

Understanding Your Negative Cycle

Couples get caught in negative “cycles”. A 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 cycle. Understanding and untangling your negative cycles is a first step in climbing out of distress.

To start understanding your negative cycles, answer the following questions. First review and think about the “When We’re Not Getting Along: Feelings, Thoughts, and Behaviors” checklist to remind yourself of how you feel and interact when you are not getting along with your partner.

When my partner and I are not getting along:

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

My partner often reacts to me by (describe his/her 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).
