Love is Easy when you use the
3 EASY LOVE Laws

How to “See through” Your Spouse and Not Get Hooked

Summary: You possess the richness of EASY LOVE once you “see through” the coping pattern of your spouse or partner.

The problem:

You tend to react to your spouse’s way of coping. The 8 coping patterns I list below have a great capacity to trigger your fears, loneliness, frustration, distance and possibly conflict.

The 8 patterns listed below are ways of coping with the internal tension and anxiety. Your spouse may cope with this internal reservoir of stress and tension by defending, attacking, rationalizing, withdrawing, throwing a fit, getting smug, trying to fix it, etc.

These patterns are surface behaviors and generalized ways of thinking and seeing the world and relationships that get in the way or preclude the making of intimacy. These patterns lead to a stagnant marriage or relationship, at best, in which the two of you never truly experience the freedom and joy of knowing or being known.

As well, the cycle of reactivity and negativity becomes entrenched, predictable and more intense over time, making it increasingly difficult to manage different aspects of marital, familial and vocational life.

Keys about coping patterns:

1. Your spouse’s coping pattern was formulated long before s/he met you.
2. Your spouse’s temperament, familial modeling, family rules, social experiences, family environment and even body type and mental capacities all contributed to them choosing a pattern that seemed to best fit and work in terms of creating what at the time seemed like emotional safety.
3. You spouse took the coping pattern along with him/her and refined it over time. The coping pattern is unconsciously used and deeply engrained.
4. The coping pattern seemed to work well in the formative years but outlived its usefulness.
5. The coping pattern keeps recycling and becomes more intense and more pronounced often when relational and life issues seem most intense.

6. At one level your spouse “hates” this pattern and wants out. But that desire may not be overtly present.
7. Your spouse’s coping pattern means that his/her life is lived on the surface. S/he wants more but is not sure how to extricate self from the pattern and see “beneath” it.
8. Your spouse is much more than his/her coping pattern.

Purpose of this checklist:

Read through the 8 different coping patterns and note which one most closely fits your spouse’s pattern.

As you identify this pattern, realize that s/he chose that pattern before you were in the picture.

Image him/her using that pattern in the formative years.

Think: This is his/her problem and dilemma, not mine!

Think: I wonder what lies beneath this pattern. I wonder who s/he truly is.

Reflect on the times and places in which the pattern seemed most evident.

Note your feelings before and after reading the checklist and identifying the particular pattern.

Note how you react with less intensity when s/he now expresses the pattern.

Realize that there might be overlap in the patterns.

Don’t take the checklist too seriously. The checklist is merely a tool to make distinctions and expand your awareness. EASY LOVE does not fit into a box or category.

Conclusion:

This checklist and exercise will help you:

"See through" your spouse. I believe "seeing through" is another way of accepting and genuinely forgiving. It removes the sting of resentment. His/her intent is positive, but living out that intent falls short for him/her, as it does for all of us!

The checklist helps you make finer and finer distinctions. Awareness enhances your personal power and capacity to love and give. You will be able to communicate more powerfully.

You will feel calmer. Your tension will subside.

You will be able to more effectively charge neutral (a powerful skill or state of being I describe elsewhere.)

You will place your spouse in a new frame, see and experience him/her differently.

Remember, in being less reactive you are changing the rules and patterns of the marriage or relationship. Be aware that your spouse will notice. Your spouse may be curious, mildly disturbed or intensify the old patterns to get you back to what was predictable and familiar.

Instructions: Read through the Checklist of the 8 Major Coping Patterns and note which apply.

Coping Pattern #1: I like being alone.

As the words indicate, this person copes by maintaining distance. Often there is no edge or hostility to this pattern, just a consistent desire to be left alone.

Characteristics

1. Tends to show very little feeling and lacks expressiveness.
2. Nothing seems to bother him/her. Is complacent.
3. Is not overly concerned about appearance. Drabness may characterize dress.
4. Seems rather lethargic, quiet and is fairly uncommunicative.

5. Holds back and is reticent to address issues or problems.
6. Often has little awareness of own feelings or feelings of another.
7. Usually very reflective and introverted and may to others seem rather “strange.”
8. Portrays being aloof, reserved and uncaring.

9. May come from family with indifferent parents or where communication was confusing
10. The natural coping pattern is to maintain emotional distance from others and his/her inner self.
11. May increasingly isolate self over time or as anxiety or perceived threatening situations emerge.

Coping Pattern #2: Leave me alone.

There is more “edge” to the coping pattern. Underlying hostility and mistrust is a theme. This person wants to actively avoid perceived threatening circumstances. S/he tends to alienate.

Characteristics:

1. This person may dress in a rather odd or brash manner.

2. One may be confused or taken aback by some behaviors.
3. Communication may seem rambling and incoherent at times.
4. This person typically is shy, ill-at-ease around others.
5. This person guards self, may be secretive and suspicious of others' motives.
6. Themes of being rejected, unwanted and betrayed may lurk.
7. This person may be self-conscious and hold back from interactions.
8. A theme of distrust dominates this coping pattern.
9. This person may be hyper alert, making painful interpretations where none exist.

10. This person often had disapproving and rejecting parents
11. And, felt alienated in his/her peer groups growing up.
12. Unfortunately, how s/he copes with the fear of rejection fuels that behavior in others.

Coping Pattern #3: I Can't Do It

The "I Can't Do It" coping patterns exhibits a strong sense of inadequacy. Submitting to others and being compliant are mechanisms to further cope.

Characteristics:

1. This person may have a disheveled appearance and look.
2. Actions are sluggish and often careful and deliberate.
3. S/he may talk quietly and often with great difficulty.

4. This person often puts others before self; placates and attempts to please others.
5. Others may experience him/her as “clingy.”
6. A lack of drive and ambition may be present.
7. This person often thinks of self as inferior, unworthy and maybe pitiful.
8. This person thinks of others as friendly and helpful.
9. And thinks of self as responsible and obligated to help.
10. Pollyanna-like thinking and naiveté may exist.
11. This person may have been overprotected by parents.
12. Abdicates responsibility and looks for others to help
13. Cries of “I Can’t do it” provokes exasperation from others.

Coping Pattern #4: Enjoy my Temper Tantrum

The personal need system with “Enjoy my Temper Tantrum” is extremely strong. This person attaches quickly and lets go almost as quickly. This is the outgoing and seductive person.

Characteristics:

1. The person’s appearance may change consistently.
2. You observe impetuous almost frantic behavior. Always on the go.
3. Speaks fast, verbose, often articulate and sometime boisterous.
4. Tends to be an exhibitionist and demonstrative.
5. Like a leaf blowing in the wind. Not sure what you will get next

6. Untrustworthy. Difficult to “count on” this person.
7. Can be charming, affectionate and enthusiastic.
8. Seen as superficial, insincere and shallow.
9. Often easily stimulated and lustful.
10. Flirtatious and often manipulative.
11. May “play the role” to win approval of others.
12. Lack of consistent structure, rules and rewards in family of origin.
13. Is always looking for that next avenue of approval.

Coping Pattern #5: I Love Me

This is most often referred to as the narcissistic personality. The person with this coping pattern presents an admirable image; however, it is marked with exploitative tendencies.

Characteristics:

1. This person appears bold and sometimes showy.
2. S/he will sweep you off your feet in an uninhibited and unreserved manner.
3. S/he talks a great talk; is often overenthusiastic and can be overbearing.
4. Can be called a snob, condescending and has delusions of grandeur.
5. Can appear to others to be very able, competent, attractive and distinguished.
6. Has a huge ego and can be pompous.
7. Expects others to be admiring, respectful and envious.
8. Sees self as superior, successful and competitive.

9. Often an only child or overvalued and overindulged by parents.
10. May turn it back on you. Projects deficiencies onto others.
11. Lack of self controls may lead to reality distortion.
12. Lives in dread of failure and/or humiliation.

Coping Pattern #6: Let's Fight

This pattern contains a large ego as well, but more aggression and hostility is exhibited.

Characteristics:

1. This person gets in the first punch, anticipating you will throw a punch.
2. Arrogant, domineering, knows s/he is right, malicious and can be cruel.

3. Watch out! Can be surly and sullen.
4. Acts in assaultive, uncontrolled and abrupt manner.
5. Language can be caustic, abusive and threatening.
6. Sees others as fearful, resentful and hostile.
7. Sees self as mocking, derisive and critical.
8. Appears to be energetic, self-reliant and enterprising.
9. Others see overbearing, opinionated and insensitive.
10. Parental hostility with disorganized and chaotic family life.
11. Projects his hostility onto others: It’s your fault.
12. Picks a fight when there is no reason to fight.
13. Rejects affection and empathetic approaches.

Coping Pattern #7: I'm in Control

This coping pattern attempts to control the inner turmoil by controlling self, others and the world around.

Characteristics:

1. May appear modest, reserved and proper.
2. His/her actions are usually deliberate and sometimes repetitive.
3. Speech patterns may be blocked and labored, attempting to utter the correct words.
4. This person is conscientious, polite and often defers to another.
5. This person tends to be legalistic; there is a right and wrong way.

6. Rituals and habit take on importance not shared by others.
7. You often can “count on” this person who takes responsibility seriously.
8. May exude tension, perfectionist tendencies and be quite serious.
9. May see others as strict, demanding and punitive.
10. Sees self as bound to duty and as moralistic.
11. Parents may have emphasized punishment and elicited obedience through guilt.
12. Rigidity and control may leave little room for personal growth.

Coping Pattern #8: You S.O.B./Bitch

Whereas the “Let’s Fight” pattern is a consistent aggression, “You S.O.B./Bitch” pattern is marked by explosions of negativity.

Characteristics:

1. May appear to be nervous and frequently distraught.
2. Acts usually in a restless and fretful manner.
3. May be nagging, impatient and shaky in speech patterns.
4. Is very negative: petty, stubborn, spiteful and can provoke conflict.
5. Feels very misunderstood and unappreciated.
6. Can become disillusioned and stick tightly to the negativistic approach.
7. Sees others as impatient, erratic and not understanding.

8. Experiences self as confused, cynical and guilt-ridden.
9. Watch out. You are never sure when the volcano will erupt.
10. May come from family with contradictory communication, schisms and sibling rivalry.
11. Manipulates others with unpredictability and demanding attitude.
12. Tends to create irresolvable conflicts.
13. Negative behaviors provoke inconsistent and rejecting reactions.