

# 7 Mix-Ups That Sabotage Relationships



*Veronica Monet*

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*Don't settle! You deserve the relationship you have always wanted.*

In this report you will discover seven misunderstandings that may be creating havoc in your relationship right now! These seven misunderstandings are common roadblocks to happiness and harmony. Learn what they are and start living and loving with a deeper heart connection.

## *1. You Get Different Results Depending Upon Whether You React or Respond*

Reacting comes from fear. Our reactions are automatic and immediate. They bypass the command center of our brain and come straight from the most primitive part of our brain that is also known as the “reptilian brain.” Reactions initiated from our “reptilian brain” are limited to three actions: Fight, Flight or Freeze. Like all other sentient beings, when we are coming from our reactionary reptilian brain we will either fight back or run away or freeze like a scared little bunny. These strategies have evolved to keep us alive but they do nothing to build connection in our relationships.

In fact, when we react, we are likely to damage our connections and create great harm to the relationships we value the most. However, when we respond from the more evolved part of our brain, we have a better chance of choosing behaviors that can lead to success in relationships and build better connections.

Responding requires us to be calm and centered and it makes it possible for us to take positive, constructive action. One very effective way to stop Reacting and start Responding, is to take a deep breath when you feel yourself getting tense or angry or frightened. Relax into that deep breath and remind yourself that you are choosing to come from a place of choice rather than allow your reptilian brain to run the show.

## *2. There is a Difference Between Walls and Boundaries*

When we have weak boundaries, we tend to hide behind the walls we have erected out of fear. But walls not only keep us from getting hurt – they also prevent any love from reaching us. What makes this particularly confusing is the fact that love also requires healthy boundaries. We all need to learn how to assert our “no” without building a defensive wall.

For those of us who have had our “no” disrespected or violated, it can be especially challenging to assert a healthy boundary with our walls down. One thing that can make this easier is to envision your partner as a small child rather than a threatening authority figure. This can serve to remind you that you are safe and that your partner, much like a small child, may want to get his/her way and/or may simply want to get close to you. Either way, you have the power to make yourself safe and create emotional safety for those you love as well.

Another helpful tip is to watch your energy when you assert. If you feel frightened, defensive or apologetic, that energy will travel to the person you are asserting your boundaries with and create confusion and fear in them as well. So take a deep breath and remind yourself that you are safe. Then invest a little trust and expect a positive outcome. That energetic shift can help create the continued connection you want while your boundaries are honored.

### *3. Taking Responsibility is NOT the same as Taking the Blame*

No one wants to feel blamed so most of us try to avoid it. This is completely understandable. Blame is painful and destructive. Whether we blame ourselves or we blame our partner, we shortchange ourselves in a multitude of ways.

The blame game creates a lose-lose situation. It erodes trust. It prevents us from finding solutions to our problems. And it makes personal growth and change impossible.

It is important to avoid blaming yourself or blaming others. Very few of us understand the difference between being blamed and taking responsibility for our part. Many of us are afraid we will get blamed if we take responsibility. But when we confuse taking responsibility for our part, with “taking the blame,” it makes it very difficult to establish trust or move forward.

The key to taking responsibility for your part is knowing that you are never wholly responsible for any disagreement or conflict. Your partner has also made choices that they are responsible for. If you know that you are not responsible for what your partner thinks, says or does, it will be much easier for you to take responsibility for what you think, say and do.

It is essential that each of us take responsibility for our choices and the actions that result from our choices. What we may not know is that responsibility can be energizing and it can connect you to your personal power. If you let go of the fear of “being blamed,” you can focus on empowering yourself by changing the one thing you have power over: you!

Taking responsibility for our part in any misunderstanding or conflict, can also help our partner to take responsibility for their part. Taking responsibility for our words, actions and feelings restores our dignity and our integrity. It also gives us control of our future actions and invites more trust and intimacy in our relationships.

#### *4. Do You Practice Self-Empathy or Self-Pity?*

Self-pity feels like a pit of despair. It ruminates and digs deep trenches in our hearts. Self-pity prevents us from making progress with our problems.

We all know someone who is consumed by self-pity. They talk about how unfair life is and how helpless they are in the face of fate. They rarely see how their actions have helped to shape their life. Instead, they complain that they “are innocent” and “being treated unfairly.”

While these people are unpleasant to be around, we can’t always see our own self-pity. Reflecting on the words that come out of our mouth can help us understand our emotional state of affairs. It can also help us see where our own self-pity may be getting in the way of our happiness.

Instead of self-pity, we need to have self-empathy. Self-empathy feels like a warm embrace. It acknowledges feelings and experiences and empowers us to take positive steps to improve our situation.

With self-empathy, you can re-parent yourself. You can validate your own perceptions and feelings. You can even make amends to yourself for any hurt you have caused you. You might say something such as “Here’s why I won’t let you down next time.” This builds your ability to trust yourself. Building a trusting relationship with yourself is essential for living an empowered life.

A natural consequence of learning to be empathetic and loving with yourself is that you will be inclined to extend that empathy and love to others.

#### *5. Don’t Control Your Anger. Learn to Manage Your Anger Instead!*

Many people control their anger so they can please others and avoid the negative consequences of acting out their anger. However this approach requires that we deny our true feelings. When we suppress our anger it will most likely come out in some other way. For instance, it can show up as displaced aggression. Or it can convert to depression.

Managing anger is different than controlling anger. Managing our anger allows us to express our angry feelings in a healthy manner. This requires self-empathy and getting in touch with how we really feel. It requires shifting from our reptilian brain to the more evolved decision making centers of our brain.

When we manage our anger, we don't have to react. We get to respond. When we manage our anger instead of allowing it to control us, we learn to value our anger as an important feedback system that notifies us when our boundaries are being violated, or when we are being mistreated. Our anger can let us know when injustices are occurring in the world, too. Thanks to our angry emotions, we are more likely to protect ourselves as well as our loved ones. We are more likely to get involved in creating positive change in the world.

**Here is an important tip for managing your anger:** Look for your underlying emotions such as fear or sadness. Trace those feelings to your unmet needs. Does the unmet need take place during your childhood? Or is there something happening in your current life that is frustrating your basic emotional needs?

Anger management asks us to have empathy for ourselves and to learn how to self-soothe. It asks us to learn how to meet our emotional needs ourselves so we are not dependent upon our partner to "make us feel better." If you can get to the feelings underneath your anger, you will feel more connected to yourself and less likely to act out your anger.

## *6. Stop Interrogating Your Partner and Get Curious*

When we feel confused or frustrated by our partner's behavior, most of us are tempted to criticize that behavior. But criticism creates hurt feelings and resentment. Ultimately, criticism not only destroys intimacy and joy, it destroys relationships. In fact, couples who criticize each other a great deal, are far more likely to divorce or break up.

Criticism can take many forms but a very common way to criticize is to ask our partner a lot of probing questions about why they did what they did. Often we don't even wait for them to answer our first question before we follow up with yet more questions. The whole process resembles an interrogation and it can be quite unnerving for anyone who is subjected to this sort of questioning.

But if we don't find a way to understand our partner's perspective, we run the risk of feeling alienated from them. A lot of couple's know that interrogating their partner will lead to arguments and resentments, so they remain quiet while attempting to "figure out" their partner's perceptions and feelings.

This doesn't work either because most of us are prone to projections. Projections are our feelings or what we think we would feel if we were behaving as our partner is. In other words it is our best guess about what is true for our partner. And often it is inaccurate or omits key elements that define our partner's experiences and motivations.

It is far better to ask your partner how they feel and listen attentively to their answer. Ask your partner about their feelings. Do NOT ask them "why" but rather "what." What do they feel. What do they fear. What do they want. And active listening skills such as eye contact, validation of feelings, sticking to "I feel" statements and reflecting what your partner says back to them are the basic building blocks of that curiosity.

### *7. It is Far Better to Make an Amends than to Apologize*

An apology often says 'I'm sorry' without having a plan for doing anything different. Resolutions to "never do it again" are not a plan for change. Resolutions to change may make the person apologizing feel better about themselves but the majority of resolutions do not come to fruition. In this way, apologizing can sometimes simply be asking for permission to do whatever you did again.

Amends are very different from Apologies. An amends always contains the acknowledgement of how your actions have harmed the person you are making amends to. Amends express empathy for the person you have harmed. Amends express a commitment to take specific actions to change your bad behavior. Those specific actions may include a plan for making restitution. An amends can also include a plan to obtain professional training or therapy to help change old habits.

It is essential to recognize that simply resolving "not to do it again" is a prescription for failure. We all need help from time to time. Getting the help you need to establish new habits of thinking, feeling and relating can take your life the next level and that much closer to the life you have always dreamed of.

***Veronica Monet, ACS, CAM is the founder of The Shame Free Zone  
and a Relationship Coach.***

*Be sure to ask about her Five Steps to Exquisite Partnership!*

***You may contact her at 415-407-2932***

***Or check out her website at: [www.TheShameFreeZone.com](http://www.TheShameFreeZone.com)***