**Answers to FAQ’s about Dr. John Gottman’s research on relationships**

**What are the negative behavior patterns that can predict divorce/separation?**

Dr. Gottman calls these destructive behaviors, “A Positive-to-Negative Ratio of 0.8 or Less,” and has named the most corrosive negative behavior patterns, “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.” Specifically, these are:

* **Criticism:** stating one’s complaints as a defect in one’s partner’s personality, i.e., giving the partner negative trait attributions. Example: “You always talk about yourself. You are so selfish.”
* **Contempt:** statements that come from a relative position of superiority. Contempt is the greatest predictor of divorce and must be eliminated. Example: “You’re an idiot.”
* **Defensiveness:** self-protection in the form of righteous indignation or innocent victim-hood. Defensiveness wards off a perceived attack. Example: “It’s not my fault that we’re always late; it’s your fault.”
* **Stonewalling:** emotional withdrawal from interaction. Example: The listener does not give the speaker the usual nonverbal signals that the listener is “tracking” the speaker.

These predict early divorcing/separation – an average of 5.6 years after the wedding/commitment. Emotional withdrawal and anger predict later divorcing – an average of 16.2 years after the wedding/commitment.

#### ****Can physiological data really predict changes in marital satisfaction?****

Yes. The more “diffusely physiologically aroused” (in other words, in “fight or flight” or “freeze” mode,) someone is during a conflict conversation, the more his or her marital satisfaction is likely to decline during a period of three years.

**If you had to summarize Dr. Gottman’s 35 years of research into two key findings, what would they be?**

* Happily married couples behave like good friends, and they handle their conflicts in gentle, positive ways.
* Happily married couples are able to repair negative interactions during an argument, and they are able to process negative emotions fully.

#### ****If we learned that we were in the category of having a high probability of divorce (separation), does that mean there’s no hope? Should we break up now, even if our relationship seems good to us?****

No! The most important discovery to come from our research is how we can predict divorce, and what couples need to do differently to strengthen their relationships. Changing those negative behaviors that predict divorce to more positive behaviors that predict success can significantly change the course of your relationship and make it better.

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