

Worksheets

Making the Shift

Write the same brief description of an event that upset you recently in both columns. Repeat this process until you’ve identified several events. When you’re done, read each version out loud. How does reading about the item in the “Thinking About” column differ from reading about it in the “Being With” column?

Thinking About	Being With
I’m thinking about... my partner’s grumpiness this week.	I’m being with... my partner’s grumpiness this week.
I’m thinking about...	I’m being with...
I’m thinking about...	I’m being with...
I’m thinking about...	I’m being with...
I’m thinking about...	I’m being with...
I’m thinking about...	I’m being with...
I’m thinking about...	I’m being with...
I’m thinking about...	I’m being with...

Being and Thinking Messages Checklist

Place a checkmark next to any message you recall receiving as a child, whether directly through words or commands, or indirectly, through behaviors you saw modeled. Write down any additional messages you received related to being or thinking under the appropriate heading.

Being Messages	Thinking Messages
<input type="checkbox"/> Just be.	<input type="checkbox"/> Think before you act.
<input type="checkbox"/> Stay with sensations.	<input type="checkbox"/> Think before you speak.
<input type="checkbox"/> Notice what you feel and observe.	<input type="checkbox"/> Think ahead.
<input type="checkbox"/> Let yourself sense.	<input type="checkbox"/> Who do you think you are?
<input type="checkbox"/> Trust the process.	<input type="checkbox"/> What do you think you're doing?
<input type="checkbox"/> Focus your attention inward.	<input type="checkbox"/> Be thoughtful.
<input type="checkbox"/> Allow what's happening.	<input type="checkbox"/> Think carefully.
<input type="checkbox"/> Learning takes patience.	<input type="checkbox"/> Be prepared for everything.
<input type="checkbox"/> Make space for what's arising.	<input type="checkbox"/> Think about the future.
<input type="checkbox"/> Tune in to yourself with kindness.	<input type="checkbox"/> Think back on what happened.
<input type="checkbox"/> Accept all of yourself.	<input type="checkbox"/> Let me do the thinking.
<input type="checkbox"/> Discomfort is normal.	<input type="checkbox"/> What are you, dumb?
<input type="checkbox"/> Rest in the experience.	<input type="checkbox"/> You'd better think ahead.
<input type="checkbox"/> Be present without avoiding or fixing it.	<input type="checkbox"/> Solve the problem.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Relationship Rumination Questionnaire

Read each item listed below and indicate how you would begin each sentence using the numeric scale. Choose the response that corresponds best with what you actually do rather than with what you think you should do. I never (0), I sometimes (1), I often (2), or I always (3):

1. ____ think I can convince my partner to act a certain way toward me.
2. ____ *think*, They may leave me if I don't find a way to make them stay.
3. ____ *think*, I should end this now since I'm going to disappoint my partner.
4. ____ think of all the ways I could have handled past events better as a partner.
5. ____ *think*, If I were better at relationships, I wouldn't suffer.
6. ____ *think*, Everyone else is in a better place than I am with my partner.
7. ____ analyze my partner's actions, words, and behaviors.
8. ____ analyze myself, my actions, my words, and my behaviors in the relationship.
9. ____ keep most of my thoughts from my partner because they're too negative.
10. ____ think about painful subjects without sharing my thoughts with my partner.
11. ____ *think*, My partner is too negative, and they should be positive.
12. ____ overshare in the hopes it'll bring us closer, and second-guess what or how much I've shared.
13. ____ *think*, Other couples are happier than we are.
14. ____ spend a lot of time deciphering my partner's intentions.
15. ____ spend a lot of time deciphering my own wants.
16. ____ fantasize about going someplace alone where I'll forget about my relationship.
17. ____ fantasize about becoming more attractive or successful so my partner will love me more.
18. ____ spend a lot of time comparing us with a better past relationship.
19. ____ imagine sad future scenarios with my partner based on sad past scenarios.
20. ____ *think*, There's something wrong with how I think about us.
21. ____ *think*, Our relationship is too challenging, and it's unfair.

- 22. ____ *think*, I should be happier than I am with my partner.
- 23. ____ *think*, They should be happier with me.
- 24. ____ *think*, I'm abnormal as a partner.
- 25. ____ *think*, They're abnormal as a partner.
- 26. ____ *think*, I can't function in this partnership.
- 27. ____ *think*, We've been through tough times, and they're bound to happen again.
- 28. ____ get mad at myself for bringing us down.
- 29. ____ get mad at my partner for bringing us down.
- 30. ____ *think*, I can't stand how much stress my/their overthinking causes me.

A lot of 2 and 3 suggests more overthinking. Mostly 0 and 1 suggests less.

My Blocks to Spotting Overthinking

Select a high-scoring item from the “Relationship Rumination Questionnaire.” What gets in the way of noticing the negative thoughts represented by this item? What can you do in the future whenever you experience this item rather than overthinking it? If you like, repeat this process with several other high-scoring items.

Item	What Makes It Hard to Spot	What I Can Do
#27	I don't realize it's harmful.	I'll practice grounding in one breath.

Rumination Cycles Log

Over the course of the next few days, write a brief five- to eight-word description of situations when your threat link was mildly activated. Write down the types of thoughts that typically follow. Note whether these thoughts reflect blame, control, doubt, worry, or self-pity.

Once you’ve identified between six to ten triggers and cycles, put a star next to the cycle that shows up most in your list; this is likely your dominant rumination cycle. Underline the second most frequently recurring cycle; this is likely your secondary rumination cycle.

Trigger	Associated Thoughts	Cycle(s)
William rearranged the dishes I loaded.	He corrects everything I do. He's controlling. He doesn't appreciate me.	Blame cycle

Attachment Style Assessment

To explore your own attachment style, select only one statement from each group. Don't choose a statement that reflects how you wish you felt—choose the most accurate one. If more than one statement seems to apply to you, choose the one that connects with your deepest and most frequent emotional reality.

- A. I have a need to be closer to my partner than I am.
 - B. I have a need for more space and time to myself in my relationship.
 - C. Whether my partner and I are close or distant, I feel secure.
-
- A. I wish I knew more about my partner's thoughts, feelings, or inner world.
 - B. Respecting privacy and separateness is a priority for me in relationships.
 - C. I'm content with the balance of what my partner and I share and keep to ourselves.
-
- A. I wish we did more fun things together as a couple.
 - B. Having freedom to pursue your own interests is non-negotiable.
 - C. There's a natural, seamless flow of time together and apart in my relationship.
-
- A. It feels like I can handle anything as long as my partner and I stay connected.
 - B. Connection takes a lot of effort and energy, and I'm not always sure I'm doing it right.
 - C. Whether or not my partner and I are connected, I trust we'll reconnect again soon.
-
- A. I feel most relaxed when my partner reassures me of their commitment.
 - B. I feel most relaxed when there's no pressure to make hard and fast commitments.
 - C. I'm able to relax even when my partner feels doubtful or insecure about us.

You may lean toward an anxious attachment style if you scored more A than B or C answers. You may lean toward an avoidant attachment style if you scored more B than A or C answers. You may lean toward a secure attachment style if you scored more C than A or B answers. If you scored an equal number of A, B or C answers—representing a “tie” between two attachment styles—reread pages 59 – 63 and sense into which style resonates most for you.

My Small Wins

Record a few of your recent small wins. Add to this list every day and read it regularly.

Today I noticed that when no one changes the toilet paper roll, it's a trigger for me.

Today I recognized that I slipped into a self-pity cycle when my wife went biking with friends.

Today _____
_____.

Today _____
_____.

Today _____
_____.

Today _____
_____.

Today _____
_____.

Today _____
_____.

Today _____
_____.

Path to SLOW Down

Circle 1 for “never,” 2 for “rarely,” 3 for “sometimes,” 4 for “often,” and 5 for “always.”

I’m willing to slow down if it means I’ll understand things better.	1	2	3	4	5
I openly embrace feeling bored.	1	2	3	4	5
With complex problems, I take my time discovering solutions.	1	2	3	4	5
Even when things go wrong, I’m confident that I’ll learn something from them.	1	2	3	4	5
Listening to others expands my perspective.	1	2	3	4	5
I’m at peace when events don’t turn out the way I want them to.	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy learning.	1	2	3	4	5
I believe in working through resentment for my own well-being.	1	2	3	4	5
I find silver linings in adversity.	1	2	3	4	5
I usually end up caring more about the process of reaching my goal than about the goal itself.	1	2	3	4	5
When I don’t force life, what unfolds is often better than I expected.	1	2	3	4	5
I find challenges interesting.	1	2	3	4	5

Add up your scores for examples 1, 3, 9, and 11. If you scored between 16 and 20, a patience mindset may be one of your strengths. Add up your scores for 2, 5, 7, and 12. If you scored between 16 and 20, curiosity may be one of your strengths. Add up your scores for 4, 6, 8, and 10. If you scored between 16 and 20, nonattachment may be one of your strengths.

Consider the Alternative

Select a couple of the blaming, worrying, doubting, controlling, or self-pitying thoughts you identified in the “Rumination Cycles Log” exercise and adjust each one in some small way—such as by changing one or more pronouns or substituting a contrasting adjective—to create an “alternative version” of it. Ask yourself, “Is any small part of this alternative thought true?” See if you can be with the alternative thought long enough to experience a softening. This softening can give you a taste of what it feels like to shift from a fixed to a growth mindset.

Labeled Thoughts	Alternative Thoughts
Manuel doesn't get me.	I don't get Manuel.
He wishes I were thinner.	He does not wish I were thinner.
He doesn't care about me.	I don't care about me.

My Warning Lights List

Read the lists below and check the personal and partner cues that resonate for you. Add any other cues you can think of that aren't on the list.

Personal Cues

- ☐ I have a hard time with sleep (too much, too little, being tired after sleeping).
- ☐ Parts of my body hurt for no apparent reason (jaw, neck, back, muscles, joints, head).
- ☐ I'm critical of myself and others.
- ☐ I engage in a nervous habit (picking, biting, chewing, tapping).
- ☐ I disregard my own health-related limits (eating poorly, too much, or too little; overworking; disregarding my need for exercise or social connection; smoking; drinking alcohol; using or overusing mind-altering substances; gaming; excessive internet use).
- ☐ Friends, family members, my partner, and coworkers seem to be avoiding me.
- ☐ Strangers, acquaintances, and friends have been unusually critical of me.
- ☐ I forgo healthy activities I enjoy (spending time with friends, reading, journaling, playing an instrument, exercising, meditating, travelling, volunteer work).
- ☐ I get excessively busy.
- ☐ I have more annoying accidents or bad luck than usual (for example, stubbing my toe or injuring other parts of my body; getting parking tickets; losing my cell phone, wallet, or keys).
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Partner Cues

- ☐ My partner says I haven't been acting like myself lately.
- ☐ My partner gets defensive and insists I'm thoughtless.
- ☐ My partner has asked me/us to get help/see a therapist.
- ☐ My partner wishes I took better care of myself.
- ☐ My partner says I'm stressed, depressed, angry, or checked out.
- ☐ My partner says I drink or work too much or overuse my phone.
- ☐ My partner says I've been sleeping, exercising, or eating too much, too little, or poorly.
- ☐ My partner has pointed out a bad habit I've been engaging in a lot lately.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Thinking About vs. Being With Cues

Identify three recent, specific incidents when a “warning light” flashed—either a personal or partner cue. Write each of these cues down. Note some of the ruminative thoughts that typically accompany this cue. Imagine how you might have viewed the cue differently if you were able to shift from a “thinking about” to a “being with” approach.

Personal or Partner Cue	Thinking About	Being With
I ate two pints of ice cream.	What's wrong with me? I shouldn't have eaten all that ice cream. That was such a dumb thing to do. Why can't I take better care of myself?	Bingeing on sweets is one of my warning lights for rumination. I guess I'm scared my dad and my future father-in-law will make a scene.

Labeling Facts and Pseudofacts

Look through your journal and select an exercise you’ve already completed—one where you’ve labeled thoughts. Note whether the thoughts you’ve labeled are facts or pseudofacts. If a thought is a fact, provide evidence. Otherwise, label whether it’s a judgement, opinion, assumption, or expectation.

Thinking About	Fact or Pseudofact	Evidence
Ronald eats poorly.	F	I see him eat only processed food all day.
He has high blood pressure.	F	Medical tests prove this.
He'd take care of himself if he loved me.	PF	Assumption

My Triggers List

Identify a few recent moments that felt threatening and set you off. Summarize them in the “Trigger” column. Note the day and time and the intensity of your reaction. Repeat this process several times a day over the course of the next week until you have a list of recurring relationship triggers.

Date and Time	Trigger	Intensity (1–5) (1 = moderately annoyed, 5 = very upset)
Monday 2:15 p.m.	When my girlfriend let the storm door fall back instead of holding it open for me	3

Labeling Attachment Fears

Put a checkmark next to common fears you experience now or have experienced in the past in your relationship. Circle the three fears you experience most often.

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> being abandoned | <input type="checkbox"/> being shamed | <input type="checkbox"/> being misinterpreted |
| <input type="checkbox"/> being controlled | <input type="checkbox"/> being tricked | <input type="checkbox"/> being unappreciated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> being rejected | <input type="checkbox"/> being betrayed | <input type="checkbox"/> being hurt |
| <input type="checkbox"/> being violated | <input type="checkbox"/> being laughed at | <input type="checkbox"/> being manipulated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> being unwanted | <input type="checkbox"/> being dismissed | <input type="checkbox"/> being objectified |
| <input type="checkbox"/> being excluded | <input type="checkbox"/> being overlooked | <input type="checkbox"/> being used |
| <input type="checkbox"/> being devalued | <input type="checkbox"/> being unheard | <input type="checkbox"/> being blamed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> being neglected | <input type="checkbox"/> being unseen | <input type="checkbox"/> being targeted |
| <input type="checkbox"/> being ignored | <input type="checkbox"/> being exploited | <input type="checkbox"/> being undermined |
| <input type="checkbox"/> being mocked | <input type="checkbox"/> being dominated | <input type="checkbox"/> being belittled |
| <input type="checkbox"/> being ridiculed | <input type="checkbox"/> being misunderstood | <input type="checkbox"/> being forgotten |

Labeling Worksheet

Set a timer at regular intervals to alert you to check in with your thoughts throughout the day. Label the thoughts you’re aware of when the timer sounds in the “Thought” column, letting the content be raw and using short phrases and feeling words. Label the time in the “Time” column. Label the type of thought (fact or pseudofact) in the “Type” column. Label the rumination cycle in the “Cycle” column and include a brief description of a possible trigger in the “Trigger” column. Finally, label the fear you experienced in the “Attachment Fear” column. If you’re not sure what to write in any of these columns, write N/A for “not applicable” or leave it blank.

Time	Thoughts	Type (F/PF)	Cycle	Trigger	Attachment Fear

Labeling Worksheet Example

Refer to this sample worksheet for guidance with the “Labeling Worksheet.”

Time	Thoughts	Type (F/PF)	Cycle	Trigger	Attachment Fear
10:00 a.m.	She's going to cheat on me. I was stupid for trusting her. It's not fair.	PF, PF, PF	Worry, Self-pity	An intern at work reminded me of her work colleague.	Being abandoned
11:00 a.m.	Margo didn't respond to my text. She's a selfish person. She's irresponsible.	F, PF	Blame	Looking at my phone every few minutes and not seeing a text from Margo.	Being ignored
12:00 p.m.	I'm ruminating again. These are just thoughts. I can observe them.	F, F, F	N/A	N/A	N/A
1:00 p.m.	I should check her devices tonight. It would help to catch her in another lie. That would show her I'm no one's fool.	PF, PF	Control	A memory of my parents announcing their divorce.	Being betrayed, being made a fool of
2:00 p.m.	I don't know how to choose the right girlfriend. Why didn't I see the red flags?	PF, PF	Doubt	Seeing a couple in the park holding hands.	Being alone

Vulnerability Trio Quiz

Answer the following questions about one another rather than about yourselves. If you're taking this quiz alone, however, answer them about yourself as objectively as possible.

1. I think my partner is tuned in most to sensory experiences related to:
 - a. sight
 - b. smell
 - c. taste
 - d. touch/physical sensation
 - e. sound
2. One example of a time when my partner seemed tuned in to what I circled in the last question is:

3. (True/False) I've noticed that my partner tends to wait till the last minute to eat, sleep, use the restroom, or take care of an injury.
4. I would rate my partner's comfort level experiencing the full range of their emotions at:
 - a. total ease
 - b. mostly easeful
 - c. some unease
 - d. uneasy
 - e. very uneasy
5. (True/False) Under the right circumstances, my partner can calmly and directly talk about it when they're angry, sad, vulnerable, scared, lonely, or jealous.
6. There are certain emotions or feelings my partner is more comfortable with (for example, anger or joy) and others they're less comfortable with (for example, fear or sadness).
7. (True/False) My partner is able to be spontaneous and also appropriately cautious, depending on the situation.

8. My partner is best at (choose one):
 - a. soothing themselves
 - b. choosing the right moment to say tough things
 - c. receiving feedback nonreactively
9. My partner sometimes has a hard time:
 - a. making decisions
 - b. taking necessary risks
 - c. setting appropriate boundaries in the heat of the moment

Questions 1 through 3 reference sensory life. Questions 4 through 6 reference emotional life. Questions 7 through 9 reference impulses.

Welcoming My Impulses

Notice any recurring sensations in your body and see if there are any impulses connected to them. Welcome impulses by finding a movement, gesture, or action that expresses them safely. If you have a history of being impulsive or mindlessly acting out impulses, practice containing them and experiencing them internally without expressing them.

Note the different aspects of your experience in the appropriate columns below.

Sensation	Impulse	I Welcomed It By	How That Felt
Heavy head, tired arms	Curl up in a ball	I curled up on the floor of my office in a ball for one minute.	Silly, sad, freeing

Healthy Thinking

Identify a trigger, along with the kinds of thoughts and rumination cycles that typically follow it. Then, write a new thought response that draws on healthy thinking in the categories of adaptive self-reflection, metacognition, emotional intelligence, problem solving, and positive reappraisal.

Trigger	Rumination Cycle	Adaptive Self-Reflection	Metacognition	Emotional Intelligence	Problem Solving	Positive Reappraisal
Steven opened my mail "by accident."	He's spying on me. He's controlling me. He's not trustworthy. (Blame cycle)	I can't change what he did. I can address my need for privacy and boundaries.	I know I tend to assume the worst and overreact when he makes mistakes.	I feel angry and hurt. I imagine Steven feels ashamed and defensive.	We could come up with ways to avoid this kind of error, like opening our mail together.	Our goal is to be better partners. This challenge is an opportunity to handle things calmly as we move toward our goal together.

Bonus Chapter: Power and Privilege

If you're a gay white cisgender woman and your partner is a Black woman, have you noticed situations when you are treated differently? What have you observed as a Latino man when going out to a restaurant with your white female partner with a disability? As a Black man in his thirties with an older white female partner reviewing a contract with an older white male lawyer and his younger white female colleague, are you conscious of anything unusual or unsettling in the way they relate to you? If you're an Asian American male partnered with a Mexican immigrant female working in the same company, how are you treated differently? How are you addressed? Have you picked up on hurtful innuendos or heard jokes that sting? Do you sense that you're equally respected?

Privilege may play out subtly or overtly in your everyday life. The salesperson at a car dealership makes eye contact with one of you while ignoring the other partner, making assumptions about who has the most money in the relationship based on gender, age, or race. You're overlooked or ignored repeatedly in situations, whereas your partner is regularly attended to. Or maybe the concept of privilege seems puzzling and opaque to you because you take basic human rights, such as the right to safety and respect, for granted. If so, how do you react to your partner insisting that they are denied these same privileges you've come to expect in everyday situations, such as when they enter a 7-11, wait in a hotel lobby, stand in line at an airport, walk down a sidewalk, or hail a taxi?

Notice what gets in the way of talking about the differing degrees of privilege between you and your partner. Power hierarchies and imbalances exist. They're embedded in the institutional fabric of our financial, governmental, educational, medical, mental health, and legal systems. Where do you fit into these hierarchies? How does the way you're treated differently from your partner in similar situations and contexts affect your sense of equity, safety, connection, and trust as a couple? When privilege isn't recognized and discussed, it becomes a toxic omission that pollutes your relationship field. If you know, or recognize, how you're the beneficiary of hidden privileges, what can you do to increase your own awareness of privilege and power and the ways it may blind you to your partner's experiences?

Here are a few examples of ways your hidden privilege may show up in your relationship:

- I'm rarely compelled to defend my gender, race, sexual identity, or ability status.
- I'm comfortable walking down many streets through most cities and towns.
- For the most part, I feel at ease with authorities and authority figures.
- I'm comfortable with media portrayals of people who look like me or represent my gender, race, ethnicity, sexual identity, or ability status.
- People direct mostly positive or neutral attention toward me in most situations.
- I think of myself as your "average, normal person."
- I'm rarely in situations where I feel uncomfortable based on others' biases.
- My ancestors are fully credited with their contributions to modern civilization.
- My ancestors' history is accurately represented in history books.

SOLO EXERCISE: Invisible Privilege Log

Review the list above and identify three hidden or invisible privileges you benefit from which you know—or suspect—your partner doesn't enjoy to the same degree as you do. Then, in a journal, write "Invisible Privilege Log" at the top of a blank page. Log the invisible privileges you've identified. If you identify any additional privileges not on the list, log those too.

Over the course of the next week, several times a day, put yourself in your partner's shoes as you're walking onto a bus or into a subway car, parking after dark, making a special request of a waiter, or reading a politically charged bumper sticker in traffic. Imagine their experience in this situation, how it might differ from yours, and how one or more of the invisible privileges you've identified may factor into your different experiences.

JOINT EXERCISE: Invisible Privilege and the Relationship Field

Share what you've written down with your partner as Speaker and Listener (refer to the "Intentional Speaking and Listening" section in the book's introduction for a refresher on creating safety and fostering connection in these roles). Even though approaching these sensitive topics can raise partners' anxiety levels and trigger rumination cycles, you can use the SLOW process to support you in facing issues related to power and privilege in your relationship in the same way you would use it to work through any of your triggers.

When Eddie (from chapter 1) starts to examine his white, male privilege in one of his graduate courses, he begins wondering about the ways these invisible privileges impact his relationship with Chandra, who is African American. He has always assumed that she inhabits the same reality he does. As a result, he has minimized her challenges and struggles as a Black woman. Many of their conflicts have centered around Chandra feeling lonely and misunderstood and Eddie feeling angry. Through seeing and labeling his thoughts and rumination cycles, he catches glimpses of the ways he perpetuates invisible privilege by assuming a fixed mindset. He works on cultivating a growth mindset and opening himself up to *being with* his underlying vulnerabilities rather than anxiously overthinking. He practices welcoming the sensations, emotions, and impulses that underlie his rumination cycles related to his white, male privilege rather than invalidating Chandra's reality.

Below, you'll find a list of questions you can ask your partner once you've shared your list of invisible privileges.

- * Can you think of a specific situation recently when you experienced me as benefiting from one of these invisible privileges?
- * How did it impact you when I benefited from this invisible privilege?
- * What can I do to bring this invisible privilege out into the open in our relationship so that it doesn't remain a "toxic omission?"
- * When I live from a place of deeply understanding and recognizing my invisible privilege consistently, how do you imagine it will help us create more safety and trust in our relationship?

When Your Partner Is a Cause

Unacknowledged privilege creates a great deal of suffering in the world and in human relationships. For this reason, it's important to call it out in yourself and acknowledge it rather than deny its existence. This is the skill of "taking ownership." Privilege has a history with deep roots. It doesn't only exist "out there" in the world beyond our relationships; it lives in our most intimate connections with people we love. Do your own research on the ways racism, white supremacy, classism, heterosexism, and ableism are embedded in our political, legal, criminal justice, and educational systems. Ijeoma Oluo's book *So You Want to Talk About Race* and Ibram X. Kendi's book *How to Be an Antiracist* are bestselling books on this subject. Online programs such as "The Great Unlearn" by author and founder of The Loveland Foundation Rachel Cargle (<http://rachelcargle.com>) can help you do your own work on dismantling invisible privilege without placing the burden on your partner as you shift your mindset, beliefs, and views in ways that foster interdependence, healthy boundaries, and safety with your partner related to privilege.

Imagine you're driving through Greenwich, Connecticut, with your white partner, when he says, "Why can't you stop cringing at the sound of cop cars?" His comment points to a vividly real, painful, and legitimate *relationship* concern. He is unaware of what it means to live inside your body in a culture where sirens have different implications for a person of color than for a white person. Nurturing interdependence, healthy boundaries, and safety in your relationship field requires partners to see the harm they cause in situations like these. Becoming aware of your unacknowledged privilege involves repairing—on an individual level—mistakes and injustices that have been committed societally for generations and are still being committed today.

If you're a woman in a heterosexual relationship and your male partner ignores your request to stop touching your leg, your partner's disregard for your boundaries is a serious issue. If it continues, you won't feel respected, safe, or valued for who you are. You may spin disempowering rumination cycles that confuse the issue rather than bringing clarity or leading to action and change. Understanding relationship rumination and getting to know yourself and how triggers like these affect you will lead to *more* personal power, not less.

If you overthink any of the topics or items below, your relationship rumination may intersect with systemic privileges and socially embedded power imbalances.

- A partner's objectively demeaning words and behavior
- A partner's dehumanizing remarks and assumptions
- A belief that you're causing or contributing to your partner's prejudices
- A partner's contemptuous or shaming reactions or responses to social injustice, white privilege, classism, prejudice, racism, nativism, antisemitism, ethnocentrism, ableism, or other forms of systemic oppression
- A partner's sexist, homophobic, or racially charged jokes
- Shame and discomfort related to your partner's prejudices
- A partner's aggression or defensiveness related to privilege
- A partner's insults and judgments of other people based on body shape or size, gender or gender orientation, sexual identity, skin color, or appearance
- A partner's mockery or contempt toward marginalized or oppressed people
- A partner's assumptions of others based on stereotypes
- A partner's support for leaders and groups representing dominant cultural narratives of heteronormativity, whiteness, or patriarchal values
- A partner's sense of entitlement to rights and privileges others don't have—including the right to basic safety and dignity