIANS 3:13

CONVERSATION 4

15 minutes



HEALING HURT

Fill in points 1 and 2 with anything that comes to mind.

1. I feel hurt by what you did / didn't do / said / didn't say when:

2. I think you may be carrying hurt by what I did / didn't do / said / didn't say when:

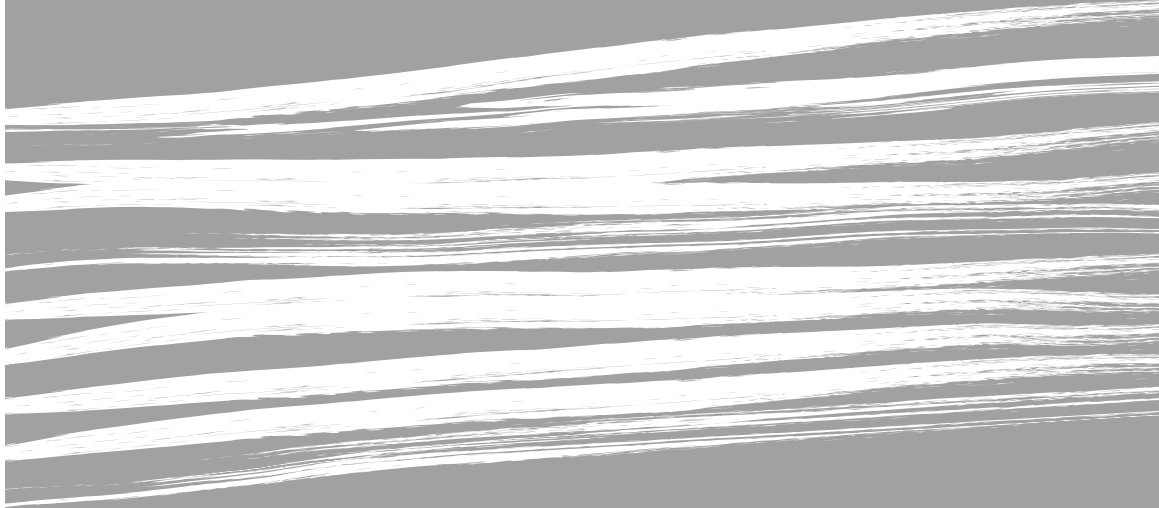
Show each other and reflect back what your partner has written. Then amend point 2 if necessary. Now, or later, complete points 3 and 4.

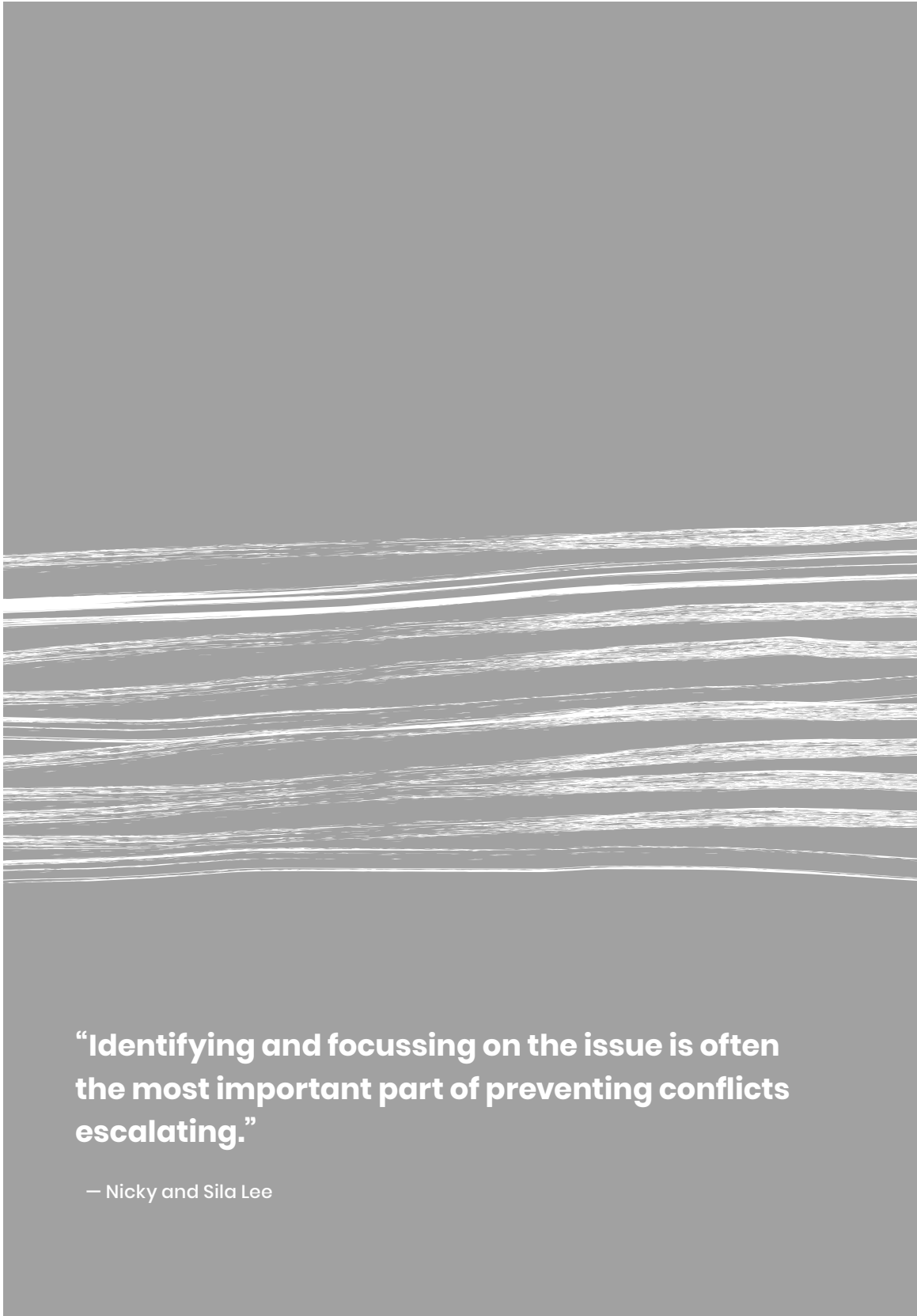
3. I am so sorry for:

4. I choose to forgive you for:

Take turns to say to your partner what you have written for points 3 and 4. If necessary, take more time over the coming week to resolve these issues. If you get stuck as a couple, ask for help.

Continuing the Conversation





**“Identifying and focussing on the issue is often
the most important part of preventing conflicts
escalating.”**

— Nicky and Sila Lee

Plan a date together

 *Morning*

 *Afternoon*

 *Evening*

<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thurs</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>	<i>Sun</i>

My turn / your turn to organize what we do.

This week, we could.....

Conversation starter on our next date



Ask your partner, "What makes us both laugh?"

And, "What could we do to create more times of fun and laughter between us?"

What does forgiveness mean to you?



How easy do you find it to forgive?

Think back to your upbringing: can you identify the people in your family who reacted more as the rhino and those who reacted more as the hedgehog in an argument?



Finding agreement



Agree on a suitable time and place to discuss one important issue that is causing disagreement between you.

1. Identify the issue.

2. How have each of you responded to this issue in the past?

Me

You

3. Both write down what you consider the main concern you each have regarding the issue.

Me

You

Discuss what you have each written down. Take turns to talk and be sure to listen to each other's point of view without blaming or criticizing.

4. Brainstorm possible solutions—do not rule out any at this stage.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5. Discuss the solutions to see which one would work best.

6. Try that solution. If it doesn't seem to work, go back to your list and try another one.