

TWO WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT A RELATIONSHIP ISSUE

Here are two different ways of thinking about a relationship issue. Take a mild issue (4 on a scale of 10 in intensity) and view it through these two different frameworks.

BLAME GAME (“Siberia”)

- What's a problem in your relationship?

- How does this problem distress you?

- Whose fault is it?

SOLUTION PATH (“Bali”)

- What do you really want in your relationship?

- Be as specific as you can. What might you see, hear or feel if you got it?

- What could be your first step towards having it?

What is the difference between these two lines of thinking?

1. Which gives you hope or somewhere new to go?
2. What is more useful:
 - Find who to blame for a “problem”
 - Explore how you can shift things to better meet your needs?

FEELINGS WHEN THERE IS DISTRESS IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP

Below are four categories of emotional distress. The feelings listed in each box are similar to each other, varying in intensity. Circle which feelings you experience in any box. Then check off how often you have those feelings (Often, Sometimes, Seldom). Then write in what you do, how you act or behave, when you feel it. Use the list of reactive behaviors that runs down the right side of the page as example behaviors.

DISTRESS STATE

How often do you feel it?

How do you behave when you feel it?

List of reactive behaviors

<p>ANGRY Irritated Frustrated Infuriated Resentful Annoyed Enraged</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Seldom</p>		<p>prod attack pursue complain lecture criticize pressure blow up yell provoke move away withdraw shut down get paralyzed hide out space out cry get sarcastic try to fix things stay in head try to push feelings away</p>
<p>AFRAID Scared Anxious Worried Insecure Frightened Nervous</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Seldom</p>		
<p>HURT Sad Despair Pained Dejected Tearful Grief</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Seldom</p>		
<p>STUCK Numb Confused Hopeless Paralyzed Shame Blank</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Seldom</p>		

BEHAVIORS WHEN THERE IS DISTRESS IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP

1. Check off any behaviors you do, especially when there is distress, bad feelings or difficulties in your relationship, where either you and/or your partner is upset.
2. Double-check the 6 most typical behaviors you tend to do. Synonyms are okay.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Solve the problem | <input type="checkbox"/> Label or name-call |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Try to fix things | <input type="checkbox"/> Judge negatively |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Be rational, use logic | <input type="checkbox"/> Criticize |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Try to reason | <input type="checkbox"/> Complain |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Defend yourself | <input type="checkbox"/> Pressure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intellectualize | <input type="checkbox"/> Prod |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lecture, teach & preach | <input type="checkbox"/> Provoke |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ridicule | <input type="checkbox"/> Get angry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get sarcastic | <input type="checkbox"/> Be right |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make a joke of it | <input type="checkbox"/> Attack |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Distance yourself | <input type="checkbox"/> Blow up |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Push your feelings away | <input type="checkbox"/> Blame or counter-blame |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Space out | <input type="checkbox"/> React with fear, anger, hurt |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ignore | <input type="checkbox"/> Yell |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid the situation | <input type="checkbox"/> Cry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Try not to rock the boat | <input type="checkbox"/> Guilt trip |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leave | <input type="checkbox"/> Argue the point |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Withdraw | <input type="checkbox"/> Correct other person |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hide out | <input type="checkbox"/> Make other person wrong |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shut down | <input type="checkbox"/> Provoke a response |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go numb | <input type="checkbox"/> Support other's victim stance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get confused | <input type="checkbox"/> See yourself as the victim of other's reactivity and behavior |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Freeze up | <input type="checkbox"/> Take on other person's feelings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Distract other person | <input type="checkbox"/> Feel guilty |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talk about something else | |

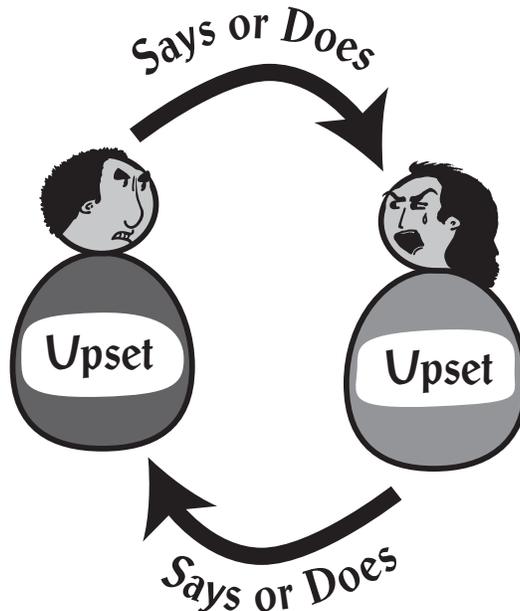
3. Now circle the top 6 behaviors your partner does that will upset you the most.

On the next page you will figure out where there are cyclic patterns of these behaviors — where if your partner does one, you do another, and vice-versa.

REACTIVE CYCLE WHEN THERE IS DISTRESS IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP

When distress occurs, it becomes a circular pattern. When one person gets triggered, they start to act in ways that distress their partner. It's a vicious circle. But we rarely see this full picture. There are two people involved in whatever is happening.

The figure below represents the reactive cycle that can take over a relationship. Both partners play a part in this cycle. The more one does what they do, then the more the other will do their behavior. Each has an impact on the other.



1. What's a cycle of upset in your relationship? Fill in each sentence below with one of your top 6 behaviors and one of your partner's top 6 behaviors that upset you:

"The more my partner _____, then the more I _____."

"The more my partner _____, then the more I _____."

"The more my partner _____, then the more I _____."

2. Now see if reversing each sentence above makes equal sense:

"The more I _____, then the more my partner _____."

"The more I _____, then the more my partner _____."

"The more I _____, then the more my partner _____."

3. Which of the above seems the most common core cycle in your relationship?

"The more my partner _____, then the more I _____."

STORIES WHEN THERE IS DISTRESS IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP

Check off any of the ways of thinking below you tend to believe, especially when there is distress in your relationship. These would be typical stories you have about what you think is going on in your relationship.

- "I feel so alone, so shut out."
- "They're so distant."
- "They just don't seem to care."
- "I am way down on the list."
- "I come after the kids, the house, and the dog."
- "My feelings don't matter."
- "I always come last."
- "We never seem to be close anymore."
- "I am just not sure I matter."
- "It's like they don't see me."
- "I don't know how to reach them."
- "If I didn't push we would never be close."
- "I can never get it right, so I just give up."
- "It all seems hopeless."
- "I feel numb."
- "Don't know how I feel."
- "I just freeze up and space out."
- "I get that I am flawed somehow."
- "I feel like a failure as a mate."
- "I shut down and wait for them to calm down."
- "I try to keep everything calm, not rock the boat."
- "I go into my shell where it's safe."
- "I go behind my wall."
- "I try to shut the door on all their anger."
- "I am just not as needy."
- "I try to handle things on my own."
- "I don't know what they are talking about. We are fine."
- "I try to solve the problem. Try to fix it."
- "I don't know what they want."