

Patterns in Love Relationships

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Almost every couple has one or two places in the relationship where they get into trouble with each other. When this happens to you, you have the same fight over and over again, and each time you hurt each other in the same ways. Of course, the content of the fight may be somewhat different each time, but in essence, it is the same fight. This is because you have hit on a place where your interpersonal patterns trigger each other in a negative way.

This article is based on an older version of the Pattern System, which is a personality system I have developed for mapping your psyche and facilitating personal growth. It focuses on those places where your patterns conflict with your partner's patterns, leading to gridlock and pain. It also shows the way these patterns can change so your love relationship can flourish.

The Pattern System involves seven dimensions of interpersonal relating--Power, Intimacy, Support, Connecting, Conflict, Self-Esteem, and Trust. Each of these clarifies subtle factors that are operating when you interact with your partner and determine how satisfying and successful your relationship is.

Healthy Capacities and Patterns

In each of these dimensions, there is a pair of complementary **healthy capacities**. For example, in the Power Dimension these are the Assertive and Cooperative Capacities. For healthy functioning in a given dimension, you need to have both capacities; that's why they are considered complementary. You need to be able to assert your own desires and also to cooperate with your partner. Some people will be more developed in their Assertiveness and some will be more developed in the ability to Cooperate.

Power Dimension

Pattern1	Pattern2
<i>Assertive</i>	<i>Cooperative</i>

Ideally you would be strong in both healthy capacities. Most of us, however, are weak on one side and problematic on the other. In addition to healthy Cooperation and Assertiveness, there are problematic versions of Cooperation and Assertiveness which lead to difficulties in relating to others. I call these problematic ways of relating **patterns** because of their rigid and repetitive nature. A pattern represents a style of relating where you over-react or respond in a way that causes problems for your relationship. You react in a rigid, extreme, or distorted way that isn't warranted by the situation. For example a problematic version of being Cooperative is being Compliant, always giving in to your partner. When you are responding from a healthy capacity, you tend to respond in a flexible, creative way that is appropriate to each situation. To the extent that you are Cooperative, you are capable of standing up for yourself and disagreeing with your partner when that is appropriate even though you usually Cooperate. However, to the extent that you are Compliant, you will agree with your partner automatically without considering what you want.

When you have a distorted or extreme version of one capacity, you are weak in the complementary capacity. For example, if you have the *Compliant* Pattern just mentioned, it means you are weak in Assertiveness. Similarly, if you are weak in Cooperation and can only be assertive, you might have an extreme version of Assertiveness called *Controlling* pattern, where you always need to have things your way. We can show these relationships as follows:

Power Dimension

Pattern1	Capacity1	Capacity2	Pattern2
Controlling	Assertive	Cooperative	Compliant

The Controlling pattern is placed to the outside of Assertive because it is a problematic version of Assertiveness. The Compliant Pattern is placed to the outside of Cooperative because it is a problematic form of Cooperation. To be considered truly Assertive you must also be capable of being Cooperative; otherwise your Assertiveness will really be Control. And vice versa, to be considered truly Cooperative, you must also be capable of being Assertive; otherwise your Cooperation is really Compliance.

Therefore each capacity is related to both patterns in its row. The one to its outside is an extreme or distorted version of it, and the one of the other side of the chart reflects a weakness in it. For example, in the above chart, Controlling is an extreme version of Assertive and the Compliant Pattern reflects a lack of Assertiveness.

When you are working on changing a problematic pattern, you need to develop the complementary healthy pattern, the one of the other side of the chart. Thus, looking at the previous chart, a Controlling person needs to develop Cooperation in order to grow, and a Compliant person needs to develop Assertiveness.

These patterns and capacities are not personality types, since a given person will have more than one pattern or healthy capacity. In fact, each person will have at least one pattern or capacity in each dimension. Having a system with dimensions makes it easier to discover what your patterns and capacities are. Taking each dimension in turn, you can reflect on what your behavior is like in that dimension and assign it a pattern or capacity.

The Power Dimension

The Power Dimension is actually a little more complicated than I have indicated so far because there is more than one pattern that can be an extreme or distorted version of Assertiveness and more than one that can be an extreme of Cooperation. The full dimension is shown as follows:

Power Dimension

Pattern1	Capacity1	Capacity2	Pattern2
Controlling	<i>Assertive</i>	<i>Cooperative</i>	Compliant
Defiant			Passive-aggressive
Deceptive			Victim

Initiating and Responding. And to fully show how patterns interact in love relationships, we need to expand this table even further, to include rows for initiating and responding:

Power Dimension

	Pattern1	Capacity1	Capacity2	Pattern2
Initiating	Controlling	<i>Assertive</i>	<i>Cooperative</i>	Compliant
Responding	Defiant Deceptive	<i>Autonomous</i>	<i>Cooperative</i>	Compliant Passive-aggressive Victim

The initiating row shows how people exercise power on their own initiative (or don't). The responding row shows how people respond to someone who is being Assertive or Controlling. The healthy responses in that row involve being Autonomous and Cooperative. Here we have added a new healthy capacity--*Autonomy*. This

means maintaining your individuality and sense of self while still cooperating with your partner as much as possible. The distorted reactions to someone exercising power fall into two categories. On the left side are extreme or distorted versions of being Autonomous--the Defiant Pattern, where you rebel excessively, and the Deceptive Pattern, where you get power in an underhanded or devious way. On the right side are extreme or distorted versions of being Cooperative--the Compliant, Passive-Aggressive, and Victim Patterns. The Passive-Aggressive Pattern involves consciously trying to please your partner but unconsciously taking actions that thwart them. The Victim Pattern involves complaining and feeling helpless in an unconscious attempt to elicit care-taking.

Here are fuller descriptions of these capacities and patterns.

Healthy Capacities in the Power Dimension

Assertive	You can exert power to get what you want, protect yourself, or make things go a certain way.
Cooperative	You can be receptive and work well with your partner.
Autonomous	You can maintain your sense of self, opinions, feelings, and desires in the face of assertion by your partner.

Patterns in the Power Dimension

Pattern	Behavior	Conscious Statement	Unconscious Motivation
Controlling	Need to have things your way, competitive, demanding	I'm in charge. Let's do it my way.	If I control you, then I won't be harmed or controlled.
Defiant	Rebel against power and authority, oppositional, rigid boundaries	Don't tell me what to do. Don't invade my space.	If I allow you to be in charge, I will be harmed.
Deceptive	Consciously deceive partner, secretive, manipulative, lacking ethics	I will get what I want any way I can.	There is no stability or meaning to life. I'm afraid to ask for what I want directly.
Compliant	Try to be what partner wants, pleasing, merging	I am a nice person.	You are in charge of my life.
Passive-Aggressive	Try to please partner and fail.	I want to please you but I can't do it.	I am angry at being controlled, and I will fail, to defeat you and preserve my autonomy.
Victim	Don't take responsibility for your life, complaining, helpless.	It's your fault that I'm unhappy. My situation is impossible.	I will force you to take care of me by blaming you and being helpless.

In the descriptions of behavior for each pattern, I have included a number of possibilities. Not everyone with a given pattern will engage in all these behaviors. And people can have varying degrees of each pattern. You might have a light version of the pattern that doesn't include the more extreme behaviors.

Notice that there is a conscious statement for each pattern and an unconscious motivation. Many people are completely unaware of the fact that they are acting from a pattern. They don't think they are being controlling, just taking care of themselves. They don't think they are being defiant, just defending themselves against being dominated. And so on. One of the most valuable things about learning this system is becoming conscious of your patterns.

Conflicts in Love Relationships

There are three different kinds of conflicts that show up in love relationships. I call these obvious mismatches, problematic attractions, and fear activations. We will discuss the first two now and fear activations at the end of this article.

Obvious Mismatches in Love Relationships

An obvious mismatch in a love relationship is a conflict between the initiating and responding patterns on the left side in any dimension. This is where two patterns obviously do not work well together. In the Power Dimension, there will likely be a major conflict between someone with a Controlling Pattern and a partner with a Defiant Pattern because each one will trigger the other's pattern. If your partner is Controlling and you have a Defiant Pattern, you will get really angry at their attempts to have things their way, and they will get angry at your rebelliousness. You will have power struggles a lot of the time. Your Controlling will make your Defiant partner even more Defiant. And their Defiance will trigger you to be even more Controlling.

Obvious Mismatches in the Power Dimension

	Pattern1	Capacity1	Capacity2	Pattern2
Initiating	CONTROLLING	<i>Assertive</i>	<i>Cooperative</i>	Compliant
Responding	DEFIANT Deceptive	<i>Autonomous</i>	<i>Cooperative</i>	Compliant Passive-Aggressive Victim

However, it is only when **both** of you are acting from a pattern rather than a healthy capacity that serious mismatches occur. If you have the Autonomous Capacity rather than a Defiant Pattern, it means that you are more flexible and less extreme in your responses to your partner's Controlling behavior. You are capable of more Cooperation and you don't get so triggered by their being Controlling. There is less likelihood of a major conflict. Similarly if your partner is Assertive but not Controlling, then even if you have a Defiant Pattern, you won't get triggered so strongly because your partner will be asserting themselves in a more Cooperative way. And your partner won't get so upset when you do get Defiant because they don't need to be in Control.

Therefore if either you or your partner can move away from your patterns and develop healthy capacities, your conflicts will diminish. When trying to determine whether you have a pattern or a healthy capacity in a certain dimension, remember that it isn't a black and white question. You may be Assertive some of the time and Controlling at other times. You may be mostly Assertive (which means you are capable of Cooperation) with a mild degree of Controlling behavior, or you might be extremely Controlling with very little ability to Cooperate.

You may be wondering why any two people with such an obvious mismatch would ever fall in love and get into a relationship. If this were the only dimension of love relationships, they probably wouldn't. However, there are other dimensions, and two people might have great compatibility along a number of dimensions and still have an obvious mismatch in one. So they may fall in love based on the dimensions of compatibility and then run into trouble when the conflictual dimension comes to the fore.

Looking at the chart above, you can see that there will also be a conflict between the Controlling and Deceptive Patterns, but in the interests of keeping this article short, we won't discuss that here.

Problematic Attractions in Love Relationships

The second kind of conflict occurs when there is a problematic attraction; two people are attracted to each other at first because of how their patterns seem to match well, how they complement each other. But over time, because they are patterns rather than healthy capacities, the attraction becomes a nightmare. When the hidden problem with your partner (and yourself) becomes more apparent, then the very quality that drew you to your partner becomes the cause for serious conflict in the relationship.

Problematic attractions happen between patterns in the left part of the initiating row and those in the right part of the responding row. In the Power Dimension, this means an attraction between a Controlling pattern and a Compliant pattern. If you have a Controlling Pattern, you may be very happy with a Compliant person at first

because he or she seems to want everything that you want; he or she seems to think and feel the same as you do. However, over time things may change. You begin to realize that your partner doesn't really agree with you but is just going along. You may begin to yearn for someone with some backbone, who has some opinions and desires of their own. You may get annoyed at your partner for being so Compliant with other people.

Problematic Attractions in the Power Dimension

	Pattern1	Capacity1	Capacity2	Pattern2
Initiating	CONTROLLING	<i>Assertive</i>	<i>Cooperative</i>	Compliant
Responding	Defiant Deceptive	<i>Autonomous</i>	<i>Cooperative</i>	COMPLIANT Passive-Aggressive Victim

If you have a Compliant Pattern, you may be very happy with a Controlling person at first because they are powerful and willing to take charge and make things happen. They will reach out to you; they will plan things for you to do together. You don't have to assert yourself or think for yourself. However, over time you may get tired of always doing what your partner wants. You may resent always accepting their opinions about things. You may venture out with some thoughts or desires of your own only to have your partner dismiss them. You may suppress your resentment because you aren't supposed to create conflict, but it will eat away at you, leaving you cranky or depressed or distant from your partner. You may begin to get Passive-Aggressive or Deceptive as a way of having some autonomy. You might even get Defiant at times. And your partner will not be happy with that change of behavior.

The reason problematic attractions go bad is because they are based on patterns rather than healthy capacities. Two people who are Assertive and Cooperative will also be attracted to each other, but they will be more flexible and less extreme in their behavior so they won't get into trouble. The Cooperative person will assert herself sometimes and the Assertive person will be receptive to this. The Assertive person will want his partner to be herself and not just go along and she will be able to. Even if only one partner has a healthy capacity, things will probably be OK. For example, if your partner is Controlling and you are Cooperative, you may find ways to assert yourself that don't feel like you are going against them. And if your partner is Compliant but you are Assertive, you may find ways to help your partner learn to assert themselves and you won't be threatened by the results.

Looking at the above chart, you can see that there will also be a problematic attraction between the Controlling Pattern and the Passive-Aggressive Pattern, and also between the Controlling and Victim Patterns. However, these are beyond the scope of this article. To keep this article short, we have explored just some of the problems in the Power Dimension.

These same relationships hold in all the dimensions. Let's look at each in turn, briefly mentioning the conflicts between patterns.

The Intimacy Dimension

This dimension deals with how you and your partner are close to each other and how you deal with the boundaries between you. The healthy goal is to be loving and Intimate while remaining Autonomous and Considerate of your partner's boundaries. One distorted version of Intimacy is the Entitled Pattern, where you treat your partner as an extension of yourself and can't see them as a separate person. A healthy response to your partner acting Entitled is to be Self-Protective of your boundaries. A distorted version of Intimacy on the right side of the chart is the Isolated pattern, where you avoid closeness or commitment. There are also two distorted responses in this dimension—the Defiant and Compliant Patterns which we have already seen in the Power Dimension. Here, however, they have to do with having overly rigid boundaries or its opposite, merging with your partner.

Intimacy Dimension

	Pattern1	Capacity1	Capacity2	Pattern2
Initiating	Entitled	Intimate	Autonomous, Considerate	Isolated
Responding	Defiant	Self-Protective	Intimate	Compliant

Healthy Capacities in the Intimacy Dimension

Intimate	You can be close and loving and committed in your relationship
Autonomous	You can maintain your sense of self, opinions, feelings, and desires in the face of assertion by your partner.
Considerate	You are respectful of your partner's needs, feelings, and limits
Self-protective	You can protect your sense of self and set limits to maintain your boundaries

Patterns in the Intimacy Dimension

Pattern	Behavior	Conscious Statement	Unconscious Motivation
Entitled	You expect the relationship to be built around you; self-absorbed, lacking empathy, controlling, intrusive, exploitative, impulsive	My desires are important.	You are an extension of me. If you give to me, I must be valuable.
Isolated	Avoid closeness, contact, or commitment; distant, cold, withdrawn	I don't need you.	If I am close to you, I will be harmed, abandoned, or controlled.
Defiant	Fight against perceived intrusion or merging, rigid boundaries	Don't invade my space. Don't try to take me over.	I must not allow myself to be intruded on or engulfed.
Compliant	Try to be like your partner. Merge with your partner.	We are connected.	I need to be part of you. I need to feel that we are the same.

The Defiant and Compliant Patterns operate in both this dimension of the Power Dimension. Here I have written their descriptions to reflect how they operate with respect to boundaries in the Intimacy Dimension.

In this dimension, there will be an obvious conflict between the Entitled and Defiant Patterns and a problematic attraction between the Entitled and Compliant Patterns.

Conflicts in the Intimacy Dimension

	Pattern1	Capacity1	Capacity2	Pattern2
Initiating	ENTITLED	Intimate	Autonomous, Considerate	Isolated
Responding	DEFIANT	Self-Protective	Intimate	COMPLIANT

The Support Dimension

This dimension has to do with how you feel your needs, ask for help, and express vulnerability, and how you care for and support your partner. And vice versa. The healthy goal is to be able to show need and Vulnerability when you feel it and also to be Self-Supporting. A distorted version of being Vulnerable is the Needy Pattern, where your needs are excessive because you can't support yourself. Another distorted version is the Victim Pattern where you unconsciously try to get your needs met by being helpless and blaming. There are also two distorted versions of being Self-Supporting—the Need-Denying Pattern, where you avoid feeling any needs, and the Isolated Pattern where you also avoid closeness. The healthy response to your partner's needs is to be Caring for your partner while also being Self-Oriented--oriented toward your own needs. There are two defended responses to your partner's needs, the Isolated Pattern and the Entitled Pattern, where you are so self-absorbed that you can't see your partner's needs. There are also two overly solicitous responses to your

partner's needs—the Codependent Pattern, where your whole reason for existing is to take care of your partner, and the Compliant Pattern, where you feel you must comply with anything your partner wants.

Support Dimension

	Pattern1	Capacity1	Capacity2	Pattern2
Need (Initiating)	Needy, Victim	Vulnerable	Self-Supporting	Isolated, Need-Denying
Caring (Responding)	Isolated, Entitled	Self-Oriented	Caring	Codependent, Compliant

Healthy Capacities in the Support Dimension

Vulnerable	Open emotionally to pain and need, willing to show this to your partner and ask for what you need
Self-Supporting	Able to care for yourself and support yourself
Caring	Able to provide care and support for your partner, wanting the best for them, compassionate, nurturing
Self-oriented	Oriented toward your own desires and needs so you don't always give precedence to your partner's

Patterns in the Support Dimension

Pattern	Behavior	Conscious Statement	Unconscious Motivation
Needy	Need much caring, over-react to loss, dependent	No one loves me or cares for me. I need you.	I am unlovable. I should be dependent.
Victim	Don't take responsibility for your life, complaining, helpless.	It's your fault that I'm unhappy. My situation is impossible.	I will force you to take care of me by blaming you and being helpless.
Need-Denying	Defend against feeling or showing needs or vulnerability	I don't need very much from you. I can take care of myself. I have it together	My needs are bad. It is dangerous to be vulnerable.
Isolated	Avoid closeness, contact, or need; distant, cold, withdrawn	I don't need you.	If I am close to you, I will be harmed, abandoned, or controlled.
Codependent	Care for your partner before yourself	I care about you.	My only value comes from caring for others.
Compliant	Try to give your partner whatever they need or ask for.	I care about you.	I must give you what you need so you won't leave me.
Entitled	Self-absorbed, lacking empathy or caring, only focused on yourself	My desires are important.	You are an extension of me so your needs don't exist.

This chart also contains a number of patterns that we have already seen, but here they are described as they show up in the Support Dimension.

In this dimension, there will be obvious conflicts between the Needy Pattern and the Isolated or Entitled Patterns because people with those patterns aren't very likely to provide the caring that the Needy person so desperately needs. The same is true between the Victim Pattern and the Isolated and Entitled Patterns. On the other hand, there will be a problematic attraction between the Needy Pattern and the Codependent Pattern and also between the Needy Pattern and the Compliant Pattern if the Compliant person is compliant about trying to meet needs. And the same is true for the Victim Pattern. There may be a problematic attraction between the Victim Pattern and the Codependent or Compliant Patterns.

Conflicts in the Support Dimension

	Pattern1	Capacity1	Capacity2	Pattern2
Need (Initiating)	NEEDY, VICTIM	Vulnerable	Self-supporting	Isolated, need-denying
Caring (Responding)	ISOLATED, ENTITLED	Self-oriented	Caring	CODEPENDENT, COMPLIANT

The Connecting Dimension

This dimension has to do with the way you reach out to your partner and how they respond, and vice versa. The healthy goal is to be able to reach out Affectionately in an Authentic way that isn't coming from disguised neediness. The distorted version of this is the Charming Pattern, where you try to charm your partner in a manipulative way to get them to admire you or meet your needs without having to ask directly for anything. The opposite distortion is the Insecure Pattern, where you feel undesirable and so you can't reach out or where you feel easily hurt. The healthy response to your partner's reaching out is to be generally Responsive to them while being Perceptive and Autonomous, so you aren't sucked in by any manipulation. The Isolated Pattern is an unresponsive distortion, and there are two overly responsive distortions. One is the Idealizing Pattern, where you put your partner on a pedestal and think everything they do is wonderful, and the other is our old friend the Compliant Pattern.

Connecting Dimension

	Pattern1	Capacity1	Capacity2	Pattern2
Reaching Out (Initiating)	Charming	Affectionate	Authentic	Insecure
Responding	Isolated	Perceptive, Autonomous	Responsive	Idealizing, Compliant

Healthy Capacities in the Connecting Dimension

Affectionate	You can express affection and reach out to your partner freely and lovingly
Authentic	Your expression of yourself and reaching out to your partner is genuine; it doesn't derive excessively from a hidden feeling of need
Perceptive	You can see your partner clearly, including their underlying needs and ways they are manipulative
Autonomous	You can maintain your sense of self, so that when your partner reaches out to you, you are not overly influenced by their needs
Responsive	You are generally responsive to your partner when they reach out to you for connection

Patterns in the Connecting Dimension

Pattern	Behavior	Conscious Statement	Unconscious Motivation
Charming	Seductive, entertaining, charismatic, flattering, histrionic	Look at me. Aren't I terrific?	If I charm people, I can get what I want without risking feeling deficient.
Insecure	Fear of self-expression or reaching out, easily hurt, self-effacing	You don't see me or respond to me.	I am not interesting or desirable.
Isolated	Avoid closeness, contact, or need; distant, cold, withdrawn	I don't need you.	If I am close to you, I will be harmed, abandoned, or controlled.
Idealizing	Admire your partner excessively, may devalue yourself	You are wonderful.	I am helpless/worthless, so I will try to live through your power and value.
Compliant	Always respond to your partner without regard for yourself	I like you.	I must give you what you need so you won't leave me.

In this dimension, there will be an obvious mismatch between the Charming Pattern and the Isolated Pattern because the Isolated partner won't provide the response needed by the Charming partner. There will be a problematic attraction between the Charming Pattern and the Idealizing or Compliant Patterns because there will be admiration based on manipulation and unrealistic responses.

	Pattern1	Capacity1	Capacity2	Pattern2
Reaching Out (Initiating)	CHARMING	Affectionate	Authentic	Insecure
Responding	ISOLATED	Perceptive, Autonomous	Responsive	IDEALIZING, COMPLIANT

The Conflict Dimension

This dimension has to do with how you and your partner deal with conflict. Can you bring up issues that are bothering you in the relationship and how do you bring them up? How do you respond when your partner brings up difficult issues? The healthy goal is to be able to Challenge your partner when you need to while being generally Accepting of them. One distorted version of this is being Angry or Judgmental. The opposite distortion is the Avoidant Pattern, where you never bring up conflicts and you try to avoid the ones your partner initiates. A healthy response to your partner's Challenging or Judging you is to be willing to explore yourself (Self-Exploring) and take Responsibility for your shortcomings while protecting yourself from attacks. A distortion of Self-Protection is the Defensive Pattern where you always have to defend yourself and can't listen to your partner. Another distortion is the Victim Pattern where you are always the aggrieved party. A third is the Deceptive Pattern where you try to deceive your partner so you won't get confronted by them. On the opposite side, the Self-Judging Pattern is a distortion where you take all the responsibility yourself for any problems in the relationship and are very hard on yourself.

The Conflict Dimension

	Pattern1	Capacity1	Capacity2	Pattern2
Challenge (Initiating)	Angry, Judgmental	Challenging	Accepting	Avoidant
Responding	Victim, Deceptive, Defensive	Self-Protective	Self-Exploring, Responsible	Self-Judging

Healthy Capacities in the Conflict Dimension

Challenging	You can confront your partner about things you don't like or want changed
Accepting	You maintain positive feelings toward your partner even when they do something that bothers you
Self-Protective	You can protect yourself from attacks and you don't take on more than your share of responsibility for problems in the relationship
Self-Exploring	You can explore yourself and be open to your partner's negative feelings; non-defensive, constructively self-critical
Responsible	You can own your part in problems in the relationship and take responsibility for changes that are needed

Patterns in the Conflict Dimension

Pattern	Behavior	Conscious Statement	Unconscious Motivation
Angry	Become angry inappropriately, rageful, vengeful, violent	I'm angry at you.	I must not let myself feel vulnerable or deficient. I am holding anger from the past.
Judgmental	Critical, blaming, condescending, moralizing	It's your fault. There's something wrong with you.	By judging you, I can control you, feel safe, or feel good about myself.
Avoidant	Avoid dealing with conflicts; withdraw when your partner challenges	There isn't any problem.	I am frightened that in a conflict I will be harmed or abandoned.
Victim	Don't take responsibility for your part in relationship problems.	It's your fault that you're unhappy. I can't do anything.	I will force you to take care of me by blaming you and being helpless.
Deceptive	Consciously deceive partner,	I don't know how it happened.	I will get out of being blamed

	secretive, manipulative, lacking ethics		any way I can.
Defensive	Defend against any criticism.	It's not my fault. There is nothing wrong with me.	I must defend against my underlying feeling of shame.
Self-Judging	Feel bad about yourself, ashamed, guilty, easily hurt, self-attacking.	I am bad/worthless. It's my fault.	same

In this dimension, the most obvious conflict is between the Judgmental and Defensive Patterns. There will also be obvious conflicts between the Judgmental Pattern and the Victim or Deceptive Pattern. And the same applies to the Angry Pattern. There also may be a problematic attraction between the Judgmental or Angry Patterns and the Self-Judging Pattern.

Conflicts in the Conflict Dimension

	Pattern1	Capacity1	Capacity2	Pattern2
Challenge (Initiating)	ANGRY, JUDGMENTAL	Challenging	Accepting	Avoidant
Responding	VICTIM, DECEPTIVE, DEFENSIVE	Self-Protective	Self-Exploring, Responsible	SELF-JUDGING

The Self-Esteem Dimension

Self-esteem is a crucial factor that affects all relationships. How good do you feel about yourself and how real is that feeling? How do you respond to and support your partner's feeling good about themselves? The healthy goal is to genuinely value yourself (Self-Valuing) while also being able to look at yourself realistically (Self-Exploring). A distorted version of this is the Proudful Pattern where you are excessively attached to a positive image of yourself or you even exaggerate your good qualities, and therefore you can't see yourself clearly. The opposite distortion is the Self-Judging Pattern where all you can see is your faults. A healthy response to your partner is to Appreciate their good qualities while still being able to see their problems (Perceptive). One distortion of this is the Judgmental Pattern where your general attitude toward your partner is non-accepting and harsh. The opposite distortion is the Idealizing Pattern where you exaggerate your partner's good qualities and are blind to their shortcomings.

Self-Esteem Dimension

	Pattern1	Capacity1	Capacity2	Pattern2
Self-Esteem (initiating)	Proudful	Self-Valuing	Self-Exploring	Self-judging
Perception (responding)	Judgmental	Perceptive	Appreciative	Idealizing

Healthy Capacities in the Self-Esteem Dimension

Self-Valuing	You feel good about yourself intrinsically, without having to earn it
Self-Exploring	You can explore yourself; non-defensive, constructively self-critical
Perceptive	You can see your partner clearly, including their underlying issues and shortcomings
Appreciative	You take joy in your partner's positive qualities, successes, and potential, and you express this

Patterns in the Self-Esteem Dimension

Pattern	Behavior	Conscious Statement	Unconscious Motivation
Prideful	Overly invested in performance or personal qualities, arrogant, grandiose	I am special & better than others.	If I impress you and feel superior, I won't feel so deficient.
Self-Judging	Feels bad about self, ashamed, moralistic, easily hurt.	I am bad/worthless. It's my fault.	same
Judgmental	Critical, blaming, condescending, moralizing	It's your fault. There's something wrong with you.	By judging you, I can control you, feel safe, or feel good about myself.
Idealizing	Admire your partner excessively, may devalue yourself	You are wonderful.	I am helpless/worthless, so I will try to live through your power and value.

In this dimension, there will be an obvious mismatch between the Prideful and Judgmental Patterns and a problematic attraction between the Prideful and Idealizing Patterns.

Conflicts in the Self-Esteem Dimension

	Pattern1	Capacity1	Capacity2	Pattern2
Self-Esteem (initiating)	PRIDEFUL	Self-valuing	Self-exploring	Self-judging
Perception (responding)	JUDGMENTAL	Perceptive	Appreciative	IDEALIZING

The Trust Dimension

The Trust Dimension has to do with how much you trust your partner when they are reaching out to you, showing need, being affectionate, or feeling good about themselves. And vice versa. The healthy goal is to be generally Trusting of your partner while still being able to see them clearly (Perceptive). A distorted version of this is the Suspicious Pattern where it is hard to trust your partner. The opposite distortion is the Gullible Pattern where you are too trusting and get manipulated. Since this dimension can involve responses to various of the previous dimensions, I list here only the responding row.

Trust Dimension

	Pattern1	Capacity1	Capacity2	Pattern2
Trust (Responding)	Suspicious	Perceptive	Trusting	Gullible

Healthy Capacities in the Trust Dimension

Trusting	You trust your partner not to be harmful unless there is evidence to the contrary
Perceptive	You can see your partner clearly, including their underlying issues and ways they are manipulative

Patterns in the Trust Dimension

Pattern	Behavior	Conscious Statement	Unconscious Motivation
Suspicious	Expect to be harmed, paranoid, provocative, withdrawn	You don't trust you.	If I trust you, I will be harmed.
Gullible	Ignore your partner's shortcomings, get fooled by them.	You are just what I want.	I can't afford to see you clearly. I might be harmed or have to leave you.

In this dimension the most obvious mismatch is between the Deceptive Pattern and the Suspicious Pattern. (I am referring back to previous dimensions for the initiating row.) There may also be obvious mismatches between the Entitled, Needy, Victim, Charming, or Prideful Patterns and the Suspicious Pattern. The most likely problematic attraction is between the Deceptive Pattern and the Gullible Pattern. There can also be problematic attractions between the Victim, Charming, or Prideful Patterns and the Gullible Pattern.

Fear Activations

The third kind of conflict in relationships happens when one person's pattern activates the other person's underlying fears. To understand this, we must look deeper than behavior patterns.

Whenever you have a pattern rather than a healthy capacity, this is because of underlying psychological issues. Frequently these take the forms of fears. For example, if you have a Controlling Pattern, you may be afraid of being controlled by your partner, so you need to stay in control to prevent that from happening. This is usually unconscious. However, you might have a Controlling Pattern for a different reason. You might be afraid of being abandoned, so you try to control your partner to keep them from leaving you. Knowing your pattern doesn't automatically tell you what the underlying fear is. You must explore yourself to discover what it is.

A relationship conflict will happen when a pattern of your partner's activates one of your underlying fears. Or vice versa. So if you are frightened of being abandoned and your partner has an Avoidant Pattern, then whenever their avoidant behavior is triggered you are likely to feel abandoned.

The table below shows the most common underlying fears and the patterns that can trigger them.

Your Fear	Your Partner's Pattern that May Trigger You
Abandonment, Rejection	Isolated, Defiant, Angry, Judgmental, Insecure, Defensive, Suspicious
Deficiency, Shame	Judgmental, Prideful, Victim, Defensive
Domination	Controlling, Entitled
Exploitation	Deceptive, Entitled, Charming
Violation, Engulfment	Entitled, Needy, Codependent
Betrayal	Deceptive, Passive-Aggressive
Attack	Angry

As I discussed before, it takes both of you to create a serious relationship problem. Suppose your partner has one of the patterns listed on the right. If you aren't particularly afraid of what that pattern represents, it won't lead to serious trouble. For example, if your partner has an Entitled Pattern, but you aren't afraid of being dominated, violated, or engulfed, then the two of you aren't likely to get in hot water. You may not like your partner's Entitled Pattern, but you will be able to handle it.

Conversely, suppose you have one of the fears listed on the left. If your partner doesn't have a pattern that triggers it, you won't get into serious problems. For example, if you are afraid of feeling deficient, but your partner doesn't have a Judgmental, Prideful, Victim, or Defensive Pattern, your fears aren't likely to be activated to such an extent that the two of you get stuck. You may still feel deficient in the relationship or

defend against feeling that way, but it isn't as likely to lead to an unresolvable conflict.

Conclusion

As you consider these ideas, look for your own patterns, not just your partner's. Ultimately each of you must take responsibility for changing your own patterns to make the relationship work.

Individual psychotherapy or coaching can be helpful in changing your patterns and working through your underlying fears. And couples therapy or relationship coaching can be very useful in identifying and resolving conflicts in your relationship.