THE TIGHTER YOU HOLD

PURPOSE

Look at one person you love and hold too tight. Find the need underneath, the disguise your control wears, and the freedom you can give them instead.

INSTRUCTIONS

Pick one person you love: a partner, a child, a parent or a friend. Fill in page 1 now. Use page 2 for 7 days. 15 minutes.

STEP 1

Who is it, and what do I want from them?

Finish the sentence.

Example: My daughter. If she really loved me, she would call me every Sunday.

Who _____

If they really loved me, they would _____

STEP 2

What do I need them to do, so that I feel okay?

This is the need underneath. Tick what you are really after.

- ☐ Safe
- ☐ Wanted
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Enough
- ☐ In control
- ☐ Not alone

Need-love or gift-love? What I give them is mostly _____

STEP 3

Which disguise does my control wear?

Tick the ones you use with this person. Be straight with yourself.

- ☐ **Worry:** checking, calling, tracking
- ☐ **Guilt:** "after everything I've done"
- ☐ **Silence:** sulking, going cold
- ☐ **Other:** _____

What I actually do: _____

STEP 4

What does it cost me?

How do they act around me when I do it?

Example: She keeps calls short. She tells me less. I hear her news from her friends.

STEP 5

Give the three freedoms

Write one real thing for each.

FROM

They are free to leave. What would show them they are not trapped?

TO

They are free to be who they are. What part of them will I stop trying to change?

INSIDE

My peace doesn't depend on them. What will I do for myself when the urge comes?

STEP 6

Swap the disguise for influence

Ask clearly. Live it yourself. Let them change your mind too.

When I feel the urge to _____

I will _____

STEP 7

Every evening for 7 days

Tick yes or no.

DAY	DID I GIVE LOVE, OR ASK TO BE PAID?	DID I LEAVE THEM FREE TO CHOOSE?	WAS I OKAY, WHATEVER THEY CHOSE?
Day 1	GAVE · ASKED	YES · NO	YES · NO
Day 2	GAVE · ASKED	YES · NO	YES · NO
Day 3	GAVE · ASKED	YES · NO	YES · NO
Day 4	GAVE · ASKED	YES · NO	YES · NO
Day 5	GAVE · ASKED	YES · NO	YES · NO
Day 6	GAVE · ASKED	YES · NO	YES · NO
Day 7	GAVE · ASKED	YES · NO	YES · NO

STEP 8

After 7 days: what changed?

In them, and in me.

Why this works. Love that comes from need puts your peace in someone else's hands, so you try to control them. What parents know about their teenagers comes mostly from what the teenagers choose to tell them, far more than from checking up. In close friendships, people who are given freedom have better friendships and feel better, and so do the people who give it. A plan for the moment the urge comes makes you far more likely to follow through.

NEED-LOVE AND GIFT-LOVE (FROMM, 1956 · LEWIS, 1960) · CHILD DISCLOSURE (STATTIN & KERR, 2000) · AUTONOMY SUPPORT IN FRIENDSHIPS (DECI ET AL., 2006) · IF-THEN PLANS (GOLLWITZER & SHEERAN, 2006, META-ANALYSIS)