

Catch the Process: Mid-Dishwasher Tool™

"For when the dishes suddenly feel like a character assassination"

Use this when you're in the middle of a small argument that suddenly feels way bigger than the topic. The goal isn't to solve the problem right now; it's to notice what just changed underneath the surface.

Step 1: What were we supposedly fighting about?

Focusing on the **Surface Trigger**: *identifying the mundane event or habit that sparked the initial reaction.*

Examples:

The Chore Conflict: We're arguing about the dishwasher, the laundry, or some other tiny household habit.

The Tone Trap: A single sentence or a specific tone of voice set me off, and now the whole conversation is about how we speak to each other.

The Micro-Habit: A small, repetitive habit that usually doesn't bother me has suddenly triggered a massive emotional response.

My Catch: *(list the surface topic or mundane event that started the argument.)*

Step 2: What actually landed in me?

Focusing on the **Internal Impact**: *identifying the deeper feeling that made the small thing feel so big.*

Examples:

- **The Judgment Sting**: I felt judged or criticized as if my worth as a person was being tied to how I handled a simple chore.
- **The Dismissal Ache**: I felt dismissed or overlooked, like my feelings and my contributions don't actually matter in this relationship.
- **The Visibility Wound**: I felt like I didn't matter again, and this small moment feels like more proof of a much bigger pattern.

My Catch: *(describe the deeper feeling that actually landed under the surface.)*

Step 3: What usually happens next?

Focusing on the **Escalation Script**: *identifying the predictable path the argument takes when you don't pause.*

Examples:

The Character Defense: I start defending my entire character and listing every single good thing I've ever done to balance the scale.

The Historical Audit: I bring up old history and past mistakes to prove that I'm not the only one at fault in this situation.

The Cold Retreat: I shut down and go cold, effectively ending the chance for a real conversation while the resentment keeps building.

My Catch: *(list the scripts or escalation moves you usually make next.)*

Step 4: One move that interrupts the usual ending

Focusing on the **Pattern Interruption**: *identifying the interruption that keeps the argument from spiraling further.*

Examples:

The Process Name: I'll name exactly what's happening by saying something like "this feels bigger than the dishes right now".

The Perspective Shift: Physically changing your environment; walking into another room or stepping outside, to break the magnetic pull of the mundane argument (the dishes, the laundry) and reset your focus on the relationship instead of the chore.

The Vulnerable Bridge: I'll say "something changed for me" and ask for a short pause to get my footing back.

My Catch: *(write down the concrete move you'll commit to trying right now.)*

The Final Move: One Real-Time Interruption You don't have to resolve anything here; catching the change in energy is the whole point. Before you put this paper away, choose one recurring "small" argument where you'll try naming the process instead of trying to win the fight.

My Test: _____