

Week 15

What Is Gridlock, And How Do We Escape It?

Gridlock often looks something like this: We have the same fight, over and over again. It feels awful, every single time. Affection, warmth, and humor go up in smoke! The 4 Horsemen of the Apocalypse (criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling) show up in a big way.

Both spouses are entrenched in their positions with no hope of compromise or resolution. They're concerned that if they give an inch, their counterpart will take a mile. Each feels hurt and frustrated every time the issue is discussed. The marriage becomes increasingly polarized. Both spouses feel rejected by the other. They become more and more disconnected and eventually shut down completely. It is as if a 12-foot prison wall topped by razor wire has been constructed between them.

In this scenario, what is missing? To be brief, listening, vulnerability, collaboration, and understanding aren't present. What is at the root of gridlock? The answer is: unfulfilled dreams!

Think about it. If you enjoy the outdoors but marry a couch potato, the dream of outdoor adventure with your spouse will probably never be realized. If you are a pet lover but your spouse has significant allergies to pet fur, another dream has probably evaporated.

The good news is that 87% of the time, even couples in the most entrenched gridlock can achieve a major breakthrough using a specific conflict blueprint. Stay tuned as we work our way toward those interventions!

Next week: Top Ten Myths About Conflict