

Basic Strategy for Using Your Power Word

All personal growth involves releasing some non-constructive attitudes and habits and then replacing them with more constructive beliefs and behaviors.

Here's how to use your power word in the most basic way.

1. Think of an attitude, feeling, or behavior you would like to eliminate, release, or make disappear. For example, dejection, lonely, pressured, helpless, scared, etc. Think of a scene or situation when that emotion occurred. Rate the distress on a scale of 1-10 with 10 being very, very unpleasant. The more specific the situation the better. For example, lost in the department store vs. grade school was a rotten experience.
2. Then think of what your preferred response would be in that circumstance. When did you experience that response in your life? Get as specific as possible as you will utilize more regions of the brain with more specifics. If you don't have a personal memory then imagine someone who does have those traits (can be living or dead, real or fictional).

Label that scene with your power word so that repeating your power word will now access that scene in your mind.

3. Go back to the distressing attitude, feeling or behavior you identified above. Think of your power word. Keep thinking of it until the number is reduced to an acceptable level like a 1 or 2. If you hit some resistance, say it levels off at a number 4, simply say to yourself, "Perhaps there is a part of me that wants to hang on to some of that distress." Then use your power word again. Very often this will continue to reduce the level of distress.
4. If you still hit the wall of resistance, break down the problem into smaller parts and use your power word on each small part. Especially focus on the feelings in your body when you think about the distressing situation, and then repeat your power word.
5. Then think of your preferred response - what you want to do instead of feeling the distress you identified above, and use your power word. This will strengthen the preferred response. As an alternative, you may want to select a different even more powerful positive situation for your power word. You may also think of how an admired person (living or dead) would respond to the situation and use that as your role model power word.
6. Go back to the original problem in number 1 and rate the intensity of your distress again to check for improvement.

Using the Power Word with the Initiator-Inquirer

Applying the power word process to the Initiator-Inquirer process can be a rapid way to help you discuss difficult topics more easily.

First: Initiator describes the situation that is problematic. This is a non-blaming description of the topic of discussion. It's important there is no finger-pointing in this description. Then the Initiator rates how serious the situation is on a scale of 1-10.

For example, instead of saying “My partner is a slob around the house,” describe it as “We have a serious disagreement about how to manage the clutter in the house.”

Instead of saying the problem is “My partner is too withdrawn,” say, “We have some pretty basic disagreements about the quantity and quality of emotional contact.”

Second: Initiator describes their individual reaction to the situation in terms of what they think, feel and do.

Third: Initiator states the assumptions about partner in this situation.

Fourth: Initiator states what their own challenge is when this situation occurs.

Fifth: Initiator thinks about the kind of response that would be more constructive for him/herself (not for the partner) in this situation.

Sixth: Think of a time when you actually were responding in that constructive manner- it could be from any time period in your life. If you don't have one, you can construct one that would be like you want. Create lots of details in this image. Then give it a power word.

Seventh: Mentally rehearse the dialogue about the situation as an Initiator while repeating your power word. Especially focus on the feelings in your body while repeating your power word. Keep rehearsing until a significant drop in the tension occurs.

Eighth: Inquirer thinks of their own challenge when this topic comes up. Then think of a constructive way of responding to this topic and give it a power word. Then mentally rehearse being an Inquirer to reduce the emotional charge. Focus on the emotions/bodily feelings as you repeat your power word.

Ninth: Now do the Initiator-Inquirer and repeat your power word as needed to keep the tension reduced.

Again, in this round the major purpose is not to solve the problem until you both have had a chance to be the Initiator. However, occasionally a natural solution will spontaneously occur. Stay flexible.

Using Your Power Word to Strengthen Your Relationship

Objectives:

- Build goodwill and develop empathy toward your partner.
- Increase awareness of the effects of your positive and negative behavior on your partner.
- Increase your ability to see the bigger picture, avoid lurching from problem to problem and control your destiny.

Select a recurring or difficult problem and mentally complete the following steps:

1. Review a negative problem/pattern and then use your power word
2. When the problem shows up, reflect on your:
 - Ineffective thoughts*, and then use your power word on them.
 - Ineffective feelings*, and then use your power word on them.
 - Ineffective behaviors*, and then use your power word on them.
3. Imagine the negative outcome of your usual ineffective actions and attitudes on your partner and then use your power word.
4. To break this ineffective loop, mentally think about your preferred response that is more constructive and use your power word.