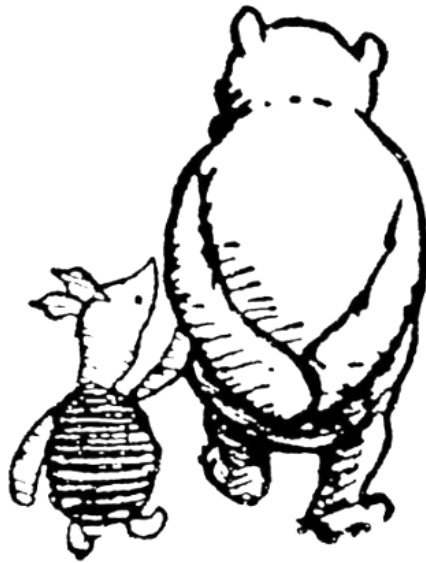


# Identifying & Interrupting Our Negative Cycle



“Pooh?” whispered Piglet.

“Yes, Piglet?” said Pooh.

“Oh, nothing,” said Piglet.

“I was just making sure of you.”



# Process

Martin Luther

This life therefore is not righteousness,  
but growth in righteousness, not health, but healing,  
not being but becoming, not rest but exercise.  
We are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it,  
the process is not yet finished, but it is going on,  
this is not the end, but it is the road.

# Recognizing the Cycle

As we begin to better understand steps in the negative dance that you and your partner often get stuck in during conflict, let's explore some specific ways our tendencies to pursue and/or withdraw (fight or flight) surface in our relationships.

See if you can find any descriptors in the lists below that capture some of your action tendencies when you suddenly find that you do not feel safely connected to your partner.

## **When things are not going right between us, I find that I tend to...**

### **PURSUE, with the intention of:**

- connecting with you
- getting your attention
- be seen and validated
- get you to respond to me
- avoid getting hurt

### **Through some of these action tendencies:**

- complaining
- being critical
- repeating myself
- becoming anxious or agitated
- blaming you
- pointing out your mistakes
- raising my voice
- telling you how to improve or how to change
- becoming angry—blowing up
- insisting on making my point even if I get pushy
- expressing frustration in an angry way
- expressing disapproval
- defining you as being the problem, while justifying myself
- pursuing—insisting that you pay attention
- making threats
- prodding, being pushy or insistent
- interrupting; talking over you
- frenetic activity (cleaning, working, etc)

### **Or WITHDRAW, with the intention of:**

- pleasing you
- avoiding making a mistake
- avoiding letting you down
- preventing conflict
- coping with my own hurt or fear

### **Through some of these action tendencies:**

- zoning out
- getting quiet and shutting down
- staying calm and reasoning with you
- appealing to logic; analyzing
- shutting you out
- trying to stop the conversation by leaving, turning to a task
- not listening and numbing out
- changing the subject
- defending myself and showing you that you are wrong
- finding an exit—just trying to get away
- staying in my head and just not responding
- going into my shell—like a turtle
- protecting myself by distancing
- refusing to talk and leaving
- giving up and withdrawing
- silent treatment
- minimizing the problem
- appeasing you

*Take a moment to share your observations about yourself with your partner.*

*What do you think your partner would say about your tendencies? Check this out with him/her.*

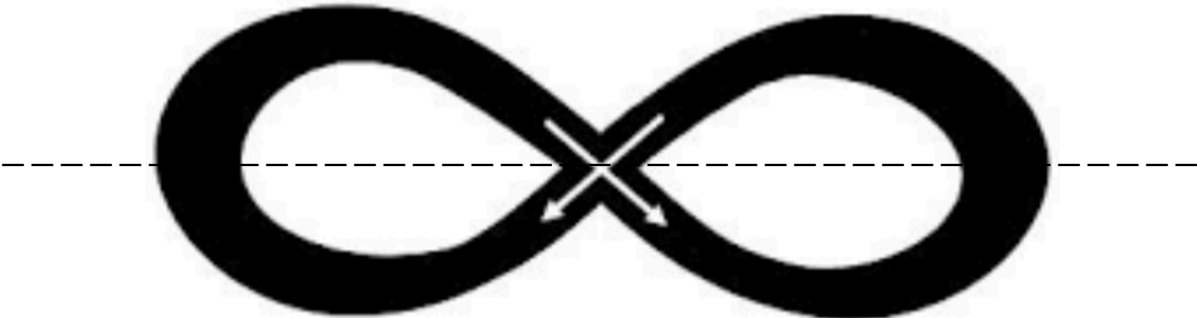
# Beginning to Understand Our Negative Cycle

Action tendencies:

Action tendencies:

Feelings/emotional cues:

Feelings/emotional cues:



Perception of words/actions (Narrative):

Perception of words/actions (Narrative):

Attachment longings:

Attachment longings:



# Beginning to Understand Our Negative Cycle

What I am learning about myself:

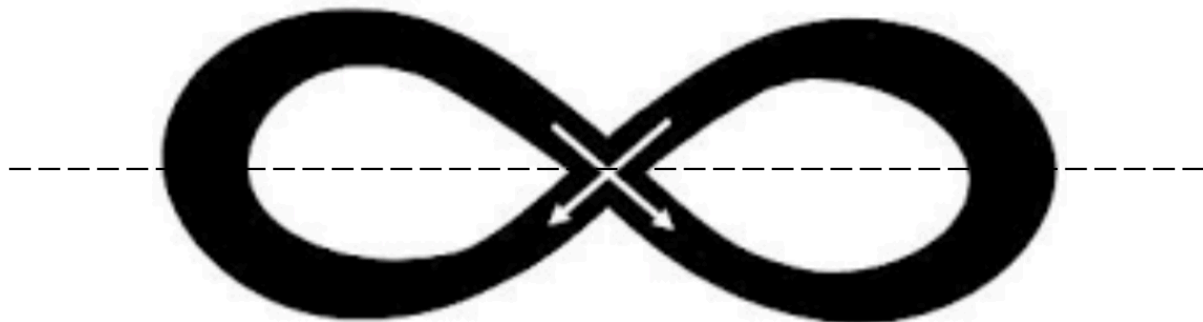
What I am learning about my partner:

My action tendencies:

My partner's action tendencies:

My feelings/emotional cues:

My partner's feelings/emotional cues:



What I am learning about myself:

What I am learning about my partner:

My perception of words/actions (Narrative):

My partner's perception of words/actions (Narrative):

My attachment longings:

My partner's attachment longings:

## Some suggestions to guide your process:

### Action tendencies (Pursue/Withdraw):

get logical	minimize the problem	get defensive	capitulate	distance myself
justify	numb out	convince	demandprobe/interrogate	
blame	criticize	silent treatment	get angry	get pushy
raise my voice	shut down	talk over the other	interrupt	turn away
appease	ignore	dismiss emotions	exaggerate	catastrophize
follow around the house				

### How I feel inside/emotional cues:

sad	frustrated	lonely	desperate	exhausted	anxious
detached	discouraged	angry	overwhelmed	attacked	defensive
exasperated	hopeless	afraid	hurt	rejected	unknown
unheard	guilty	critical	ashamed	dismissed	confused
scared	helpless	panicked	inadequate	insignificant	hurt

### Perception of words/actions:

"Why can't I get through to him/her?"

"I can never do enough to make him/her happy"

"He/she always disappears on me"

"He/she always needs to have his/her way"

"I can't win...nothing will please him/her"

"My emotions are too much for him/her"

"Do I even matter to him/her?"

"\_\_\_ is more important to him/her than I am"

"Uh oh, what have I done now?"

"He/she clearly doesn't care about me"

"He/she won't be there for me"

"He/she might get fed up and leave"

### Attachment longings:

to make contact, create connection

to be seen, visible, to matter to you

to avoid hurt or rejection

accepted for who I am

to know you are there for me

to feel loved by you

to create harmony, preserve the peace

to feel close to you

to avoid the pain of disappointing you/being rejected to be

to feel safe

to feel reassured, held, embraced

to feel valued and important to you

# For the Fun of It

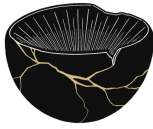
\*Concept adapted from Eight Dates by John and Julie Gottman

Play and fun are vital components of successful and joyful relationships, and yet are among the first things to go in times of stress. Playing together creates trust, intimacy and deeper connection. Enjoy these creative ideas to make play and connection a priority no matter what else is going on in your life!

- go on an evening walk before bed...hold hands
- karaoke night—videos on YouTube (no mic? no worries! use a carrot or some other absurd object)
- play scrabble or other board games...even better, make it a tournament!
- pull out a jigsaw puzzle for evening downtime
- sidewalk chalk—leave messages of kindness, encouragement and hope around your neighborhood... better yet, do it after dark as a secret mission!
- watch a nature documentary and eat snacks or a meal that go with the theme
- Let's Dance evening on the X-box or Wii
- read a book out loud to each other
- learn a new hobby together
- make a new recipe from a new cuisine together
- feed the kids early and put them down early or let them watch a show while you two enjoy an at-home-date-night dinner together...do this weekly!
- leave little notes around the house for the other to find
- go for a drive
- go on a walk and keep a tally of how many people you can get to smile and wave at you
- watch the sunset
- create new traditions
- load a star gazing app onto your phone and look for planets and constellations together
- dress up for dinner one night, light candles, play music, and pull out your best dishes/glasses
- learn to make something new together
- speak in foreign accents while doing just about anything
- color, paint, or draw together
- have a weekly happy hour date
- put a "no kids allowed" sign on your bedroom door
- have breakfast in bed
- find a new show that you'll both enjoy...and commit to only watching it together
- have monthly pajama day
- take turns giving each other a massage
- spa day! do face masks together



- plan and plant the garden together (get starters going in your window sill before planting time...and name the little guys as you cheer them into readiness for the garden!)
- do a home project together that you've been wanting to do but haven't had the time
- paint your bedroom walls, or spend an afternoon organizing, decluttering, and cleaning it so it feels more relaxing...celebrate your work with candles and a dessert date in bed!
- create your own mini-olympics where you make up a new sport/activity to do together (competing as a team against another couple, perhaps?)
- write Dr. Seuss-style poetry together, taking turns adding new lines...you can keep the running poem taped up to your bedroom/bathroom mirror
- download the Gottman Card Deck app and take turns asking each other conversation questions during mini-dates
- drive to a different neighborhood, get a coffee, and walk around
- choose and learn a new video game together
- go for a bike ride
- dance together in the kitchen to different genres of music
- create a complicated secret handshake together
- create a special code together for being able to communicate on the sly at future dinner parties
- create a playlist together (or one for chill time, one for fun)
- work out together
- sing loudly together to music you both know
- tell stories about your most embarrassing/entertaining episodes of your lives



*We appreciate your participation in this Grace Group.*

**Grace Groups:** Living by God's grace is a paradigm shift for all of us and as a big shift, it involves study, practice, community, and the work of the Holy Spirit within each of us. All Grace Groups will this common thread: learning to live by grace in a wide variety of life. You can find this and more resources on our website: [allsoulsseattle.org/resources](https://allsoulsseattle.org/resources)

# All Souls

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Rev. Andy Pelander

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Emma Groppe

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Rachel Faunce  
Graeme Hanson  
Dan Reeve  
Nancy Spiro  
Thad Williams

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It is the smallest of all seeds,  
but when it has *grown* it is  
larger than all the other garden  
plants and becomes a tree, so  
that birds of the air come and  
make nests in its branches.

Matthew 13:32