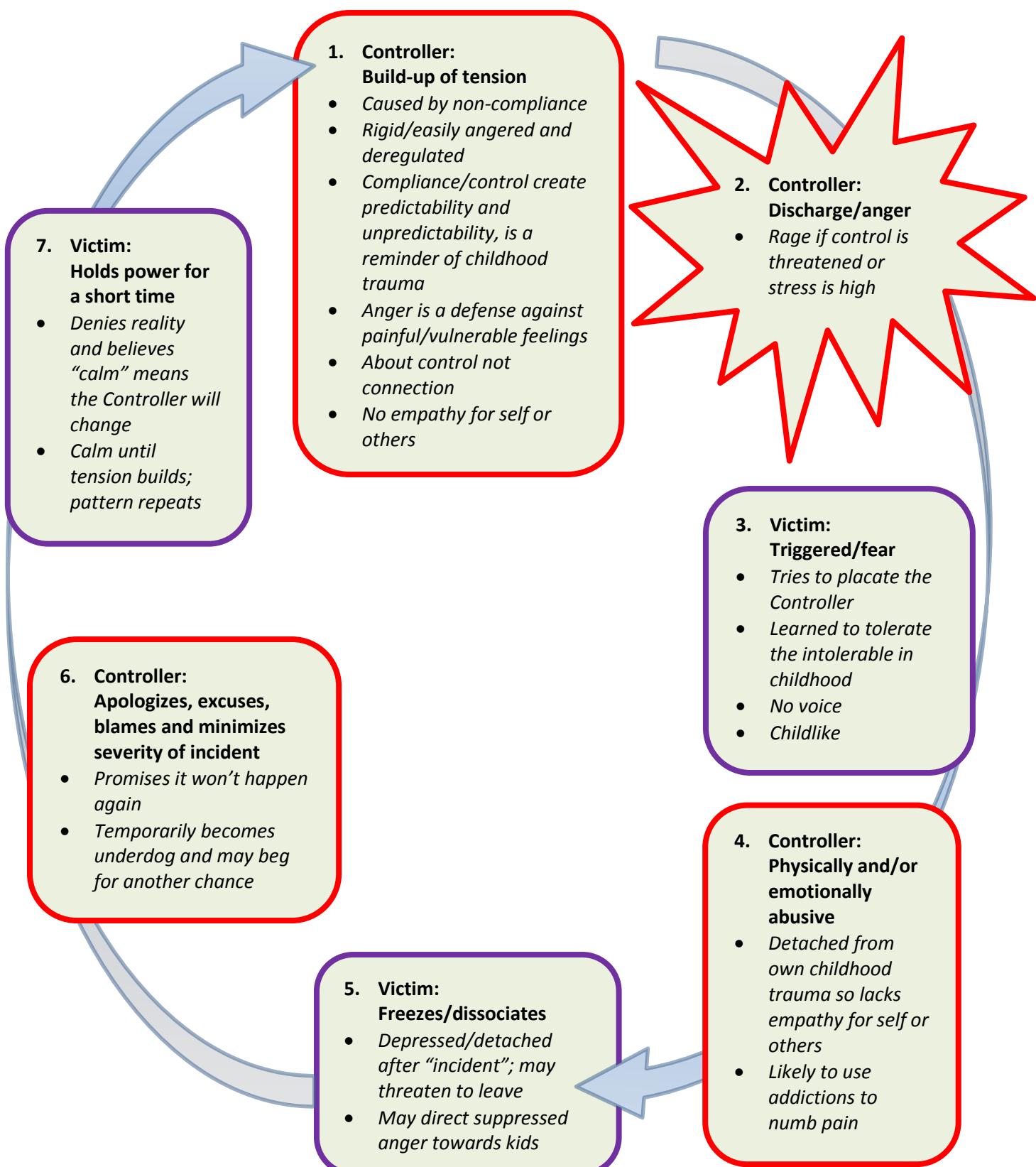


ATTACHMENT CORE PATTERN THERAPY™

CONTROLLER/VICTIM CORE PATTERN

© Copyright Milan and Kay Yerkovich 2013

www.howwelove.com



Attachment Core Pattern Therapy™ Interventions

Controller & Victim

The CONTROLLER

- Growing up, I experienced a great deal of intense anger and stress from a parent(s) or sibling(s).
- No one protected me from harm when I was growing up so I had to get tough and take care of myself.
- Life has taught me to either “be in control” or “be controlled.”
- If I wasn’t in charge, nothing would get done.
- Sometimes I try to control my temper but I feel too angry to stop.
- My spouse couldn’t survive without me.
- People would probably describe me as intimidating.
- I rarely feel any emotion except anger and sometimes guilt if my anger has gone too far.
- Things would go more smoothly if my spouse (and kids) listened to me and did the things I asked.
- My spouse purposely makes me jealous and does things behind my back.
- I have few feelings about my childhood except I’m glad it’s over.

The VICTIM

- Growing up, I experienced a great deal of intense anger and stress from a parent(s) or sibling(s).
- I’m used to chaos and calm makes me anxious because something bad is about to happen. It’s just the calm before the storm.
- My spouse mistreats me, but I stay because it would be worse to be alone.
- If I spoke up more and had stronger opinions, my spouse would be even angrier.
- I don’t let myself cry because if I started, I’d never stop.
- I try very hard to keep my mate happy, but it doesn’t always work.
- At times, I’m honestly scared of my spouse.
- I’m resentful and angry and sometimes take it out on the kids.
- I feel like I’m just “going through the motions” and I’m tired and out of energy.

The Initial Attraction:

As young adults, Controllers are starved for affection, attention and praise. They fall hard and fast, because if it isn’t intense, it isn’t love. They have an uncanny ability to pick individuals that don’t threaten their need for control. Because they were never able to entirely possess their parents, it feels wonderful to possess their lover and have him or her all to themselves.

The Victim, too, is starved for affection, attention and praise. Intensity is mistaken for intimacy, and for awhile, control is mistaken for protection. Many times the Victim has never felt protection of any kind, so being exclusively possessed by the Controller can make them feel special and loved.

Overview of the Core Pattern

These love styles are displayed on a continuum from mild to severe. Some Controllers may only occasionally become angry and never exhibit violence. In severe cases, Controllers may continually be physically, emotionally and spiritually abusive. We include some directives for the Victim who may be with a dangerous Controller. Victims always tolerate too much and are poor at self-care and self-protection. In extreme cases, the Victim may dissociate to the point where they have no memory of violent events. Drug and alcohol add to the chaos and hinder healing.

In this Core Pattern, the Controller never feels completely in charge as the smallest things threaten their sense of power. To lose control would mean feeling vulnerable and weak as they did as a child. The goal of control is to keep vulnerable childhood feelings from ever surfacing. Over time, insecurities about losing control increase. To lower anxiety, the Controller exerts more power.

The Controller believes to get their needs met, they will have to violate, exploit and manipulate others taking what they want or have nothing. Any feelings of weakness or vulnerability are loaded with humiliation and shame and quickly submerged under anger.

The Victim submits to the Controller believing they will otherwise be left alone with no one to meet their needs. Accustomed to high anxiety, they accept mistreatment not fully recognizing the seriousness of the abuse. As kids, Victims learned to tolerate the intolerable. In adulthood, unbearable, relational pain seems normal.

In the cycle of abuse the tension builds, the Controller rages, and then goes through a period of regret, apologizing and promising not to lose control again while minimizing the recent outburst. For a short period of time, the Victim may have the power until they give in and decide to believe the Controller once again. Tension builds and the cycle repeats again and again. At times, the Victim may take their anger out on the children when the Controller is not home. Drugs and alcohol are often used to soothe pain and anxiety, adding to the chaos and unpredictability.

When stuck in this Core Pattern, each person feels:

The Controller

- If my spouse would listen, I wouldn't get so angry.
- My spouse does things behind my back and it drives me crazy.
- I feel angry when my spouse ignores me.
- My spouse does things that make me jealous.
- I lose my temper a lot, especially at home, but my spouse (or kid) deserves it.
- My spouse ignores me when I ask him or her to do things a certain way.

The Victim

- I have to keep my mate from knowing certain things because he or she would be angry.
- My spouse complains no matter how hard I try.
- I am afraid of making my spouse angry.
- Sometimes I pick a fight just to get it over with.
- My spouse mistreats me, but I stay because it would be worse to be alone.
- I get nervous when things are calm because I know it won't last and I'm waiting for my spouse to get angry or critical.
- I apologize to my spouse just to get them off my back.
- I feel tense when my spouse is home and more relaxed when they are gone.
- I feel humiliated when my spouse calls me names and puts me down.

Following, we list the general individual growth goals for the Controller and Victim. Ask your spouse to pick a growth goal from **your** list that would be most meaningful to them and begin there. Start with one goal and focus on making observable progress in that area. For more ideas see the How We Love Workbook.

Individual growth steps for the Controller: (see How We Love Workbook)

1. **Feelings under the anger:** The only emotions the Controller is aware of are frustration and anger. Anger covers more vulnerable feelings that felt unbearable in childhood. Fear, shame, humiliation, loneliness and despair may be just a few of the feelings you had little to no help managing during a difficult childhood. Control keeps you safe from having to feel vulnerable feelings. Use the feelings word list (freebie on the website) to begin to communicate the feelings under the anger.
2. **Grief:** There is often a lot of trauma in a chaotic home but no place to grieve or receive comfort. Grief is the antidote to anger. Anger is a defense that keeps the pain out of awareness. Feeling the pain as you recall childhood events in a comforting and supporting place may help you receive the comfort you missed as a child. The wounds begin to heal and the defense becomes unnecessary.
3. **Denial:** People from chaotic homes tell horrendous childhood stories with a smile. They often minimize trauma, believing it was normal. "I survived. It wasn't that bad," is a phrase we hear over and over.
4. **Compassion for the child you once were:** You cannot have compassion for the hardships you endured if you deny and minimize the impact. You must remember what it was like to be a child or you will traumatize your own children in the same way and not be aware of the damage you are doing.
5. **Respect vs threats:** You can demand respect, make threats and intimidate, but if you do the respect of others will be based on fear. It's hypocritical to yell and raise your voice and be furious with others when they do the same thing. Respect breeds respect. Listen to your voice tones and learn to speak in a gentle kind way. Apologize when you go back to old habits.

6. **Apologize:** Take responsibility for your anger. Apologize for how you have hurt others in the past and let them explain how your anger makes them feel.
7. **Time-outs:** Take time outs when you feel the anger building. This is when you use the feelings word list to communicate the vulnerable feelings under the anger.
8. **Listen:** Controllers don't listen, they tell. Your perspective isn't the only view. Learn to stay in the listener role and not be scared off by tears or vulnerable emotions.
9. **Comfort:** For most Controllers, there are no memories of comfort from childhood. Learn to recognize when you are stressed and anger is building. Ask for comfort rather than getting angry.
10. **Address addictions:** I will admit my addiction(s) and seek relational comfort versus gaining relief through my addictions. Addictions relieve pain and stress. You cannot let go of them until you can go to people for help rather than things. Consider a 12-step group or find a Celebrate Recovery group in your local church.
11. **Find a mentor:** I will accept my need for re-parenting and seek a mentor. You cannot heal alone. You need a mentor or sponsor who can be a support as you attempt to grow. Asking for help is essential to healing.

Individual growth steps for the Victim: (see How We Love Workbook)

1. **Safety:** Remember, you learned to tolerate the intolerable as a kid. You may still be living in an intolerable situation. You need support (sponsor or mentor) to help you determine what is normal. You cannot do it alone. If you are in danger, call 911. When a man or woman is violent, it is always wrong and should never be tolerated.
2. **Stress response:** Notice your stress response. Do you freeze? Check out and dissociate? Withdraw? Rate your level of anxiety from one to ten. Write down what you feel in your body when the stress level is high. Where does your mind go and what are your thoughts? What do you need at these moments?
3. **Address addictions:** People from difficult childhoods are at high risk for addictions. This is because no one helped you learn to manage stress and addictions provide temporary relief from pain but cause other serious problems that are also painful. You need people you can turn to for relief before you can let go of addictions.
4. **Mentor:** Find a mentor in a 12-step group or in a Celebrate Recovery program at a local church. This may be one of the most important choices you can make. Start today.
5. **Grieve:** There is often a lot of trauma in a chaotic home but no place to grieve or receive comfort. Feeling the pain as you recall childhood events in a comforting and supporting place helps you receive the comfort you missed as a child and the wounds begin to heal.
6. **Denial:** People from chaotic homes tell horrendous childhood stories with a smile. They often minimize trauma, believing it was normal. "I survived. It wasn't that bad," is a phrase we hear over and over.
7. **Compassion for the child you once were:** You cannot have compassion for the hardships you endured if you deny and minimize the impact. You must remember what

it was like to be a child or you will traumatize your own children in the same way and not be aware of the damage you are doing.

8. **Boundaries:** Most likely you were not protected as a child. Setting boundaries and learning to say "No," and "Stop," are necessary so you can protect yourself.
9. **Be truthful and don't minimize:** What do you do to cover and disguise the truth of what goes on in your family? Are you willing to tell someone the truth of what goes on behind closed doors? It is essential to your healing.
10. **Know the signs of abuse**

If the person you love or live with does these things, it's time to get help:

- Keeps track of what you are doing all the time and criticizes you for little things.
- Constantly accuses you of being unfaithful.
- Prevents or discourages you from seeing friends or family or going to work or school.
- Gets angry when drinking alcohol or using drugs.
- Controls all the money you spend.
- humiliates you in front of others.
- Destroys your property or things that you care about.
- Threatens to hurt you or the children or pets or does cause hurt (by hitting, punching, slapping, kicking, or biting).
- Uses or threatens to use a weapon against you.
- Forces you to have sex against your will.
- Blames you for his/her violent outbursts.

Identifying and Exiting the Core Pattern

In Part 3 of our book, How We Love (2006), we discuss Duets that Damage How We Love. When harmful love styles combine in close relationships (especially marriage) a destructive, repetitive Core Pattern is created that blocks emotional intimacy and makes resolution of conflict difficult. These reactive patterns are at the root of many complaints and struggles so learning to identify and exit the Core Pattern is critical to moving toward a secure connection as a couple. Each person must own and work on their harmful love style and use the Comfort Circle as a new and healthy format for connecting as a couple. (For more on the Comfort Circle, go to howwelove.com).

See Controller/Victim Diagram

The diagram on page 1 explains the circular Core Pattern. Each step of the Core Pattern is represented by Steps 1 through 7. What is happening in each step is explained under the section **What's going on?** Then, individual or couple action steps are listed that either the Victim or Controller would have to do to pull out of, or exit, the Core Pattern. The Comfort Circle is useful in that it requires each person to listen to the other without interrupting, defending or fixing. The goal is to recognize the pressure building in Steps 1 and 2 and address

Milan & Kay Yerkovich

the Core Pattern at the beginning which could alleviate the completion of the destructive dance. At any point in the circle, steps can be taken to exit the Core Pattern by either spouse.

Injured love styles exit on a continuum of mild, medium or extreme. Both the Controller and the Victim have a lot of unresolved pain and trauma from their childhood experiences. Rather than learning good relational skills and ways to feel and deal, these two have many episodes of uncomforted, painful experiences during their childhood with little to no positive modeling of a healthy relationship. Marriage is often as easy or difficult as our childhood, and for this couple, marriage is often an extension of childhood pain.

The Controller uses anger to block grief and the Victim dissociates or numbs feelings to block grief. Without awareness of childhood pain, these two may easily wound their own children as they have “forgotten” how it feels to be a child. Remembering and grieving childhood pain and receiving tender comfort for those wounds is a key to healing and the only way the defenses become unnecessary. As one learns to grieve and accept comfort, anger and numbing out lessen. In addition, as this couple learns to soothe and comfort one another, they are able to let go of many addictions that have provided distraction and relief.

Mentors or sponsors for both partners are especially important to healing this pair because outside perspectives and support can help these two learn to experience relief through relationships when their spouse is too triggered to respond in a helpful way.

Safety is a key concern and physical, emotional or sexual abuse must be reported and a separation or shelter may be necessary if danger exists. We are addressing our interventions to a couple who desire to break the cycle of abuse and grow.

Overview of the Core Pattern: What's going on at each point in the circle?

Step 1: Controller's buildup of tension:

1. **Controller:**
Build Up of Tension
 - *Caused by non-compliance*
 - *Rigid/easily angered and deregulated*
 - *Compliance/control create predictability and unpredictability is a reminder of childhood trauma*
 - *Anger is a defense against painful/vulnerable feelings*
 - *About control not connection*
 - *No empathy for self or others*

What's going on?

1. People from homes where there is “fright without solutions” (Mary Main) often become chaotic and disorganized as adults or become highly rigid. Because security was never experienced, they have no innate cognitive or emotional understanding of healthy emotions and relationships. Rigid Controllers tend to latch on to highly systematized and regulated guidelines for living life, spending money and parenting. When people move outside their prescribed and predictable behaviors, or compliance is compromised, the Controller is easily overwhelmed and becomes angry.
2. “Unpredictability” and behavioral “surprises” remind the Controller (chaotic or rigid) of the unexpected childhood trauma they once experienced. Thus, they are quick to force compliance and control to ease their internal distress. Why are men or women highly controlling? Control is about keeping all painful, vulnerable emotions out of awareness.
3. Anger and rage function as a relief valve to their own build-up of tension as well as a show of force, intimidating those around them. Anger also keeps the terrifying and vulnerable emotions lying underneath the anger from coming to the surface.
4. Having rarely (or never) received empathy during childhood, Controllers have little to no empathy for themselves or others and life is about control, not connection. Control is used to defend against childhood pain, where most feelings were painful (humiliation, terror, shame, anxiety, confusion, betrayal). Loss of control or being the underdog gets too close to childhood memories so control and anger keep vulnerable feelings out of awareness.

Step 2: Controller's discharge of tension through anger:**What's going on?**

1. As tension builds or control is threatened, the Controller discharges, becoming angry, full of rage and sometimes violent. Physical or emotional abuse are possibilities. The Controller is unpredictable and it may be a small thing that causes the explosion as tension has been building. Others are fearful and uncertain how bad it will get. Alcohol or drugs exacerbate the situation.

Step 3: Victim's fearful response:**What's going on?**

1. The Victim is triggered, becomes overwhelmingly fearful and tries to appease, placate or beg their way back to harmony. They will do anything to stop the escalation including

confessing to false accusations, offering sex and addictive substances. When they cannot stop the assault, they will numb out or dissociate.

2. When highly fearful, the Victim's right brain is triggered and flooded. Words, logic and linear thinking shut down. When this happens, Victims freeze, becoming childlike and voiceless.
3. Having learned early in their life to tolerate the intolerable, out of control behaviors seem normal. As adults they are not able to protect themselves or their children.
4. Numbing their pain with addictive substances or activities is often used to cope and get rid of the pain.

Step 4: Controller becomes abusive as anger escalates:

- 4. Controller:**
Physically and/or emotionally abusive
- *Detached from own childhood trauma so lacks empathy for self or others*
 - *Likely to use addictions to numb pain*

What's going on?

1. Detached from his or her childhood trauma, and completely lacking empathy, the Controller will attack the Victim with a vengeance verbally and often physically. They will threaten, brandish weapons and bully until they are satisfied they have "won." By putting the Victim "in their place," they have *righted the historical wrongs* . . . unaware however of the tie between the past and the present.
2. They are likely to act out with the addiction of choice to numb their pain and settle down the agitation.

Step 5: Victim freezes:

- 5. Victim:**
Freezes/Dissociates
- *Depressed/detached after "incident"; may threaten to leave*
 - *May direct suppressed anger towards kids*

Step 5: What's going on?

1. The Victim freezes and/or dissociates which is exactly how they coped as a child. When the Controller is gone, asleep or passed out, the Victim may displace their anger upon the kids. The abuse continues.
2. On occasion, the Victim may reach a breaking point and, in a desperate moment, attempt to kill, wound or maim the abuser.
3. The Victim will become sad, angry and despondent after the incident and may threaten to leave.

Step 6: The Controller's remorse:

6. **Controller:**
**Apologizes excuses,
blames and minimizes
severity of incident**
• *Promises it won't happen
again*
• *Temporarily becomes
underdog and may beg
for another chance*

**Step 6:
What's going on?**

1. After the battle, if nobody is in jail, hospitalized or dead, each retreats to a place of solace to bandage their wounds. If the Victim threatens divorce or if they have been injured, the Controller may flip into the Victim role fearing abandonment or jail.
2. The Controller may apologize, show remorse, make excuses, minimize the severity of the incident and make promises that "It will never happen again."
3. The Controller will temporarily become the underdog and may continue the begging and pleading, "Just one more chance!?!?"
4. Some Controllers never apologize but just act nice after an incident to win the Victim back and the cycle repeats.

Step 7: Victim believes things will change. Denial sets the stage for the pattern to repeat:

7. **Victim:**
Holds power for a short time
- *Denies reality and believes “calm” means the Controller will change*
 - *Calm until tension builds; pattern repeats*

What's going on?

1. For a short time, the Victim holds the power in the relationship if the Controller is afraid they will be abandoned. The childlike victim will deny the reality of the overall pattern and believe the “calm” or promises of change are signs things will improve.
2. The Victim may finally realize the pattern will not go away and they may use addictions to numb this horrid reality.
3. For some Victims, although they see reality for what it is, they are too afraid to resist the Controller and thus stay hopelessly locked into the abuse cycle for a lifetime.
4. After an incident, there is often a period of “calm” until tension within the Controller builds and the pattern repeats.

Growth Steps to Exit the Core Pattern:

Now that you understand the pattern, how do you get out of it? In this section, we will give the Controller and the Victim ideas and actions for exiting the Core Pattern. In addition, we will include how this couple can utilize the Comfort Circle to exit the Core Pattern. Remember the childhood injuries causing this pattern are serious and pervasive. It will take commitment and time to exit this pattern and learn healthy ways of relating.

Exiting the Core Pattern Step 1: Buildup of tension in the Controller

Step 1: Controller: Individual and couple action steps to exit the Core Pattern (for more detail see the HWL Workbook chapter on growth goals for the Controller):

These steps are very important in learning to manage your anger.

1. Increase self-awareness by noticing the buildup of tension that ultimately results in an outburst. Set your phone alarm and look at the soul words list several times a day and pick three feelings under any category except anger. Rate the intensity of your feelings from 1-10 (one low, ten high) and jot down any thoughts that go with these feelings. This will help you to better understand how your stress builds towards an eruption of anger.
2. Do the first chapters of the workbook in *How We Love* and contemplate when and where your anger really started during childhood or adolescence and what events growing up are at the root of your anger.
3. Notice the absence of sadness and grief. Reflect on childhood memories with your spouse or friend and use the soul words list to describe the feelings a child would feel in each situation.
4. Ask your spouse to go around the Comfort Circle with you and share your childhood experiences that are at the root of your anger. In so doing, you can learn to experience with your spouse what you did not experience as a child (listening, validation and comfort).
5. Take responsibility for your anger and own that it is destructive. Quit blaming, excusing and minimizing the impact your anger has on others. If you had an angry parent, think about how you would feel if they owned the impact of their anger on you and made consistent efforts to change.
6. When you come home, ask everyone in the family to share three feelings about their day. Use the soul words list and simplify it for younger children. You don't know what stresses your family members have faced during the day until you ask. Listen to the feelings and try to validate the feelings but don't try to fix the feelings. Let them be.
7. Make a list of the mean phrases you tend to use when you are angry. (If you don't know, ask your family.) Circle each phrase that was said to you as a child. How do you think you felt as a child when you heard those words? Put a name by each phrase that you did say or would like to say to your parents, siblings, extended family or other specific people from your childhood years. (Don't say it, just be aware of who you are really angry at.)
8. Ask your spouse to help you notice the verbal and non-verbal signs that indicate your stress is building and be open to their input (tight jaw, teeth clenching, flushing, increasing irritation). When your spouse tells you they see these signs, STOP, go to a quiet place and write down all stressful events in your life and three feelings for each event. Share with your spouse.

Step 1: Victim: Interventions by the Victim that may help the Controller before anger erupts:

1. Many times Victims can identify nonverbal signs of the building tension that occurs before the angry outburst (clenched jaw or fists, a look in the eyes, reddening of face, etc.). Rather than ignoring the buildup, try to notice signs of tension increasing.
2. **If the Controller is willing**, make an agreement that the Victim can verbalize what they see and offer help. "It seems like you are feelings tense and uneasy. Can we walk, do some breathing together, listen to music, etc? I want to help you feel better."

Exiting the Core Pattern Step 2: Controller discharges anger

Step 2: Controller: Action steps to exit the Core Pattern:

OK, you had an angry incident:

1. Stop. Take a time-out and breathe.
2. As quickly as possible, apologize to your family and ask for a do-over. Use the feelings word list and ask each person how they felt as a result of your anger and behavior. This will help you remember what it felt like to feel powerless when you were little. Show empathy when you are listening to feelings.
3. Make a list of the events and stresses of the last several days. Using the soul words list, write three feelings words (not in the anger category) by each event. Share with your spouse or mentor the stressors and feelings that lead up to the outburst.

Step 2: Victim: Action steps to exit the Core Pattern:

1. If you feel you are in danger, leave the house and take the kids with you. Call 911 immediately if there is any pushing, slapping, hitting or violence.
2. If you feel you are NOT in danger:

Don't run but don't fight: You must draw a boundary and refuse to listen to angry outbursts. It's not good for you or the kids. If you want to be respected learn to say:

1. "I can see you are very angry. I want to listen when you can tell me in a calm way the feelings under your anger. Let me know when you are ready."
2. Stick to this boundary and learn to tolerate the silence or anger of your mate without fixing or pleasing to make the anger go away.
3. Call 911 if there is any violence, hitting or pushing.

Exiting the Core Patter Step 3: Victim triggered freezes

Step 3: Victim: Action steps to exit the Core Pattern:

At all points in the circle, safety is your first goal. You may not realize the level of danger you are in because you have learned to tolerate too much stress and chaos. Your alarms that you are in danger were overused as a kid and now they don't work properly. This is why a mentor is so important. Seek the help of a counselor, mentor or sponsor who can help you recognize abuse. Do an internet search on *the cycle of abuse, symptoms of victimization, and characteristics of a perpetrator of domestic violence*.

Victims often freeze during the Controller's angry outbursts. Anger may immobilize you. Have a plan in advance that you can implement when the Controller gets angry.

1. The Victim's traumatic childhood experiences are often repeated in the present. Use the soul words list and search list for feelings that you felt during childhood that are repeating in the present.
2. Most likely you never received empathy or comfort as a child for the pain you endured. Learn to have compassion for the child within you and increase your efforts at self-care.
3. Learn to say "No" and set boundaries with your spouse and kids. You will need the help of a mentor or sponsor to do this.

Exiting the Core Pattern Step 4: Controller's anger escalates

Step 4: Controller: Action steps to exit the Core Pattern:

At this point, the Controller's anger escalates and becomes more destructive. The further you travel around the circle in the Core Pattern, the more damage there is to repair. You must realize your anger began long ago before you ever met your spouse or had kids. Go back and repeat step 2.

Anger: Anger does not go away by counting to 10. It is covering all the vulnerable childhood feelings you avoid. Grief is the antidote to anger. Grief softens a person but anger hardens. You must learn not to fear vulnerable emotions in yourself and others. Remember there is a hurt little child inside of you that never got what he or she needed. You can receive the comfort and validation you missed as a child when you are willing to share those memories. Your spouse and kids are not the source of your childhood pain, yet you discharge a lifetime of hurt and rage upon them. It's not fair . . . just like your abuse was not fair."

As a Controller, I must:

1. Try to tie the present day pain to a past trauma from childhood. I need to turn much of my anger toward past abusers. NOTE: By this, we do not mean a literal expression of anger toward past offenders. Rather the group, therapist and spouse can hear the Controller vent to an empty chair or a therapist who is trained in role play interventions.
2. I will not use addictions but I will call my sponsor.
3. I will tell the Victim that I am getting triggered and deregulated (out of control). I will ask for a "do-over" and a time-out with a clear time fixed for the resumption of the conversation.
4. I will work on learning to grieve with my spouse because sadness for my early experiences is a missing emotion for me.
5. I will apologize and repair.

Exiting the Core Pattern Step 5: Victim detaches

Step 5: Victim: Individual action steps to exit the Core Pattern:

I will call someone who will help me stabilize (friend, sponsor).

1. If my spouse is violent, I will call 911 and press charges. With the help of others, I will prepare a secret plan to escape and find refuge and safety for me and my kids.
2. I will ask others to check in regularly and hold me accountable to my growth goals.
3. Rather than numbing out, I will keep an anxiety journal to rate my level of anxiety and record my feelings three times per day. This will help me live in reality and I will be more likely to make changes if I acknowledge my pain. I will also try to connect to grief rather than numb out.
4. If I have been drinking or using drugs, I will get help for my addiction.

Step 5: Victim: Couple action steps to exit the Core Pattern (Comfort Circle):

1. I will establish appropriate boundaries with the opportunity to reconnect if boundaries are respected. If the other person is verbally abusive, I will walk away and tell them that I will return when they stop. If they are physically abusive, I will leave the house and call 911.

Exiting the Core Pattern Step 6: Controller's remorse

At this point, the dust settles and the Controller may try to be “nice” to indirectly make amends to bring the Victim out of their despondency and detachment.

Step 6: Controller: Individual action steps (for more detail see the HWL Workbook chapter on growth goals for the Controller):

1. Don't minimize the impact of your anger. Repeat Steps 2 and 4, acknowledging others in the home were traumatized by the experience.
2. While your remorse may be sincere in the moment, nothing ever changes. The pattern has already repeated over and over.
3. Admit you need outside help. Consider how you would feel if your own parents apologized and then actually changed for the better.
4. Isolation and addictions will keep you a prisoner of your anger.

Step 6: Controller: Couple action steps to exit the Core Pattern (Comfort Circle):

1. I will repair with the children asking for an apology for my outbursts and frightening behavior. I will ask about their feelings and will seek to improve family health as opposed to avoiding the pain I inflict upon others.
2. I will look my spouse in the eye, move closer in a caring engaging manner, and ask them to tell me about their fears and feelings caused my anger both now and from the past.

Step 6: Victim:

See Victim interventions in Steps 3 and 5.

Exiting the Core Pattern Step 7: Victim believes in promised change

Step 7: Victim: Individual action steps to exit the Core Pattern.

Part of the cycle of abuse is to believe the Controller when he or she promises, "It won't happen again." How many times have you believed this only to find nothing changes? Sometimes it takes firm action on your part, even a separation, for change to take place. Nothing will change without outside help and intervention. Do you want to tolerate the intolerable for your entire life? Go back and read through this document and be the one that is willing to change.

A note from Milan & Kay:

Due to our Christian beliefs, we often speak in churches and our faith is deeply intertwined with our work. We believe one of the most important interventions to bring healing to relationships is prayer. The Christian gospel is the story of rupture, repair and restoration. God sent his Son, Jesus, to provide payment for our sin so we can enter into a relationship with a holy God, clean, forgiven and restored. The offering of this gift involved *initiation*. Jesus entered our messy, broken world with a willingness to experience our sorrow and pain. The gift of His loving presence involved *sacrifice and pain*. Jesus's death on the cross expresses the magnitude of His sacrificial love. As we accept this gift of love, we enter into a secure connection with God, becoming a member of his family, with a promise we will never be abandoned.

This serves as a model for healing our relationships. Overcoming these Core Patterns means we must *initiate* and move towards pain, not away from it, with a focus on restoration and redemption. We must be willing to *sacrifice* and embrace the *pain* of taking on our own wounds as well as the injuries of our mate learning to repair ruptures. This kind of love and commitment builds a deep trust and bond. Over time, our marriage can become our most secure connection and provide a charted path to lead others into healing, freedom and joy.

Praying as an individual and as a couple is a powerful intervention at any point around the Core Pattern as we seek to escape the pull of the destructive dance and find the freedom of secure connection. Our prayers are with you and for you on this journey.

Blessings, Milan and Kay