

(Intimacy Backlash Re-Entry) Workshop, Pahoia Retreat

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- We are learning to feel safe with true intimacy. Be aware that after a couple recovery experience that brings you closer, we are prone to “intimacy backlash”. It’s an unconscious response we each can have that aims to create more distance between partners (such as feeling irritated, picking a fight, etc.).
- RCA Blue Book, 4th Edition, page 42: “Meetings often bring couples closer and encourage communication. But many couples have their biggest fights after a first, or an especially intimate, RCA meeting. We call this phenomenon **intimacy backlash**. This is not exclusive to newcomers. We have found it helpful to remind everyone about intimacy backlash. It is important to remember that when this happens, we are temporarily reverting to old behaviors. We need to remind ourselves and each other that this a *temporary* backlash. We are actually right on track and making progress. Keep coming back.

1. Re-Entry/Intimacy Backlash Suggestions

- Remember: First things first, if I am in HALT (Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired) address that **first** by practicing basic self-care and take care to avoid conflict since HALT means we are more easily triggered.
- Remember the Safety Guidelines!
- Plan something to do together for quality time later this week that both of you will enjoy.
- Pick a slogan that works for you now and use it: Take it Easy, One Day at a Time, Let go and Let God, It takes 200% to make a coupleship work (100% from each partner), etc.
- Go to a meeting (zoom or tele-meeting) and share about your retreat experience to ground yourself in what you learned.

If you start to feel triggered/tangled up ...

Use your RCA tools: Remember the Safety Guidelines, say the Serenity Prayer together, take a moratorium to connect with yourself/examine your part/calm yourself, a meeting of two (to share your feelings and recovery discoveries from the retreat) and/or practice Steps Ten, Eleven and/or Twelve (see below).

- **Step Ten:** Each of you share with each other at least one thing your partner has done that **helps** the relationship and something you’ve done that hurts or is **not** helpful to the relationship.
- **Step Eleven:** Do something together to strengthen your spiritual bond, such as meditating together (even for 5 or 10 minutes), reading recovery literature together, taking a peaceful meditative walk in nature, praying together.
- **Step Twelve:** Find a way to be of service to the coupleship (doing chores such as the dishes, walking the dog, listening to your partner, etc.). Allow yourself to enjoy the benefits/positive feelings of being of service. We **get** to be of service to our coupleships and our RCA program (rather than **have** to)!

Questions to consider in Break-Out groups:

1. What challenges are we facing after we leave the Retreat? Discuss and list them. Share some or all of this list with the other members of your break-out group.
2. Make a recovery plan to help you stay connected and out of conflict today, reminding ourselves that Intimacy Backlash can sneak up on us.
Write down three things you can commit to do to support your relationship over the next 48 hours and share them with the other RCA members in your breakout group