



A HOLD ME TIGHT PRACTICE

FINDING THE RAW SPOTS

A raw spot is an attachment vulnerability, a place where a specific partner move hits harder than it seems to warrant. Once you know where yours are, you stop misreading each other's reactions as bad behavior and start seeing the older story underneath.

FOUR SIGNS YOU JUST HIT ONE

Raw spots show up in patterns. These are the signals to slow down and notice one is running.

- **The reaction is bigger than the moment**
A comment produces flooding, defensiveness, or shutdown in a way that seems out of scale. That gap between the size of the event and the size of the response is usually a raw spot.
- **The same wound gets hit over and over**
Different content, same familiar hurt. "You always make me feel invisible." "It is like I do not matter to you." "I never come first." The words themselves are worth listening to.
- **The body reacts before you can think**
Heat in the chest, closing throat, dropping stomach, going quiet inside. The nervous system has recognized something before conscious thought caught up.
- **You leave the interaction in an old feeling**
Not just angry or hurt about now. Small, alone, ashamed, unwanted, or invisible in a way that feels older than this relationship.

COMMON RAW-SPOT THEMES (SUE JOHNSON)

Most raw spots translate down to one of six attachment themes: **deprivation** (I will not get what I need), **rejection** (I am not wanted), **abandonment** (I will be left alone), **invalidation** (my feelings do not count), **judgment** (I am not good enough), or **betrayal** (I cannot trust you). When your partner reacts big to something small, one of these has been touched.





SIX RAW SPOTS IN REAL LIFE

Six of the most common attachment raw spots we see clinically, with the small partner moves that tend to activate each one and the older story often sitting underneath.

The “I don’t matter” spot

ACTIVATOR MOMENTS

Your partner is on their phone when you come home, interrupts you mid-story, forgets a plan you told them twice about, gives the dog a longer greeting than you.

OLDER STORY POINTERS

Often traces to being the middle child in a large family, taking on a caretaker role young, or growing up in a house where being quiet and helpful was how you earned attention.

The “I’m too much” spot

ACTIVATOR MOMENTS

Your partner sighs when you get emotional, makes a joke to defuse a serious conversation, says “let’s move on” before you feel done, checks their phone while you are still upset.

OLDER STORY POINTERS

Often traces to a parent who could not tolerate big feelings, being labeled dramatic or sensitive as a child, a sibling who got quiet attention while you were told to calm down.

The “I’ll be left” spot

ACTIVATOR MOMENTS

Your partner works late without checking in, goes silent during conflict, mentions an ex fondly, has a plan you were not included in.

OLDER STORY POINTERS

Often traces to a parent who left through divorce, illness, or emotional distance; a friend group that dropped you; an early partner who cheated or disappeared.

The “I’m not enough” spot

ACTIVATOR MOMENTS

Your partner corrects a small detail, suggests a better way to do something you were already doing, praises someone else warmly, raises an eyebrow at your idea.

OLDER STORY POINTERS

Often traces to a critical parent, a coach whose praise was rare and conditional, a sibling positioned as the smart or successful one, love that felt performance-based.

The “I can’t be trusted” spot

ACTIVATOR MOMENTS

Your partner double-checks a fact you shared, asks who you were with, seems to verify your version of events, sounds skeptical of something small.

OLDER STORY POINTERS

Often traces to a past betrayal in this relationship, being falsely accused as a kid, a family where lying was the safest move, a parent who assumed the worst.

The “I’m invisible” spot

ACTIVATOR MOMENTS

Your partner does not notice a haircut, does not ask how a big meeting went, walks past you to greet the dog first, forgets what you had scheduled for the day.

OLDER STORY POINTERS

Often traces to parents focused on a louder sibling, teachers who overlooked you, being the “easy” child in a family with a louder one, feeling like the placeholder.

The point is not to protect the raw spots forever. It is to know them, name them, and let your partner in on them, so the two of you stop stepping on them by accident and start meeting them on purpose.

EDUCATIONAL ONLY, NOT THERAPY.





MAP YOUR OWN

Journal privately, then share in a calm moment. Both partners answer these same prompts about their own raw spots first.

PROMPT 01

Recall the last time a raw spot got hit

What was the moment? What did your partner do or say? Be as specific as you can, and stay with one instance, not the pattern.

PROMPT 02

Rate the event versus the reaction

Rate the actual event 1–10. Rate your reaction 1–10. The gap between those numbers points at a raw spot. A big gap is a signal, not overreaction.

PROMPT 03

What did it feel like in my body?

Heat in the chest, closing throat, dropping stomach, going numb, wanting to run. Bodies remember before words. Track where the sensation lived.

PROMPT 04

Which theme lit up?

Deprivation, rejection, abandonment, invalidation, judgment, or betrayal? Sometimes more than one. Which was the sharpest?

PROMPT 05

Sketch the older version

When did you first learn this feeling? Not to blame anyone, just to notice the age and the setting where the sensation was first practiced. Often earlier than the current relationship.

PROMPT 06

What would help right now if I could ask?

A concrete request. "A hand on my back." "Tell me you are not going anywhere." "Sit with me without trying to fix it." Most people have never let themselves say it out loud.

SHARE WITH YOUR PARTNER (IN A CALM MOMENT)

Not a fight moment, a calm one. Try this opening: "There is a spot in me that reads that as X. It is old, it is not your fault, and I want to tell you about it so you can help me not fall into it alone." Then swap and receive theirs. Adapted from Sue Johnson's Hold Me Tight (Conversation 2).

