



Does the Freeze and Flee Pattern Seem Familiar?

Communication is key to a stable and healthy relationship. Avoiding problems will only make the situation worse, while fighting can be even more problematic.

Open and honest communication is an important part of every relationship because it allows you to share who you are and what you need from the people around you. Miscommunication is common but can often lead to problems, misunderstandings, and hurt feelings. These tips will help you talk to your partner honestly.

Be open and clear about how you are feeling; if you don't understand something, tell them. Use "I statements" so that the other person doesn't feel like you are blaming or attacking them (*I feel....when you...what I would like is...*). Be honest, even if you think the other person might not like hearing how you truly feel; apologize when you are wrong or hurt the other person. When talking about something negative, also mention something positive.

Does the Freeze and Flee Pattern Seem Familiar to You?

If so, where did you learn to ignore and discount your needs for emotional connection?

Who taught you to do this?

When do you feel most alone?

Can you dare to share the answers to these questions with your partner?

Learning how to take risks and initiate this kind of sharing is like taking an antidote to numbing or running away from your attachment needs.

Is there any way your partner can help you with this?

Can you share with your partner one cue that sparks the distancing dance?
It can be as simple as a turn of the head at a particular moment.

Can you also identify exactly how you push your partner away from you or make it dangerous for him or her to come closer?

What do you tell yourself once you have emotionally withdrawn to justify separation and to discourage yourself from reaching out to your partner?

Sometimes these are pronouncements about what love is and how we ought to act in love relationships that we have been taught by our parents or even our culture.

Can you share these with your partner?

Can you make a list of all the things this dance has taken away from you?

We usually have glimpses of emotional closeness when we first become infatuated with a person and are willing to take any risk to be by his or her side. We will remember those moments just as we remember our hopes and longings. How has this negative dance eroded them?

When you

, I do not feel safely connected to you. Fill in the cue that starts up the music of disconnection, e.g., When you say you are too tired for sex and we have not made love for a few weeks, when we fight about my parenting, when we don't seem to speak for days. No big, general, abstract statements or disguised blaming is allowed here, so you can't say things like When you are just being difficult as usual. That is cheating. Be concrete and specific.

I tend to, choose an action word, a verb, e.g., complain, nag, zone out, ignore you, run, or move away.

Place your answer here:

What do you tend to do to cope with difficult feelings? e.g., *I move this way in our dance to try to cope with difficult feelings and find a way to change our dance.* Place your answer below.

Why do you participate in *the dance* in this way? e.g., *I do it in the hope that*, state the hope that pulls you into the dance, e.g., *We will avoid more conflict, or I will persuade you to respond to me more.*

Place your answer here.

Identify a feeling. The usual ones that people can identify at this point are frustration, anger, numbness, emptiness, or confusion. *As this pattern keeps going, I feel...*

Place your answer here.

What I then say to myself about our relationship is

Summarize the most catastrophic conclusion you can imagine, e.g., *You do not care about us, I am not important to you, I can never please you.* Place your catastrophic conclusions here.

My understanding of the circular dance that makes it harder and harder for us to safely connect is that when I move in the way I described above, you seem to then... place your answer below.

Choose an action word, a verb, e.g., shut down, and push me to respond. *The more I , the more you.*

Then we are, Insert verbs that describe your own and your partner's moves in the dance e.g., *both trapped in pain and isolation.* Place your answers below.

Discuss alternatives with your partner on how you can change this pattern, e.g., *Maybe we can warn each other when this dance begins. We can call it,* place your answers here.

Seeing this dance is the first step out of the circle of disconnection. Once you can identify these negative cycles and recognize that they trap both of you, you are ready to learn how to step out of them. The next conversation explores more deeply the strong emotions, particularly the attachment fears that keep these negative dances going.

In this incident, the trigger for my raw feeling was

On the surface, I probably showed

But deep down, I just felt

[pick one of the basic negative emotions, sadness, anger, shame, fear].

What I longed for was

The main message I got about our bond, about me or my love was

Can you guess at one of your partner's raw spots? Do you know exactly what you do to irritate it?