

Taming the Horseponies

What if criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling aren't simply bad behaviors to eliminate? What if they are protests—imperfect attempts to protect an important relationship?

This activity invites you to "tame the Horseponies" by looking beneath the behavior to the underlying attachment need. Have fun with the drawings (stick figures are encouraged!), then share them with each other. The goal isn't artistic talent—it's seeing your partner through a new lens.

The pony represents the protest. Your drawing represents the need underneath the protest.



To tame Criticism is to recognize your partner's protest as:

"Please hear my pain."

Draw a picture to show what it would look like for your partner to hear your pain.

To tame Defensiveness is to recognize our partner's protest as:

"Please don't reject me."

Draw a picture of what helps you feel accepted by your partner.



To tame Contempt is to recognize your partner's protest as:

"I've stopped believing you really care."

Draw a picture of a moment when you knew your partner truly cared about you.

To tame Stonewalling is to recognize your partner's protest as:

"I'm overwhelmed."

Draw a picture of what helps you feel less overwhelmed when life becomes too much



**After sharing your drawings, ask the question:
What did you learn about your partner that you didn't know before?**