

FOUR STEPS TO CREATING ZERO NEGATIVITY IN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS:

Zero negativity means being 100% responsible for your reaction and the energy behind it and staying away from blame and shame and criticism and instead, take the time to understand it well yourself/accepting that experiences are happening in the other, enough to invite your partner to learn about it so they can repair, grow out of a behavior that doesn't work and maybe even learn something about themselves in the exploration. After all, you are a mirror for them.

1. **Get to be an expert on when you are reactive.** When you get activated, things happen in your body long before you have a response that comes out of your mouth or that you act on. (shutting down, slamming doors, saying something sarcastic). There could be tension in different parts of your body, you could be breathing faster, your palms could get sweaty, and all of those are signs that your limbic brain has decided there is a threat. And, you have a lot of thoughts racing through your brain. If you're not able to contain it, then your limbic brain will respond outwardly as though the other person is a threat. So once you can identify and become an expert on your own activation, it is time for the second step.

2. **This step is containment.** (and a bit of de-escalation). Containment is not the same as minimizing or dismissing or pushing under the rug or ignoring. It is recognizing that you are activated, and deciding to sit with it until you can figure it out. This is where you can do the 4X4 Breathing. (Breathe in for 4 seconds while drawing a line up in your mind, hold the breath for 4 seconds while drawing a line across, breathe out for 4 seconds while drawing the line down and then pause for 4 seconds and complete the box. Repeat. Orienting, (looking around you to find something that appeals to your eyes. Then take time to see every aspect of this object:its colors, textures, lines etc. Until you feel the deactivation taking place in your body. And use the techniques I've taught you to soothe that inner little kid.

3. **Take personal responsibility for your activation in your body.** Don't blame it on the other and say things like, "well, they made me mad or they hurt me". Yes it is true that they did the thing that they did and you are having the reaction. So take personal responsibility for your reaction and learn how to deactivate it.

Ask yourself questions like, "What did the other do or say that triggered me"? "What is the story I told myself about that behavior, statement," etc.? Or, "What do I think it meant that the other person did or said what they did or said"? See if you can figure out what YOU did with what they said or did. (An example might be, "It means she doesn't care about me").

For those of you who want to move on to more advanced exploration, you can also ask yourself, "What core issue does that trigger in me? (Issues like fear of not being good enough, fear of not being liked, fear of rejection, fear of abandonment). You can also ask yourself, "How does this feel familiar from before, either before in a previous relationship or before in my family"?

Once you can determine what's going on with you, you are usually pretty De-escalated and not so in your reactive limbic brain but in more of an observing understanding part

of yourself. You might then ask yourself, “What do i think is going on with them”? If you are de-activated, than you might have a clue as to what is occurring in them, so you might have some compassion and not just anger/hurt. Then you can make decision what to do with it.

4. Decide “What action to take about what I'm feeling”.

Depending on what you discover about yourself, you might just be able to de-escalate and solve it on your own especially if you accept what is true about your partner, which is that they would not **want** to hurt you intentionally, when they are in their adult, and probably didn't intend to. If you feel you can't get past it, then you can invite your partner into a conversation or dialogue that will help them to understand what happened for you and for you to also get curious about what happened for them. **Remember:** We are in a dynamic. Usually, we are both feeling and experiencing and reacting, not just you. This is not about shaming or blaming, it is about helping them to understand what you did with what they said/did and how to help them repair the rupture. It looks something like this, “I noticed I had a pretty big reaction when you said you didn’t want to go to the concert. I had a bunch of stories about it, and was wondering if you would be willing to be in Dialogue with me about what was happening for you when you said it and what happened for me when you said it?”

Of course, this means that the other becomes willing to be in Dialogue with you, and the two of you create enough safety to explore the dynamic, not just be IN the dynamic....

It takes considerable work at first, and after time you will find it becomes easier with practice. The really hard stuff.. The really hard stuff usually requires deeper exploration of core issues that are not readily apparent. So, save the harder stuff for my office and our work together.

Take charge of your reactivity and don’t let it run your relationship!

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