

MARRIAGE BOOSTER SERIES



The Art of Fighting

*Dialogue and Empathy
in Marriage*

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Reflection Questions

Think about a recent/major conflict you had.

- a. How did you behave?
- b. What behaviors do you think were most helpful?
- c. What behaviors do you think were least helpful?

My Goal

Discuss foundational
understanding and
practical tools for healthier
conflict resolution



The Reality

- Conflict is inevitable, sometimes even necessary
- Management is key
- Attachment style can influence conflict behavior
 - Demand-Withdraw Pattern in conflict

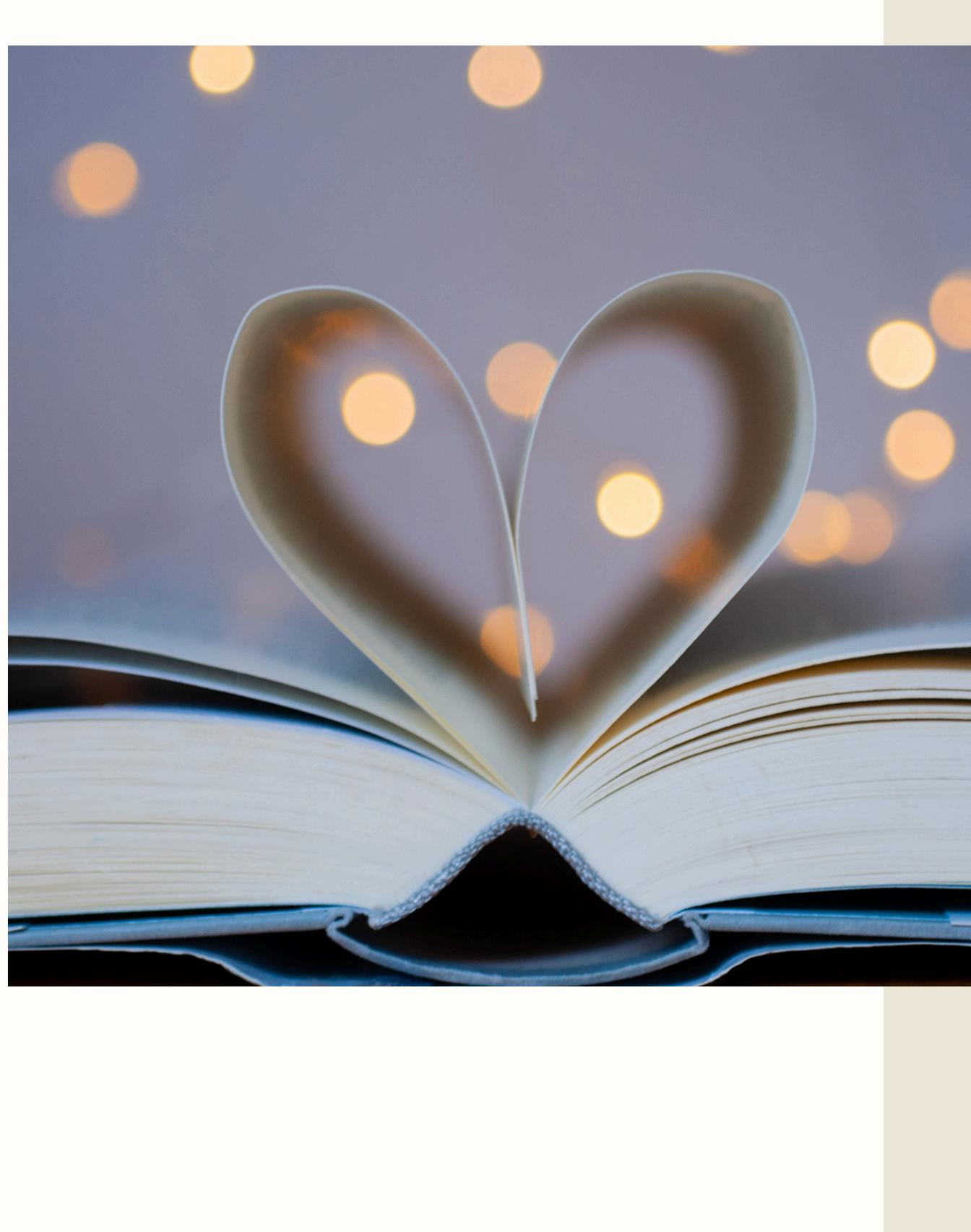




When conflict is managed well



- stronger connection
- deeper understanding
- personal growth
- increased resilience



Overview

- ♥ Unhelpful Conflict Patterns
- ♥ Effective Conflict Management
 - ♥ safe & respectful environment
 - ♥ understanding and expressing needs and feelings
 - ♥ problem solving and negotiation
 - ♥ repair attempts and de-escalation

Unhelpful Conflict Patterns

Gottmann's “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse”



1. **Criticism** - attacking partner's personality or character
2. **Defensiveness** - seeing oneself as the victim and warding off perceived attacks
3. **Contempt** - acting superior, mocking, or being disrespectful
4. **Stonewalling** - withdrawing from the interaction to avoid conflict

Negative Communication Patterns



1. Escalation - negative exchanges becoming increasingly intense
2. Invalidation - discounting or dismissing a partner's feelings or perspectives
3. Negative Interpretation - assuming the worst intentions in a partner's behaviors
4. Kitchen Sinking - bringing up past grievances during a current conflict to avoid conflict

Promoting Healthy Ways of Managing Conflict



1. Safety and Understanding



- Establishing ground rules
 - regulation before discussion
 - respect at all times
- Active listening
 - focusing on the partner's perspective
 - paraphrasing what was said

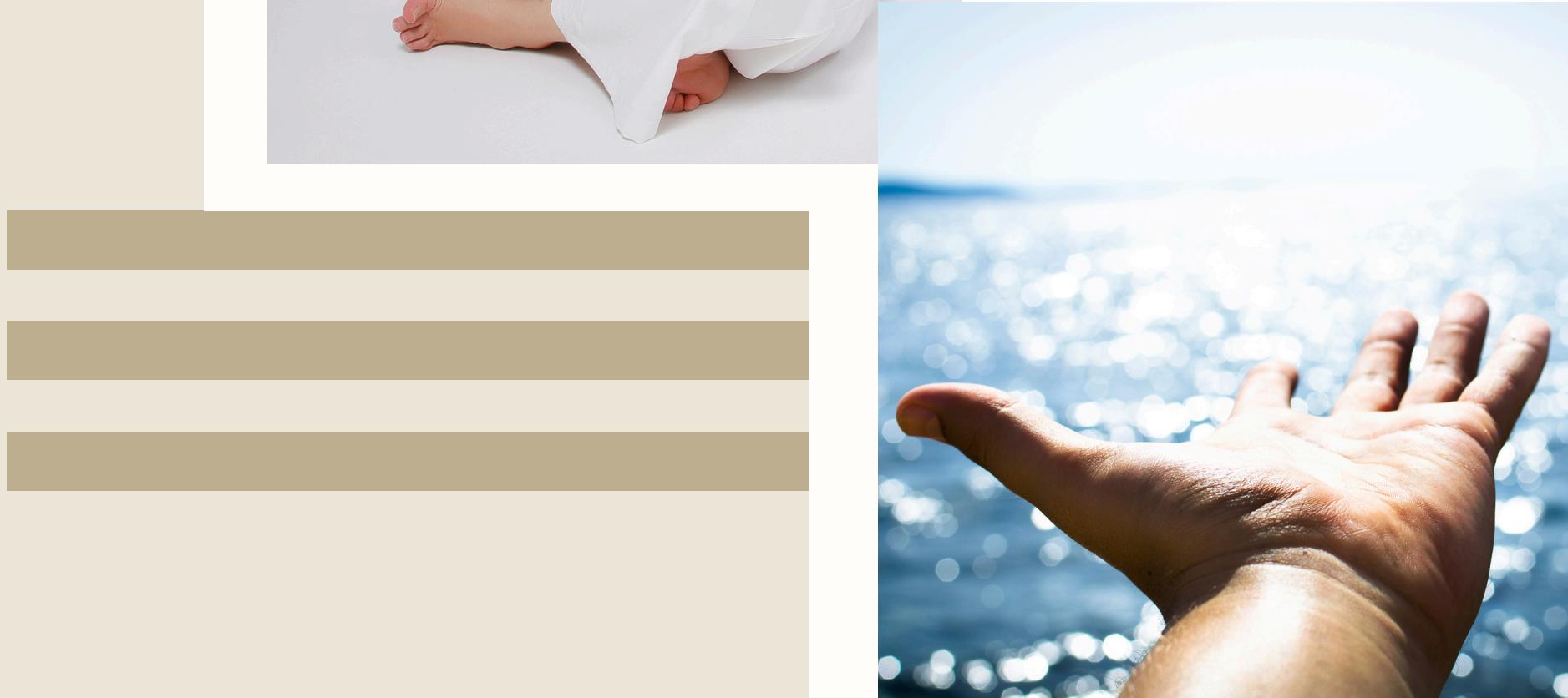
1. Safety and Understanding



- Speaking non-defensively
 - using “I” statements to express feelings without blame

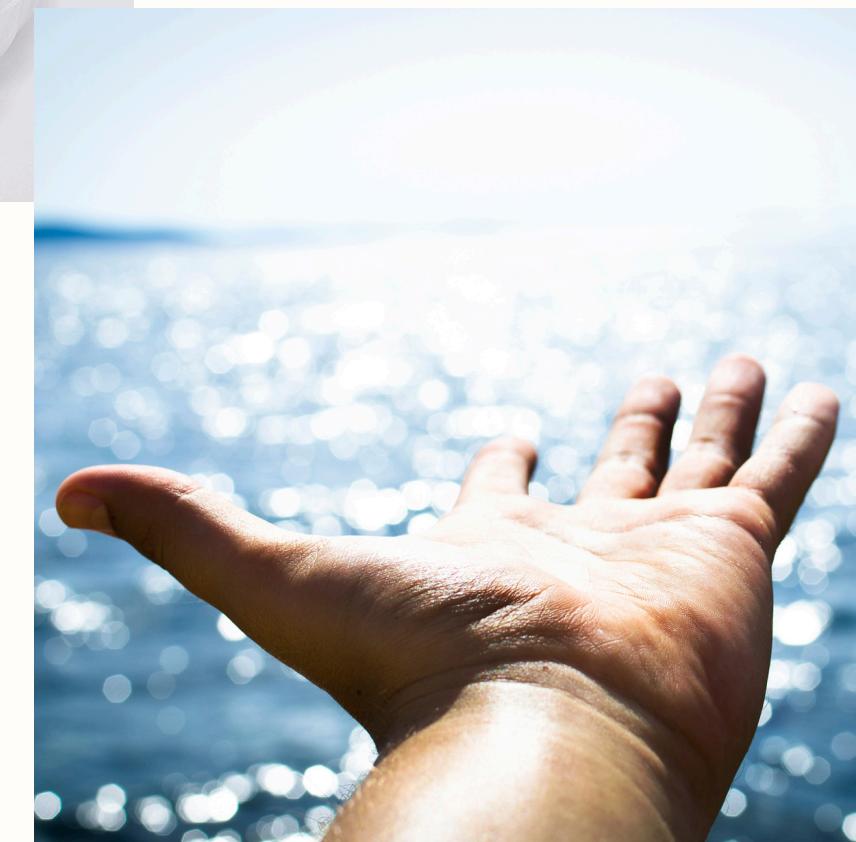
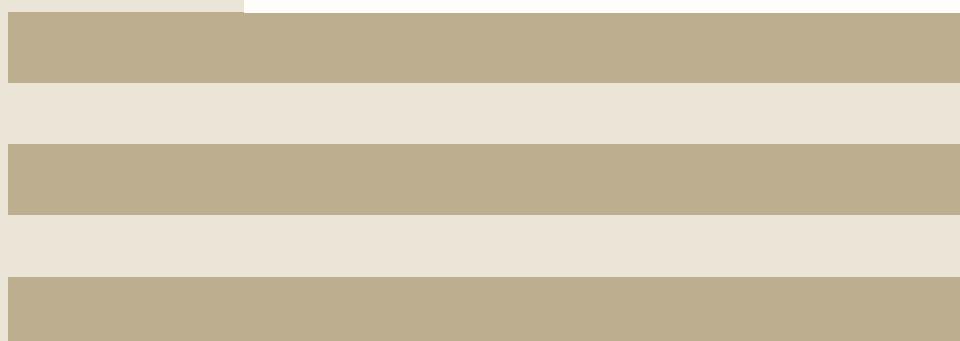
Affirming Emotions and Addressing Needs

- Identifying underlying needs and emotions driving the conflict
- Communicating these needs and feelings
 - clearly
 - assertively



Affirming Emotions and Addressing Needs

- Empathy and validation
 - acknowledging and understanding partner's feelings, even if you don't agree with their perspective



Problem Solving

1. Defining the problem
 - a. clearly
 - b. collaboratively
2. Brainstorming potential solutions together
3. Evaluating pros and cons of different solutions



Problem Solving

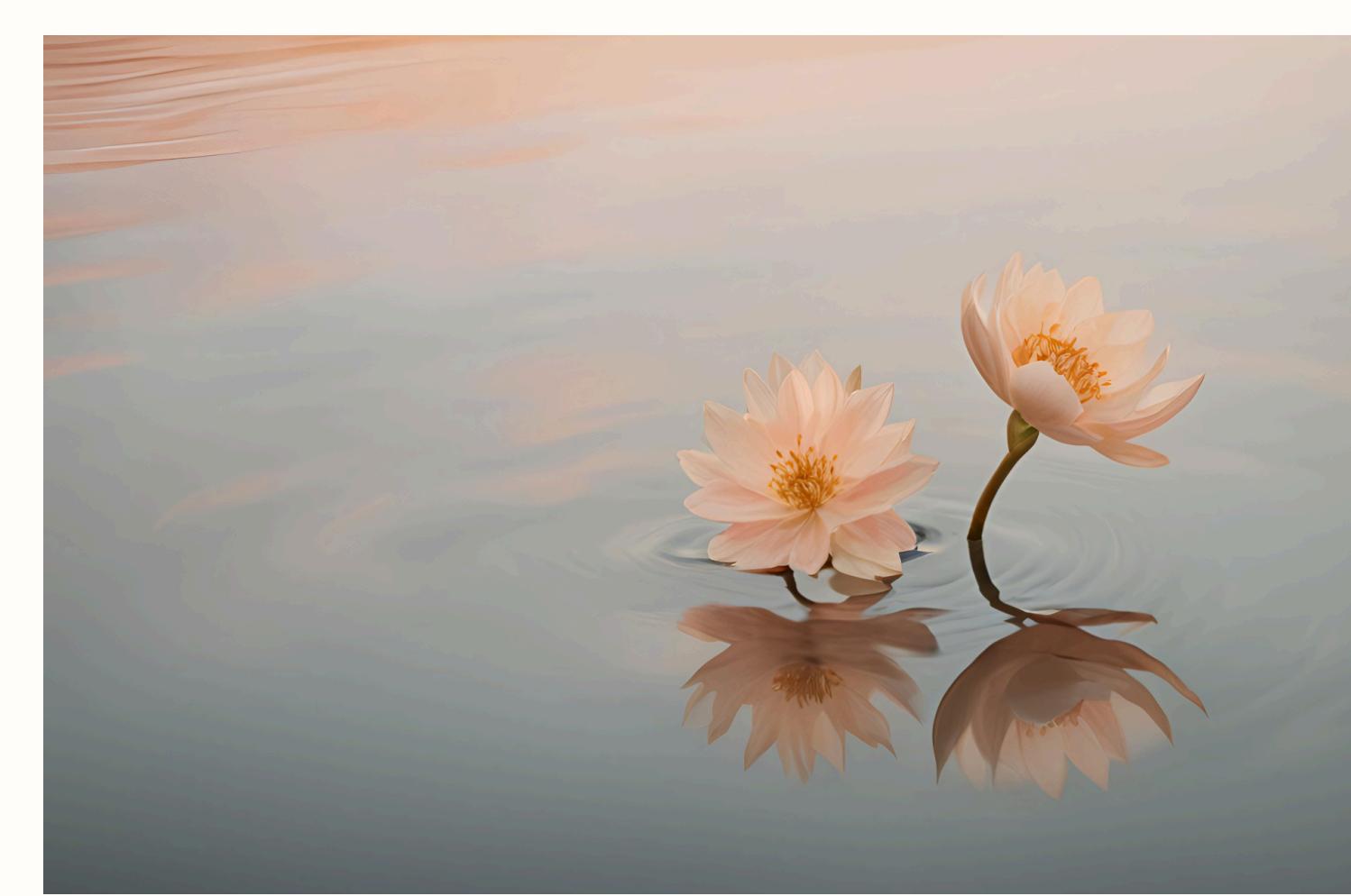
4. Finding mutually acceptable compromises
5. Focusing on shared goals and the wellbeing of the relationship





Resolution and De-escalation

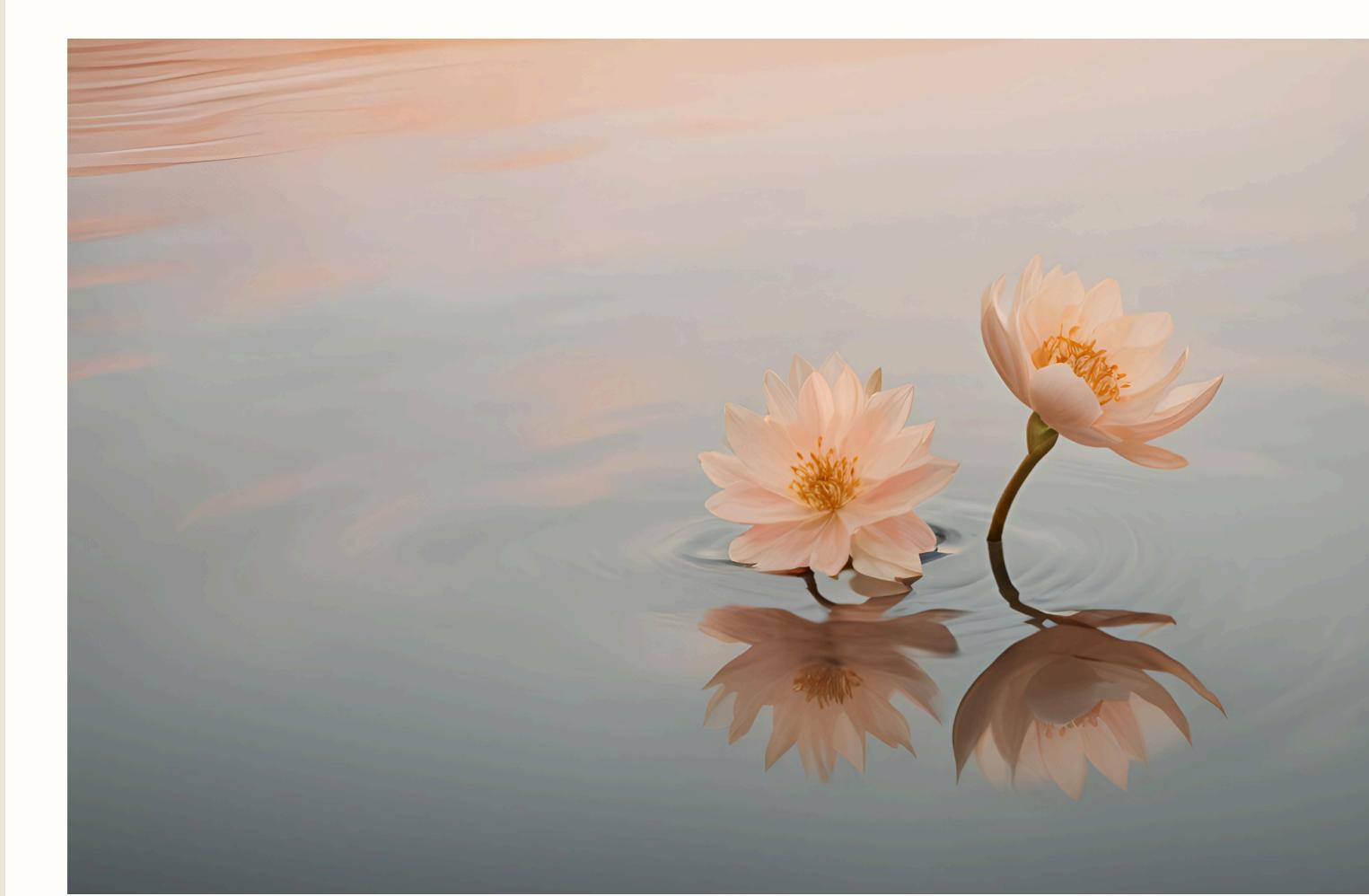
- Recognizing when conflict is escalating and taking steps to de-escalate
- Using repair attempts to stop negative cycles
 - humor
 - apologies
 - affection





Resolution and De-escalation

- Learning to take breaks and revisit the discussion when calmer



Things to Remember...

- Effective conflict management
 - begins with regulation and safety
 - is an ongoing process
 - requires practice and commitment
 - may also involve professional help



Things to Remember...

1. Create a safe and respectful communication environment
2. understand and express needs and feelings
3. problem-solving and negotiation
4. repair attempts and de-escalation





Reflection Questions

Go back to your earlier answers.
What would you do in the next
conflict?

- a. Similarly?
- b. Differently?



Studio
Shodwe

