



# Communicating Through Conflict Webinar

*Jonathan Swinton, PhD, LMFT, MedFT*

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## About Dr. Swinton

- Extension Assistant Professor, Utah State University Extension
- Relationship expert
- Masters degree and a PhD in marriage and family therapy
- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and Certified Medical Family Therapist
- 15 years of clinical experience counseling thousands of couples



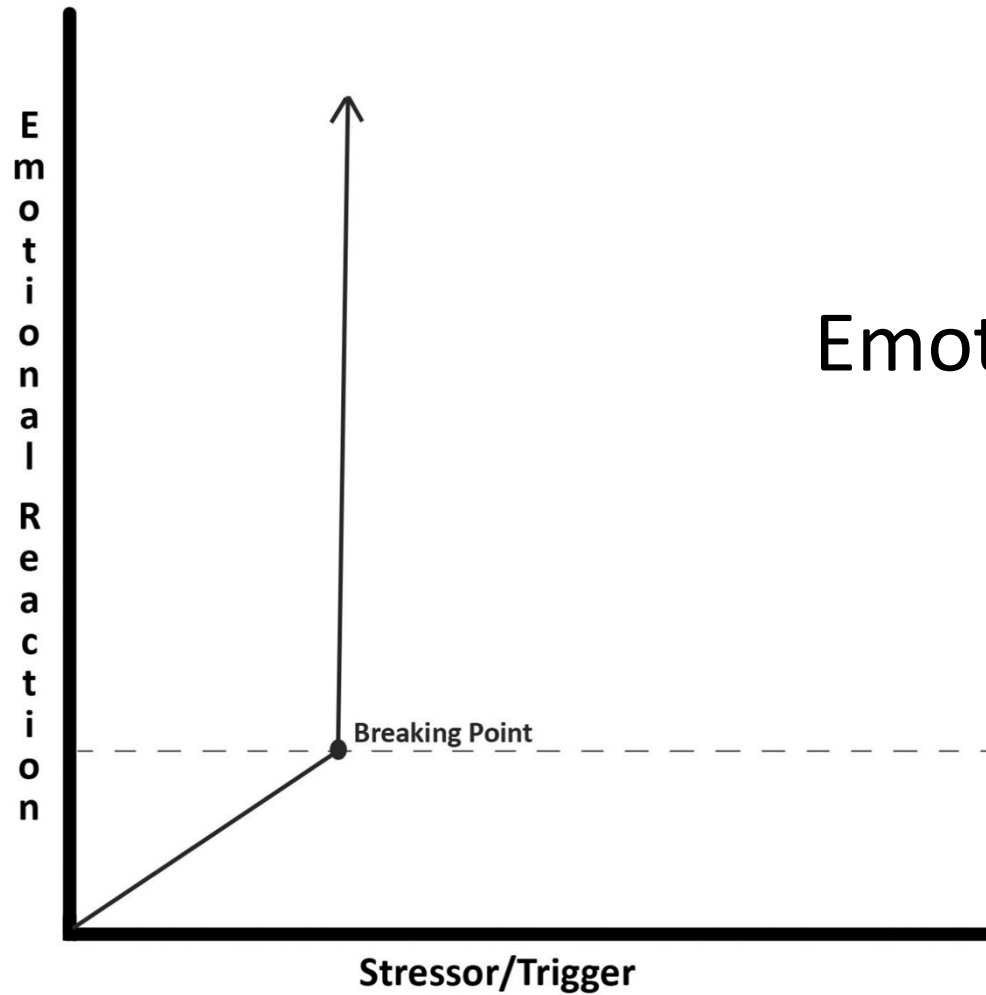
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## About Webinar

1. How to stay calm
2. Conflict behaviors to avoid
3. How to manage conflict
4. Q&A
5. Brief survey

# Emotional Flooding





# Wise Mind

Reasonable Mind



Emotional Mind



## Understanding Emotional Flooding

- Triggers
- Cues
  - Physiological Cues
  - Behavioral Cues
  - Verbal Cues
- Calming Strategies

# Emotional Time Out

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- Signal
- Safe Zone
- What will you do?
- How long?
- How will you try differently?



# Four Pitfalls of Communication

1. Criticism
2. Contempt
3. Defensiveness
4. Stonewalling





## 1. Criticism

- When there is a personal attack or blame attached, it is critical.
- Examples (which ones are critical?):
  - *“When are you going to act like an adult and learn to put your socks in the laundry basket?”*
  - *“I am frustrated that the socks are on the floor again.”*
  - *“You need to stop yelling at me!”*
  - *“I don’t appreciate feeling disrespected.”*

## 2. Contempt

- Unique because it is less about the observable behavior, and more about the underlying feelings such as:
  - Resentment, Superiority, Blood boiling
- Behavioral manifestation examples:
  - Mean / Disrespectful
  - Sarcastic
  - Eye rolling
  - Poor body language

### 3. Defensiveness

- When a person feels accused, attacked or the need to clarify something, human tendency is to respond defensively with something like:
  - “That’s not what I said”
  - “I didn’t mean it that way”
- Defensive responses are so problematic for relationships because:
  - They are selfishly motivated – to save face
  - They send the message that we are more interested in not looking bad or not being to blame than we are in listening.

## 4. Stonewalling

- Stonewalling is essentially conflict avoidance or shutting down.
- Typically happens for one of two reasons:
  - Uncomfortable and don't want to face the issue
  - Use conflict avoidance as a weapon
- Problems will accumulate if they are stonewalled – potentially leading to more feelings of contempt and a blowup later on.
- 85% of the time stonewalling is by a male.

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## Harsh Startup vs. Soft Startup

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- Showing blame
- Making accusations
- Being critical
- Being sarcastic
- Harsh tones



Should these be the goal?

- Always agree with each other.
- Convince the other of your intentions.
- NO!

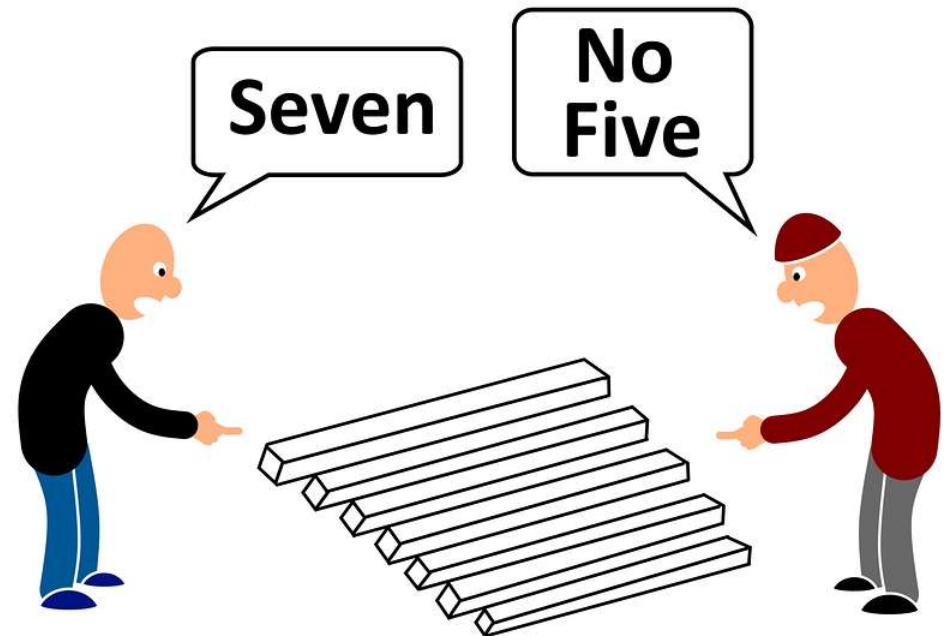
GOAL:

- To understand your partner's perceptions to your partner's satisfaction.

Goal of Healthy  
Communication

# Multidirectional Partiality

- Seek to understand and empathize with differing perspectives
- Not one and only truth in the situation
- Validate differing perspectives (sitting in the mud)



IT'S **NOT**  
ABOUT  
THE  
NAIL





# **W**e not me

## **VULNERABLE**


- How you feel
- Why the feeling is meaningful
- How you want to feel

## **VALIDATE**

- Listen to understand
- Validate with care

## 100 Root Emotion Words

1	Abandoned	21	Degraded	41	Flawed	61	Inferior	81	Resentful
2	Abused	22	Dejected	42	Flustered	62	Intimidated	82	Ridiculed
3	Adrift	23	Demeaned	43	Forsaken	63	Invalid	83	Shamed
4	Afraid	24	Demoralized	44	Frail	64	Judged	84	Shocked
5	Alienated	25	Depressed	45	Frightened	65	Lonely	85	Sorrowful
6	Ambivalent	26	Despondent	46	Grieved	66	Lost	86	Threatened
7	Ashamed	27	Destroyed	47	Guilty	67	Misled	87	Tiny
8	Awkward	28	Detached	48	Helpless	68	Mistreated	88	Trapped
9	Belittled	29	Devalued	49	Hesitant	69	Misunderstood	89	Troubled
10	Betrayed	30	Devastated	50	Hopeless	70	Neglected	90	Uncomfortable
11	Blemished	31	Disappointed	51	Humiliated	71	Nervous	91	Uneasy
12	Blue	32	Discouraged	52	Hurt	72	Oppressed	92	Unimportant
13	Broken	33	Discredited	53	Impaired	73	Overwhelmed	93	Unsure
14	Cheapened	34	Disgraced	54	Imperfect	74	Powerless	94	Used
15	Confused	35	Distant	55	Inadequate	75	Punished	95	Useless
16	Crippled	36	Distracted	56	Incapable	76	Puzzled	96	Weak
17	Crushed	37	Downhearted	57	Incompetent	77	Regretful	97	Wicked
18	Damaged	38	Empty	58	Incomplete	78	Rejected	98	Withdrawn
19	Defeated	39	Excluded	59	Ineffective	79	Reluctant	99	Worried
20	Defensive	40	Exposed	60	Inept	80	Remorseful	100	Worthless



*“You cannot be influential  
unless you accept  
influence”*

John Gottman

# Invitation for Solutions

- Collaborative
- Explore all potential options
- Realistic
- Meet the needs of the other

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# Webinar Evaluation



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# Q & A

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- Jonathan Swinton, PhD, LMFT, MedFT
- [jonathan.swinton@usu.edu](mailto:jonathan.swinton@usu.edu)
- (435) 893-0470
- [www.drswinton.com](http://www.drswinton.com)

Contact Me