

## What's Your Relationship Style?

1. **Validating:** Validate partners opinions and emotions, even if they don't agree with them
  - Value communication, mutual respect, verbal openness, displaying affection, sharing time/activities/interests; frequently see each other as best friends
  - Value "we-ness" more than separateness and individuality
  - May have clearly defined separate spheres or stereotypical roles
  - Skilled at negotiation and compromise
  - Frequently finish each other's sentences

**Risk of validating:** Sacrificing passion and selfhood for friendship and togetherness

**Remedies for validating partners:** Learn to express your emotions

- Don't run away from issues that have a potential for making relationship better
- Take time to nurture the passion in your relationship
- **COMMITMENT: I commit to my own full creative expression.**

2. **Volatile:** Seem to thrive on skirmishes
  - High level of engagement during discussions
  - Strong expression of all feelings, pleasant (joy/laughter) as well as unpleasant(anger)
  - Tend to see each other as equals, value independence and separateness
  - See honesty as basis for trust, so don't censor their thoughts
  - Focus on trying to persuade each other of the rightness of their position
  - In arguments may interrupt each other with little interest in the other's point of view
  - Enjoy teasing which may be playful but can inadvertently lead to sarcasm

**Risk for volatile partners:** Blame, criticism, contempt, maybe even violence

**Remedies for volatile partners:** Focus on appreciations rather than complaints

- Express interest in your spouse; express your affection frequently
- Learn to replace criticism & contempt with the unarguable truth
- Focus on what you can and want to do instead of what you can't or won't do
- Respond to your partner with consideration, rather than escalation
- **COMMITMENT: I commit to generating wonder and creativity rather than blame in my relationship.**

3. **Avoidant:** Minimize or avoid conflict, without resolving issues
  - Uncomfortable with strong unpleasant feelings
  - May put a high value on having a shared set of religious or philosophical beliefs
  - Low level of introspection or self-exploration
  - Value separateness and maintain autonomy
  - Live calm, pleasant lives

**Risk for avoidant partners:** Lacking skills in conflict resolution. Internalized stress may lead to physical /mental health problems. May be lonely.

**Remedies for avoidant partners:**

- Get in touch with your feelings and learn to express them
- Learn how to communicate unarguable truth and how to express your own needs
- Structure time to bring up difficult issues
- **COMMITMENT: I commit to experiencing and expressing all my feelings in friendly ways.**

Note: John Gottman says that feeling good about each other and the interaction is more important than solving the problem. Each style has strengths and risks. Problems may also occur when each partner prefers a different style.