

#32B. What to Do when Flooding Has Started: Questions to Ask

Directions: Complete #32 A **Flooding Self-Test**. Then share your answers to the following:

1. *"What makes you feel flooded?"* Avoid blaming your partner here. Focus on your partner by asking: *"What do you need, in order to avoid becoming flooded?"*
2. *"How do you (or I) typically bring up issues or irritability or complaints?"*
3. *"Do you (or I) typically store things up?"*
4. *"Is there anything I can do that soothes you?"*
5. *"Is there anything you can do that soothes me?"*

Together discuss questions 6 and 7.

6. *"What signals can we develop for letting the other know when one person feels flooded? Can we take breaks?"*
7. Develop a ritual for taking at least a 20-minute break. Schedule a return time to talk again. Also this must be a real break in which you are not thinking about things that maintain distress such as thoughts of righteous indignation or thoughts in which one feels like an innocent victim. Men are more likely to do this (ruminate) than women. You must really relax and calm down during the break.

Resources:

There are things you can do to learn to relax on a deeper level. Learning meditation or mindfulness is one. There are also tools you can buy that "teach" your body to go into what is called "Heart Rate Variability" (HRV). Some use the computer, allowing you to "play games" that advance when you are relaxed. Others are hand-held devices that change color when you change your physiological state.

#32A Flooding Self-Test

<i>Directions: Check off the correct answer.</i>		Yes	No
1.	At times, when my partner gets angry, I feel confused.		
2.	Our discussions get far too heated.		
3.	I have a hard time calming down when we discuss disagreements.		
4.	I'm worried that one of us is going to say something we'll regret.		
5.	My partner gets far more upset than is necessary.		
6.	After a fight I want to keep away for a while.		
7.	There's no need to raise one's voice the way my partner does in a discussion.		
8.	It is really overwhelming when an argument gets going.		
9.	I can't think straight when my partner gets so negative.		
10.	I think, "Why can't we talk things out logically?"		
11.	My partner's negative mood comes out of nowhere.		
12.	When my partner's temper gets going there is no stopping it.		
13.	I feel cold and empty after one of our fights.		
14.	When there is so much negativity I have difficulty focusing my thoughts.		
15.	Small issues suddenly become big ones for no apparent reason.		
16.	I can never seem to soothe myself after one of our fights.		
17.	Sometimes I think that my partner's moods are just crazy.		
18.	Things get out of hand quickly in our discussions.		
19.	My partner's feelings are very easily hurt.		
20.	When my partner gets negative, stopping it is like trying to stop an ongoing truck.		
21.	All this negativity drags me down		
22.	I feel disorganized by all this negative emotion.		
23.	I can never tell when a blowup is going to happen.		
24.	When we have a fight it takes a long time before I feel at ease again.		

Scoring: If you answered "yes" to eight statements, this is a strong sign that you are prone to feeling flooded during conflict with your spouse. Because this state can be harmful to your relationship, it is important to let your spouse know how you are feeling.

The antidote to flooding is to practice soothing yourself and your partner. This will help change how you perceive your partner's negative reactions. Instead of feeling overwhelmed by your spouse's angry tone or words, try to see them as simply an underliner—a way for your partner to emphasize something he or she is feeling—rather than a personal attack.