

# The Four Horsemen

## Criticism

- Suggesting the problem is your partner's character defect.
- "You always"
- "You never"
- Antidote: Complain without blaming

## Defensiveness

- Denying any responsibility for the problem.
- Negative body language
- Believing that the problem is all your partner's fault
- Responding to a complaint with another complaint
- Whining
- Feeling attacked
- Antidote: Accept some responsibility

## Contempt

- Making yourself sound superior to your partner.
- Insults and name-calling
- Using sarcasm
- Being cynical
- Mockery, hostile humor
- Body language: sneering, rolling eyes
- Antidote: Create a culture of appreciation

## Stonewalling

- Listener withdraws from the interaction.
- Often occurs when people are upset.
- Appears to be an attempt to withdraw to calm down or to self-soothe.
- Antidote: Take a good break.



Courtesy of Bringing Baby Home, The Gottman Institute