

Owning Your Reactions to Your Partner

This exercise will help you stop the blame game and start letting go of some of your negative reactions toward your partner and work to replace them with loving thoughts and behaviors. When you focus only on the negative, you are missing out on some of the reasons you got in relationship in the first place. Further, if you are always criticizing your partner, your partner will always be on the defensive or on the attack. This exercise will help you get more specific about the positive and negative traits and start to create a more self-reinforcing positive climate. What you pay attention to is what you get!

- Think of all the negative words you use to describe your partner and write them in the left column.
 Include words you have used in a heated situation and words you have thought but never spoken out loud.
- 2) Next identify a specific example of a behavior that demonstrates that negative word and write it in the right column.

Negative Trait	Related Behavior

- 3) Look through your list and circle the trait that bothers you the most.
- 4) On the back, now list at least as many or more positive traits and related behaviors.
- 5) Now go back to your list of negative traits. Are there any of these traits that you have as well? Be honest with yourself. Put a question mark next to the ones you think may describe an aspect of yourself as well.
- 6) Go through each negative trait on your list. For each one, close your eyes and visualize your partner doing that behavior. When you have it clearly in your mind, release the image and bring to mind a positive behavior your partner has done that you do like. Hold the positive image in your mind and note how you feel. Do this for all the negative traits on your list.
- 7) Share with your partner what you have learned about yourself. This is not a time to share what you don't like about your partner or point out negative traits, only what you have learned about yourself. Practice mirroring back what you heard from your partner and check for accuracy.

(continued on next page)

Positive Trait	Related Behavior

- 8) In the coming weeks, whenever you have a negative thought about something your partner has done, practice releasing it and replacing it with a positive trait you have also observed recently.
- 9) Practice pointing out and communicating ONLY the positive things you see your partner doing while releasing the negative.
- 10) If there is a negative behavior coming up repeatedly that is hard for you to release, you may place a request for this behavior to change using the Behavior Change Request Dialogue.

Adapted from Getting the Love You Want by Harville Hendrix, Ph.D. (2008).