1. Describe a recent conflict, argument, or negative situation with your spouse—something that really “pushed your button.”

2. How did you feel in response to this conflict or situation? How did that conflict or argument make you feel? Check all that apply—but “star” the most important feelings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feeling</th>
<th>Star</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apathetic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Puzzled</td>
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<td>Upset</td>
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<td>Sullen</td>
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<td>Sad</td>
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<td>Hurt</td>
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<td>Disappointed</td>
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<td>Resentful</td>
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<td>Fed up</td>
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<td>Uncomfortable</td>
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<td>Frustrated</td>
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<td>Miserable</td>
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<td>Guilty</td>
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<td>Disgusted</td>
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<td>Bitterful</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guilty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Embarrassed</td>
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<td>Frightened</td>
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<td>Anxious</td>
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<td>Horrified</td>
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<td>Disturbed</td>
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<td>Furious</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3. How did this conflict make you feel about yourself? What did the conflict say about you? What was the “self” message—the message that it sent to you? What were the “buttons” that got pushed? Circle all that apply, but “star” the most important feeling you felt about yourself.

“As a result of the conflict, I felt…”

**What That Feeling Sounds Like**

- **Rejected**: My spouse doesn’t want me; my spouse doesn’t need me; I am not necessary in this relationship; my spouse does not desire me; I feel unwanted.
- **Abandoned**: I will be alone; my spouse will ultimately leave me; I will be left alone to care for myself; my spouse won’t be committed to me for life.
- **Disconnected**: We will become emotionally detached or separated.
- **Like a failure**: I am not successful at being a husband/wife; I will not perform right or correctly; I will not live up to expectations; I will fall short in my relationship; I am not good enough.
- **Helpless/powerless**: I cannot do anything to change my spouse or my situation; I do not possess the power, resources, capacity, or ability to get what I want; I will be controlled by my spouse.
- **Defective**: Something is wrong with me; I’m the problem.
- **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.
- **Unloved**: My spouse doesn’t love me anymore; my spouse has no affection or desire for me; my relationship lacks warm attachment, admiration, enthusiasm, or devotion; I feel as if we are just roommates—that there are no romantic feelings between us.
- **Dissatisfied**: I will not experience satisfaction within the relationship; in our marriage, I will exist in misery for the rest of my life; I will not be pleased within my marriage; I feel no joy in my relationship.
- **Cheated**: My spouse will take advantage of me; my spouse will withhold something I need; I won’t get what I want.
- **Worthless/devalued**: I am useless; I have no value to my spouse.
- **Don’t measure up**: I am never able to meet my spouse’s expectations of me; I am not good enough as a spouse.
- **Unaccepted**: My spouse does not accept me; my partner is not pleased with me; my spouse does not approve of me.
Judged
I am always being unfairly judged or misjudged; my spouse forms faulty or negative opinions about me; I am always being evaluated; my spouse does not approve of me.

Humiliated
This marriage is extremely destructive to my self-respect or dignity.

Ignored
My spouse will not pay attention to me; I will be unknown in my marriage; I feel neglected.

Unimportant
I am not important to my mate; I am irrelevant, insignificant, or of little priority to my spouse.

Other:
__________________________________________

4. What do you do when you feel ____________________________ [insert the most important feeling from question #3]? How do you react when you feel that way? Identify your common coping strategies to deal with your “buttons” being pushed. Check all that apply—but “star” the most important reactions:

Withdrawal
You avoid others or alienate yourself without resolution; you sulk, use the silent treatment.

Escalation
Your emotions spiral out of control; you argue, raise your voice, fly into a rage.

Earn-it mode
You try to do more to earn others’ love and care.

Negative beliefs
You believe your spouse is far worse than is really the case; you attribute negative motives to your spouse.

Blaming
You place responsibility on others, not accepting fault; you’re convinced the problem is your spouse’s fault.

Exaggeration
You make overstatements or enlarge your words beyond bounds or the truth.

Tantrums
You have a fit of bad temper.

Denial
You refuse to admit the truth or reality.

Invalidation
You devalue your spouse; you do not appreciate who your partner is, what he or she feels or thinks or does.

Defensiveness
Instead of listening, you defend yourself by trying to provide an explanation.

Passive–aggression
You display negative emotions, resentment, and aggression in unassertive passive ways, such as procrastination and stubbornness.

Caretaking
You become responsible for others by giving physical or emotional care and support to the point you are doing everything for your spouse and your partner does nothing to care for himself or herself.

Fix-it mode
You focus almost exclusively on what is needed to solve the problem.

Complain/criticize
You express unhappiness or make accusations; you present a “laundry list” of faults about your mate.

Striking out
You become verbally or physically aggressive, possibly abusive.

Manipulation
You pursue your mate to get them to do what you want; you control your spouse 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.

Emotionally shut down
You numb out emotionally; you become devoid of emotion, or you have no regard for other’s needs or troubles.

Humor
You use humor as a way of not dealing with the issue at hand.

Sarcasm
You use negative humor, hurtful words, belittling comments, cutting remarks, or demeaning statements.

Minimization
You assert that your spouse is overreacting to an issue; you intentionally underestimate, down play, or soft pedal the issue.

Rationalization
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.

Indifference
You are cold and show no concern.

Abdication
You give away responsibilities.

Self-abandonment
You desert yourself; you neglect you; you run yourself down.

Other:
__________________________________________
Step 1: My Core Fear Buttons
(Insert the most important feelings from question 3 on pages 12 & 13.)

Step 2: My Reactions
(Insert the most common coping strategies from question 4 on page 13.)

Step 3: My Spouse’s Core Fear Buttons
(Insert the most important feelings for my spouse from questions 3 on pages 12 & 13.)

Step 4: My Spouse’s Reactions
(Insert my spouse’s most common coping strategies from question 4 on page 13.)

Step 5: Discuss how this dance plays out in your conflicts.