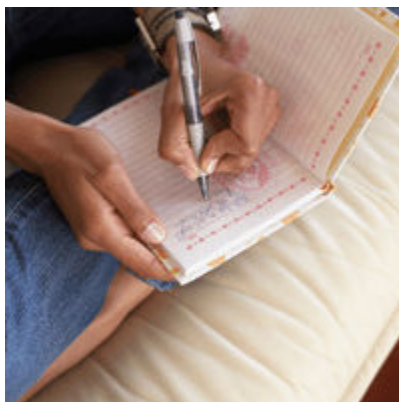


Mild upset tells you: “This conversation has a lot of importance to me, and I’m sensing some sort of threat.” It is important to listen to your body not because you are truly in danger, but because you are *perceiving* danger or threat.

When we are feeling threatened and our physiology changes to prepare ourselves for “fight, flight, or freeze,” we become more defensive and reactive. Our capacity to remind ourselves that we are only having a disagreement becomes challenging. We increase our “black or white” thinking. At low levels of this perceived threat, you may be thinking: “My partner isn’t hearing me!” or “What my partner says makes no sense!” As the emotional upset intensifies, so does the defensiveness (one of the four horsemen).



Instead of “reacting” to a perceived threat, I’m going to encourage you to begin to “notice” what’s going on inside of you and become curious about it. Ask your partner: “Give me a moment, I’m feeling defensive and I’m trying to figure out why.” Say this even if you believe you know why. Your “right off the bat” first hunches can be wrong and exceedingly negative. (“He/She’s attacking me. That’s why I’m upset!”) Breathe in 6 times and out 6 times. Then ask yourself: “Why am I getting upset about this? Why is this so important to me?”



Return to the conversation with a new, mindful focus on the topic. Get curious and reinvest in what your partner is actually saying. Grab a notebook, if you’d like, and actually write down the words you are hearing. Repeat back if those are what they actually mean to say.

Keep in mind you are doing this not for their benefit, but for your own. Your reactivity keeps you stuck and enslaved to an old way of thinking. When you are mindful, you are able to gain a larger view of the world, yourself, and your partner.