Ways We All Avoid Differentiation, Tension and/or Growth in Our Relationships

Use the list below and mark the various methods you use to avoid relationship difficulties. Make a concerted effort to catch yourself avoiding; substitute more proactive responses in spite of your fears and anxieties.

- Try to forget it…keep smiling…
- Blurt it out…have a nasty fight
- Go numb, hold it in, hope to avoid any conflict
- Distract myself; focus on something else
- Blame my partner; see him/her as the problem
- Talk to my friends instead of my partner
- Tell myself s/he couldn’t possibly handle my real feelings
- Make an attempt, then give up when I can’t get through
- Get very upset, get flooded with everything that’s ever been wrong
- Do everything I can to avoid the feeling of having my nose rubbed in the dirt
- Tell myself s/he will never change; what’s the use?
- Tell myself that I don’t feel much that nothing really bothers me
- Change the subject
- Get angry at someone or something else
- Get busy, work harder and tell myself that there is so much to do.
- Have an affair.
- Work on letting go and practicing non-attachment
- Tell myself I’ll get even eventually.
- Think of the suffering of the saints and others. Life is dukha.
- Try not to let my partner see how bothered I really am.
- Drop hints, verbally or through body language hoping my partner picks up on these
- Threaten to leave or console myself with these thoughts.
- Use drugs and/or alcohol to not deal with the discomfort and/or problems
- Delay discussions about the problems.

This list is the original work of Ellyn Bader & Peter Pearson of the Couples Institute, Menlo Park, CA. www.thecouplesinstitute.com