

THE FOUR ENEMIES OF HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Michael E. Metz, Ph.D.

ENEMY or BETRAYAL ----->>> **REMEDY or SATISFACTION**

CRITICISM	-- blaming and attaching your partner's personal characteristics, personality, or character.	FOCUS ON SELF	-- begin your complaints with the word, "I" -- e.g., "I'm upset about..." Don't generalize; focus on the specific event or behavior that bothers you.
CONTEMPT	-- insults, name calling, mockery and actions that abuse your partner psychologically; disdain, disgust.	RESPONSIBILITY FOR SELF	-- take responsibility for your role in problems and conflicts. Apologize; listen to your partner even if you don't agree.
DEFENSIVENESS	-- making excuses, whining, answering your partner's complaints with your own complaints, making assumptions about your partner's thinking.	EMPATHY	-- take time to calm down, interrupt your negative thinking and feelings of victimization or righteous indignation. Remember your partner's negative qualities don't cancel out the positives.
STONEWALLING	-- distancing yourself from your partner by being unresponsive, acting cold, smug, superior.	COOPERATION	-- don't run from your partner's anger; it's an attempt to get your attention. Be alert to your negative inner script. Find ways to let him/her know you're listening.

Adapted liberally from: John Gottman. *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail*. NY: Simon & Schuster, 1995.