Exploring Hurts from our Families of Origin

Our current relationships are influenced by hurts and patterns of relating from past relationships, particularly from our families. In this exercise, you and your partner will explore your past hurts and how those may affect your relationship. You will then share with each other what you discovered and discuss how you can use this new knowledge to increase understanding and closeness with each other. The following exercise is not meant to be completed in a short period of time. Each part may take days or weeks of reflection to discover meaningful information about oneself and the relationship.

1.	Reflect on your relationship with your parents. Think of any ways your needs were not met or of hurts you carry from your family past. Write these down.
2.	Study the three common attachment styles and determine your predominant style.
3.	Think of ways that your past hurts and your attachment style affect your relationship with your spouse. Write these down.

4.	Share with your partner your past hurts, your attachment style, and how you think these may affect how you relate with each other. At this point of the exercise, spend a lot of time making sure you listen, understand, and can reflect back to your partner what he or she is telling you. It is very important for you to truly understand your partner's deep hurts and how these hurts have impacted your partner's life.
5.	Discuss with your partner ways that you can accommodate for each other's past hurts and attachment styles. Think of and discuss practical ways you can use this new knowledge to improve how you and your partner relate.