

Understanding Your Negative Cycle

Couples get caught in “negative cycles” of interaction. A “negative cycle” is a repeating pattern of negative behaviors, thoughts and feelings that causes distress. You react to your partner’s reactions and your partner reacts to your reactions and you go round and round in a never-ending negative cycle. Understanding and untangling your “negative cycles” is a first step in climbing out of distress. The exercise below will help you with this process.

When my partner and I are not getting along:

I often react by (*describe behaviors*)...

My partner often reacts to me by (*describe behaviors*)...

When my partner reacts this way, I often *feel*...

When I feel this way I, see myself as....

When I feel this way I long for or need...

When I react the way I do, I guess that my partner feels...

Describe your repeating negative cycle (*include how you and your partner trigger each other’s feelings, thoughts and behaviors*)...