SEVEN STEPS
TO INFIDELITY RECOVERY SUCCESS

HORSEMAN TWO: CONTEMPT

Contempt is the worst of the four horsemen. In Dr. Gottman's four decades of research, he has found it to be the #1 predictor of divorce.

When we communicate in this state, we are truly mean. Treating others with disrespect and mocking them with sarcasm are forms of contempt. So are hostile humor, name-calling, mimicking, and/or body language such as eye-rolling and sneering. In whatever form, contempt is poisonous to a relationship because it conveys disgust. It's virtually impossible to resolve a problem when your partner is getting the message that you're disgusted with him or her.

Contempt is fueled by long-simmering negative thoughts about the partner, in the form of an attack from a position of relative superiority. Inevitably, contempt leads to more conflict rather than to reconciliation.

Take Jan for example. Coming home from a long day with the children to find her husband on the couch, she asks him for help in making dinner. When he tells her he is tired, she snaps:

"You're 'tired'?! Cry me a river… I've been with the kids all day, running around like mad to keep this house going and all you do when you come home from work is flop down on that sofa like a child and play those idiotic video games. I don't have time to deal with another kid…just try, try to be more pathetic…"

Or imagine Luke and Emma at dinner, after she tells him she'd rather he not go out with his friends that night, he lashes out:

"You don't want me to go out with my friends tonight? Surprise! When have you ever been okay with me going anywhere? Would you like to tie me to something in this living room to ensure that I never leave you?"

Dr. Gottman has found that couples who are contemptuous of each other are more likely to suffer from infectious illness (colds, the flu, and so on) than other people! Contempt is the most poisonous of all relationship killers – destroying psychological, emotional, and physical health.

ROLEPLAY

Now it is your turn. With the same rules as last lesson, role-play contempt.