

Identifying Your Reactive Cycle

Name: _____

Date: _____

Take a moment to reflect on times in your relationship when you experienced conflict, tension, or disharmony as a couple. Consider thinking about recent circumstances and the relationship over time. Allow your reflection to help you answer the following questions what are the fears or “buttons/reactions” that get pushed during conflict, tension, or disharmony what feelings do you experience? **Check all that apply, and then circle the top five feelings.**

✓ ○	Feelings/Emotions	“As a result of conflict, tension, or disharmony, I am concerned . . .”
	Abandoned	My spouse will ultimately leave me, and I will be alone.
	Alone	I will be by myself or on my own; I will be without help or assistance; I will be lonely; I will be isolated.
	Betrayed	My mate will be disloyal or unfaithful; my spouse has given up on the relationship; my mate will share or reveal private information with others.
	Controlled	I will be dominated; I will be made to submit; what my spouse says goes; I will be treated like a child, or my mate will act like my parent.
	Deceived	My relationship will lack truth, honesty, or trustworthiness; truth will be perverted in order to cheat or defraud me; I will be misled or deceived.
	Defective	Something is wrong with me; I’m the problem; I am broken and unlovable.
	Disconnected	We will become emotionally detached or separated; there are walls or barriers between us in the marriage.
	Disrespected	I will be treated rudely; my thoughts and opinions will be disregarded; my mate does not respect or admire me; my spouse has a low opinion of me.
	Failure	I am not successful as husband/wife; I will fall short in my relationship; I won’t make the grade.
	Helpless/Powerless	I am unable to do anything to change my spouse or my situation; I am at the end of my power, resources, capacity, or ability to get what I want; things are unmanageable and beyond my control.
	Humiliated	I will be shamed, degraded, and embarrassed; my dignity and self-respect are attacked; I will be made the fool.
	Ignored	He/she will not pay attention to me; I feel neglected.
	Inadequate	Others are more competent than me; I am incapable and ineffective; I will let others down, and I will disappoint my mate.
	Inferior	Everyone else is better than I am; I am less valuable or important than others.
	Insignificant	I don't matter in this relationship; I will be of no consequence to my spouse; I am immaterial, not worth mentioning, trivial in the eyes of my mate.

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✓ ○	Feelings/Emotions	“As a result of conflict, tension, or disharmony, I am concerned . . .”
	Intimacy	I am afraid of opening up emotionally to my mate or others; I will be hurt if I allow my spouse past my walls; it is uncomfortable to open up the deepest, most essential parts of who I am.
	Invalidated	Who I am, what I think, what I do, or how I feel doesn't matter.
	Judged	I am always being unfairly criticized or misjudged; my spouse forms faulty or negative opinions about me; I am always being evaluated.
	Misportrayed	I will be portrayed and inaccurately; I am described in a negative or untrue manner; my spouse paints a wrong picture of me.
	Misunderstood	My spouse will fail to understand me correctly; he/she will get the wrong idea or impression about me; I will be misperceived or misread.
	Not good enough	Nothing I do is ever acceptable, satisfactory, or sufficient; there will always be more hoops to jump through; I won't measure up to my spouse's expectations of me.
	Phony	I strongly desire to act in accord with who I say I am, yet i don't know how to reconcile the contradictions that lie within me; others will discover those contradictions within me and believe the worst period
	Rejected	My spouse doesn't want to be with me and does not accept me; I will be pushed away and discarded.
	Taken advantage of	I will be cheated by my mate; I feel like a “doormat;” my goodwill is exploited.
	Unaware	I do not know what is going on in the relationship; I do not have the necessary information; I'm in the dark; I'm clueless; things feel secretive, hidden, or undisclosed.
	Unfair	I will be treated unfairly; I will be asked to do things he/she is unwilling to do (double standard); I will be asked to do things that are unreasonable or excessive; I will be treated differently than others.
	Unimportant	I am not important to my mate; I am of little priority to my spouse.
	Unknown	He/she will not know me; it's like I'm a stranger to him/her; I will be nameless or anonymous to him/her; I will be unfamiliar to him/her.
	Unloved	He/she doesn't love me anymore; He/she has no affection or desire for me; my relationship lacks warm attachment, admiration, enthusiasm, or devotion.
	Unwanted	He/she doesn't want me; He/swill not choose me; He/she is staying in the relationship out of duty, obligation, or because it's the “right” thing to do.
	Worthless	I am useless; He/she fails to recognize my value and worth; I feel cheapened, less than, or undervalued in the relationship; I have little or no value to him/her; He/she does not see me as priceless.

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	Other:	
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What do you do when your “buttons” get pushed? What are the common ways you react when you feel what you indicated on pages 1 & 2. **Check all that apply and circle the five most prominent reactions or coping behaviors.**

✓ ○	Reactions	Explanation
	Abdicate	You give away or deny your authority or responsibility.
	Act out	You engage in negative behaviors like drug or alcohol abuse, extramarital affairs, excessive shopping, or overeating.
	Anger or rage	You display strong feelings of displeasure or violent and uncontrolled emotions.
	Arrogance	You posture yourself as superior, better than, or wiser than your mate.
	Avoidance	You get involved in activities to avoid your mate or certain topics.
	Belittle	You devalue or dishonor someone with words or actions; you call your spouse names, use insults, ridicule, take potshots, or mock him/her.
	Blame	You place responsibility on others, not accepting fault; you’re convinced the problem is your spouse’s fault.
	Broadcast	You share your problems and concerns with people outside of your marriage.
	Caretake	You regularly take on the burdens of others; you find it hard to rest until everyone around you is provided for; you “over function” by taking on the details tasks and responsibilities of others.
	Catastrophize	You use dramatic, exaggerated expressions to depict that the relationship is in danger or that it has failed.
	Clinginess	You develop a strong emotional attachment or dependence on your spouse or others; you hold tight to your mate.
	Complain	You express unhappiness or make accusations.
	Control	You hold back, restrain, oppress, or dominate your mate; you “rule over” your spouse; you talk over or prevent your mate from having a chance to explain their position, opinions, or feelings.
	Criticize	You find and verbalize fault in your mate; you bring up what is wrong and focus on negative aspects of your mate or your relationship.
	Cross- complain	You meet your mate’s complaint (criticism) with an immediate complaint of your own.
	Defensiveness	Instead of listening, you defend yourself by providing an explanation; you make excuses for your actions.
	Demand	You try to force your mate to do something, usually with implied threat of punishment if they refuse.
	Denial	You refuse to admit the truth or reality.

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✓ ○	Reactions	Explanation
	Dishonesty	You lie about, fail to reveal, give out false impressions, or you falsify your thoughts, feelings, habits, likes, dislikes, personal history, daily activities, or plans for the future.
	Earn-it-mode	You try to do more to earn his/her love and care.
	Escalate	Your emotions spiral out of control; you argue, raise your voice, or fly into a rage.
	Exaggerate	You make overstatements or enlarge your words beyond bounds or the truth; you make statements like: "You always" or "You never. . ."
	Fact-find	You focus almost exclusively on what is needed to solve or fix the problem.
	Fix-it mode	You focus almost exclusively on what is needed to solve or fix the problem.
	Humor	You use humor as a way of not dealing with the issue at hand.
	Independence	You become independent (separate from your mate) in your attitude, behavior, or decision-making.
	Invalidate	You discredit your spouse's thoughts, feelings, and actions; you give no weight to your spouse's opinions and seek to nullify and refute them.
	Isolate	You shut down and go into seclusion or into your "cave."
	Judge	You negatively criticize, evaluate, form an opinion, or conclude something about your mate.
	Lecture	You sermonize, talk down to, scold, or reprimand your mate.
	Manipulation	You control, influence, or maneuver your spouse for your own advantage.
	Mind-read	You make assumptions about your mate's private feelings, behaviors, or motives.
	Minimize	You assert that your spouse is overreacting to an issue; you intentionally underestimate, downplay, or soft-pedal the issue or how they feel.
	Nag	You badger, pester, or harass your mate to do something you want.
	Negative beliefs	You believe that your spouse is far worse than is really the case; you see your spouse in a negative light or attribute negative motives to him/her; You see your mate through a negative lens.
	Negative body language	You give a false smile, shift from side to side, or fold your arms across your chest.
	Pacify	You try to soothe, calm down or placate your spouse; you try to get them to not feel negative emotions.
	Passive- aggressive behavior	You display negative emotions, resentment, and aggression in passive ways, such as procrastination, forgetfulness, and stubbornness.
	Personalize	you make the actions or inactions of your spouse about yourself; you interpret comments and actions as critical messages directed at you even if you are not specifically mentioned.

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✓ ○	Reactions	Explanation
	Pessimism	You become negative, distrustful, cynical, and skeptical in your view of your spouse and marriage.
	Provoke	You intentionally aggravate, hassle, goad, or irritate your spouse.
	Rationalize	You attempt to make your actions seem reasonable; you try to attribute your behavior to credible motives; you try to provide believable but untrue reasons for your conduct.
	Repeat yourself	You repeat back your own position over and over instead of understanding your partner's position.
	Replay	you rewind and replay the argument over and over; you ruminate about what your mate does or doesn't do that frustrates or hurts you.
	Rewrite history	You recast your earlier times together in a negative light; Your recall of previous disappointments and slights becomes dramatically enhanced.
	Right/Wrong	You argue about who is right and who is wrong; You debate whose position is the correct or right one.
	Righteous indignation	You believe that you deserve to be angry, resentful, or annoyed with your spouse because of what they did.
	Righteousness	You make it a moral issue or argue about issues of morality or righteousness.
	Sarcasm	You use negative or hostile humor, hurtful words, belittling comments, cutting remarks, or demeaning statements.
	Self-abandonment	You desert yourself; You neglect you; You take care of everyone except you.
	Self-depreciate	You run yourself down or become very critical of yourself.
	Selfishness	You become more concerned with you and your interests, feelings, wants, or desires.
	Shut down	You detach emotionally and close your heart toward your spouse; you numb out; you become devoid of emotion.
	Stonewall	You put up walls and stop responding to your mate; you refuse to share or show any emotion.
	Strike-out	You lash out in anger, become verbally, or physically aggressive or abusive.
	Stubborn	You will not budge from your position; You become inflexible or persistent.
	Tantrums	You have a fit of bad temper; You become irritable, crabby, or grumpy.
	Vent	You emotionally vomit, unload, or dump on your mate.
	Victim mode	You see your spouse as an attacking monster and yourself as put upon, unfairly accused, mistreated, or unappreciated.
	Withdraw	You avoid him/her or alienate yourself without resolution; You get distance, sulk or use the silent treatment.

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	Withhold	You withhold your affections, feelings, or love from your spouse.
	Yes, but...	You start out agreeing (yes) but you end up disagreeing (but).
	Other:	

What do you truly desire or want to experience in your marriage? Check all that apply—but “circle” the **top five** wants/desires:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	“I want . . .” or “want to be.”	What That Feeling Sounds Like:
	Acceptance	I want to be warmly received without condition.
	Accurately portrayed	I want to be seen correctly; I want him/her to represent me in a true and accurate manner; I want to be seen in a positive light.
	Adequate	I want to feel like I’m adequate, I measure up, or I’m good enough.
	Affection	I want to feel fondness and warmth.
	Appreciation	I want he/she to notice what I do in the relationship and to feel gratitude.
	Approval	I want to be liked and accepted.
	Assistance	I want help, support, backing and assistance from him/her.
	Attention	I want to be noticed and attended to.
	Care	I want him/her to take great care of me; I want to be well cared for.
	Comfort	I want to feel a sense of well-being.
	Commitment	I want to have unconditional security in relationships.
	Companionship	I want deep, intimate relationships.
	Competence	I want to have skills and ability that bring success.
	Grace	I want something good (i.e. forgiveness) that I don’t deserve.
	Hero	I want to be the knight in shining armor; To be He/she’s champion.
	Hope	I want confidence that I will get what I love and desire.
	Intimacy	I want to open my heart and not have walls in my relationship; I want a deep closeness.
	Joy	I want to feel satisfied and happy; I want to be thrilled with my relationship.
	Love	I want to feel attractive to him/her; I want to be admired; I want to feel lovable.
	Partnership	I want to feel like I have a teammate or partner; I want us both to share equal responsibility for our relationship.
	Passion	I want excitement, fascination, intrigue, romance, and adventure.

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✓○	"I want . . ." or "want to be."	What That Feeling Sounds Like:
	Peacefulness	I want calm, serenity, and tranquility; I want my relationship to be relaxed.
	Power	I want to feel that I have the ability to control the outcome or influence the direction of my relationship.
	Respect	I want to be admired and esteemed.
	Safety	I want to feel protected and secure.
	Self- determination	I want to have independence and freewill.
	Significance	I want to have meaning and purpose.
	Success	I want to achieve or accomplish something; I want to be successful as a partner.
	Support	I want to be cared for.
	Trust	I want to have faith in others.
	Understanding	I want to be known and understood at a deep level.
	Useful	I want to feel useful and needed in the relationship.
	Validation	I want to be valued for who I am, what I think, and what I feel.
	Wanted	I want to be sought after.
	Other:	

SOURCE: Restoring Hope -- an Integrative Approach to Marital Therapy pages 337-343

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