



## TRIGGER

### WHAT TRIGGERS ME?

What was said or done that upset you, made you shut down, or let you know that this conversation was not going well?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



## INTERPRET

### HOW DO I INTERPRET IT?

This is the meaning you give those triggers. Answer the question: "When they said or did that, how did I interpret it? How did I receive it?" This can be from three different perceptions: about myself, about the other person, and about us.

#### EXAMPLES:

- **About myself:** "I will never be enough for them."
- **About them:** "They will never understand me." Or "They will never really hear me."
- **About us:** "Our marriage will never be fixed." Or "We will never be happy together."

About Myself: \_\_\_\_\_

About Them: \_\_\_\_\_

About Us: \_\_\_\_\_

#### CHECK ANY INTERPRETATIONS THAT ALSO APPLY:

##### COMMON INTERPRETATIONS FOR PURSUERS:

- ☐ I feel lonelier with you than when I'm alone
- ☐ I am not liked
- ☐ I don't matter
- ☐ I have to deal with things on my own
- ☐ I am way down on the priority list
- ☐ I don't know what I feel anymore
- ☐ It's like we're roommates
- ☐ I am lost
- ☐ I can't get through this

##### COMMON INTERPRETATIONS FOR WITHDRAWERS:

- ☐ I will never get it right
- ☐ There is nothing I can do here to make it right
- ☐ I can never satisfy them

## REACTIVE FEELING

### REACTIVE FEELINGS (check top three to four):

- ☐ Angry   ☐ Guarded   ☐ Shut down   ☐ Clingy
- ☐ Explosive   ☐ Let Down   ☐ Emotionally Flooded
- ☐ Resentful   ☐ Stubborn   ☐ Blank   ☐ Overwhelmed
- ☐ Confused   ☐ Critical   ☐ Numb   ☐ Smothered
- ☐ Frustrated   ☐ Upset   ☐ Can't Calm Down

## ACTIONS

### ACTIONS FOR PURSUERS & WITHDRAWERS/AVOIDERS (check top three to four):

#### I PERSUE BY...

- ☐ Complaining   ☐ Attacking   ☐ Criticizing   ☐ Yelling
- ☐ Blaming or pointing out mistakes   ☐ Making threats
- ☐ Telling you how to improve   ☐ Becoming angry
- ☐ Insisting on making a point   ☐ Expressing frustration angrily   ☐ Provoking you
- ☐ Expressing disapproval   ☐ Defining you as the problem   ☐ Poking you to react
- ☐ Telling you how to change   ☐ Not letting the conversation stop   ☐ Blowing up
- ☐ Getting angry to get you to respond   ☐ Pushing an issue and not letting it go
- ☐ Insisting you pay attention   ☐ Placating - saying what you want to hear
- ☐ Giving up and withdrawing

#### I WITHDRAW AND AVOID CONFLICT BY...

- ☐ Trying to zone out   ☐ Analyzing   ☐ Getting quiet   ☐ Becoming cold or aloof
- ☐ Avoiding conflict   ☐ Staying calm and reasoning with you   ☐ Shutting you out
- ☐ Leaving or turning to a task   ☐ Stop listening   ☐ Protecting myself by distancing
- ☐ Numbing out   ☐ Changing the subject   ☐ Defending myself   ☐ Going into a shell
- ☐ Showing you how you are wrong   ☐ Staying in my head and not responding
- ☐ Refusing to talk and leaving

### PUTTING IT TOGETHER TO REVEAL THE FIGHT CYCLE (fill in blanks from above):

On the outside I show (reactive feeling) \_\_\_\_\_, and I tell myself  
(interpretation) \_\_\_\_\_.

The more I (action) \_\_\_\_\_, the more you (action) \_\_\_\_\_,  
so, the more I (action) \_\_\_\_\_! This is how we are caught in our  
(create a name) \_\_\_\_\_ fight cycle!

### QUESTIONS TO BRING IT ALL TOGETHER:

Take your time with this part, really let yourself feel what you are writing about...

1. What is the pain under my reaction (ie. hurt, loss, grief, loneliness, sadness, heartbreak, feeling vulnerable, fear, confusion, feeling lost, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Where do I hold that pain in my body (ie. twist in the stomach, tension in shoulders, pressure on the chest, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. If that pain had words, what would it say (ie. "I will always be alone." Or "I'll never be accepted.")? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### FINDING COMPASSION FOR OURSELF AND OUR SPOUSE:

#### MYSELF:

Of course it hurts... It comes from \_\_\_\_\_ (trigger). Of course I react, I am protecting myself from \_\_\_\_\_ (pain). This makes sense now.  
I understand why the cycle keeps happening.

#### MY SPOUSE:

Of course it hurts... It comes from \_\_\_\_\_ (trigger). Of course they react, they are protecting themselves from \_\_\_\_\_ (pain). This makes sense now.  
I understand why the cycle keeps happening.