

## Brain Patterns in Relationships

### Understanding Brain Patterns in Relationships

Many marriages or intimate relationships don't work because of brain misfires that have nothing to do with character, free will or desire. Rather, they are sabotaged by factors beyond conscious or even unconscious control.

Understanding your brain type and the brain type of your significant other can help you both work together to overcome some of the differences that threaten a good relationship.

My Brain Type is:	My Partner's Brain Type is:

### Brain Type Relational Statements and Brain Type Relational Statements and Prescriptions for Healing

Once you each know your brain type, place a checkmark next to any of the brain type relational statements below that resemble ones you make, and then practice each of the applicable brain type prescription suggestions that can help your relationship.

#### LIMBIC

Negative Limbic Relational Statements:

Which of these negative limbic relational statements are similar to the ones you make, even if you just think them in your mind?

- "Don't look at me that way."
- "All I can remember is the bad times."
- "I'm too tired."
- "Leave me alone. I'm not interested in sex."
- "You go to bed. I can't sleep."
- "I don't feel like being around other people."
- "I don't want to hear you're sorry. You meant to hurt me."
- "I'm not interested in doing anything."

Which of the following negative limbic relational statements are similar to ones made by your partner about you?

- "You're so negative."
- "You're often depressed."
- "You don't want to be around other people."
- "You tend to take things the wrong way."
- "You're not interested in sex."
- "You can't sleep."
- "There's little playfulness in our relationship."

## **Limbic Relational Prescriptions:**

If these limbic relational statements are the kinds you make for yourself or make in regard to your partner (and vice versa), regularly practice the following Relational Prescriptions.

### **Limbic Relational Prescriptions for Self:**

- Spend time together. It increases limbic bonding and is essential to all human relationships.
- Choose scents your partner likes and wear them; it can have a positive effect on your relationship.
- Focus on the times you have enjoyed with each other and on the positive aspects of your relationship that help you feel more connected.
- Touch each other: Nonsexual and sexual touch is healing and is essential to intimacy.
- Kill the ANTs: Do the ANT killing worksheet to help you overcome negative thinking patterns and stay more focused on positive, uplifting and nurturing thoughts about your partner.

### **Relational Prescriptions for a Limbic Partner:**

- Don't let your partner choose isolation; it makes the situation worse. Encourage activity and togetherness.
- Touch your partner. Back rubs or a touch on the shoulder or hand can be very reassuring to someone who feels alone. Connectedness is very important.
- If your partner has a loss of sexual interest, do not take it personally. Depression is often accompanied by sexual problems.
- Help your partner around the house—with the children, chores and so on. Often times, limbic problems are associated with low energy and poor concentration thus can cause your partner to feel more easily overwhelmed.
- Help get your partner to the doctor if the limbic problems interfere with functioning. Limbic problems are often very treatable.
- Take care of yourself. It is stressful to be married to someone who is depressed. Take time to replenish yourself.

## **BASAL GANGLIA**

### **Negative Basal Ganglia Relational Statements :**

Which of these negative basal ganglia relational statements are similar to the ones you make—even if you don't say them out loud?

- "I know this isn't going to work out."
- "I'm too tense."
- "I'm scared."
- "I'm too afraid to bring up problems. I tend to avoid them."

- “I can’t breathe. I feel really anxious in this situation.”
- “I can’t make love—I have a headache (chest pain, backaches, muscle aches, etc.).”
- “You’re going to do something to hurt me.”

Which of the following negative basal ganglia relational statements are similar to ones made by your partner about you?

- “You’re nervous.”
- “You’re anxious.”
- “You’re uptight.”
- “You care too much about what others think.”
- “You predict the worst possible outcomes to situations.”
- “You complain of feeling bad a lot (headaches, stomachaches, etc.).”
- “You won’t deal with conflict.”
- “You won’t deal with problems head-on.”

### **Basal Ganglia Relational Prescriptions:**

If the basal ganglia relational statements above are similar to the ones you make for yourself or make in regard to your partner (and vice versa), you both can help heal your relationship by regularly practicing the behaviors listed below.

#### **Basal Ganglia Relational Prescriptions for Self:**

- Kill the fortune-telling ANTs: Predicting failure, pain or an unhappy outcome often causes erosion in relationships. Make copies of the ANT Killing worksheet so you always have a place to write out and challenge your negative thinking.
- Predict the best: Looking to the future in a positive manner is a key to happiness. Your mind helps to make happen what it sees. People with basal ganglia issues have a natural tendency to predict the worst, which can sometimes become a self-fulfilling prophecy.
- Before responding to your partner in an anxious or tense situation, take 3 or 4 deep breaths, holding each one for 3 seconds, and then slowly exhale (taking up to 5 to 7 seconds to exhale). This helps fill your brain with oxygen; you’ll feel more relaxed and you will be much more likely to make better decisions.
- Deal effectively with conflict in a kind, respectful manner. Don’t bury your differences or put off dealing with conflict—otherwise anxiety, tension and subversive behavior result.

#### **Basal Ganglia Relational Prescriptions for Partner:**

- Help your partner look at the positive side of things. Help him or her predict good things rather than bad things. Join forces to kill the fortune-telling ANTs.
- Don’t get irritated with your partner’s anxiety or negative predictions. Soothe him or her with gentle words or a touch.

- Pace your breathing to help your partner's breathing. Often people unconsciously mirror their partner. When you breathe slowly and deeply, your partner is likely to pick up a more relaxed breathing pattern, automatically calming his or her anxiety.
- Encourage your partner to face conflict in an effective way.

## **PREFRONTAL CORTEX (PFC)**

### **Negative PFC Relational Statements:**

Which of these negative PFC relational statements are similar to the ones you make—even if you don't say them out loud?

- "I'm only a half hour late. Why are you so uptight about it?"
- "I'll do it later."
- "I find it hard to listen to you."
- "Go ahead and talk to me. I can listen to you while I'm watching TV and reading this book."
- "My mind goes blank when I try to express my feelings."
- "I didn't mean to have the affair (overspend, embarrass you at the party, make hurtful comments, etc.)."
- "I just can't sit still."
- "The noise bothers me."
- "I get so distracted (while listening, during sex, when playing a game, etc.)."
- "I need the answer now."
- "I want it now."
- "I'm so mad at myself. I've made that mistake too many times."

Which of the following PFC negative relational statements are similar to ones made by your partner about you?

- "You're impulsive."
- "You blurt out and interrupt."
- "You don't pay attention to me."
- "You won't let me finish a comment. You have to say whatever thought comes into your head."
- "You have to have the fan on at night to sleep. It drives me crazy."
- "You often seem to start a problem for no particular reason."
- "You love to challenge everything I say."
- "You get so distracted during sex."
- "You tease the animals, and it makes me furious."
- "You can't sit still."
- "You put things off and tend not to finish things."
- "You're always late, rushing around at the last minute."

### **PFC Relational Prescriptions:**

If the PFC relational statements above are similar to the ones you make for yourself or make in regard to your partner (and vice versa), you both can help heal your relationship by regularly practicing the behaviors listed below.

### **PFC Relational Prescriptions for Self:**

- Develop a “two-minute focus statement.” On one piece of paper, write down the major goals you and your partner have for your relationship in the areas of: communication, time together, money, work, parenting and sexuality. Post this statement where you will see and read it every day.
- Focus on what you like about your partner more than what you don’t like. Don’t seek conflict as a way to stimulate yourself—even inadvertently. Otherwise, negativity can kill the relationship.
- Positive stimulation is helpful: Look for new, exciting ways to keep the relationship fresh and alive. Find ways to do new things together, such as sharing a hobby, going to new places or spicing up your sex life.
- Learn to say “I’m sorry.” Apologizing and taking responsibility for your mistakes is essential to relational health.
- Before you say or do something, ask yourself, “Then what?” Make sure what you say or do fits with the goals you have for the relationship.

### **PFC Relational Prescriptions for Partner:**

- Because the prefrontal cortex seeks stimulation, your partner may unconsciously try to upset you, make you angry or get you to yell. Instead of overreacting to the antagonism, take a deep breath or a break until you can get yourself under control. Don’t take the bait!
- Since people with PFC problems often have low self-esteem, getting encouragement and positive input from those they love is helpful to them.
- Offer to help your partner with organization.
- Make the appointment and drive your partner to the doctor. If you wait for your partner to have the desire, will or commitment to change, you may wait too long.
- If medication is necessary, help your partner remember to take it using gentle (non-sarcastic) reminders, or help him or her come up with a reminder system, such as weekly pill organizers or calendars.

### **ANTERIOR CINGULATE GYRUS (ACG)**

#### **Negative ACG Relational Statements:**

Which of these negative ACG relational statements are similar to the ones you make—even if you don’t say them out loud?

- “You hurt me years ago.”
- “I won’t forgive you.”
- “It’ll never be the same.”
- “I’m always worried.”
- “I get stuck on these bad thoughts.”
- “Do it my way.”

- "I can't change."
- "It's your fault."
- "I don't agree with you."
- "No. No. No."
- "I won't do it."
- "I don't want to do it."
- "I have a lot of complaints about you."
- "I've never hated anyone more than you."
- "This will never change."

Which of the following negative ACG relational statements are similar to ones made by your partner about you?

- "Nothing gets forgiven or let go."
- "You bring up issues from years and years ago."
- "Everything has to be the way you want it."
- "You can't say you're sorry."
- "You hold onto grudges forever."
- "You never throw anything away."
- "You're so rigid."
- "If things aren't perfect, you think they are no good at all."
- "I don't help you because I have to do it exactly your way or you go ballistic."
- "You argue with everything I say."
- "You're often oppositional."
- "You don't like to try new things."

### **Healing ACG Relational Problems:**

If the ACG relational statements above are similar to the ones you make for yourself or make in regard to your partner (and vice versa), you both can help heal your relationship by regularly practicing the behaviors listed below.

- Pay attention to the times when you are stuck on a thought or argument. Find the courage to do something differently than you normally would.
- Take a break when things get heated by distracting yourself with something else, and come back to it later.
- Nagging has a seriously negative impact on a relationship. It is ineffective and irritating. Try to find new ways to deal with your frustrations.
- When you are stuck at an impasse, write out the issue along with options and solutions. Writing problems down often helps to get them out of your head and out of repetitive relational arguments.
- Exercise together: Exercise enhances serotonin production in the brain and often helps a person (maybe even a couple) to become more flexible and less stuck on unhelpful behavior.
- Have a smart carbohydrate snack. Smart carbs, such as sweet potatoes or hummus, often improve moods and help anterior cingulate people be more flexible.

### **Anterior Cingulate Relational Prescriptions for Partner:**

- Become aware of repetitive negative patterns in your partner; take a breath and really try to listen to your partner. Do something different to break the negative cycle.
- When your partner is stuck on an issue, or when anger is escalating, distract your partner or take a break from the situation.
- Deal effectively with nagging by asking what steps you can take to make the situation better, and in a kind way, ask to not hear about the issue again.
- Exercise together: Exercise enhances serotonin production in the brain and often helps people be happier and more flexible.

### **TEMPORAL LOBES**

#### **Negative Temporal Lobe Relational Statements:**

Which of these negative temporal lobe relational statements are similar to the ones you make—even if you don't say them out loud?

- "I struggle with memory."
- "I blow things way out of proportion."
- "I get angry easily. I have a bad temper."
- "My moods tend to be volatile."
- "I tend to get scary, violent thoughts in my head."
- "It's hard for me to read."
- "I often misinterpret what others say."
- "I tend to be too sensitive to others or feel others are talking about me."
- "I tend to misread the facial expressions of others."
- "I frequently have trouble finding the right words in a conversation."

Which of the following negative temporal lobe relational statements are similar to ones made by your partner about you?

- "You can be physically or verbally very aggressive."
- "You're volatile."
- "Your memory is very poor."
- "You misread situations."
- "You're very moody."
- "You take things the wrong way."
- "You space out easily."
- "You don't seem to learn by reading something or hearing directions. You have to be shown what to do."

## Healing Temporal Lobe Relational Problems:

If the temporal lobe relational statements above are similar to the ones you make for yourself or make in regard to your partner (and vice versa), you both can help heal your relationship by regularly practicing the behaviors listed below.

- Listen to beautiful music together. Music is healing and often has a positive impact on relationships; it also enhances moods and sharpen learning and memory.
- Engage in rhythmic movement together. Dancing and walking hand-in-hand helps maintain connection and promotes bonding in a relationship.
- Remember the best times. Develop a positive sense of the history of the relationship.
- Practice effective anger management strategies, like deep breathing, correcting negative thoughts, and communicating clearly. In addition, be sure to stay away from alcohol and drugs; they can unleash a vulnerable temporal lobe, uncorking anger and causing serious problems.
- Know you have a tendency to be extremely sensitive to the behavior of others, so when you feel others are being negative toward you, don't automatically believe your negative thoughts or feelings. Check them out.
- Protein snacks may be helpful to stabilize blood sugar, which can help to settle down a situation caused by temporal lobe irregularities.

## Temporal Lobe Relational Prescriptions for Partner:

- Use reminders (notes, mobile or computer calendars) to do little things that help your partner feel loved. Temporal lobe partners need constant reminders to keep you lovingly in their memory banks.
- Often, people with temporal lobe problems struggle in relationships because of their negativity, anger and mild paranoia—but do not take the negativity personally. Help your partner see situations clearly.
- Take anger seriously. If you see your partner escalating, talk in a soft voice to help him or her de-escalate. Actively listen. Offering food may also help.
- Keep protein snacks around.
- Make sure you help get your partner to the doctor if the temporal lobe problems interfere with functioning. Such problems are often very treatable.