

Relationship Restart
How Do I Keep Myself From Becoming Defensive?

1. Learn to _____

Definition: Is a way of protecting yourself from a perceived attack and blaming your partner. "The problem isn't me. It's you."

Examples: Denying responsibility, sarcasm, dredging up the past, repeating yourself, making excuses, counter attack, whining, change in body language

Impact: It shuts down communication, it destroys goodwill, it turns little issues into huge problems.

Key: Defensiveness _____

Genesis 3:12 *The man replied, "It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it."*

2. _____

a) _____

b) _____

Use the _____

c) Ask them _____

Key: Use the _____

I feel _____ Because _____ I need _____

1 Corinthians 4:12-13 *We bless those who curse us. We are patient with those who abuse us. We appeal gently when evil things are said about us.*

d) Look for the _____

Proverbs 15:31 *If you listen to constructive criticism, you will be at home among the wise.*

e) _____

Proverbs 28:13 *People who conceal their sins will not prosper, but if they confess and turn from them, they will receive mercy.*

Choose a code word or gesture that means "we are getting off track, let's begin again." I have a couple that uses the word "banana" (I'm sure there's a backstory there). When one of them says, "banana," that signals to them both to start again.

Write down what your partner says and any defensiveness you're feeling Dr. Gottman suggests using a notepad to write down everything your partner says, which is especially helpful when you're feeling defensive. This also helps you remember what was said when you reflect back what you hear or it's your turn to speak. Remind yourself that you're listening to your partner because you care about their pain.

2 types of defensiveness

Counter attack: "Oh yeah? What about you?"

Innocent victim: "It's always my fault. I'm always the problem."

Example of asking for a reframe

"I'm feeling defensive because this feels like an attack. Can you please reword your complaint so I can understand your need and explore ways we can meet it?"

What if you see someone getting defensive?

- Use a gentle start up
- Clarify your motives
- Have a conversation about the conversation
- Talk more about what you want instead of what went wrong
- Take responsibility for your own tone, timing, or aggressiveness

Don't say...

Yes, but...

You always...

What about when you...

At least I'm not...

You are overreacting...

Say...

Yes, and...

I am listening...tell me more

The part I agree with is...

I never thought of it that way...

I see what you are saying...