

Understanding Your Negative Cycle

Couples get caught in “negative cycles” or patterns of interactions. A negative cycle is a repetitive pattern of behaviors, thoughts and feelings that cause distress . You react to your partner’s reactions and your partner reacts to your reactions and around and around it goes. Understanding and untangling your negative cycle is the 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 negative cycle (include how you and your partner trigger each other’s feelings, thoughts, and behaviors).....