

A Summary of **What Predicts Divorce?**
The Relationship Between Marital Processes and Marital Outcomes
By John M. Gottman; Hillsdale, H.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1994

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

The four most corrosive negative marital behaviors are:

- **Complain/Criticize**

- *Complain* means to initiate a conflict by engaging the partner, usually by the female.
- *Criticize* is finding faulty by the speaker, usually the female.

- **Contempt/Disgust**

- *Contempt* involves insult, mockery, sarcasm or derision of the other person. It includes disapproval, judgment, disdain, exasperations, put downs or communicating that the other person is absurd or incompetent. Contempt behavior produces distance, coldness and detachment and implies superiority of the speaker.
- *Disgust* gets communicated by sounding fed up, sickened and repulsed. In disgust, the speaker expresses the hidden message of nausea.

- **Defensiveness**

Defensiveness is an attempt to ward off an attack, often with denial of responsibility, counter blame or a whine. Mind reading statements are an attribution of motives, feelings or behaviors to the spouse. Generalization often accompanies mind reading like, "You always" or "You never."

- **Stonewalling**

Stonewalling is avoidance of interaction, usually by the male.

"The process cascade I propose, which predicts marital dissolution, is the following: Complaining and criticizing leads to contempt, which leads to defensiveness, which leads to listener withdrawal from interaction (stonewalling)." (page 110)