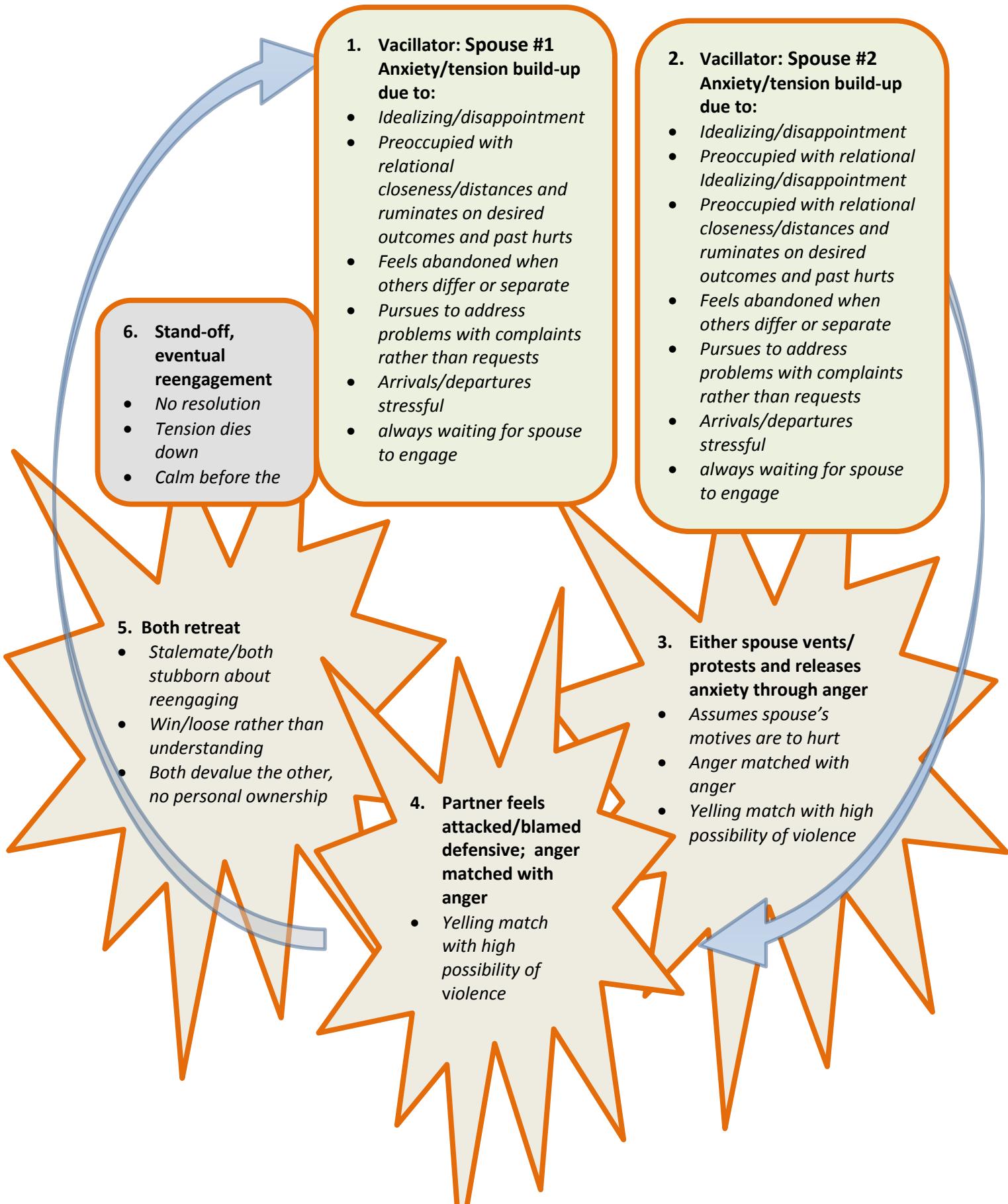


ATTACHMENT CORE PATTERN THERAPY™

VACILLATOR/VACILLATOR CORE PATTERN

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Attachment Core Pattern Therapy™ Interventions

Vacillator & Vacillator

The VACILLATOR

- I've always been especially sensitive and perceptive and can tell when others are pulling away from me.
- I want more connection than my spouse wants and always seem to be waiting for time and attention.
- I feel like no one has really understood what I need.
- I make it obvious when I'm hurt and when no one pursues me to ask what's wrong, I feel even more upset.
- I am often disappointed and sometimes I get angry when my expectations aren't met.
- I have difficulty being willing to reengage when I'm angry and when my spouse makes an effort, I feel it's too little, too late.
- I don't like to be alone but often feel resentful and lonely when my spouse is around.
- I experience internal conflict and a high level of emotional stress in relationships and often feel misunderstood.
- At times, I find myself picking a fight and I'm not sure why.
- Others have said they feel like they can never please me.
- When people hurt me long enough, I write them off.
- I tend to reflect more on how others have hurt me rather than on my own shortcomings.
- I rehearse in my head how I hope things will go and I ruminate on events when they are over.

The Initial Attraction:

Vacillators like intense connection they can FEEL and when they connect as a couple, they each desire a deep, passionate relationship. Since they both idealize, any red flags are ignored and this couple will believe they have each found their "soul mate". Lots of time and attention during initial dating confirm this conviction and the relationship will move forward, full speed ahead. Deep talks, lots of touch and affection (may include passionate sex) and spontaneous fun cause this couple to "live in the clouds." Fights may happen early on in this relationship but arguing is another form of intensity and making up is passionate and grand.

Overview of the Core Pattern:

Vacillators are sensitive and easily triggered by any hint of rejection or abandonment. Each can feel easily overlooked, misunderstood or unloved. Over time, the passionate connection and intense good feelings of the early relationship are disturbed by anger, hurt and disappointment

as “real life” sets in. Since Vacillators can swing between “all good” and “all bad” their relationship is often stormy and extremely good or bad on any given day.

Jealousy is often a problem for this couple as both are easily threatened by potential loss. Either mate can vent and listening is rare. Anger is matched with anger and fighting can be intense and ugly. The children suffer during such interchanges and are rarely asked how the fighting made them feel. Neither likes to apologize or give in, so stubborn standoffs can last a long time with fighting replaced by stony silence. Both have difficulty understanding their contribution to the problems. Rather, they blame the other for making them feel “bad” and “unhappy.” With no ownership, problems continue.

The Vacillator goes through a pattern of protest, despair and detachment over and over when their idealized hopes and dreams don’t materialize. Over time, they may give up, detach and appear to be a disconnected Avoider when, in fact, they are a Vacillator who has given up hope.

When stuck in this Core Pattern, each person feels:

Vacillator:

- My spouse hurts me and I think sometimes they do it on purpose.
- I want the passionate connection we used to have.
- When I do see my spouse try, it feels like too little, too late.
- My spouse is defensive and reactive and they never listen.
- If my spouse really loved me, they would know what I need.
- I have a love/hate relationship with my spouse.
- We both get jealous and it causes problems.
- My spouse is reactive and defensive. They expect me to listen but they never listen.

Following, we list the general individual growth goals for the Vacillator. 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 Vacillator: (see How We Love Workbook)

1. **Reflect.** Because I’ve focused on the behavior of others for such a long time, I realize that I am not used to looking at myself. As a result, my self-observation and reflection skills are lacking. With the Soul Words List as my constant companion, I will choose to spend time journaling trying to become aware of and describe the old, familiar reactive thoughts and feelings that build tension and anxiety.

2. **Look at roots.** Though painful, I will learn to connect the past to the present, to trace the history of my ruminations and obsessive thought patterns to historical origins. I will face my history of abandonment, chronic or acute, blatant or subtle.
3. **See and care for child within me.** I will have empathy for my little self who was hurt long ago. Remembering my little boy or girl is vital to the healing process. When I am triggered by others, feeling lonely or insecure, I will say to my little child, "I see you. I remember your pain and won't forget you are there."
4. **Accept reality.** My irritability and agitation at the lack of "ideal" must be addressed. If things are "ideal," then life can be pain free so idealization is a defense against pain. I will learn to say daily, "Today won't be as good as I hope." When things go wrong, I will say, "This is not as bad as I think it is." These statements will help me live in reality. When I feel things are "all bad," I will go on a "**good hunt**" looking for the positive in people or circumstances. By doing this, I am seeking middle ground versus seeing things as "all good" or "all bad."
5. **Own my triggers.** I will learn to accept my present day primary attachment figure (spouse) is inadvertently triggering an old wound sustained in my early childhood. I will empathize with the little self who was abandoned or unseen and realize his or her feelings and thoughts are still with me today. I'll remember that my feelings are real and valid but my reactivity toward my spouse is turbo-charged as childhood feelings bleed into the present.
6. **Check out assumptions.** I will be open to the fact that many of my interpretations of other's motivations and intentions are often erroneous and not based in reality. I will check out my assumptions instead of assuming they are facts.
7. **Tolerate differences.** My childhood injuries intensify my sensitivity causing me to become easily hurt and highly reactive. I will learn to accept different ideas and perspectives of my spouse as a part of life rather than a personal rejection.
8. **Be curious.** I will accept the truth that others will not feel or think the same way I do. I will choose to be curious and ask about differing opinions and values and allow others to influence my perspective.
9. **Accept mistakes.** I will be more tolerant of both my mistakes and the mistakes of others. If my mistakes felt shameful as a child, I will strive to embrace the truth that "brokenness" is an adult reality. I will accept an integrated view of myself and others and resist the temptation toward the extremes of idealizing and devaluing. Everyone, everything, every day is good and bad.
10. **Be vulnerable.** I will use my anger as a red flag that I missed identifying and communicating more vulnerable feelings that preceded my anger. I will use the Soul Words List to identify these feelings instead of using anger as a defense against feeling.
11. **Ask directly.** When I need something, I will ask directly for it rather than expecting my spouse to "get it" and read my mind. I will let go of the ideal belief that if they loved me, they would just "know". I will make requests instead of complaints.
12. **Get input.** If I decide to take on a new challenge or direction, I will invite my family members to join me, and if they choose not to do so, I will not insist they comply. I will

not force a family direction unless my spouse is in full agreement and is not yielding under pressure and duress. I will remember new projects are often a way of coping with my own restless anxiety. I will discover and share my anxieties.

13. **Arrivals and departures:** I will see my idealism contributes to my expectations around arrivals and departures. At arrivals, I hope for ideal connection. Departures can trigger feelings of anxiety and abandonment.
14. **Rehearsing and reviewing:** I will become aware of my tendency to rehearse future events and review past events. This contributes to my anxiety. I will ask for help or distract myself rather than ruminate about hurts and problems.

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 Vacillator/Vacillator Diagram:

The diagram on page 1 explains the circular Core Pattern. Each step of the Core Pattern is represented by Steps 1 through 6. What is happening in each step is explained under the section, **What's going on?** Then, **individual action steps and couple action steps** are listed that either Vacillator spouse would have to do to pull out, 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 Step 1 for both spouses and address 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.

The Vacillator/Vacillator Core Pattern is one of the most loud, augmentative, intense, and unpredictable Core Patterns. If the couple has kids, they suffer the most. The Vacillator uses anger as their primary defense. The reason for the Vacillator's anger is most often due to a lack of connection, disappointments or feelings unseen or misunderstood. The Vacillator uses anger to block the grief of painful childhood experiences. Both spouses must commit to understanding and grieving childhood wounds so they no longer have to defend with anger.

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

Step 1 and 2: Each Vacillator has a buildup of ANXIETY and TENSION. This tension builds toward anger.

1. **Vacillator: Spouse #1 or 2**
Anxiety/tension build-up
due to:
 - *Idealizing/disappointment*
 - *Preoccupied with relational closeness /distances and ruminates on desired outcomes and past hurts*
 - *Feels abandoned when others differ or separate*
 - *Pursues to address problems with complaints rather than requests*
 - *Arrivals/departures/waiting for spouse to engage*

What's going on?

1. ***Idealizing / disappointment***

- In attachment research, Vacillators are referred to as preoccupied or ambivalent. They suffer from an almost constant state of internal **agitation, anxiety** and **tension**. This began long ago when, as a child, they experienced inconsistent connection, subtle or blatant abandonment, and feelings of being misunderstood, unseen or unwanted. Since childhood, their mind has been preoccupied with figuring out “What’s going on?”, “What did they mean by that?”, “When will someone see me?” or “Does anyone know I feel alone and scared?”
- With this emotional backdrop, they enter adulthood continuing to ruminate and obsess about relationships, hoping for ideal connection with fairy tale endings. Fearing rejection, the Vacillator is hyper-sensitive to closeness and distance. Just as in childhood, they continue to interpret the motives and intentions of others. We call this “reviewing and rehearsing,” internal dialogues of rehearsing idealized hopes and reviewing current and past hurts and disappointments caused by people and institutions.
- Silently, they try to make sense of the behaviors of others, coming to conclusions that are assumptions, not facts. Without checking out assumptions, they frequently attribute incorrect motives and intentions to the behaviors of others.

2. Preoccupied with relational closeness/distances and ruminates on desired outcomes and past hurts

- As a child, Vacillators consciously or unconsciously fantasized about the future, an ideal world where love is constant. They maintain the quest for intense connection until the realities of adult romantic relationships bring the idealized future to a screeching halt.
- Instead of *embracing* the reality of a broken world and lowering idealism to realistic expectations, they blame the person(s) who “spoiled” their ideal picture and believe the spouse is the problem. They struggle to accept the reality that the world is broken and real life falls short of ideal so they are chronically frustrated by the gap between ideal and real.
- Vacillators are also called “ambivalent” and “preoccupied” in the attachment research. They seem happy and close one moment and sullen and withdrawn the next. They become reactive very quickly and are prone to angry outbursts which relieve the internal tension, agitation and anxiety that builds as they ruminate over disappointments in people’s behavior. When angry or hurt, they move from an idealized view to an “all bad” devaluation of others attacking and withdrawing from those around them.
- With low levels of self-awareness, they are unable to put into words the vulnerable feelings of fear and anxiety they feel when they are disappointed by others.

3. Feels abandoned when others differ or separate

- Perceptions of abandonment, ever so slight, will trigger the Vacillator. This includes differing opinions, values, and thoughts, feeling states, levels of concern, likes, dislikes, hopes and dreams.
- Practically speaking, they don’t allow others to individuate and differentiate. To the Vacillator, a different view is experienced as personal rejection.

4. Pursues to address problems with complaints rather than requests

- Vacillators complain and blame when others make them feel “bad”. They want their spouse to “mind read” and instinctively know how to make them feel good, wanted, understood and valued. They have an aversion to asking directly for what they want and need.
- Conversely, they are not open to any hint of criticism or opposition toward themselves. As a result, their spouses view them as the kings and queens of double standards.

5. Arrivals/departures/waiting for spouse to engage

- Relational departures and arrivals are fraught with internal conflict. “Will you miss me/think about me?” Vacillators will often pick a fight to make the departure easier.
- When the reunion approaches, the Vacillator anticipates a euphoric connection and if the reception of the other person is lackluster, the Vacillator is very disappointed.

NOTE: The preoccupied or ambivalent attachment style (Vacillator) exists on a continuum of mild, moderate to extreme. Serotonin elevating antidepressants are often helpful in reducing anxiety, intrusive thoughts and ruminations (symptoms of Generalized Anxiety Disorder).

Step 3: The Vacillator's release of anxiety through anger:



What's going on? One spouse will release tension and anxiety by getting angry. Either spouse may be the one "venting" and will each be in this role at different times.

1. The agitation and build-up of anxiety and tension explodes on the nearest lightning rod which is the primary attachment figure (spouse) or sometimes the kids. The attack may include accusations, assumptions of motives, judgments about intentions as well as a historical recounting of all other offenses that resemble the current transgression.
2. The Vacillator's emotional mood shifts are sudden, strong and powerful. Often the downward swing catches others off guard. When kids interrupt the Vacillator's ruminations, the Vacillator may discharge anger on the kids.

3. Sometimes, the emotional “discharge” may include a sudden and intense commitment to a cause, crusade, fad, or new direction. These new directions provide distraction and relief from the misery of the Vacillator’s anxious ruminating and obsessing.
4. These causes, crusades and fads are attempts to reach toward a more ideal state of existence. Common examples: “I’m going to get in shape and run the Boston Marathon!”, “We’re going to adopt or become foster parents!”, “I’m putting our kids in a private school!”, “I’m going to home school the kids!” and “Our family is going to become vegetarian!” (NOTE: We are not in opposition to any of these choices.)
5. When opposed, the Vacillator will say, “I have been thinking about this for a long time and I’ve decided what is best. To oppose or disagree with my view is to betray and abandon me.”
6. The spouse may go along with the idea because they don’t want to oppose and endure the fight that will ensue or the spouse may strongly resist with their own intense opinion.
7. When family members, especially the spouse, lose enthusiasm for the cause, the Vacillator with the new cause feels betrayed and abandoned. If their spouse remains opposed, the other Vacillator parent may pull the children into the “new direction” triangulating with the kids against the spouse.
8. After venting, the Vacillator usually feels better because the underlying anxiety has been released. Other people in the family feel worse, especially the kids. The Vacillator is often unaware of the destructiveness of their anger on family members and rarely apologizes or repairs after venting.

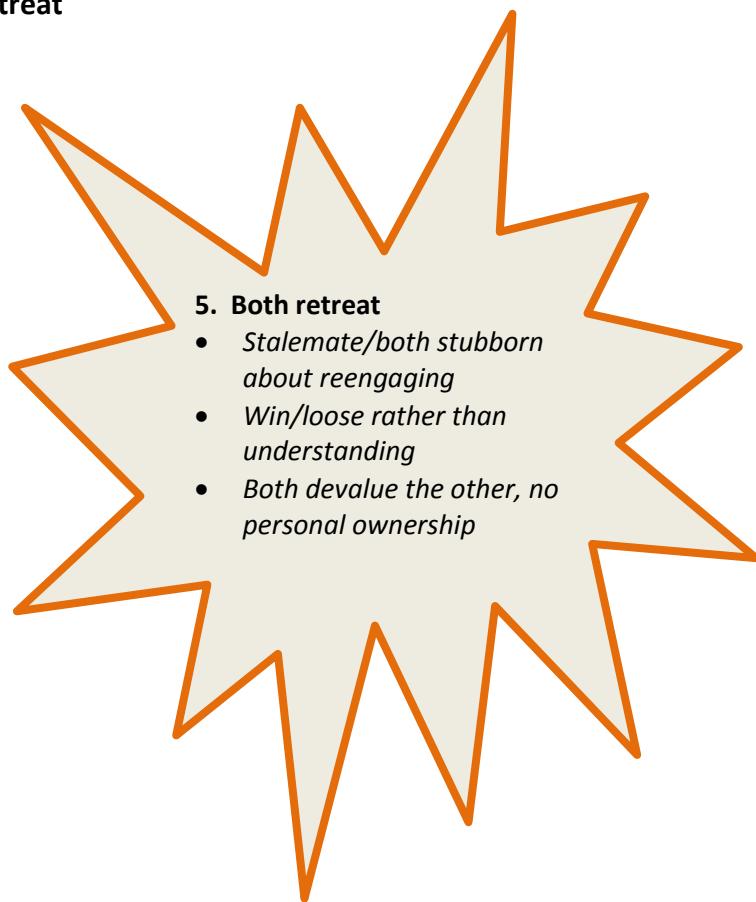
Step 4: Anger is matched with anger:



What's going on? Anger is matched with anger; when one spouse vents, the other feels unfairly attacked and will defend, matching anger with anger.

1. Since both spouses are reactive and easily feel misunderstood, both will have a difficult time calmly listening. Reactivity breeds reactivity and this couple may quickly get off the topic recounting past hurts and hurling insults and blame at one another.
2. Unchecked, these fights can be intense, ugly and sometimes violent as the arguing heats up. Alcohol or drug abuse will increase the likelihood of violence. Since Vacillators more easily see the faults of others than their own weaknesses, neither will want to take ownership for the difficulties but will blame one another.
3. Neither spouse seems to notice the effects on other family members and apologies and repairs are uncommon.

Step 5: Both retreat



What's going on? Without intervention, at this point in the Core Pattern, there is most often a stalemate where both spouses devalue one another. They each retreat, pout and stubbornly wait for the other to reengage. This is viewed as a win/lose battle with the spouse giving in first viewed as the "loser". There are seldom any apologies or satisfying resolutions. Rather, it

is forgotten until the next battle. Sometimes a sexual encounter is used to “make up” without talking through the issues.

Step 6: Stand-off and eventual re-engagement:

7. **Stand-off, eventual reengagement**
 - *No resolution*
 - *Tension dies down*
 - *Calm before the next storm*
 - *Repeat of pattern*

What's going on? After a time of distancing, pouting or stonewalling, one spouse decides to engage and life goes on. Tension will build (Step 1) and the pattern will repeat again. Since anger is an intense form of connection and Vacillators want passionate connection, there may be little motivation to really change. Intensity in confused with intimacy and safe, calm connection is rarely experienced.

Growth Steps to Exit the Core Pattern:

Now that you understand the pattern, how do you get out of it? In this section, we give each Vacillator 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.

Exiting the Core Pattern Step 1 and 2: Buildup of anxiety leading to anger

Step 1 and 2: Vacillators: Action steps to exit the Core Pattern:

We all have a behavior we act out when we are stressed. Learn to become aware of each other's stress response and the actions and behaviors that indicate stress is building toward anger. When you reunite with your spouse at the end of the day, take turns sharing three feelings about your day with one another. Use the Soul Words List. This will help you monitor rising tension.

1. Vacillators are often unaware of the build-up of anxiety that precedes anger. Keeping a daily log of feelings using the Soul Words List can increase awareness of a couples' rising tension. The goal is to identify and ask for help with feelings underneath the anger before the venting occurs. The five areas that are common sources of anxiety (listed in Step 1) are important areas to focus on underlying feelings and needs. Look for what caused the build-up of tension and anxiety

(described in Box 1) and identify what feelings preceded the anger, such as hurt, fear, shame and embarrassment. (Use the Soul Words List).

- a. Did I idealize something? Were my expectations too high? Am I angry because I am disappointed?
- b. Am I preoccupied about something? Have I been rehearsing and reviewing and is my preoccupation resulting in a short fuse? Did someone interrupt my preoccupation? If so, can I share the anxiety this preoccupation is causing?
- c. Do I feel abandoned? Did I feel this same feeling as a child? Is my spouse getting the anger that partly belongs to someone in my past?
- d. Did I make a complaint that could have been a request?
- e. Am I triggered by an arrival or departure? These are areas of sensitivity for me. Is that the trigger?
2. Ask your spouse to engage in the Comfort Circle and listen to the hurts as opposed to waiting for the tension to build and then attacking the person who triggered the feelings. "Honey, I am feeling anxious and I don't want it to turn into anger. Can we do the Comfort Circle so I can sort out my feelings?"
3. Your reactivity and flare-ups further alienate those you love, sabotaging the very closeness you desire.
4. When you feel dark, (everything is bad) go on a "good hunt" to look for the good within yourself and others. Ask your spouse to help you see the good. This is very important in learning to integrate good and bad which will in turn regulate your mood. You are happy when it's ideal and good. You are angry when someone spoils the ideal picture and that person becomes "all bad". Start each day with, "Today won't be as good as I think it will." When something goes wrong, "This is not as bad as I think it is."
5. Be direct and ask for what you want instead of hoping your spouse "will just know."
6. Be patient with your spouse, realizing that they struggle too. They may not be as skilled as you would like them to be as a listener. Give them a chance to improve over time. Appreciate and praise their efforts. Patience does not mean you should tolerate abuse. Always call 911 when abuse takes place.
7. Be curious and explore your spouse's history to understand and to have compassion for the root of their Vacillator tendencies.

Examples for Vacillator: I would like to do the Comfort Circle because:

- "I really got triggered this morning when we were talking to the neighbor. She did not seem to acknowledge me and I felt invisible and shameful."
- "I would love to share a hope or dream with you that I have been thinking about. I am open to your opinions and feedback."
- "I feel my anxiety building and want help with my tension before it turns to anger."
- "I feel myself shifting to a dark place. Can you help me process my feelings?"
- "I've been ruminating and obsessing about something all day. "I need to go around the Comfort Circle. When is a good time for you?"

Notice these are all "I" statements, not "you" statements.

Exiting the Core Pattern Step 3: Vacillator Vents

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

This Core Pattern can begin with either Vacillator discharging the internal tension in a bout of anger. The suggestions listed in Steps 1 and 2 are very important to stop the blow ups. Once a blow up happens, the goal is not to match reactivity with reactivity.

When venting takes place, the sooner you stop the better. Stop! Take a time out by saying, "I am too angry to continue. Let me calm down and then we can try a do-over."

1. Own your anger. Communication with harsh tones and mean, unkind words is not OK. It will never get you what you hope for. If you have an outburst, take a time out and breathe until you are calm. Then go back to **each family member** within ear shot and say: "I am sorry for my anger. I would like a "do-over". I am trying to learn better ways. Learn to be to be really brave and ask each family member, "How did my anger make you feel?"
2. Initiate a "do-over" and try again using the Comfort Circle as a format. Remember to focus on feelings under the anger.
3. Use the listener guide for the Comfort Circle (freebie on the website) and learn to stay in the listener role discussing only one topic. After one spouse has been listened to, switch roles.
4. In addition:
 - Formulate thoughts into a statement: "I feel _____ and I need _____."
 - Be aware of complaining and make a request rather than a complaint.

Exiting the Core Pattern Step 4: Anger is matched with more anger

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

If your spouse's anger is lighting your fuse, stop!! Take a time out. Nothing good happens from this point onward. Repeat the time out phrase: "I am too angry. I will ask for a do-over when I calm down." OR "I want to listen but I need to have a calm conversation. Let's take a time out and then use the feeling words list to get beneath the anger."

1. If you need to, call a sponsor and ask them to talk you down. Review your childhood triggers that fuel your reactivity.

2. Remember you are not as little and helpless as you were as a child. You have resources and choices now that you did not have when you were growing up.
3. Don't use addictions to numb out. Use the Soul Words List and begin journaling to describe the hurt, vulnerable feelings underneath the rage.
4. Remember you had these feelings before you ever met your spouse. What happened to you growing up that gave you these same angry feelings? How much of your reactivity is about the past versus the present?

When you attempt a do-over:

After a time out to calm down, invite your spouse to do the Comfort Circle and give them the Soul Words List. Ask them to share what vulnerable feeling might have been going on in Step 1 before they got angry. Attempt to readdress the anxieties and ruminations that started in Step 1.

1. I will apologize for anger I expressed in hurtful ways and ask my spouse or kids how my words made them feel. I will own my hurtful behavior and seek to repair.
2. Instead of debating the facts and defending against the accusations, empathize and lean into the Vacillator with compassion. "Wow! Something hurts. You must have gotten triggered; tell me about it. Tell me what's been going on in your thoughts and emotions. How long have you been thinking about all of this?"
3. Don't fix. Ask the Vacillator to share the memories that caused their childhood pain and try to comfort them.
4. After listening to your spouse, use the Comfort Circle to explain what memories are triggered in you when they get reactive and angry. "When you rage at me, it keeps me from being close to you which is what you really crave and it reminds me of a time in my childhood when...."
5. Journal or reflect using the Soul Words List to determine what vulnerable feelings you experience when your reactivity gets ignited. "Why am I so defensive? What am I afraid of?"

Exiting the Core Pattern Step 5: Retreating/ruminating

Step 5: Vacillators: Action steps to exit the Core Pattern:

Usually, the argument ends and each spouse retreats into their corner and fumes, silently pouts or uses addictive behavior to get rid of the painful feelings. As reactivity subsides, there is a period of calm but there is rarely any resolution and the whole cycle will repeat as tension builds once again. This is when a lot of ruminating occurs where you review the fight, justify your anger and make your spouse all bad. If you spent as much time being grateful and expressing appreciation to your spouse as reviewing their faults, you might have a surprising turn of events. Go on a "good hunt" and review all the ways you appreciate your spouse. I can hear you saying "No way!" Pick your pain. Growth is difficult.

1. Don't wait for your spouse to apologize. Beat them to it and ask for a "do-over" to go around the Comfort Circle. Use the listener guide for the Comfort Circle (freebie on the website) to identify root issues that drive this reactivity. What happened in childhood (before you ever met one another) that fuels the need for control, anger and fear of abandonment?
2. Understanding your spouse's history will help you have compassion for the underlying cause of their reactivity. Learn how your mate suffered in childhood and seek to comfort the wounds from difficult childhood experiences.
3. Remember grief is the best antidote to anger. Grief is the missing emotion for both Vacillator spouses so it is imperative that you each learn to grieve the difficult experiences you endured before you met one another.

Exiting the Core Pattern Step 6: Standoff and eventual reengagement

At some point one, your spouse will reengage but there is rarely resolution. The entire cycle repeats over and over. Use the ideas above (1-3) to change this destructive dance. It will require a lot of do-overs as these reactive patterns are rooted in childhood learning. You can do it!

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