

Turning Toward Each Other

The cycle is the enemy — not your partner. Below the surface of every fight is a longing to know: *Are you there for me?*

A.R.E.

ACCESSIBLE
RESPONSIVE
ENGAGED



NAME IT TO TAME IT

Spot Your Negative Cycle

When you feel disconnected, you each fall into a protective move. The moves feed each other — and the loop, not your partner, is what erodes the bond.

MOVE 1 · PROTEST

The Pursuer

Criticizes, pushes, gets loud to get a response — "I'm knocking louder because I can't reach you."

MOVE 2 · PROTECT

The Withdrawer

Shuts down, defends, goes quiet to avoid failing — "I go silent so I don't make it worse."

RESULT

The Spiral

The harder one pushes, the further the other pulls back. Both end up feeling alone.

Try naming it together: "There's our cycle again." You're now on the same team, facing the pattern side by side.



READ THE REAL SIGNAL

Beneath the Surface

Reactive emotions protect softer ones. Share the emotion *underneath* — it's the one that invites your partner closer.

ON TOP (REACTIVE)

Anger
Criticism
Blame
Stonewalling
Sarcasm

UNDERNEATH (REAL)

Fear of losing you
"I feel unimportant"
Hurt & loneliness
Feeling not enough
Longing to matter



THE BOND IN THREE QUESTIONS

Are You There For Me?

Secure love answers "yes" to each. Ask what would make your partner feel a stronger yes.

- **Accessible** — Can I reach you? Do you turn toward me when I need you?
- **Responsive** — Can I count on you to respond to my emotions, not just my words?
- **Engaged** — Do I know I matter to you — that you'll stay close and choose me?



SAY IT OUT LOUD

Conversation Starters

Take turns. One shares, the other listens to understand — no fixing, no defending.

- "When we drift apart, the move I make is ____."
- "Underneath my frustration, I'm really feeling ____."
- "I feel closest to you when you ____."
- "A moment I felt truly seen by you was ____."
- "What I need most from you right now is ____."



PRACTICE THIS WEEK

Growth Exercises

- **Daily hug, 20 seconds.** Hold on until you both feel your bodies settle.
- **Catch the cycle.** Once this week, pause mid-spat and say, "We're in our cycle."
- **Softened start-up.** Swap one "You always..." for "I feel ____, I need ____."
- **Reach & respond.** Make one bid for closeness; answer your partner's with a turn-toward.
- **Repair ritual.** After a rupture, come back: "That landed hard. Can we try again?"