
The Four Horsemen Lesson

Follow along with the video.

Complete the exercises below as instructed.

Criticism:

Complaint focuses on specific behavior.

Criticism includes _____ and general character assassination.

To turn any complaint into a criticism, "What is _____ with you?"

ARE YOU CRITICAL?¹ – CHECK EACH STATEMENT THAT APPLIES TO YOU

_____ I often criticize my spouse when we talk about our disagreements.

_____ In our arguments, I sometimes make my spouse feel that I am attacking him/her.

_____ My spouse feels insulted by some of the things I say.

_____ I can get mean and rude in our disputes.

_____ Sometimes I point out my spouse's flaws in ways that hurt or anger him/her.

_____ I use phrases like "you always" or "you never" when complaining to my spouse.

_____ I hurt my spouse's feelings sometimes by the way I disagree with him/her.

_____ I often feel that our problems really are because of my spouse, not me.

_____ When my spouse is wrong, I let him/her know in no uncertain terms.

_____ My spouse may sometimes think of me as blunt or hurtful, but I tell it like it is.

¹ Questions come from or are suggested by John Gottman's *The Marriage Clinic*.

Contempt:

Contempt—the worst of the Four Horsemen—conveys _____.

It includes:

Sarcasm and cynicism

Name-calling, eye-rolling, sneering, mockery, and _____ humor.

ARE YOU CONTEMPTUOUS? – CHECK EACH STATEMENT THAT APPLIES TO YOU

_____ I feel appalled at my spouse at times.

_____ I do not have a lot of respect for my spouse's position on our basic issues.

_____ I feel disgusted by some of my spouse's attitudes or actions.

_____ In my anger I have called my spouse derogatory names.

_____ I have made cruel or mean jokes at my spouse's expense.

_____ I have made disparaging remarks about my spouse, or to my spouse, in front of other people.

_____ Sometimes I just feel smarter or more logical than my spouse and get aggravated that he/she just doesn't get it.

_____ Because of my actions, words, or attitude, my spouse sometimes feels that I disrespect him/her.

_____ I can really hurt my spouse with my sarcasm.

_____ I sometimes roll my eyes or sneer at my spouse.

Defensiveness:

“Defensiveness is a way of blaming your partner.

“The problem isn’t _____, it’s _____.”

ARE YOU DEFENSIVE? – CHECK EACH STATEMENT THAT APPLIES TO YOU

_____ I feel attacked or criticized when we talk about our disagreements.

_____ I have to defend myself when we argue because my spouse is so unfair.

_____ My feelings and intentions are often misunderstood.

_____ If my spouse points out something negative about me, I respond by pointing out something negative about him/her.

_____ I basically feel disrespected by my spouse and so I stand up for myself.

_____ I am not guilty of many of the things I get accused of, and react to the accusations.

_____ My spouse doesn’t face issues fairly and responsibly.

_____ I often point out to my spouse that he/she does the same things I’m being accused of.

_____ I have found that the best defense when we argue is to go on the offense.

_____ When I get the blame for what really are our problems, I react to defend myself.

Stonewalling:

Happens when one partner _____.

He or she tends to look away or down without uttering a sound.

Do You STONEWALL? – CHECK EACH STATEMENT THAT APPLIES TO YOU

_____ I often just want to leave the scene of the argument.

_____ I sometimes just clam up and become quiet.

_____ The way we talk makes me want to withdraw from the whole marriage.

_____ I think to myself, "Who needs this conflict?"

_____ I often will become silent just to cool things down a bit.

_____ Sometimes when my spouse wants to argue, I leave the room.

_____ In our arguments, I follow the idea that if you don't have something nice to say, you don't say anything at all.

_____ Sometimes during an argument my spouse demands to know if I am actually listening to him or her.

_____ I can tune out of a conversation while appearing to be listening.

_____ I sometimes provoke my spouse by purposely not reacting to what he/she says.

Flooding

Flooding is a _____ reaction.

It affects the mind and emotions.

The flooded person cannot help having the reaction

_____ syndrome kicks in.

More pronounced in men.

We suggest:

- End all conversation for at least 2 hours
- Restart unemotionally

DO YOU FLOOD? – CHECK EACH STATEMENT THAT APPLIES TO YOU

_____ I get too heated in our discussions.

_____ I have a hard time calming down.

_____ I feel overwhelmed by our arguments.

_____ I feel like running away during our fights.

_____ I can't think straight when we get into an intense argument.

_____ I have thrown or hit things when I am angry.

_____ I sometimes regret that awful things I say when I am mad.

_____ When my temper gets going, it's hard to control or stop it.

_____ Sometimes it seems my anger just comes out of nowhere.

_____ I sometimes yell or scream during our arguments like I'm out of control.

Exercise

1. Analyze your interactions and write descriptions of any patterns that lead *you* to use any horsemen when you interact with each other.

- The Horsemen I use most often is.....

- I use that horsemen when

3. When my spouse uses _____ (name the horseman you feel your spouse uses most often OR the horseman your spouse uses that affects you most), I feel...(circle one or more, or add your own words)

hurt	humiliated	insulted	ignored
disconnected	vulnerable	worried	anxious
panicked	insignificant	hopeless	helpless
angry	overwhelmed	weak	let down
betrayed	alone	terrified	empty
shamed	worthless	useless	controlled

I agree to avoid use of any of the Four Horsemen for the duration of this 10-week course.

_____ (signature) _____ (date)

Write at least one thing from this section that can make your relationship with your spouse better.