

Relationship Antidotes

When things are going wrong in my relationship, I have learnt to ask myself, “what am I doing to contribute to the issue and what can I do to move ‘us’ forward?” I only have control over my own actions so by directing my focus on me rather than projecting the blame onto someone else, I avoid drama and create choice within the situation.

***Relationship Antidotes* by Howard Lambert, Ph.D.**

1. Learn how to mirror your partner's complaints.
2. Scan for whatever is valid in your partner's complaint and address that.
3. Speak respectfully even when angry.
4. Practice holding yourself and your partner in warm regard, even when feeling distant or during a fight.
5. Learn the skills of repairing damage in the relationship.
6. Always live up to your agreements (or renegotiate if you can't.)
7. Make all requests of your partner clear, simple and specific.
8. Practice sharing compliments, appreciations and praise daily.
9. Hire an expert who coaches couples in how to re-establish intimacy in damaged relationships for therapy or a weekend couples' retreat that can help you repair and/or deepen the loving commitment between you.

Relationship Antidotes

According to Howard Lambert, "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" are "behaviors that, if they occur regularly, are very good predictors of either a failed or a terminally unhappy relationship." By understanding what these behaviours are, I put myself in a position to grow or move forward.

***The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* by Howard Lambert, Ph.D.**

1. Criticism versus Complaint

While a complaint addresses only the specific action at which a partner has failed, a criticism is global. It attacks ones character or personality.

Example

Complaint: "There is no gas in the car. I'm aggravated that you didn't fill it up like you said you would."

Criticism: "You never remember anything! You can't be counted on for your word!"

2. Contempt

Contempt is composed of a set of behaviors that communicate *disgust*. It includes, but is not limited to: sneering, sarcasm, namecalling, eye rolling, mockery, hostile humor and condescension. It is primarily transmitted through non-verbal behaviors. It does not move toward reconciliation and inevitably increases the conflict. It is always disrespectful. Research shows couples that display contempt for each other suffer more illnesses and diseases than respectful couples.

3. Defensiveness

This convey the message, "the problem is not *me*. It's *you*." This behaviour abdicates responsibility for your own behavior by pointing to something your partner did *prior* to their complaint about you.

4. Stonewalling

In relationships where intense arguments break out suddenly, and where criticism and contempt lead to defensiveness, and where more contempt leads to more defensiveness, eventually one partner tunes out. This is the beginning of stonewalling. The stonewaller acts as if he (research indicates that 85% of stonewallers in marriages are husbands) couldn't care less about what the partner is saying or doing. He (sometimes she) turns away from conflict and from the relationship. Any form of disengagement can be stonewalling.

If either you or your partner regularly engages in ANY of these behaviors during fights, you have some work to do if you want to ensure the success and happiness of your relationship.