

Understanding Your Negative Cycle

Couples get caught in “negative cycles” of interaction. A “negative cycle” is a repeating pattern of negative behaviors, thoughts and feelings that causes distress. You react to your partner’s reactions and your partner reacts to your reactions and you go round and round in a never-ending negative cycle. Understanding and untangling your “negative cycles” is a first step in climbing out of distress. The exercise below will help you with this process. Please refer to the second page to respond.

Name _____

When my partner and I are not getting along: I often react by (describe behaviors or what you do)...

My partner often reacts to me by (describe their behaviors or what they do)...

When my partner reacts this way, I often feel (next page ‘what I feel’ section)...

When I feel this way I, see myself as (thoughts you tell yourself about you)...

When I feel this way I see my partner as (thought you tell yourself about partner)...

When I feel this way I long for or need...

When I react the way I do, I guess that my partner feels (next page under feelings)...