



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What do you tell yourself once you have emotionally withdrawn to justify separation and to discourage yourself from reaching out to your partner?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 _____ . 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 _____. I move this way in our dance to try to cope with difficult feelings and find a way to change our dance. Choose an action word, a verb, e.g., complain, nag, zone out, ignore you, run, and move away.

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.

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

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. 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 _____.

Choose an action word, a verb, e.g., shut down, and push me to respond. The more I _____, the more you _____. We are then both trapped in pain and isolation. Insert verbs that describe your own and your partner's moves in the dance. Maybe we can warn each other when this dance begins. We can call it _____.

Seeing this dance is our 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?