

## OUR NEGATIVE CYCLE:

### WHEN I AM UPSET BY YOU:

#### ON THE SURFACE, I FEEL:

Angry, Pissed off	Sad
Alone, Abandoned	Disappointed
Justified in my anger	Like I have to figure this out myself
Frustrated by him/her	Deprived
Annoyed, Irritated	Despairing, Hopeless
Scared, frightened	Like I want to protect myself
Anxious	Hurt, Not heard, Not valued, Not important

#### WHAT I THEN DO IS (BEHAVIORS):

Criticize you, blame you  
Interrupt you  
Try to manipulate to get what I want from you  
Yell, Attack, Say nasty things to you  
Beg or Plead  
Demand  
Point out how you are letting me down or hurting me; try to get you to understand how you hurt me  
Explain again and again what I want  
Pull away, Withdraw, Give up  
Refuse to talk to you  
Get logical and point out how irrational you are  
Find solutions, try to fix it so the conflict will stop or so that you won't be so upset or angry  
Defend myself  
Try to show why I am right and you are wrong  
Justify my feelings and actions  
Counter-criticize or counter-blame or counter-attack and say nasty things to you

#### WHEN I DO THIS, YOU SEEM TO (CHOOSE FROM THE BEHAVIORS ABOVE):

#### WHEN YOU DO THIS, I FEEL (CHOOSE FROM THE SURFACE FEELINGS ABOVE):

#### I BEHAVE AS I DO (ABOVE) IN THE HOPE THAT (WHAT I LONG FOR IS):

**BUT IT DOESN'T WORK. INSTEAD, WE GET STUCK IN THIS REPETITIVE CYCLE THAT UPSETS US BOTH**

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**BUILDING A SAFE AND SECURE RELATIONSHIP**  
**Changing Negative Cycles to Positive Cycles**  
**Begins with De-Escalating as a Couple**

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***WHAT IF WHEN WE WERE HAVING DIFFICULTY I TOLD YOU THAT....***

I realize we are beginning a negative cycle and that I am contributing to it  
I realize we are a system and I am affecting you  
I would like to be safe and close to you rather than distant, disconnected,  
alone, and afraid of what will happen  
Our cycle feels like it is present and I want to help alleviate it  
I care about our relationship and I won't do the next thing that hurts or scares  
you and pulls you deeper into our negative cycle  
I'd love it if you slow down with me so we can reconnect. We can always  
figure out what to do about the problem later, when we've provided  
assurance and safety and our physiology has returned to normal.  
If you aren't ready to de-escalate with me as a team, I will anyway because I  
love you and want to be close and connected.  
I realize and take seriously that you need to experience me as safe.  
I realize that when I'm wrapped up in my own needs and hurts and feel a need  
to protect myself, I'm not thinking about you and how you feel. I'd like to  
shift into protecting you and us instead of protecting just me.  
I realize and take seriously that if I am anxious, scared, angry, and frustrated,  
you probably are, too.  
I realize you are upset, too, and I am pledging you support and empathy even  
though I'm also upset. I really want you to be happy.  
I really want you to know how important you are to me, how much I care for  
you, and that I want to protect our relationship.  
I realize and take seriously that I have to trust you and also be trustworthy

**WHEN I'VE DONE THESE THINGS, YOU SEEM TO:**

**WHEN I SEE YOU DE-ESCALATING AND REASSURING ME OF YOUR  
AFFECTION, I FEEL:**

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