John Gottman's FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

1. Criticism:

Attacking your partner's personality or character, usually with the intent of making someone right and someone wrong:

Generalizations: "you always…" "you never…""you're the type of person who …" "why are you so …"

2. Contempt:

Attacking your partner's sense of self with the intention to insult or psychologically abuse him/her:

- Insults and name-calling: "bitch, bastard, wimp, fat, stupid, ugly, slob, lazy…"
- Hostile humor, sarcasm or mockery
- Body language & tone of voice: sneering, rolling your eyes, curling your upper lip

3. Defensiveness:

Seeing self as the victim, warding off a perceived attack:

- Making excuses (e.g., external circumstances beyond your control forced you to act in a certain way) "It's not my fault…", "I didn't…"

- Cross-complaining: meeting your partner's complaint, or criticism with a complaint of your own, ignoring what your partner said

- Disagreeing and then cross-complaining "That's not true, you're the one who …" "I did this because you did that…"

- Yes-butting: start off agreeing but end up disagreeing

- Repeating yourself without paying attention to what the other person is saying

- Whining "It's not fair."

4. Stonewalling:

Withdrawing from the relationship as a way to avoid conflict. Partners may think they are trying to be "neutral" but stonewalling conveys disapproval, icy distance, separation, disconnection, and/or smugness:

- Stony silence
- Monosyllabic mutterings
- Changing the subject
- Removing yourself physically
- Silent Treatment

Remedies:

- Learn to make specific complaints & requests (when X happened, I felt Y, I want Z)

- Conscious communication: Speaking the unarguable truth & listening generously

- Validate your partner (let your partner know what makes sense to you about what they are saying; let them know you understand what they are feeling, see through their eyes)

- Shift to appreciation (5 times as much positive feeling & interaction as negative)

- Claim responsibility: “What can I learn from this?” & “What can **I** do about it?”

- Re-write your inner script (replace thoughts of righteous indignation or innocent victimization with thoughts of appreciation, responsibility that are soothing & validating)

- Practice getting undefended (allowing your partner’s utterances to be what they really are: just thoughts and puffs of air) and let go of the stories that you are making up

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based on **Gottman**, John. 1994. Why Marriages Succeed or Fail