

## Reactive Cycle Worksheet

Take a moment to reflect on times in your relationship with your spouse when you experienced conflict, tension, and/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:

1. What are the fears or "buttons" that get pushed during conflict, tension or disharmony? What feelings do you experience? **Check all that apply, and then star the top five feelings.**

### FEELINGS

### "AS A RESULT OF CONFLICT, TENSION OR DISHARMONY, I'M CONCERNED ..."

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Abandoned      | My spouse will ultimately leave me and I will be alone.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alone          | I will be by myself or on my own; I will be without help or assistance; I will be lonely and isolated.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 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.                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 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.                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 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 given false appearances. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Defective      | Something is wrong with me; I'm the problem; I am broken and unlovable.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disappointment | I will let others down; I will disappoint my mate; My spouse will be disillusioned by me.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disconnected   | We will become emotionally detached or separated; There are walls or barriers between us in the marriage.  |

<input type="checkbox"/> 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.
<input type="checkbox"/> Failure	I am not successful as a husband/wife; I will fall short in my relationship; I won't make the grade.
<input type="checkbox"/> 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.
<input type="checkbox"/> Humiliated	I will be shamed, degraded and embarrassed; My dignity and self-respect are attacked; I will be made the fool.
<input type="checkbox"/> Ignored	My spouse will not pay attention to me; I feel neglected and invisible.
<input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate	Others are more competent than me; I am incapable and ineffective.
<input type="checkbox"/> Inferior	Everyone else is better than I am; I am less valuable or important than others.
<input type="checkbox"/> 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.
<input type="checkbox"/> 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.
<input type="checkbox"/> Invalidated	Who I am, what I think, what I do, or how I feel doesn't matter.
<input type="checkbox"/> Judged	I am always being unfairly criticized or misjudged; my spouse forms faulty or negative opinions about me; I am always being evaluated.
<input type="checkbox"/> Misportrayed	I will be portrayed inaccurately; I am described in a negative or untrue manner; my spouse paints a wrong picture of me.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 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.   |
| <hr/>                                       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 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.  |
| <hr/>                                       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 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.      |
| <hr/>                                       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected           | My spouse doesn't want to be with me and does not accept me; I will be pushed away and discarded.   |
| <hr/>                                       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Taken advantage of | I will be cheated by my mate; I will feel like a "door mat;" My good will is exploited.   |
| <hr/>                                       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 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.   |
| <hr/>                                       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 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. |
| <hr/>                                       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unimportant        | I am not important to my mate; I am of little or no priority to my spouse.  |
| <hr/>                                       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown            | I'm afraid to move forward because the outcome is uncertain; If I am not prepared then I won't feel secure.   |
| <hr/>                                       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unloved            | My spouse doesn't love me anymore; my spouse has no affection, care or desire for me.   |
| <hr/>                                       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unwanted           | I am not desirable; My spouse is staying in the marriage out of duty, obligation, or because it's the "right" thing to do.  |

☐ Worthless      My value and worth are not recognized; I feel cheapened, less than, or devalued in the marriage; I have little or no value to my spouse; My mate does not see me as priceless.

---

☐ Other

---

➤ What do you do when your "buttons" get pushed? What are the common ways you react when you feel what you indicated above? **Check all that apply, and "star" the five most important reactions or coping behaviors.**

## REACTIONS

## EXPLANATION

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Abdicate      | You give away or deny your authority and/or responsibility.  |
| <hr/>                                  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Act-out       | You engage in negative behaviors like drug or alcohol abuse, extra-marital affairs, excessive shopping, or overeating.                       |
| <hr/>                                  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anger or rage | You display strong feelings of displeasure or violent and uncontrolled emotions.   |
| <hr/>                                  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arrogance     | You posture yourself as superior, better than, or wiser than your mate.  |
| <hr/>                                  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avoidance     | You get involved in activities to avoid your mate or certain topics.   |
| <hr/>                                  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Belittle      | You devalue or dishonor someone with words or actions; you call your spouse names, use insults, ridicule, take potshots, or mock him or her. |
| <hr/>                                  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blame         | You place responsibility on others, not accepting fault; You're convinced the problem is your spouse's fault.                                |
-

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Broadcast      | You share your problems and concerns with people outside of your marriage.   |
| <hr/>                                   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Care take      | 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. |
| <hr/>                                   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Catastrophize  | You use dramatic, exaggerated expressions to depict that the relationship is in danger or that it has failed.  |
| <hr/>                                   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clinginess     | You develop a strong emotional attachment or dependence on your spouse or others; You hold tight to your mate.   |
| <hr/>                                   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Complain       | You readily express unhappiness or make accusations.   |
| <hr/>                                   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 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.       |
| <hr/>                                   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 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.   |
| <hr/>                                   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cross-complain | You often meet your mate's complaint (criticism) with an immediate complaint of your own.  |
| <hr/>                                   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Defensiveness  | Instead of listening, you defend yourself by providing an explanation; You make excuses for your actions.  |
| <hr/>                                   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Demand         | You try to force your mate to do something, usually with implied threat of punishment if they refuse.  |
| <hr/>                                   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Denial         | You refuse to admit, or you ignore the truth or reality.   |
| <hr/>                                   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 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.             |

<input type="checkbox"/> Earn-it mode	You try to do more to earn others' love and care.
<input type="checkbox"/> Escalate	Your emotions spiral out of control; You argue, raise your voice, or fly into a rage.
<input type="checkbox"/> Exaggerate	You make overstatements or enlarge your words beyond bounds or the truth; You make statements like: "You always ..." or "You never ..."
<input type="checkbox"/> Fact find	You actively seek the facts and details to determine what really happened. You pursue evidence to prove your point.
<input type="checkbox"/> Fix-it mode	You focus almost exclusively on what is needed to solve or fix the problem.
<input type="checkbox"/> Humor	You use humor as a way of not dealing with the issue at hand.
<input type="checkbox"/> Independence	You become independent (separate from your mate) in your attitude, behavior and/or decision-making.
<input type="checkbox"/> Innocent victim	You see your spouse as an attacking monster and you as put upon, unfairly accused, mistreated, or unappreciated.
<input type="checkbox"/> 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.
<input type="checkbox"/> Isolate	You shut down and go into seclusion or into your "cave"
<input type="checkbox"/> Judge	You negatively critique, evaluate, form an opinion, or conclude something about your mate.
<input type="checkbox"/> Lecture	You sermonize, talk down to, scold, or reprimand your mate.
<input type="checkbox"/> Manipulation	You control, influence, or maneuver your spouse for your own advantage.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mind read                   | You make assumptions about your mate's private feelings, behaviors, or motives.   |
| <hr/>  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Minimize                    | You assert that your spouse is overreacting to an issue; You intentionally underestimate, downplay, or soft-pedal the issue or how they feel.   |
| <hr/>  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nag                         | You badger, pester, or harass your mate to do something you want.   |
| <hr/>  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Negative beliefs            | You believe your spouse is far worse than is really the case; You see your spouse in a negative light or attribute negative motives to him or her; You see your mate through a negative lens. |
| <hr/>  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Negative body language      | Your feelings are expressed through non-verbal cues (facial expressions, tone of voice, posture, etc.) that are noticeable to all.  |
| <hr/>  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pacify                      | You try to soothe, calm down or placate your spouse; you try to get them to not feel negative emotions.   |
| <hr/>  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Passive-aggressive behavior | You display negative emotions, resentment, and aggression in passive ways, such as procrastination, forgetfulness, and stubbornness.  |
| <hr/>  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 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.          |
| <hr/>  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pessimism                   | You become negative, distrustful, cynical and skeptical in your view of your spouse and marriage.   |
| <hr/>  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Provoke                     | You intentionally aggravate, hassle, goad, or irritate your spouse.   |
| <hr/>  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 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.                  |

<input type="checkbox"/> Repeat yourself	You state your own position again and again instead of understanding your mate's position.
<input type="checkbox"/> 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.
<input type="checkbox"/> Rewrite history	You recast your earlier times together in a negative light; Your recall of previous disappointments and slights becomes dramatically enhanced.
<input type="checkbox"/> Right/wrong	You argue about who is right and who is wrong; You debate whose position is the correct or right one.
<input type="checkbox"/> Righteous indignation	You believe that you deserve to be angry, resentful or annoyed with your spouse because of what they did.
<input type="checkbox"/> Righteousness	You make it a moral issue by arguing about issues of morality or righteousness.
<input type="checkbox"/> Sarcasm	You use negative or hostile humor, hurtful words, belittling comments, cutting remarks, or demeaning statements.
<input type="checkbox"/> Self-abandon	You desert yourself; You neglect you; You take care of everyone except you.
<input type="checkbox"/> Self-deprecate	You run yourself down or become very critical of yourself.
<input type="checkbox"/> Selfishness	You are concerned with you and your interests, feelings, wants, or desires while disregarding or paying little heed to those of others.
<input type="checkbox"/> Shut down	You detach emotionally and close your heart towards your spouse; You numb out; You become devoid of emotion.
<input type="checkbox"/> Stonewall	You put up walls by and stop responding to your mate; You refuse to share or show any emotion.
<input type="checkbox"/> 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.
- 
- ☐ Withdraw      You pull out of arguments when they become too much; Once you pull out, you rarely if ever revisit the conflict; You get distance, sulk or use the silent treatment.
- 
- ☐ Withhold      You hold back your affections, feelings, sexual intimacy, or love from your spouse.
- 
- ☐ Yes, but...      You start out agreeing (yes) then you end up disagreeing (but).
- 
- ☐ Other
- 

3. What do you truly desire or want to experience in your marriage? **Check all that apply, and "star" the five most important wants/desires.**

**"I WANT ... OR  
I WANT TO BE ..."**

**WHAT THAT FEELING SOUNDS LIKE:**

- ☐ Acceptance      I want to be warmly received for who I am without condition.
- 
- ☐ Accurately portrayed      I want to be seen correctly; I want my mate to represent me in a true and accurate manner.
- 
- ☐ Adequate      I want to feel like I measure up and am good enough.
-

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Affection     | I want to feel fondness and warmth.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appreciation  | I want what I do to be noticed, valued, and acknowledged.                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Approval      | I want to be liked and accepted.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assistance    | I want a helpmate; I want help, support, backing and assistance from my spouse. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attention     | I want to be noticed and attended to.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Care          | I want to know that others care about me and are interested in my wellbeing.    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Comfort       | I want to feel a sense of well-being.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commitment    | I want to have unconditional security in relationships.                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Companionship | I want to enjoy spending time with my mate and them with me.                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Competence    | I want to have skills and ability that bring success.                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Connection    | I want to feel close to others.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grace         | I want something good (i.e. forgiveness) that I don't deserve.                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hero          | I want to be the knight in shining armor; to be my mate's champion.             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hope          | I want confidence that I will get what I love and desire.                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Important     | I want to feel relevant, significant and of high priority to my mate.           |

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intimacy           | I want to open my heart and not have walls in my marriage; I want to feel a deep closeness and connection with my mate.       |
| <hr/>                                       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Joy                | I want to feel lasting satisfaction and happiness; I want to be thrilled with my marriage.                                    |
| <hr/>                                       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Love               | I want to be loved deeply; I want to know that others experience me as lovable.   |
| <hr/>                                       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Partnership        | I want to feel like I have a teammate or partner for a spouse; I want us both to share equal responsibility for our marriage. |
| <hr/>                                       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Passion            | I want excitement, fascination, intrigue, romance, and adventure.   |
| <hr/>                                       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peacefulness       | I want calmness, serenity, and tranquility; I want to feel relaxed in my marriage.  |
| <hr/>                                       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Power              | I want to impact and influence my life and my marriage; I want to know that what I do makes a difference.                     |
| <hr/>                                       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Respect            | I want to be admired and esteemed.  |
| <hr/>                                       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Safety             | I want to feel protected and secure.  |
| <hr/>                                       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self-determination | I want to have independence and freewill.   |
| <hr/>                                       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Significance       | I want to have meaning and purpose.   |
| <hr/>                                       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Success            | I want to experience a sense of achievement and accomplishment.   |
| <hr/>                                       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Support            | I want others to be on my side; I want someone to be beside me through thick and thin.  |
| <hr/>                                       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trust              | I want to have faith in others and know they are reliable.  |

- ☐ Understanding I want to be known and understood at a deep level.
- 
- ☐ Useful I want to contribute something valuable to the marriage.
- 
- ☐ Validation I want to feel valued for who I am, what I think, and what I feel.
- 
- ☐ Wanted I want to be sought after; I want to be desirable to my mate.
- 
- ☐ Other