

THE COUPLES CURE

Miraculous Recovery for Couples on the Brink

DEFENSIVE MANEUVERS LIST (REVIEW)

Please review these defensive maneuvers, identify yours, and make a commitment now to replace these habits with the non-defensive alternatives on page 2.

Deny responsibility: You take this approach when you know it wasn't your fault: "I never said I would." "I didn't do anything wrong." "I can only do so much." "That's not my job."

Making excuses: You do this because there is a good reason why you did (or didn't do) whatever is called into question. "There was bad traffic." "I couldn't because my boss called and it took a while."

Disagreeing with This is when your partner makes unflattering and just plain wrong assumptions.

Negative mind- about your feelings or motives. You argue with exasperation or respond with a reading: lack of generosity/reassurance.

Cross-complaining: This is when your partner does something just as bad as what you feel accused of. When they say: "I wish you would have done the dishes like you said you would," you say, "Well, I wish you would not leave your clothes on the floor."

Rubber Man/ Rubber Woman: Taken from the expression "I'm rubber you're glue..." this is when your partner does something similar to what they calling out in you. When they say: "You didn't call and I was worried, you say, "Well, how about when you drive like a maniac; is that any different?" This is the classic "turning the tables."

Yes, but...: This approach gets used when you know they are right, but you have a morally justifiable reason that outweighs your transgression. "Yes, I know I didn't pay that bill, but I was waiting for you to make a deposit."

Repeating yourself: You do this because if they would just hear you, they will be convinced of your point. You keep rephrasing your point of view, perhaps more loudly each time, not really responding to what they are saying.

Whining: This is self-explanatory. But you can also whine without the sound, by acting like the victim and feeling disempowered: "Why are you picking on me!?"

Body language: This is for when you feel above verbal defenses. For example, you may keep your arms folded across the chest, give a false smile, wave your hand dismissively, walk away, roll your eyes, shift your body from side to side, or refuse eye contact.

How to Listen Non-Defensively:

1. Reframe your partner's negativity. You could see it as a sign of how much they care.
2. Remember it is not about you. You are free to take yourself out of it without taking anything personally.
3. Embrace their anger. Look for the positive intention behind it, for example, to repair and clear the air.
4. Release the need to agree. You can have a different opinion and still work as a team.
5. Check your body language. Avoid expressions of contempt, irritation, condescension, detachment, or worse, mockery.

How to Speak Non-Defensively:

1. Acknowledge and honor their experience. You can thank them for sharing that with you, or say *"I can see why you would feel that way..."*
2. Seek to find the truth. Find what you agree with and start there.
3. Hold them in the highest regard. Keep a mental stance that remembers this is the person you chose for a reason and attribute to them positive qualities and intentions.
4. Keep calm and curious. You are speaking as if to collaborate, to learn more, to share for the sake of teamwork.
5. Avoid Yes but you...Just avoiding this phrase will eliminate a lot of defensive moves.
6. If you must stand your ground, share your point of view rather than negating theirs. We never have to make the other person wrong to speak our truth.
"Thank you for telling me that. I get where you are coming from. Here's what it looks like from where I'm standing..."