

Supplementary Module 15: Telling One's Own Story (Copyright by Eckhard Roediger)

This exercise was developed by Paul Kasyanik and Elena Romanowa in St. Petersburg for self-experience groups with couples. It can be introduced in-session. It helps deepening emotional connection and compassion between partners. In the joint imagery exercise (Module 9), we have already encountered one distressing childhood scene of the partner as an image. In this module, childhood experiences are shared more comprehensively—since many couples have only ever exchanged fragments, but rarely detailed accounts, of their childhoods.

Intervention. The narrating partner rests their head in the lap of the listening partner. Both may keep eyes open or closed, as they wish. The position should be comfortable (e.g., sitting on a sofa, leaning against a wall). While one person tells their story, the listening partner may gently stroke their head or shoulders. Commentary should be minimal—only validating, if at all. The main task is to *listen*.

The exercise need not be strictly time-limited, though 15–30 minutes is recommended. Afterwards, roles can switch—or the other partner may share on a different day.

This exercise is particularly valuable when painful childhood experiences are shared. By entering this experiential world together, both partners connect with the formative scenes in which core schemas were laid down. Later, when those schemas are triggered in the present, the feelings can more easily be recognized as schema-driven rather than caused by the partner. The couple can reassure each other that *“today we are here, and we will do better.”* This helps reduce the unconscious transmission of negative behavioral patterns across generations. Of course, positive childhood memories can also be shared in this way—which strengthens connection, too.

Possible homework:

During the “couple evening,” each partner takes 15–30 minutes to tell their own story.