# Stopping the Music

DE-ESCALATING TOGETHER

> *You can't dance a new dance*
> *while the old song is still playing.*

Before a couple can build new closeness, they have to be able to stop the old dance in the middle of a spin. Stopping it is not the same as solving the issue. But it is the hinge everything turns on, the moment two people catch the cycle in the act and refuse, together, to let it finish its usual work.

The catch is a sentence, said by whoever notices first: “I think we're in it.” Not as an accusation. More like a weather report. Then both of you do the strange, brave thing: move to the same side of the table and look at the cycle instead of at each other. What just happened? Where did it hook us? What did each of us feel a second before we fired or fled?

Early on you will catch the cycle hours late, then minutes late, then one day while it is still just a tightening in the room. Every catch, even a late one, weakens the dance and strengthens the team. Couples don't become secure by never falling into the spiral. They become secure by getting faster, and kinder, at climbing out.

### CATCH IT IN THE ACT

1. Agree on your catch-phrase for the week. “I think we're in it,” or your own version.
2. Either of you can call it, and calling it can never be used against the one who called it.
3. When it's called: both pause, take one breath, and physically shift. Sit side by side if you can.
4. Replay the last two minutes like detectives: “What did the cycle just do to us?”
5. End every catch with credit: “We caught it. That's new. That's us.”

### WHEN IT’S HARD

Expect the cycle to fight back. It may even grab the catch-phrase itself: “Oh, so now we're 'in it'?” When that happens, name it with a rueful smile. “It wants this sentence too.” A little humor, used gently, is one of the best tools you have here.

### TO SIT WITH

*In your last spiral, what was the earliest moment either of you sensed it coming?*

*What would it mean to your younger self to watch the two of you stop a fight mid-spin?*

### OUR INTENTION THIS WEEK

Something small you can both actually do this week.

WITH YOU ON THE JOURNEY,

*Dr. Mark Gregory Karris*