

## H. MELTS AND THE SIX FIGHTMAKERS

by Stephen B. Karpman, M.D.

There are some simple ground rules that can be used by couples or anyone else to keep discussions from degenerating into fights. There are six "talkbusters" or "fightmakers" that are easily learned and practiced by couples. Arranging the initials into H. MELTS makes them easier to remember and use. The six not to do are:

1. **Hundred Percentiles:** "You never want to have sex with me. You always find an excuse. You are completely inconsiderate. You never come through on your promises."
2. **Mindreading:** "I know why you are withholding sex. You are punishing me and you have a fear of assertive women and you're just like your passive father and you think I'm just like your aggressive mother."
3. **Excitability:** (The pace quickens, the tone of voice gets higher, the volume gets louder, interruptions increase, and the primitive vocal "distress cry" is heard between the sounds.)
4. **Labels:** "You're a hysteric, a loser, an alcoholic, that's a projection, you're a bitch and a sexual turnoff."
5. **Threats:** "I'm leaving! I'll find someone else tonight! I've got something in the closet that will take care of you quickly!"
6. **Subjects (Too Many):** "Why talk about me? What about you? I'm not selfish, you are. And so are your friends and your family, and you start all the fights, and you spend our money on foolishness, and you're a terrible parent, and everyone knows it, and I'll never forgive you for four years ago when you..."

In a calmer setting, like therapy, the initials on the board, H. MELTS, are pointed to and each fightmaker is discussed briefly. Couples, in their Adult, discuss which one they and their partners often do. They agree to work on it and to find a way of pointing it out to the other. Progress is checked each week. There are surprisingly few objections to these six and much of the "cleaning up" of their discussions comes quickly. In a workshop setting, people pair up and role play a fight using each of the six hooks deliberately, then discuss them.

**Miscellaneous hooks.** Many other fightmakers have been weeded out to make this short list of the most acceptable and easily learned violations. At another time, the couples have learned, the Loser's Loop, with its Condescending, Abrupt, Secretive, and Evasive intimacy blocks. Therefore they can spot blatant behavioral manifestations of sarcasm, stubbornness, remoteness, and scatteredness which may hook corresponding retaliation from others.

The turning point in a fightmaker is often when one person drops the

- 1) POINT (what you're saying) and brings up the
- 2) PROCESS (what you're doing) which can further escalate into the
- 3) PERSONALITY (what you are).

In focusing on process, most ulterior messages are quickly snapped up and rammed back at the person. In focusing on personalities, insults and attributions are offered to weaken the strength and confidence of the other. Socially, there is usually an 80/20 communication rule of thumb. Roughly 80% of attention is spent on the point and 20% on the process. However, in 1st degree games, the percentages become closer to 50/50; in 2nd degree games it reverses to 20/80; and in 3rd degree games and paranoia it gets up around 5/95 (or worse). People here seem to be always reading between the lines and not showing the courtesy of taking someone at face value. With too much of that, Happiness Melts.

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