

## Identifying Your Reactive Cycle

1. Describe a recent conflict or negative situation—something that really “pushed your emotional buttons,” or that really hurt or upset you.

2. What were the “*buttons*” that got pushed during the conflict? Another way to look at it is: How did what happened during the conflict make you feel about *yourself*? What did the conflict say about *you* or the message that it sent to *you*? For example, as a result of the above conflict, I felt \_\_\_\_\_ or feared being \_\_\_\_\_ or I thought \_\_\_\_\_ would happen? Check all that apply, but “star” the most important buttons.

✓	<i>“As a result of the conflict, I felt...”</i>	<i>What That Feeling Sounds Like</i>
	Rejected	I will be discarded; I will be seen as useless; He/she doesn’t need me; I am not necessary in this relationship; He/she doesn’t desire intimacy with me.
	Unwanted	He/she doesn’t want me; He/she will not choose me; He/she is staying in the relationship out of duty, obligation, or because it’s the “right” thing to do.
	Abandoned	I will be alone; He/she will ultimately leave me; He/she won’t be committed to me long-term.
	Disconnected	We will become emotionally detached or separated; There are walls or barriers between us in the relationship.
	Like a failure	I am not successful as a person; I will not perform right or correctly; I will fall short in my relationship; I won’t make the grade.
	Helpless or powerless	I cannot do anything to change the other person or my situation; I do not possess the power, resources, capacity, or ability to get what I want.
	Controlled	I will be controlled by him/her; He/she will exercise authority over me; I will be made to “submit;” He/she will restrain me; I will be treated like a child or He/she will act like my parent.
	Defective	Something is wrong with me; I’m the problem; I am unlovable.
	Inadequate	I am not capable; I am incompetent.
	Inferior	Everyone else is better than I am; I am less valuable or important than others.
	Invalidated	Who I am, what I think, what I do, or how I feel is not valued by him/her.
	Unloved	He/she doesn’t love me anymore; He/she has no affection or desire for me; my relationship lacks warm attachment, admiration, enthusiasm, or devotion.
	Dissatisfied	I will not experience satisfaction within the relationship; I will exist in misery for the rest of my life; I will not be pleased within my relationship; I feel no joy in my relationship.
	Taken advantage of	I will be cheated by him/her; He/she will take advantage of me; He/she will withhold something I need; I will feel like a “door mat;” I won’t get what I want.
	Worthless or devalued	I am useless; He/she fails to recognize my value and worth; I feel cheapened, less than, or undervalued in the relationship; I have little or no value to him/her; He/she does not see me as priceless.

Not good enough / Don't measure up	Nothing I do is ever acceptable, satisfactory or sufficient for him/her; There will always be more "hoops" to jump through; I will never be able to meet his/her expectations of me; My efforts will never be enough.
Unaccepted	He/she does not accept me; He/she is not pleased with me; He/she does not approve of me.
Judged	I am always being unfairly judged or misjudged; He/she forms faulty or negative opinions about me; I am always being evaluated; He/she does not approve of me.
Humiliated	This relationship is extremely destructive to my self-respect or dignity.
Ignored	He/she will not pay attention to me; I feel neglected.
Unimportant	I am not important to him/her; I am irrelevant, insignificant, or of little priority to him/her.
Useless	I am of no use in my relationship; I am ineffective; I am not needed.
Intimacy	I am afraid of opening up emotionally to him/her; I will be hurt emotionally if I allow he/she past my "walls."
Misunderstood	He/she will fail to understand me correctly; He/she will get the wrong idea or impression about me; I will be misinterpreted or misread.
Misportrayed	He/she has an inaccurate portrayal of me; I am misrepresented or represented in a false way; I am described in a negative or untrue manner; He/she paints a wrong picture of me; He/she has negative beliefs about me.
Disrespected	I will be insulted; He/she does not admire me; He/she will have a low opinion of me; I will be disregarded; He/she does not respect me; He/she does not look up to me.
Out of control	My relationship will be wild, unruly, or hectic; He/she will be unmanageable or uncontrollable; Things will feel disorganized or in disorder.
Alone	I will be by myself or on my own; I will be without help or assistance; I will be lonely; I will be isolated.
Insignificant	I will be irrelevant to him/her; I will be of no consequence to him/her; I am immaterial, not worth mentioning, trivial in the eyes of him/her; I am of minor importance to him/her.
Unknown	He/she will not know me; It's like I'm a stranger to him/her; I will be nameless or anonymous to him/her; I will be unfamiliar to him/her.
Boring	There will be no passion in our relationship; He/she perceives me as dull and dreary; Our relationship is uninteresting; He/she will believe that he/she knows everything there is to know about me; I feel as if we are just friends—there will be no romantic feelings between us.
Disappointment	I will be a let down in the relationship; He/she will be disappointed in me; He/she will be disillusioned by me.
Phony	He/she will see me as fake or not genuine; He/she will believe that I'm a fraud, pretender, or an imposter; He/she will perceive that I'm not who I say I am; I will be viewed as a hypocrite.
Unfair	He/she will treat me unfairly; He/she wants me to do things he/she is unwilling to do (there is a double standard) ; I will be asked to do things that are unreasonable or excessive; He/she treats me differently than others; I won't be treated equally.
Dishonesty	Our relationship will lack truth, honesty, or trustworthiness; He/she willfully perverts truth in order to deceive, cheat, or defraud me; He/she will mislead me or give a false appearance.
Betrayed	He/she will be disloyal or unfaithful; He/she has given up on the relationship; I'll be let down; He/she will share or reveal private information with others.
Unaware	I do not know what is going on in the relationship; I do not have the necessary information; I'm in the dark; I'm clueless; Things feel secretive, hidden or undisclosed; I'll appear ignorant or uninformed.

Other:	
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3. What do you *do* when your “buttons” get pushed? [Your buttons are the items you checked from question #2] How do you *react* when you feel those ways? Identify your common *coping strategies* to deal with those buttons or feelings. Check all that apply—but “star” the most important reactions or coping behaviors:

✓ or *	Reactions	Explanation
	Withdraw	You avoid him/her or alienate yourself without resolution; You get distance, sulk or use the silent treatment.
	Stonewall	You turn into a stone wall by not responding to the other person.
	Escalate	Your emotions spiral out of control; you argue, raise your voice, or fly into a rage.
	Emotionally shut down	You detach emotionally and close your heart towards the other person; You numb out; You become devoid of emotion; You have no regard for others’ needs or troubles.
	Pacify	You try to soothe, calm down or placate the other person; You try to get them to not feel negative emotions.
	Earn-it mode	You try to do more to earn his/her love and care.
	Belittle	You devalue or dishonor someone with words or actions; you call your partner names, use insults, ridicule, take potshots, or mock him or her.
	Negative beliefs	You believe the other person is far worse than is really the case; you see the other person in a negative light or attribute negative motives to him or her; You see the other person through a negative lens.
	Arrogance	You posture yourself as superior, better than, or wiser than the other person.
	Blame	You place responsibility on others, not accepting fault; You’re convinced the problem is the other person’s fault.
	Innocent victim	You see the other person as an attacking monster and yourself as put upon, unfairly accused, mistreated, or unappreciated.
	Control	You hold back, restrain, oppress, or dominate the other person; You “rule over” the other person; You talk over or prevent the other person from having a chance to explain their position, opinions or feelings.
	Dishonesty	You lie about, fail to reveal, give out false impressions, or you falsify your thoughts, feelings, habits, likes, dislikes, personal history, daily activities, or plans for the future.
	Withhold	You withhold your affections, feelings, or love from the other person.
	Demand	You try to force the other person to do something, usually with implied threat of punishment if they refuse.
	Annoying behavior	You use irritating habits or activities to infuriate, annoy, upset, or to get on the other person’s nerves.
	Provoke	You intentionally aggravate, hassle, goad, or irritate the other person.
	Isolate	You shut down and go into seclusion or into your “cave.”
	Exaggerate	You make overstatements or enlarge your words beyond bounds or the truth; You make statements like: “You always” or “You never.”
	Tantrums	You have a fit of bad temper; You become irritable, crabby, or grumpy.
	Denial	You refuse to admit the truth or reality.
	Invalidate	You devalue the other person; you do not appreciate who the other person is, what he or she feels or thinks or does.
	Distress-maintaining thoughts	You replay the argument over and over; You don’t stop thinking about the conflict or what your partner does that frustrates or hurts you.
	Independence	You become independent (separate from the other person) in your attitude, behavior and decision-making.

Rewrite history	You recast your earlier times together in a negative light; Your recall of previous disappointments and slights becomes dramatically enhanced.
Defensiveness	Instead of listening, you defend yourself by providing an explanation; You make excuses for your actions.
Clinginess	You develop a strong emotional attachment or dependence on the other person; You hold tight to your partner.
Passive-aggressive behavior	You display negative emotions, resentment, and aggression in passive ways, such as procrastination, forgetfulness, and stubbornness.
Avoidance	You get involved in activities to avoid the other person.
Care-take	You become responsible for others by giving physical or emotional care and support to the point you are doing everything for the other person, and the other person does little to care for himself or herself.
Pessimism	You become negative, distrustful, cynical and skeptical in your view of the other person and relationship.
Act-out	You engage in negative behaviors like drug or alcohol abuse, extramarital affairs, excessive shopping, or overeating.
Fix-it mode	You focus almost exclusively on what is needed to solve or fix the problem.
Complain	You express unhappiness or make accusations.
Criticize	You pass judgment, condemn, or point out the other person's faults; You attack his/her personality or character.
Strike-out	You lash out in anger, become verbally, or physically aggressive or abusive.
Manipulation	You control, influence, or maneuver the other person for your own advantage.
Anger or rage	You display strong feelings of displeasure or violent and uncontrolled emotions.
Catastrophize	You use dramatic, exaggerated expressions to depict that the relationship is in danger or that it has failed.
Pursue the truth	You try to determine what really happened or who is telling the truth.
Judge	You negatively criticize, evaluate, form an opinion, or conclude something about the other person.
Selfishness	You become more concerned with you and your interests, feelings, wants, or desires.
Lecture	You sermonize, talk down to, scold, or reprimand the other person.
Cross-complain	You meet the other person's complaint (or criticism) with an immediate complaint of your own, totally ignoring what the other person has said.
Whine	You express yourself by using a childish, high-pitched nasal tone and stress one syllable toward the end of the sentence.
Negative body language	You give a false smile, shift from side to side, or fold your arms across your chest.
Humor	You use humor as a way of not dealing with the issue at hand.
Sarcasm	You use negative or hostile humor, hurtful words, belittling comments, cutting remarks, or demeaning statements.
Minimize	You assert that the other person is overreacting to an issue; you intentionally underestimate, downplay, or soft-pedal the issue or how they feel.
Rationalize	You attempt to make your actions seem reasonable; you try to attribute your behavior to credible motives; you try to provide believable but untrue reasons for your conduct.
Yes, but...	You start out agreeing (yes) but you end up disagreeing (but).
Indifference	You become cold, smug, and show no concern for the other person or relationship.
Dump on	You emotionally "vomit," unload, or dump on the other person.
Abdicate	You give away responsibilities; You deny responsibilities.
Self-depreciate	You run yourself down or become very critical of yourself.

	Mind read	You make assumptions about the person's private feelings, behaviors, or motives.
	Repeat yourself	You repeat back your own position over and over instead of understanding your partner's position.
	Right/Wrong	You argue about who is right and who is wrong; You debate whose position is the correct or right one.
	Self-abandonment	You desert yourself; You neglect you; You take care of everyone except you.
	Righteous indignation	You believe that you deserve to be angry, resentful or annoyed with the other person because of what they did.
	Stubborn	You will not budge from your position; You become inflexible or persistent.
	Righteousness	You make it a moral issue or argue about issues of morality or righteousness.
	Play dumb	You pretend not to understand or know what your partner is talking about.
	Nag	You badger, pester, or harass your partner to do something you want.
	Other:	

4. If you don't want to feel \_\_\_\_\_ [the items or "buttons" you checked and stared on question #2], what do you want to feel like in your relationship. In other words, what do you desire or want to feel or experience in your relationship? These are things that are usually the opposite of the buttons or fears you checked in question #2 (e.g., the opposite of failure is success; the opposite of helpless is power; the opposite of rejected is accepted, etc.). Check all that apply—but "star" the most important wants/desires:

✓ or *	"I want..."	<i>What That Feeling Sounds Like:</i>
	Acceptance	I want to be warmly received without condition.
	Grace	I want something good (i.e. forgiveness) that I don't deserve.
	Connection	I want to be united to others.
	Companionship	I want deep, intimate relationships.
	Success	I want to achieve or accomplish something; I want to be successful as a partner.
	Self-determination	I want to have independence and freewill.
	Cared for	I want him/her to take great care of me; I want to be well cared for.
	Understanding	I want to be known and understood at a deep level.
	Hero	I want to be the knight in shining armor; To be He/she's champion.
	Love	I want to feel attractive to him/her; I want to be admired; I want to feel lovable.
	Validation	I want to be valued for who I am, what I think, and what I feel.
	Competence	I want to have skills and ability that bring success.
	Respect	I want to be admired and esteemed.
	Important	I want to feel relevant, significant and of high priority to him/her.
	Valued	I want to be honored and to feel like a priceless treasure.
	Commitment	I want to have unconditional security in relationships.
	Passion	I want excitement, fascination, intrigue, romance, and adventure.
	Significance	I want to have meaning and purpose.

	Attention	I want to be noticed and attended to.
	Comfort	I want to feel a sense of well-being.
	Support	I want to be cared for.
	Approval	I want to be liked and accepted.
	Wanted	I want to be sought after.
	Safety	I want to feel protected and secure.
	Affection	I want to feel fondness and warmth.
	Trust	I want to have faith in others.
	Hope	I want confidence that I will get what I love and desire.
	Joy	I want to feel satisfied and happy; I want to be thrilled with my relationship.
	Power	I want to feel that I have the ability to control the outcome or influence the direction of my relationship.
	Partnership	I want to feel like I have a teammate or partner; I want us both to share equal responsibility for our relationship.
	Adequate	I want to feel like I'm adequate, I measure up, or I'm good enough.
	Appreciation	I want he/she to notice what I do in the relationship and to feel gratitude.
	Useful	I want to feel useful and needed in the relationship.
	Accurately portrayed	I want to be seen correctly; I want him/her to represent me in a true and accurate manner; I want to be seen in a positive light.
	Assistance	I want help, support, backing and assistance from him/her.
	Peacefulness	I want calm, serenity, and tranquility; I want my relationship to be relaxed.
	Intimacy	I want to open my heart and not have walls in my relationship; I want a deep closeness.
	Other:	