

Five Losing Strategies & Five Winning Strategies – by Terry Real

Adapted from “The New Rules of Marriage” by Vivian Baruch M.Couns

When you’re talking to your partner and your emotions start to escalate, one of the most important questions to ask yourself is “Which part of me is talking?”

Is it the mature, present-based, functional adult part (associated with thinking & planning) which wants a solution? Or is the immature, reactive child part (associated with the emotional brain)? If it’s the second part, we want be proven right, control our partner, vent frustration or anger, or lead with contempt and self-righteousness? These are the losing strategies of our “first consciousness”.

The kindest and most respectful thing you can do for yourself and your partner is to learn to recognize when you’re in a reactive (immature child) state of mind and [Stop, Breathe, Think & Choose](#). This is called practicing Relational Mindfulness. This daily practice builds “second consciousness”, a consciously learnt adult response to dealing with relationships. It is practicing relational mindfulness.

[Practicing Relational Mindfulness](#) means you stop and think. Before you say or do anything, ask yourself “Am I remembering that I love this person? Is the reason I’m speaking to make things better?” or “How will this affect my partner?” This is how you can access the five winning strategies in a state of relational mindfulness.

Five Losing Strategies:

1. Being Right

- a) Arguing about whose view is more accurate
- b) Fuels self-righteous indignation

2. Controlling Your Partner

- a) Can be direct or indirect manipulation
- b) No-one likes being controlled. It leads to retaliation & payback

3. Unbridled Self-expression

- a) Saying whatever is on your mind with no kindness or respect

4. Retaliation

- a) Offending from the victim position
- b) I’ll make you feel what I feel
- c) Can be overt or covert (passive aggressive)

5. Withdrawal

- a) This is different from taking a responsible time-out or responsible distance taking
- b) Comes from resignation or retaliation.

Five Winning Strategies:

1. Shift from Complaint to Request

- a) [Learn how to speak and ask for what you want](#)
- b) Make your requests specific, behavioural & reasonable.

2. Speak to Repair with Love & Respect

- a) [Contract with your partner to engage in a 10 minute dialogue](#) or repair conversation
- b) Remember love
- c) Use the 4 steps of the feedback wheel
 - 1. What I saw & heard
 - 2. What I made up about it
 - 3. How I feel about it
 - 4. What I'd like
- d) Let go of the outcome.

3. Listen With Compassion

- a) Listen to understand – you don't have to agree
- b) Acknowledge whatever you can
- c) Give whatever you can

4. Empower Each Other

- a) Acknowledge the gifts the responder has offered
- b) Ask what you can do to help the responder deliver
- c) [Acknowledge whatever you can & give whatever you can.](#)

5. Cherish each other

- a) [Give your partner specific positive feedback & appreciations daily](#)
- b) Nourish yourself & your relationship with time & energy
- c) Practice smart generosity
- d) Give back to the world.