



8 Aversive Strategies

"Couple Skills, Making Your Relationship Work"
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1. **Discounting.** The message to your partner is that his or her needs are invalid. They don't have the importance, the magnitude, or the legitimacy of your needs. The idea is to shame him or her into acquiescence. "For God's sake, Honey, you've been home looking at TV all day. Why do you want me to do the bills?"
2. **Withdrawal/abandonment.** The message here is "Do what I want or I'm leaving." The threat of abandonment is so frightening that a partner may be willing to give up a great deal to avoid it. "I don't think this is working, Ted. If you can't pick me up when my car bombs out, I don't think I have any business being in this relationship."
3. **Threats.** The strategy is explicitly to promise harm to your partner. "I've had enough of your high and mighty stuff. No job is good enough for you. You can take this one. Bill, or I'm going to stop covering up for your sorry career with your family."
4. **Blame.** The method here is to make the need the other partner's fault. "If you could say something real about yourself, I wouldn't have to live in this emotional void. Look, I'm asking, what's going on with you? Knock, Knock. What's happening in there?"
5. **Belittling/denigrating.** Here the strategy is make our partner feel foolish and inappropriate for having a need different from yours. "Why do you want to go to the lake all the time? All you ever do is get sinus headaches when we are there."
6. **Guilt tripping.** This strategy conveys the message that the partner is a moral failure for not supporting what you want. He/she is unfair, inconsiderate or just plain wrong for having conflict desire. "I've spent the whole day keeping this house going, and you can't with that couch. Your main task in life is to keep your feet up."
7. **Derailing.** You respond to your partner's need by switching the conversational focus. The covert message is that his or her desires aren't worth talking about. "I know, I know, you want more time off from the kids. We're both going crazy. Listen, I've got only two nights to prepare that lecture for the Hornblowers' Society. Got some heavy work ahead in the library."
8. **Taking away.** This strategy is to withdraw some form of support, pleasure, or reinforcement from the other person. You take away something our partner finds nurturing. "I'm not really in the mood, hiking getting boring from me." Said coldly after the partner was reluctant to spend money on a new PC.



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