

## Ten Attitudes that Keep You from Expressing Your Feelings

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- 1. Conflict phobia.** You are afraid of angry feelings or conflicts with people. You may believe that people with good relationships shouldn't fight or argue. You may also believe that the people you care about would be hurt and couldn't take it if you told them how you felt or what was really on your mind. This is the "ostrich phenomenon," because you bury your head in the sand instead of dealing with the problems in your relationship.
- 2. Emotional perfectionism.** You believe that you shouldn't have irrational feelings like anger, jealousy, depression, or anxiety. You think you should always be rational and in control of your emotions. You are afraid of being exposed as weak and vulnerable. You believe that people will look down on you if they find out how you really feel.
- 3. Fear of disapproval and rejection.** You are so terrified by rejection and ending up alone that you'd rather swallow your feelings and put up with some abuse than take the chance of making anyone mad at you. You feel an excessive need to please people and to meet everybody's expectations. You are afraid that people would not like you if you expressed your own ideas and feelings.
- 4. Passive-aggressiveness.** You pout and hold your hurt and angry feelings inside instead of sharing them openly and honestly. You give others the silent treatment and try to make them feel guilty instead of sharing your feelings.
- 5. Hopelessness.** You feel convinced that your relationship cannot improve no matter what you do, so you give up. You may feel that you've already tried everything and nothing works. You may believe that your spouse (or partner) is just too stubborn and insensitive to be able to change. This acts as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Once you give up, things get stuck and you conclude that your situation is hopeless.
- 6. Low self-esteem.** You believe that you aren't entitled to express your feelings or to ask others for what you want. You think you should always please other people and meet their expectations.
- 7. Spontaneity.** You believe that you have the right to say precisely what you think and feel when you are upset. You may feel that any change in the way you communicate will sound phony and ridiculous.
- 8. Mind reading.** You believe that people should know how you feel and what you want without your having to express yourself directly. This gives you a perfect excuse to hold your feelings inside, and to feel resentful because people don't seem to care about your needs.
- 9. Martyrdom.** You are afraid to admit that you're angry, because you don't want to give anyone the satisfaction of knowing that their behavior upsets you. You take enormous pride in controlling your emotions and suffering silently.
- 10. Need to solve problems.** When you have a conflict with someone, you go around and around in circles trying to solve the problem instead of sharing your feelings openly and hearing how the other person feels.