

Gottman Method Couples Therapy

Treating Escalating and Avoidant Couples

Part 1

What is an escalating couple?

- ▶ Engage in conflicts often
- ▶ Tend to use negative communication patterns (4 Horsemen)
- ▶ Flooding leads to increased negative arguments
- ▶ Often report positive relationship when not in conflict
- ▶ Often report positive shared values and goals
- ▶ Might report good sexual connection but loneliness can still be present
- ▶ Usually have several repeating issues (gridlocks)

Multi-Method Assessment

- ▶ Couple's narrative usually filled with argument stories
- ▶ Couple's history usually has high positive connection stories
- ▶ History often contains several break up and reuniting stories
- ▶ Conflict conversation usually exhibits many negatives
- ▶ Questionnaires may show positive friendship and shared meaning but low conflict management scores.
- ▶ 4 horsemen and flooding are present
- ▶ Repair skills tend to be low
- ▶ Harsh startup and rejecting influence are present

Escalating Couples - Treatment

- ▶ Establish flooding protocols
- ▶ Address 4 horsemen as they appear
 - ▶ 4 horsemen intervention
 - ▶ Dan Wile intervention
- ▶ Establish new conversation patterns (Gottman-Rapoport)
- ▶ Uncover underlying issues (Dreams within Conflict)
- ▶ Establish new behaviors (Compromise Ovals)
- ▶ Process negative past incidents (Aftermath of a Fight)

Escalating Couple Intake Video

- ▶ Show Video EC 1

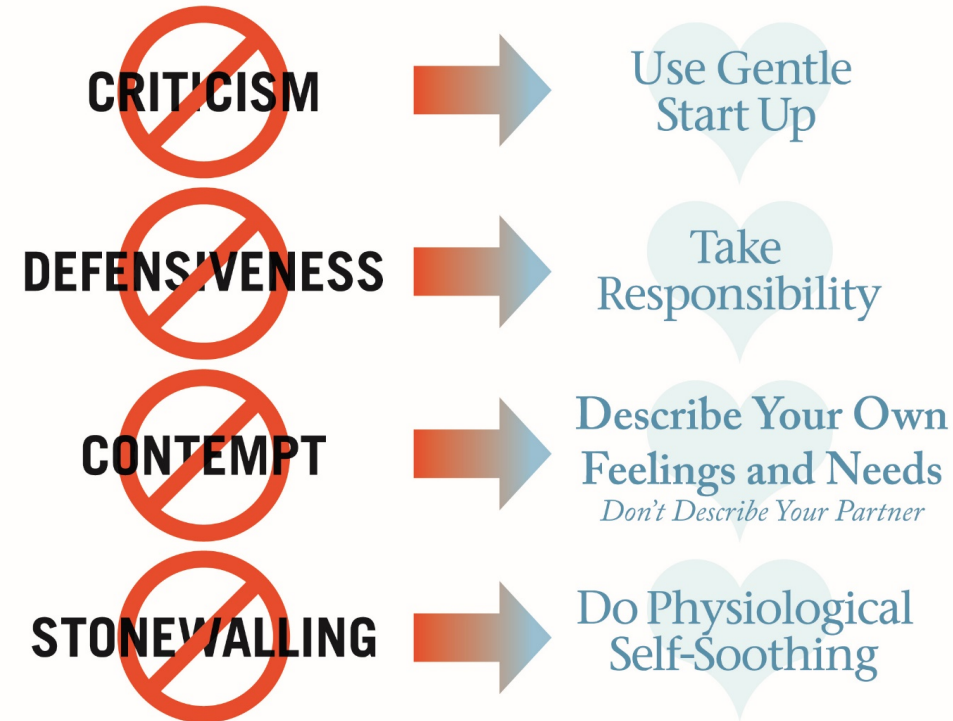
Flooding

- ▶ Physiological Experience
- ▶ Pulse escalation
- ▶ Brain Changes

Flooding Video

- ▶ Show EC2

Stop the Four Horsemen with their Antidotes



The Four Horsemen

Four Horsemen Examples

- ▶ Show EC 3 and EC 4

Dan Wile Intervention

Speak	Speak for each
Kneel	Kneel beside them, don't stand over them, be at least eye level
Interrupt	Interrupt Attack – Defend
Re-state	Have client say it in his or her own words (transfers skill to client)

Dan Wile Video

▶ Show EC 5

Gottman Rapoport



Understanding Must Precede Persuasion and Problem-Solving



Assumption Of Similarity



Speaker:



Gentle Start-up



Positive Need



Listener:



Take Notes



Postpone agenda, listen with empathy



Validate

Dreams within Conflict



Dreams Within Conflict Goals:

Postpone persuasion or problem-solving
Deepen understanding of issue



Speaker-Listener structure



Speaker's job, refer to Sample Dreams



Listener's job, refer to Sample Questions



Coach one partner to ask the other partner questions from the handout.



For very difficult cases – ok for therapist to address questions to Speaker. But try to keep it dyadic.



Switch roles

Compromise Ovals

For either solvable or perpetual/gridlocked problem.

Both partners must feel understood before compromise (Gottman-Rapoport Intervention, Dream Within Conflict)

Perpetual/gridlocked issues = reach a temporary or partial compromise on part of the larger issue.

Gridlocked during Compromise? Do a Dreams Within Conflict before proceeding.

Aftermath of a Fight



Aftermath Video

▶ Play EC 6