

The Ten Distortions that Trigger Conflict

Distortion	Description	Example
1. All-or-Nothing Thinking	You look at the conflict, or the person you're not getting along with, in absolute, black-and-white categories. Shades of gray do not exist.	You tell yourself that the person you're mad at is a complete zero with no redeeming features. Or if your relationship breaks up, you may think that it was a total failure.
2. Overgeneralization	You view the current problem as a never-ending pattern of frustration, conflict, and defeat.	You tell yourself, "She'll always be like that."
3. Mental Filter	You catalog the other person's faults, dwell on all the negative things he or she has ever done or said to you, and filter out or ignore all the other person's good qualities.	You tell your spouse, "This is the tenth time I've told you to carry out the trash." Or, "How many times do I have to remind you not to leave your dirty socks on the floor?"
4. Discounting the Positive	You insist that the other person's good qualities or actions don't count.	If someone you're fighting with does something positive, you tell yourself that she's trying to manipulate you.
5. Jumping to Conclusions	You jump to conclusions that may not be warranted by the facts. There are three common patterns: Mind-Reading. You assume that you know how the other person thinks and feels about you. Reverse Mind-Reading. You tell yourself that the other person should know what you want and how you feel without your having to tell him or her. Fortune-Telling. You tell yourself that the situation is hopeless and that the other person will continue to treat you in a shabby way, no matter what.	<p>You tell yourself that a friend is totally self-centered and only wants to use you.</p> <p>You tell your spouse, "You should have known how I was feeling!"</p> <p>You tell yourself that the person you're not getting along with will never change.</p>

Disarming Technique Exercise: Answers

Harsh Criticisms	Disarming Responses
I hate you! You're a total jerk! You're a loser!	"It sounds like you're furious with me, and I realize I didn't handle things very well. I did screw up and I'm embarrassed about it. Can you tell me more about how you're feeling?"
You're mean.	"I think my comment hurt your feelings, and I feel bad about that because I really care about you. Can we talk about it?"
You're selfish. All you care about is yourself.	"You're right. I haven't taken your feelings into account, and you have every right to be mad at me. This is hard for me to hear. Are there other things I've done or said that also seemed selfish or uncaring?"

Feeling Words

Feeling	Words that Express this Feeling		
Angry	mad resentful upset irate	pissed off irritated furious annoyed	ticked off incensed enraged bitter
Anxious	worried apprehensive panicky nervous	afraid uptight fearful concerned	scared tense frightened uneasy
Bored	uninterested	unmotivated	
Criticized	picked on judged	put down blamed	insulted
Embarrassed	foolish humiliated awkward	self-conscious mortified	flustered shy
Frustrated	stuck exasperated	thwarted	defeated
Guilty	ashamed	at fault	bad
Hopeless	discouraged	pessimistic	desperate
Inferior	inadequate useless second-rate	worthless undesirable defective	flawed intimidated incompetent
Jealous	envious		
Lonely	abandoned unwanted	alone unloved	rejected
Paranoid	mistrustful	suspicious	
Sad	blue depressed hurt disheartened	down disappointed lost low	unhappy despairing dejected miserable
Stressed	overwhelmed pressured	burned out overworked	tense frazzled
Tired	exhausted drained sleepy	weary worn out burdened	fatigued lethargic wiped out
Vulnerable	weak	fragile	exposed

Distortion	Description	Example
6. Magnification and Minimization	You blow the other person's faults way out of proportion and shrink the importance of his or her positive qualities.	During an argument, you may blurt out, "I can't believe how <i>stupid</i> you are!"
7. Emotional Reasoning	You reason from how you feel, or assume that your feelings reflect the way things really are.	You feel like the other person is a loser and conclude that he really is a loser.
8. Should Statements	You criticize yourself or other people with <i>shoulds</i> , <i>shouldn'ts</i> , <i>oughts</i> , <i>musts</i> , and <i>have tos</i> . There are two common patterns: Other-Directed Shoulds. You tell yourself that other people <i>shouldn't</i> feel and act the way they do, and that they <i>should</i> be the way you expect them to be. Self-Directed Shoulds. You tell yourself that you <i>shouldn't</i> have made that mistake or <i>shouldn't</i> feel the way you do.	"You've got no right to feel that way!" Or, "You <i>shouldn't</i> say that. It's unfair!"
9. Labeling	You label the other person as a "jerk" or worse. You see his or her entire essence as negative, with no redeeming features.	"She's such a bitch!" Or, "He's an asshole!"
10. Blame	Instead of pinpointing the cause of a problem, you assign blame. There are two patterns:	
	Other-Blame. You blame the other person and deny your own role in the problem.	You tell your spouse, "It's all your fault!" Then you get angry, frustrated, and resentful.
	Self-Blame. You feel guilty and worthless because you blame yourself for the problem, even if it isn't entirely your fault.	You tell yourself, "It's all my fault!" Then you use all your energy beating up on yourself instead of finding out how the other person is feeling and trying to solve the problem.

Relationship Satisfaction Test (RSAT)							
Date: _____							
Instructions: Use checks (✓) to indicate how satisfied or dissatisfied you feel about your relationship. Please answer all the items.							
	0-Very dissatisfied	1-Moderately dissatisfied	2-Slightly dissatisfied	3-Neutral	4-Slightly satisfied	5-Moderately satisfied	6-Very satisfied
1. Communication and openness							
2. Resolving conflicts and arguments							
3. Degree of affection and caring							
4. Intimacy and closeness							
5. Satisfaction with your role in the relationship							
6. Satisfaction with the other person's role							
7. Overall satisfaction with your relationship							
TOTAL →							

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Scoring Key for the RSAT			
Total Score	Satisfaction Level	Percentage of People with Troubled Relationships Who Are More Satisfied	Percentage of People with Successful Relationships Who Are More Satisfied
0 - 10	Extremely dissatisfied	75%	100%
11 - 20	Very dissatisfied	35%	95%
21 - 25	Moderately dissatisfied	25%	90%
26 - 30	Somewhat dissatisfied	15%	75%
31 - 35	Somewhat satisfied	5%	50%
36 - 40	Moderately to very satisfied	1%	10%
41 - 42	Extremely satisfied	<1%	<1%

Step 1. S/he said. Write down *exactly* what the other person said to you. Be brief:

Step 2. I said. Write down *exactly* what you said next. Be brief:

Step 3. Good Communication vs. Bad Communication. Was your response an example of good communication or bad communication? Why? Use the EAR Checklist or the list of Common Communication Errors on page 261 to analyze what you wrote down in Step 2.

Step 4. Consequences. Did your response in Step 2 make the problem better or worse? Why?

Step 5. Revised Response. Revise what you wrote down in Step 2, using the Five Secrets of Effective Communication (see page 262): Remember to note which techniques you're using in parentheses after each sentence you write down. If your Revised Response is still ineffective, try again.

The Intimacy Inventory

Submissiveness	Demandingness
1. Pleasing Others. I should always try to please you, even if I make myself miserable in the process.	5. Entitlement. You should always treat me in the way I expect. It's your job to make me happy.
2. Conflict Phobia/Anger Phobia. People who love each other shouldn't fight. Anger is dangerous.	6. Justice/Fairness. If you don't meet my expectations, I have every right to get mad and punish you.
3. Perceived Narcissism. You can't tolerate any criticism or disagreement without falling apart.	7. Truth. I'm right and you're wrong and you'd better admit it!
4. Self-Blame. The problems in our relationship are all my fault.	8. Other-Blame. The problems in our relationship are all your fault.

Dependency	Detachment
9. Love Addiction. I can't feel happy and fulfilled without your love.	13. Achievement Addiction. My self-esteem depends on my achievements, intelligence, or income.
10. Fear of Rejection. If you rejected me, it would mean I was worthless. I can't be happy if I'm alone.	14. Perfectionism. I must never fail or make a mistake. If I fail, it means I'm worthless.
11. Approval Addiction. I need your approval to feel happy and worthwhile.	15. Perceived Perfectionism. You won't love or accept me as a flawed and vulnerable human being.
12. Mind Reading. If you really love me, you'll know what I need and how I feel without me always having to explain myself.	16. Disclosure Phobia. I can't tell you how I really feel inside. I have to keep my true self hidden.

Self-Blame vs. Other-Blame vs. Personal Responsibility

	Self-Blame	Other-Blame	Personal Responsibility
What you tell yourself	Your mind is flooded with distorted thoughts about yourself, such as, "I'm no good. It's all my fault. Things are hopeless."	Your mind is flooded with distorted thoughts about the other person, such as, "He's such an asshole. It's all his fault. He's got no right to feel that way."	Your thoughts are objective and non-judgmental. You try to pinpoint any specific errors you made so you can learn from the situation and take steps to resolve the conflict.
How you feel	You feel guilty, ashamed, inferior, anxious, or hopeless.	You feel angry, resentful, irritated, frustrated, or hurt.	You have a sense of self-respect and curiosity that's mixed with healthy sadness, concern, or remorse (if indicated).
How you communicate	You withdraw because your self-esteem is on the line and you can't stand to hear anything critical.	You argue defensively, insisting that the other person is wrong.	You listen and try to find the truth in the other person's criticism. You share your feelings, but tactfully, and you convey respect.
What you do	You give up and avoid the other person.	You put up a wall and do battle, trying to "win" or get back at the other person.	You actively engage the other person so you can both develop greater understanding.
Your body language	You look demoralized, defective, discouraged, and defeated.	You look hurt, defiant, adversarial, sarcastic, or judgmental.	You appear open, receptive, interested, respectful, and caring.
The result	Isolation, depression, and loneliness	Endless fighting, blaming, bitterness, and arguing	Greater intimacy, trust, and satisfaction

The EAR Checklist

Instructions: Review what you wrote down in Step 2 of the Relationship Journal. Use checks to indicate whether it was an example of good communication or bad communication.

	Good Communication	✓	Bad Communication	✓
E = Empathy	1. You acknowledge the other person's feelings and find some truth in what he or she is saying.	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. You don't acknowledge the other person's feelings or find any truth in what he or she is trying to say.	<input type="checkbox"/>
A = Assertiveness	2. You express your feelings openly, directly, and tactfully, using "I Feel" Statements.	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. You argue defensively or attack the other person.	<input type="checkbox"/>
R = Respect	3. You convey caring and respect, even if you're feeling frustrated or annoyed with the other person.	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. You belittle the other person or treat him or her in a cold, competitive, or condescending way.	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Common Communication Errors

Instructions: Review what you wrote down in Step 2 of the Relationship Journal. How many of the following communication errors can you spot?

1. Truth. You insist that you're right and the other person is wrong.	10. Diversion. You change the subject or list past grievances.
2. Blame. You imply that the problem is all the other person's fault.	11. Self-Blame. You act as if you're awful and terrible to prevent the other person from criticizing you.
3. Defensiveness. You argue and refuse to admit any flaw or shortcoming.	12. Hopelessness. You claim that you've tried everything but nothing works.
4. Martyrdom. You claim that you're the innocent victim of the other person's tyranny.	13. Demandingness. You complain that the other person "should" be the way you expect him or her to be.
5. Put-Down. You use harsh or hurtful language and try to make the other person feel inferior or ashamed.	14. Denial. You deny your role in the problem or insist that you don't feel upset when you really do.
6. Labeling. You call the other person a "jerk," a "loser," or worse.	15. Helping. Instead of listening, you give advice or "help."
7. Sarcasm. Your attitude, words, and tone of voice are belittling or patronizing.	16. Problem Solving. You ignore the other person's feelings and try to solve the problem that's bothering him or her.
8. Counterattack. You respond to criticism with criticism.	17. Passive Aggression. You say nothing, pout, or slam doors.
9. Scapegoating. You imply that the other person is defective or inadequate.	18. Mind Reading. You expect the other person to know how you feel without having to tell him or her.

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The Five Secrets of Effective Communication

Listening Skills

1. **The Disarming Technique (DT).** You find some truth in what the other person is saying, even if it seems totally unreasonable or unfair.
2. **Empathy.** You put yourself in the other person's shoes and try to see the world through his or her eyes.
 - **Thought Empathy (TE).** You paraphrase the other person's words.
 - **Feeling Empathy (FE).** You acknowledge how the other person is probably feeling, based on what he or she said.
3. **Inquiry (IN).** You ask gentle, probing questions to learn more about how the other person is thinking and feeling.

Self-Expression Skills

4. **"I Feel" Statements (IF).** You use "I Feel" Statements, such as, "I feel upset," rather than "You" Statements, such as, "You're wrong!" or "You're making me furious!"
5. **Stroking (ST).** You find something genuinely positive to say to the other person, even in the heat of battle. You convey an attitude of respect, even though you may feel very angry with the other person.

Disarming Technique Exercise

Instructions: Try to come up with an effective response to each criticism using the Disarming Technique. In the blank boxes at the bottom, write down a few criticisms you think you might hear from other people, and put your responses to them in the right-hand column.

Harsh Criticisms	Disarming Responses
I hate you! You're a total jerk! You're a loser!	
You're mean.	
You're selfish. All you care about is yourself.	

Cognitive Brewing discussion points

Date: 3/8/2014.

Moderator: Dipti Joshi.

Topic: Marital Therapy

Assessment areas for couple counselling:

1. Identifying beliefs of the couple using guided discovery
2. Identifying cognitive distortions
3. Recognising point of conflict
4. Expression of tender feelings

Step by step guide for marital therapy sessions:

1. Identifying emotions with NATs. This includes eliciting, questioning and modifying NATs. The TRS can be given to couple in session. HW can be assigned to note down Automatic thoughts and distortions
2. Test predictions with an activity; insights get better by doing this.
3. Psycho-education on aims/dynamics of marriage.
 - Strike a foundation of trust, loyalty-partner is entitled to this
 - Demonstrate love and affection (TLC)
 - Work in a partnership and collaboratively
4. Problem solving behaviour through brainstorming. Cost benefit analysis etc.
5. Follow up including check on differences observed by couple in emotion and functionality

Guru's inputs: Reciprocal Reinforcement. Do activities the partner enjoys

Hvovi's inputs: Give live feedback to couples in session on communication styles. Avoid seeing both partners together; refer one out. In marital therapy current recommendations are to assess for Personality Disorder. If one of the partners has BPD use specialised skills in therapy and recognise burnout in the non-BPD partner.

Reference Books:

"Stop walking on eggshells" (Helpful guide for partners and families of BPD patients)

"Feeling Good Together" by David Burns