

Our Damaging Relational Dance Dynamic

Let's make love... not war!

When some partners feel “failed” or let down by the other, their levels of anxiety tend to increase as their relational traumas (or childhood wounds) are reactivated. They may immediately start experiencing similar EMOTIONS and displaying similar BEHAVIOURS (or [unhelpful] coping strategies) as during their negative childhood experiences in order to help them cope with their painful inner experience and challenging environment. These strategies are unfortunately unhelpful as they stem and were developed from unsafe or unhealthy situations in relations to their family or childhood environment.

1. **EMOTIONS** – *When I feel let down or “failed” by my partner, I normally tend to FEEL:*

Anxious Preoccupied Attachment

dismissed
unimportant
misunderstood
rejected
guilty , other _____

Anxious Avoidant Attachment

criticized
blamed
attacked
controlled
a/shamed , other _____

Core Life Values may be activated

Schemas may be engaged

Unresolved relational traumas may be triggered

[Level I Double-Bind]

[Level II Double-Bind]

[Level III Double-Bind]

2. **ACTIONS** – *M.O., defense (weapons of mass retaliation), unhelpful coping strategies used just as during childhood, so...*

When I feel let down or failed by my partner, I tend to (DO the following):

Anxious Preoccupied Attachment

criticize / invalidate
start asking multiple questions
raise my voice
attack / blame , other _____

Anxious Avoidant Attachment

shut down
justify (my self, my actions, my words, etc.)
dismiss / invalidate
counter attack / project / blame , other _____

3. **RESULT / OUTCOME** – *At the end of OUR fight, WE will likely end up feeling...*

hurt discouraged guilty distanced ashamed bitter resentful having lower self-esteem _____

4. **CONCLUSION** – *In the end, OUR approach (what each does and says) does NOT get what we WANT and NEED (i.e. proximity, connection, understanding, etc.), on the contrary, OUR approach/dynamic is normally:*

non effective hurtful harmful damaging ever so painful and discouraging _____

5. **SOLUTION (NEW APPROACH)** – *Instead of our usual defensive (unhelpful and inefficient) strategies, more efficient relational strategies would be to:*

validate (validate, validate, validate what my partner just said!) / **ask to be validated** E.g.: “Can you validate me now?”, “I would like you to validate me.”

simply be kind and loving (and drop the hostile and distancing approach towards my partner) E.g.: “sweetie”, “honey”, “my love”, “babe”, etc.

connect to my partner via their love language (words of affirmation , spending time together , physical touch , acts of service, gifts)

stay in the “green zone” (accessing my *Adult*, staying inside the window of tolerance) E.g.: “How about we each take a five-minute break to calm down?”

verify (my own painful conclusion re: other’s actions) E.g.: “Are you trying to manipulate me now?” / **clarify** (my partner’s intentions based on my own conclusions) E.g.: “I felt judged by your comment: was that your intention to judge me?”, “What was your intention?”, “What did you mean by abc?”

cooperate E.g.: “What are you asking of me now sweetie?” / **get other to cooperate** with you E.g.: “Hun, could you pick up the kids after school today?”

ask your partner to present a clear need E.g.: What is it that you are asking from me right now, sweetie?

relent E.g.: “I’m so sorry that you were hurt by my comment this morning.”, “My intention was not to be hurtful, only to share how I felt.”, “I’m sorry.”

validate some more! (you can rarely validate *too much!*) E.g.: “You seem still very hurt by what I said this morning...I’m so sorry (bonus!).”

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Mapping **My** Damaging Relational Dance Dynamic

Expecting a different result while displaying the same behaviour simply doesn't work... and is so discouraging!

Let's look at what I can do to transform my relationship, get MY needs fulfilled and get the relationship I really want and deserve.

1. **EMOTIONS** – Similar to MY negative childhood experience, so...

...when I feel "let down" or "failed" by my partner, I normally tend to FEEL:

2. **ACTIONS** – M.O., Defense / Weapons / Unhelpful Coping Strategies used just as the ones during MY childhood, so...

...when I feel "let down" or "failed" by my partner, I tend to (DO the following):

3. **END RESULT** – *In the end, after having unfolded my all-out-war arsenal, without fail, I end up feeling:*

4. **SOLUTION (NEW APPROACH)** – Instead of using my *unhelpful defensive strategies*, I **commit to using more efficient relational strategies such as:**
