

MARRIAGE WORKSHEET

Get Rid of the Four Horsemen

What It Is

A quick definition of this particular horseman, according to Gottman.



A generalized complaint about your partner, usually begins with "you" and involving the words "always" or "never".

"You're always late! Why can't you get your act together?"

How to Avoid It

A healthy alternative as to how to act instead of resorting to the horseman.



Use a gentle start-up and make it about you instead of about your partner.

"I get really nervous when we're late. Can you accommodate me even though you don't feel the same way?"

When I'm at Risk

Think about when you're most susceptible to that type of behavior.



I'm most prone to criticism in situations when...

Criticism

A statement that places you above your partner: disrespect, sarcasm, ridicule, etc.

"You're so pathetic and lazy you can't even remember to take the garbage out after I ask twelve times."

Short Term: Describe your feelings and needs.
Long Term: Build up lots of fondness and admiration.

"I'm exhausted at the end of the day and would really feel taken care of if you dealt with the trash."

I'm most prone to contempt in situations when...

Contempt

Responding with defensiveness and redirecting blame to your partner.

"You know I didn't have time to make that call today. You're at home all day, why didn't you just do it yourself?"

Take responsibility for your part in the problem and react calmly.

"Oops, I completely forgot. Let me make the call now so it gets done ASAP."

I'm most prone to defensiveness in situations when...

Defensiveness

Shutting down, refusing to engage with your partner, and emotionally withdrawing.

"I just can't deal with this right now."

Communicate your need for a break and resume the conversation later.

"I'm not rational enough to continue this conversation right now. Can we try again once I calm down?"

I'm most prone to stonewalling in situations when...

Stonewalling