

## Explanations for Partner Behavior Worksheet

By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

When assessing a relationship event, examine how you process the information about the event. Identify an event where you feelings were hurt, where you felt angry, disappointed, or had some other negative emotional response. After you have identified an event, ask yourself these questions about the event. See also "[Explanations For Partner Behavior Makes All the Difference in Marital Happiness](#)".

*Write a Description of the event. (What was happening? What did you notice?)*

*What were you thinking about that event?*

Use the following questions to reflect and write about your explanations for your partner's behavior.

### **Internal vs. external locus of control**

*Did my partner do/say this because of who s/he is as a person?*

*Is his/her behavior because of his/her personality characteristics?*

### **Stable/unstable.**

*Is this behavior persistent over time?*

*Does it happen every time?*

## **Intention**

*Did my partner intend to do the behavior?*

*Did s/he intend the outcome that happened?*

## **Controllable vs. uncontrollable. Voluntary vs. involuntary**

*Does s/he do it because s/he wants to?*

*Can they stop doing it if they choose to?*

## **Reframe and refocus:**

Go back and rethink the event. (Take into account locus of control, stability, intention, and volition). Address questions like the following:

What was his/her intention here?

Where was s/he coming from?

What did it mean to him/her?

What was s/he feeling?

What was his/her motive?

Did s/he want something from you? What was it?

Could it be that s/he intended something other than what you thought?

What might s/he have intended instead?

Let's pretend for a moment that s/he did not mean what you initially thought. What else might s/he have meant to do/say?

What might s/he have needed from you?

Is this behavior typical?

## Making a connection between the mini-theories you write and your feelings and behavior

Was your initial response how you would ordinarily interpret, think, and feel about his/her behavior?

When you interpret your spouse behavior this way, what do you feel?

What do you usually **do** when you interpret your partner behavior in a negative light?

How might repeated negative interpretations be affecting your relationship?

*Peggy's note: When we can accurately assess a situation, and use appropriate feelings management skills, we can be proactive in problem solving in a way that meets both partner's needs.*

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