

Four Warning Signs That Your Relationship May be In Trouble

Dr. Tony Fiore, MarriageClassOnline.com

According to extensive research at the famed Gottman Institute in Seattle, Washington, there are four warning signs that predict divorce with a high degree of accuracy. Dr Gottman calls these "The Four horsemen of the Apocalypse". We have created the following checklists so you can measure these warning signs in your relationship and administer the antidotes before things get out of hand!

Instructions: Rate each patterns below, indicating how often it has occurred in your relationship in the last thirty days: Frequently-4, Often-3, Once in a while-2 or Never-1

Warning Sign #1-Stonewalling

One or both partners simply refuses to engage in conversation when the other complains _____

One or both partner sit in silence or walks away when the other complains _____

One or both partners bottle up feelings and does not express them _____

One or both partners withholds affection or attention when upset with the other _____

One or both partners often wants to avoid the other during conflict by doing something else like watching television, playing a video game, etc. _____

Total Stonewalling Score _____

See page 3 for an explanation of what this score means and possible antidotes

Warning Sign #2-Criticizing

One or both partners express complaints in a harsh, critical way _____

There is much negativity toward each other in our relationship _____

One partner feels that the viewpoints or actions of the other are wrong _____

One or both partners often feels attacked through criticism by the other _____

The relationship feels more like "parent-child" than "adult-adult" _____

Total Criticizing Score _____

See page 3 for an explanation of what this score means and possible antidotes

Warning Sign#3-Defensiveness

- One partner feels they are less to blame for conflicts than the other _____
- Instead of acknowledging anything reasonable about requests, one or both partners counter nearly every point in order to “win” Or “be right” _____
- One or both partners resist influence or input from the other _____
- One or both partners is unable to accept personal responsibility for mistakes, errors or conflicts _____
- One or both partners see many relationship issues as simply not their problem _____

Total Defensiveness Score _____
See page 3 for an explanation of what this score means and possible antidotes

Warning Sign#4-Contempt

- One partner feels that their way to doing things is better or more correct than those of the other _____
- One or both partners feels disrespected or insulted by the other _____
- One or both partners gets mean spirited and insulting in our disputes _____
- One or both partners feel that they are more mature or less selfish than the other _____
- One or both partners bully the other into doing things against the their beliefs or values _____

Total Contempt Score _____
See page 3 for an explanation of what this score means and possible antidotes

If your scores on any of the four warning signs quiz areas is

- Between 1-10** you probably are not in trouble in this area
- Between 11-14** you may have some concerns in this area
- Between 15-20** you probably should do things to improve your relationship in this area.

What Should you Do?

Antidotes to the Four Warning Signs

#1-Antidote For Stonewalling:

If Stonewalling is the problem, you should learn to sooth yourself during a relationship battle or conflict, instead of just stuffing your negative feelings, or simply cutting yourself off from all feelings. Research shows that stonewallers are having a lot of conflict and angst inside: they just are not showing it. Sooth yourself by taking in deep breaths, exercising, listening to music, etc. Just try to somehow reduce your stress so you can deal with the issue.

#2-Antidote for Criticism:

If criticism is a warning sign, you should learn to complain without blame. This means sticking to the issue and not attacking the person or his character. The difference is often subtle but extremely important. A complaint is a simple statement about something a person doesn't like, or something a person would like to see changed and an explanation of to why the person feels this way. By contrast, a critical person goes beyond complaining and implies that the viewpoint or actions of others are wrong, and his or hers are right, or the person will imply that others have behaved badly. Criticism is a form of attack. Critical people often seem disgusted and show no interest in hearing the viewpoints of others.

#3-Antidote for Defensiveness:

Defensive people deflect criticism by denying responsibility for the problem, blaming their partner for the problem, or denying there is a problem at all. The Antidote is to take some responsibility for the issue which opens discussion and problem-solving dialogue instead of conflict and arguing. Be open to the possibility that there is another viewpoint to things, that your partner may have an equally valid point, and that perhaps both of you have contributed to the conflict, problem, or issue.

#4-Antidote for Contempt:

Contempt involves thinking that one's values, preferences or viewpoints are better or more correct than those of one's partner in any given situation. Or, it may involve the tendency to think of one as better (more mature, more responsible, less selfish, less to blame) than one's partner. The antidote is to build an atmosphere of appreciation. In successful marriages, there is almost no contempt with partners valuing the opinions and input of the other. Rather than judging the other or "looking down" at the other, successful couples convey that they appreciate the other. They avoid hurtful criticism or negative judgments of the other or how the other does things or thinks about things.