

Belgian-American psychotherapist Esther Perel – Three types of relationship fights.

Power and Control- Fights about power and control can sound like:

“You undermine me with the kids.”

“Because I don’t make as much money as you, I feel like I have to check with you before I buy anything. I know you don’t ask me to but you don’t have to.”

“We only have sex when you want to.”

Care/Love and Closeness- Fights about care and closeness can sound like:

“Why can’t you support me when I’m anxious rather than make me feel worse about my coping skills?”

“Why am I always the one to text or call you? I pursue; you distance.”

“Why don’t we have sex anymore?”

Respect and Recognition- Fights about respect and recognition can sound like:

“You go out with your friends without asking me what I’m doing.”

“You never acknowledge my professional accomplishments.”

“I don’t think you realize how much I do around the house.”

Getting Out of the Loop (Crazy Cycle) Requires Creating New Patterns

Expressing how you feel in a respectable way. Communication and UNDERSTANDING is the key element to any successful relationship.

XYZ Method – When you do X in situation Y, I feel Z.

Communication - This method/formula is an invitation to your spouse to allow them the opportunity to relate to our feelings/emotions, whether it be pink or blue.

Understanding - The listening spouse then will repeat back what they understood the other person was saying.

(Negotiation starts)

Resolution – Mutual agreement on said topic.

It’s hard to remember in the heat of the moment, but when someone is extremely angry or deeply upset, it’s usually because they care. That care can be better utilized. **It requires *developing the skills and language to identify the underlying dynamics which serve as the backdrop to so many of our fights.* When we work together in a healthy way to understand how these patterns came to be, we shift our relational trajectory toward how we can help each other through it.**

Getting out of the loop is a process of dismantling entrenched dynamics, reversing them micromovement by micromovement. One step leads to another. It may feel unnatural at first to engage in such choreography—articulating our feelings while consciously allowing room for the other’s perspective—but all relationships are a dance. Eventually, it will become more organic to say *“I feel something but that doesn’t mean you’re necessarily doing it, but I need you to hear that,”* or *“Honey, I’m going to hang out with my friends tonight but I was thinking we could do something special tomorrow—what do you think?”* **Creating new patterns of mutual self-awareness and affirmation of the other is the key to improving our relational dynamics.** Remember, the process shapes the experience. The form is more important than the content.