When the Alarm Goes Off

YOUR BODY IN ATTACHMENT PANIC

> *Before you chose your words,*
> *your body had already decided it was an emergency.*

Attachment distress is not a mood. It is a physical event. When the bond feels threatened by a sharp tone, a turned back, or a silence that goes on too long, the body's alarm fires in a fraction of a second. Heart racing or chest going hollow, heat rising or everything going numb. By the time you are talking, you are talking from an emergency.

This is why "just communicate better" so often fails in the middle of a fight. An alarmed brain cannot do nuance. It can pound on doors or barricade them. That is the whole menu. Expecting calm, articulate vulnerability from a body in full alarm is like expecting good handwriting during an earthquake.

The skill is learning your own early warning signs (the clenched jaw, the flat voice, the urge to grab your phone) and treating them as information: the bond feels threatened right now. Slowing your body down is not avoiding the conversation. It is what makes the real conversation possible. Only a settled nervous system can reach, and only a settled one can catch.

LEARN YOUR ALARM

1. Each of you describe your alarm's first physical signs. Be specific. Where in the body, what sensation?
2. Name your alarm behavior. Do you pound the door or barricade it?
3. Pick a shared pause phrase: "My alarm's going off. I need two minutes to come back."
4. During the pause: feet on the floor, one long breath out, a hand on your own chest.
5. Always come back. A pause with no return is not calming down. It is the withdrawal the alarm fears.

WHEN IT'S HARD

If pausing feels like losing, like your partner gets off the hook, remember what the pause is for: a better version of the same conversation a few minutes later. You are not dropping the issue. You are dropping the emergency so the issue can finally be heard.

TO SIT WITH

What are the first three seconds of your alarm like in your body?

What does your partner's alarm look like from the outside? What did you used to think it meant?

OUR INTENTION THIS WEEK

Something small you can both actually do this week.

WITH YOU ON THE JOURNEY,

Dr. Mark Gregory Karris