



HIGH CONFLICT COUPLES:

**The Pattern You Already Know:
A Reflective Assessment
for the Year Ahead**

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High-Conflict Couples | Accountability & Reality Tool

This is not a communication exercise. This is not about fairness.
This is not about who started it.

This is about identifying the pattern that is actively damaging your relationship – and your role in keeping it alive.

Complete this alone.
Do not share answers outside of session.

SECTION 1: Name the Pattern (No Story)

Strip it down.

1. What is the same destructive cycle you and your partner repeat? (Different topics. Same ending.)
The pattern is:

2. What is always present when this pattern shows up? (Check what applies.)

- Escalation
- Withdrawal
- Control
- Contempt
- Defensiveness
- Stonewalling

SECTION 2: Your Role (Non-Negotiable)

This is where most people lie to themselves.
When the pattern starts, I:

- Attack
- Criticize
- Escalate
- Shut down
- Withdraw
- Control
- Refuse to pause
- Refuse to repair

What I do that keeps the pattern alive:

SECTION 3: What You Blame – and What You Avoid

Be direct.

I blame my partner for:

Now answer this:

How does blaming them allow me to avoid looking at myself?

SECTION 4: The Cost (Stop Minimizing)

High conflict always has a cost.

This pattern has cost us:

- Emotional safety
- Trust
- Respect
- Intimacy
- Stability
- Hope

What this pattern is doing to the relationship:

SECTION 5: The Part You Don't Want to Own

This is usually the real issue.

The part of me that fuels this pattern is:

- My need to be right
- My anger
- My control
- My avoidance
- My shutdown
- My defensiveness
- My unwillingness to change

The truth I don't want to face is:

SECTION 6: Nervous System Reality

This is not psychological. It's physiological.
When this conflict starts, my body:

- Tenses
- Feels hot
- Speeds up
- Shuts down
- Goes numb
- Feels out of control

What I typically do when my body is in this state:
(If this is not managed, the pattern will not change.)

SECTION 7: Accountability (No Soft Exit)

Answer plainly. The part of this pattern that belongs to me is:

If I don't change my part, this pattern will continue.

- True
- Still true

Right now, I am more invested in: (Check one.)

- Being right
- Protecting myself
- Being understood
- Or changing the pattern

SECTION 8: How Close to Done Are You?

This is not a threat. It's information.

1. On a scale of 1-5, how close are you to being done?

- 1 - Not close
- 2 - Struggling but still invested
- 3 - Emotionally exhausted / unsure
- 4 - Mostly checked out
- 5 - Done

My number: 1 2 3 4 5

2. What does “done” actually mean to you? Be specific.

To me, “done” means:

- No longer trying
- No longer hopeful
- Emotionally disconnected
- Staying only for practical reasons
- Feeling numb
- Wanting out but not acting yet Describe what “done” looks like:

3. How long have you felt this way? Do not minimize.

- Less than 6 months
- 6-12 months
- 1-2 years
- Longer than I want to admit

When did this shift for you?

4. In your honest opinion, is there any hope left?

This is not about optimism.

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

Why or why not?

5. If there were hope, what would it require from you? Not your partner.

From me, it would require:

- Managing my reactions
- Owning my part without defensiveness
- Changing behavior, not just insight
- Letting go of control
- Staying present during discomfort
- Doing work I've avoided

The hardest thing I would have to do is:

6. What would it require from your partner?

Not demands – requirements. From my partner, it would require:

7. Final Reality Check

Answer honestly.

Right now, I am more committed to: (Check one.)

- Protecting myself
- Being right
- Avoiding pain
- Or changing the pattern

STOP

Do not discuss this outside of session.

This tool is not designed to save the relationship.
It is designed to expose where each of you actually is.
Therapy cannot move forward without this clarity.

Bring this into session.