

UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT IN MARRIAGE

When you sense or feel that there is tension between you and your spouse, what do you tend to do?

PURSUE	WITHDRAW
<input type="checkbox"/> Complain	<input type="checkbox"/> Zone out
<input type="checkbox"/> Become critical	<input type="checkbox"/> Stay calm – almost distant
<input type="checkbox"/> Point out mistakes/blame	<input type="checkbox"/> Go numb
<input type="checkbox"/> Instruct on how to improve	<input type="checkbox"/> Go into my shell
<input type="checkbox"/> Express frustration	<input type="checkbox"/> Refuse to talk
<input type="checkbox"/> Make threats	<input type="checkbox"/> Find an exit – leave
<input type="checkbox"/> Tell you how to change	<input type="checkbox"/> Change the subject
<input type="checkbox"/> Demand attention	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimize the situation
<input type="checkbox"/> Talk in absolutes	<input type="checkbox"/> Veg in front of the TV
<input type="checkbox"/> Ask questions	<input type="checkbox"/> Look at phone or computer
<input type="checkbox"/> Yell/raise my voice	<input type="checkbox"/> Become logical
<input type="checkbox"/> Argue for my point	<input type="checkbox"/> Shut down my emotions
<input type="checkbox"/> Problem solve	<input type="checkbox"/> Give up

Are you more of a Pursuer or a Withdrawer?

What are you feeling deep down?

<input type="checkbox"/> Mad/Angry	<input type="checkbox"/> Defensive	<input type="checkbox"/> Scared/panicked
<input type="checkbox"/> Frustrated	<input type="checkbox"/> Intimidated	<input type="checkbox"/> Rejected
<input type="checkbox"/> Shut down	<input type="checkbox"/> Frozen/Numb	<input type="checkbox"/> Belittled
<input type="checkbox"/> Alone	<input type="checkbox"/> Controlled	<input type="checkbox"/> Hurt
<input type="checkbox"/> Irritated	<input type="checkbox"/> Threatened	<input type="checkbox"/> Ashamed
<input type="checkbox"/> Resentful	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-Conscious	<input type="checkbox"/> Sad/Hopeless

What kind of thoughts or beliefs might you struggle with?

<input type="checkbox"/> You don't understand me	<input type="checkbox"/> You don't really care
<input type="checkbox"/> You don't appreciate me	<input type="checkbox"/> You don't love me
<input type="checkbox"/> I am not good enough	<input type="checkbox"/> I am not desirable
<input type="checkbox"/> I am a failure	<input type="checkbox"/> I am not important

Go to empathi.com/pre-quiz to explore your particular conflict pattern more.

In marriage we often develop patterns of conflict. They become “cycles” that feed on themselves and tend to go around and around, getting worse and worse. See if you can identify a common cycle in your marriage based on your responses in the previous exercise.

When I feel tension in our marriage, I tend to _____

or _____ (pursuer or withdrawer actions), and

then it seems like you tend to _____ or

_____ (pursuer or withdrawer actions).

In the midst of this kind of tension, I can feel _____

or _____ (emotions) and can think

_____ (inner thought or belief).

For example: *When I feel tension in our marriage, I tend to zone out or go numb, and then it seems like you tend to ask questions or complain. In the midst of this kind of tension, I can feel self-conscious and belittled and can think “I am not good enough.”*

Breaking this cycle requires one or both partners to recognize the negative pattern and stop their negative response. Instead of getting caught in the cycle and seeing each other as the enemy, a couple needs to see themselves as a team and the cycle itself as the “enemy.” Biblically, this is the idea of “putting off” destructive actions in your relationship and “putting on” constructive ones.

But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.

...Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. (Col. 3:8, 12-14)

For further help, consider the following local counseling centers:

Baton Rouge Christian Counseling Center (www.brchristiancounseling.com)
 Baton Rouge Counseling Associates (www.brcounselingassociates.com)
 Crossroads Professional Counseling (www.crossroadcounselor.com)