

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

Adapted from Dr. John Gottman, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*
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Criticism

Attacking the character of the partner at the core. Different from a complaint, which focuses on the behavior. “Why can’t you do this right?” “What’s wrong with you?”

Contempt

Treating the partner with disrespect or ridicule. Thinking the other as lesser. Partner feels despised and worthless. Using eye-rolling, sarcasm, name-calling. “You’re disgusting.” “You’re so stupid.”
***The single greatest predictor of divorce.**



SHAME:
wrong,
bad,
broken

Defensiveness

Self-protection and retaliation to ward off a perceived attack. Shifting the focus away from the problem onto the partner’s flaws. “The problem isn’t me, it’s you.”

Stonewalling

Withdrawing from the interaction, shutting down or “checking out.” Habitually avoiding conflict, turning away, acting busy, or engaging in obsessive behaviors. “Whatever. I don’t need this”.