

”You’ve Lost that loving feeling”

Couples often find themselves stuck in their relationship. When things are not going well, each partner is looking to place blame on the other to justify their negative feelings or behaviours. Many couples are told that they need to improve their communication skills. But newer theories of couples counselling highlight that the tension in a marriage relates to their fear of disconnection, in essence the loss of the secure attachment needed in every relationship. Just like children, adults fear rejection and emotional abandonment, and this distress comes in the form of anger.

The main tenet in loving relationships, whether it be husband to wife or parent to child, is maintaining a strong connection or attachment. When we feel secure in our relationships, there is a trust and a desire to be physically close. A strong attachment relationship acts like an anchor and helps us feel more confident so that we can explore and pursue our other interests without threatening the marriage. Being close to a loved one relieves stress and worry. For adults and children alike, this closeness soothes the soul. Mini alarms bells sound when a spouse does not feel connected or doubts that their partner will be there for them when needed. The brain registers a possible threat to our need to be attached and the person moves into either a state of anxiety or avoidance.

The secret to stopping the negative pattern of blaming or avoiding, is recognizing the cyclical pattern and not pointing fingers as to who started the argument. To find the pattern that traps your marriage, Dr. Sue Johnson, founder of Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT), helps couples find their pattern that arouses them to freeze or fight. She outlines several exercises in her new book [Hold Me Tight](#). Next, she looks at uncovering the triggers or “sensitive spots” that ignite a person into protection and sometimes anger. These triggers are often about an unmet need or desire that can relate back to an early experience with care takers or loved ones. This feeling can press the negative cyclical pattern back into action.

Couples work can be difficult due to the intensity that our fear of abandonment can spark. So if you are thinking of working to improve your marriage, every positive contribution towards breaking the cycle of negativity can help bring back that loving feeling.

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