

Effective Communication Program Summary

FROM BICKERING TO
UNDERSTANDING
CONNECTION

MODULE 2: ATTITUDE

2

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— FOUR APOCALYPTIC RIDERS —

There are four ways of communicating which are toxic to marriage. Gottman describes them as ‘The “Four riders of the Apocalypse.’ Any one of them, if it’s a repeating feature of couples communication, is a big predictor of a not so happily ever after – and many times of a soon to be break-up!

1. Evil Rider One - Contempt



You can show contempt in all kinds of ways from rolling your eyes, cursing, sarcasm, or name calling. Gottman found that if the expression of contempt was a regular feature in the start-up phase of a disagreement, the prognosis for relationship survival was poor.

2. Evil Rider Two - Defensiveness

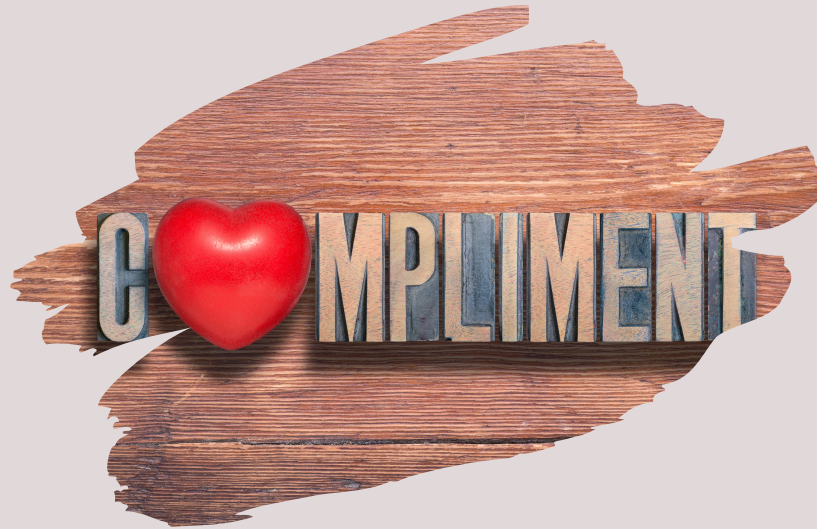


Feeling overly attacked or threatened can be a deal breaker as it makes you hard to live with and to intimate with.

A partner may have gotten into the habit of being defensive because of having been genuinely relentlessly criticized while growing up, in a past relationship, or by yourself.

Being too defensive can do to your relationship what a hail storm can do to a beautiful new car.

3. Evil Rider Three - Don't Criticize but do Compliment



A criticism, as opposed to a complaint is an attack on the whole person. The “for your own good” criticism has destroyed more marriages than you can imagine.

A complaint, on the other hand, might be needed and it's not as damaging because it's limited. It's directed at one behavior rather than the core identity of your partner

People in happy marriages feel appreciated, loved, and respected. Dr. Gottman suggests you need 5 positives for every negative. No one likes to feel constantly under fire.

4. Evil Rider Four – Withdrawal or ‘stonewalling’



Emotionally withdrawing or stonewalling, ‘closing your ears’ or ‘shutting off’ when a partner is complaining or just trying to be intimate is another huge predictor of breakdown. You can be absent even if you are in the same room.

Men may typically do this in the face of what they perceive to be nagging. Gottman found that whilst criticizing was generally more of a female trait, men used stonewalling more.

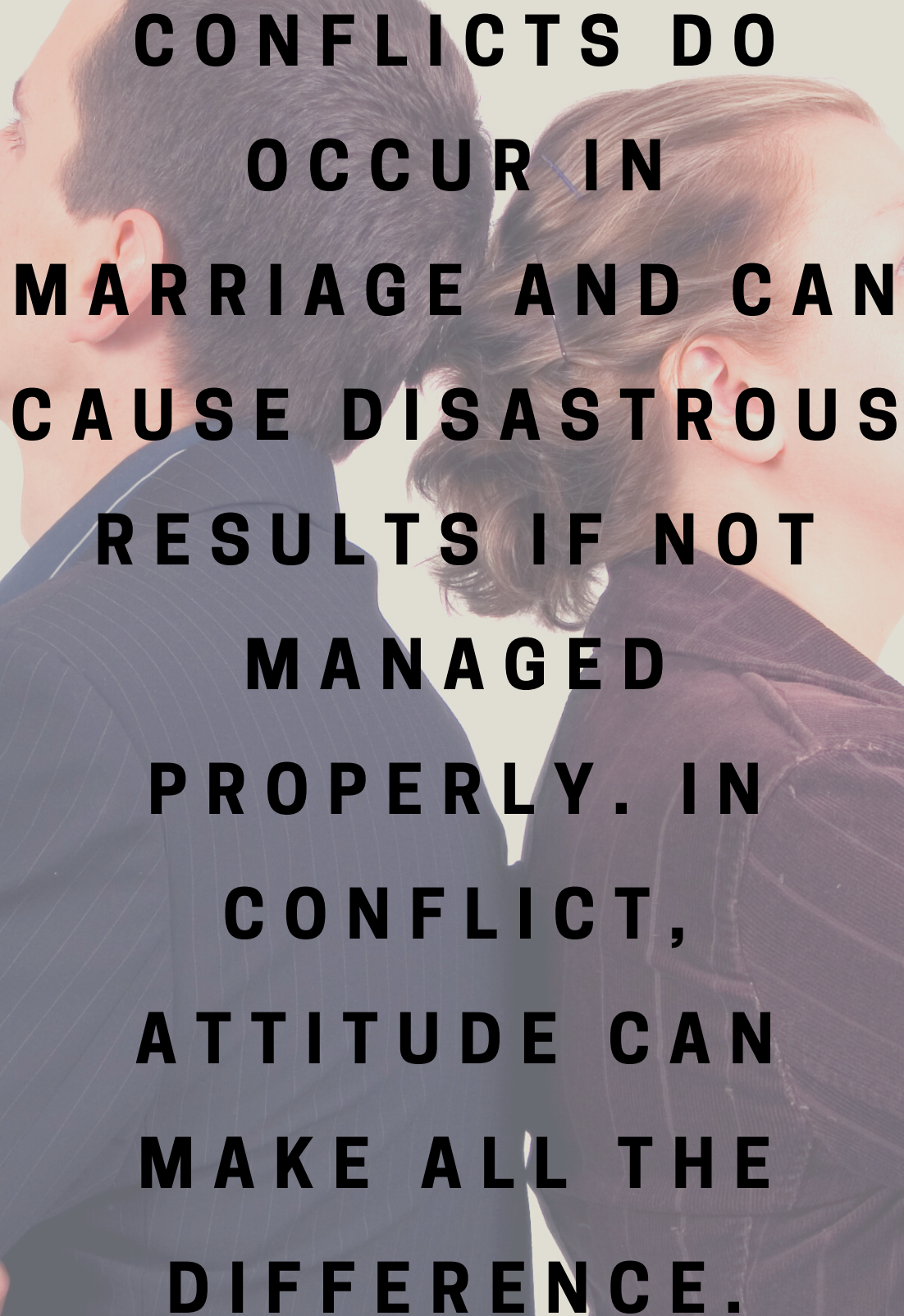
Everyone needs space, but never responding to an emotional issue leaves the other partner out in the cold.

— ATTITUDE AND CONFLICTS —



Dr. Gottman found the problem wasn't how often couples argued . It was HOW they argued that was the key to relationship longevity. In other words, it was their attitude!

A negative attitude will doom the conversation to failure even before the start.



**CONFLICTS DO
OCCUR IN
MARRIAGE AND CAN
CAUSE DISASTROUS
RESULTS IF NOT
MANAGED
PROPERLY. IN
CONFLICT,
ATTITUDE CAN
MAKE ALL THE
DIFFERENCE.**

Negative attitudes in dealing with conflict can be:

1. The "I win you lose" attitude. . .

is a power play and shows little or no love.

2. The "I'll get out. I'm uncomfortable, so I'll withdraw..."

you storm from the room with nothing solved.

3. The "I'll give in. I'll be nice and submit to your demands so you'll love me. . ."

makes you become a doormat who is smiling but angry and frustrated inside.

4. The "I'll meet you halfway. I have only half of the truth and I need your half. . ."

is the attitude of creative compromise. But sometimes these two half-truths may not equal the real truth.

A healthy attitude can be:

"I care enough to confront. I want to stay in a respectful and honest relationship with you. I want you to know where I stand and what I am feeling, needing, valuing and wanting. And I want to hear where you stand."

This attitude invites your partner to enter into dialogue. It's not a demand, it's an invitation.



Therefore, even in conflict you can have a positive attitude.

Remember that To have a Positive attitude you need to:

- Consciously choose to focus on the positives in each other.
- Make a list of your spouse's positive qualities and things you appreciate. Think of what your spouse does that demonstrates his or her goodwill overall.
- Understand your different styles and cultivate curiosity and an open mindset.
- If you catch yourself dwelling on negatives, stop yourself. Shift your thinking to something positive.
- If in conflict, have the positive attitude that by entering into dialogue you can solve or dissolve the issue.

— ATTITUDE AND STYLE —



People tend to have different preferred processing styles of communication. When this happens, it's easy to feel the other is either ignoring you (if they tend to take more time for processing and are not willing to be talking all the time), or smothering you and bombarding you with words all the time (if the other wants to process everything right this minute and dissect every little happening).

Knowing more about your partner's natural tendencies will help you discover that neither of you needs to get a negative attitude just because the other has a different communication style.

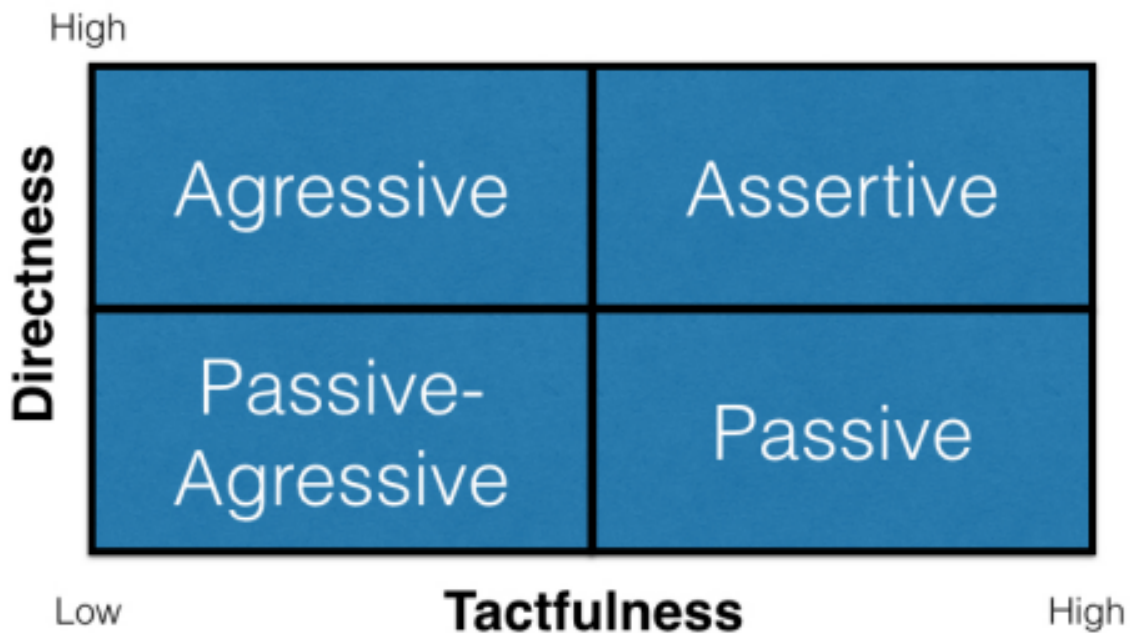
Questions to ask yourself about your style of processing communication:

1. How do you like to process information - talking through it or you need time to mull and think?
2. When going on an adventure, Do you need a plan before heading off on a new adventure and talk about it for hours on end or does the idea send shivers down to your toes?
3. Are you good at determining the reactions and needs of others or do you focus more on the facts in situations?
4. Are you more director do you tend to imply or infer?
5. Are you more thoughtful or are you more thoughtless?

When you are frustrated, and each of you is defending your positions, stating your cases, and completely ignoring the other person's perspective., it's good to remember What's your communication style.

Let's think about these 4 styles:

Communication Styles Matrix



— COMMUNICATION STYLE MATRIX —

1. Passive

I do not express my needs, desires and opinions directly and I put others' needs above my own. I have the attitude of a loser and the other communicator wins.

2. Passive Aggressive

I don't express my needs directly, But I indirectly make sure that others are aware of my needs, desires and opinions and feel guilty if they don't cater to me. I give little or no thought to theirs. I have an attitude of "You should know what I need and give it to me. But I don't deserve it." The passive aggressive communicator wins or loses, but the other communicator always loses.

—COMMUNICATION STYLE MATRIX—

3. Aggressive

I am direct in expressing my needs, desires and opinions giving little or no thought to other people's. I have an attitude of "it's my way or the highway." The aggressive communicator wins but the other communicator loses.

4. Assertive

I clearly and directly express my needs, desires and opinions in a way which is considerate of others. I have an attitude of both of us are worthy and deserve respect. We end in a win, win scenario, for both sides within the communication process.

—TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR ATTITUDE—

The journey to healing a marriage in this predicament begins with looking at yourselves first.

Instead of looking at what your partner is doing wrong, take a good hard look at yourself and ask God to reveal to you what you are doing wrong. As God reveals things to you, write them down, ask His forgiveness, and then share the list with your spouse and ask for their forgiveness.

A sincere apology is a specific admission of wrong, followed by a heartfelt effort to do differently. You can't claim to have changed your attitude if you are not changing your behaviors.

DO THE WORK IN YOUR WORKBOOK!