

Core Negative Image Exercise

Helps Couples: End vicious and repetitive cycles

Target Behavior: To evaluate re-occurring thought patterns and relate them to your early childhood experiences. This tool will educate your partner on your projective process and help you to stop unwanted behaviors and thoughts that support them.

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Description:

A Core Negative Image (CNI) is who your partner is to you at his worst; when your partner is the least rational, the most unloving moments. Each partner has a CNI, and each CNI reinforces the other. For example: The more she believes he's lazy, the more she cleans up after him. The more she cleans up after him, the lazier he becomes.

Learn how to work with the CNI – it can be the single most transformative experience in your path to relationship change. It will serve as your relationship compass. Even if your partner doesn't respond well – you are still disrupting the viscous cycle.

Step 1: Make the CNI Explicit

- **Write out your CNI of your partner.** List out adjectives that describe your partner when he/she is at their worst. List out adjectives such as "lazy, stubborn, mean," etc.
- **What would your partner's CNI be of you?** Write down what you think he will write about you.
- **Is there a connection of your CNI to your childhood experience growing up? If so, put a "check" next to each**

adjective. Example: Does my CNI of my partner remind me of traits in my parents? Did I see any behaviors connected to my CNI experience in childhood? Did I see these behaviors growing up? Did anyone behave like this to me? Is what I want from him what I wanted from my parents?

- Write what your partner would say about the above.
- In a safe and respectful manner, share the material. Journal what you heard.

Step 2: Acknowledge the Truth of your CNI

- **This can be liberating.** Instead of denying the truth of your partner's CNI – think to yourself that it is not completely fabricated. Instead, consider it an exaggerated version of you at your absolute worst.
- **It does not acknowledge you at your best.** Consider the idea that the exaggerated version is true when the most immature parts of you grab hold of you.

Step 3: Identify CNI Busting Behaviors

- On a piece of paper, draw a line down the center. On one side, write out "CNI confirming behaviors" and on the other side, write "CNI busting behaviors." Bulleted lists of each.

Step 4: Use CNI as a Compass

- This is **operating instructions** from your partner. Use it. Every time you do the CNI confirming behaviors, you will reinforce the CNI.
- **Any time you behave in ways that are CNI-busting,** your behaviors reassure your partner. It has the potential to deeply touch your partner – you might be giving him/her what they didn't get growing up. That is profound.

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