THREE DESTRUCTIVE COMMUNICATION PATTERNS

Based John Gottman's: The Seven Principles for making marriage work

1. CRITICISM vs COMPLAINT

Criticism
- Attacks personality or character
- Uses "always / never"
- Creates defensiveness

Complaint (Gentle Start-Up)
- Focuses on behavior
- Uses "I feel"
- Makes a clear request

Formula for a Healthy Complaint:

I feel ___ about ___, and I need ___.

2. CONTEMPT (Most Dangerous)

What It Looks Like:
- Sarcasm
- Mocking
- Eye-rolling
- Name-calling
- Superiority

Why It's Toxic:
- Destroys respect
- Creates shame
- Predicts divorce

Antidote:

Practice **respect, appreciation, and repair**.

3. DEFENSIVENESS

What It Sounds Like:
- “It’s not my fault”
- Excuses
- Counterattacks
- Playing the victim (DARVO:

Why It Fails:
- Blocks responsibility
- Prevents repair

Antidote:

Take **even partial responsibility**.