

PART EIGHT

'Facts' That Aren't & Psychological Games We Play

[First identified by Eric Berne]





Don't argue about the 'facts'

- When your partner's version of what happened is different to yours, they may be lying to win the argument, but it's quite possible that they are simply recalling things differently and believe what they are saying.
- This is because we unconsciously distort what happens, selectively filter information, believe what fits for us, see what we expect to see and fill in missing bits.
- The 'reality' we remember sometimes finishes up very different to the 'reality' our partner remembers.

In my work with couples, I often have to invite them to accept that they have experienced and remember things differently. I get them to concentrate on what needs to happen to move forward, rather than keep trying to convince each other about the 'correct' version.

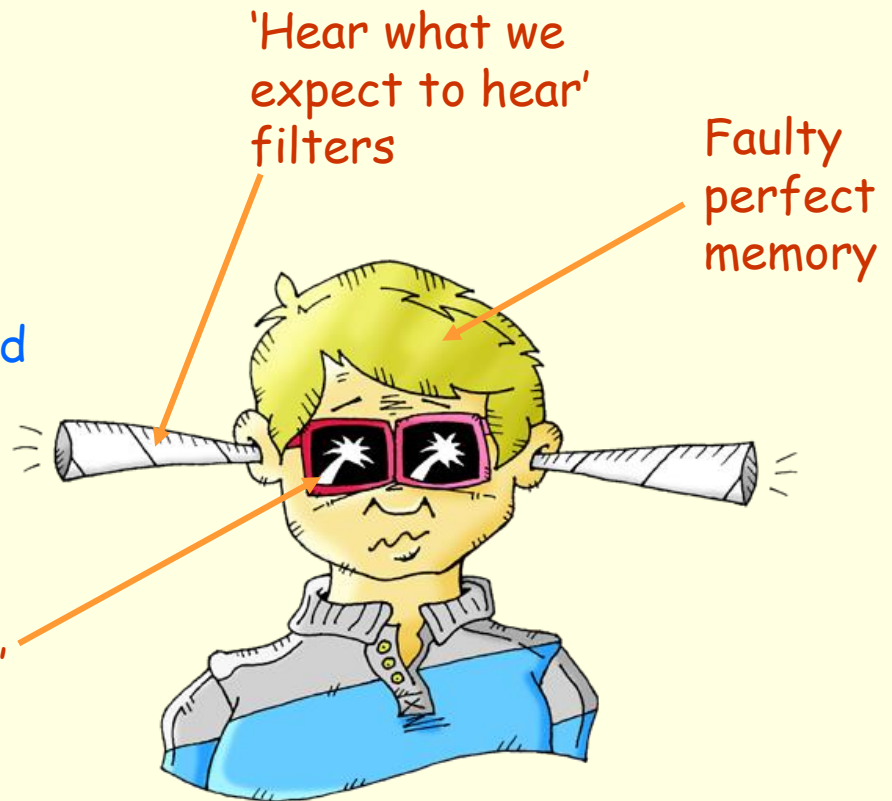
We unconsciously filter and distort what happens to create our own 'facts'

- We filter and distort what happens and fill in missing bits, to make things fit our recollection.
- In doing this we are often blind to any contrary evidence which might mean we have recalled or interpreted something incorrectly.
- **For example:** If we don't like someone we will only notice what they do wrong and be blind to anything they do right. If they do anything good which we can't avoid noticing, we will think they had an ulterior motive in doing what they did.

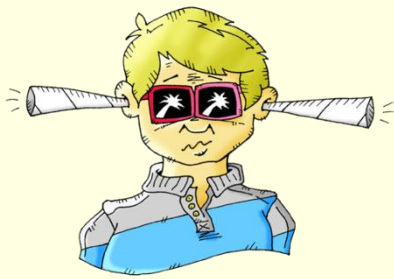
Without realising it change 'facts' to make things fit what we believe

- We often hear only what we expect to hear.
- See what we expect to see.
- Remember things in a way which fits our recollection and beliefs..

'See what we expect to see'
filtering lenses



We really, absolutely, believe our distorted version of what happened - which is often not the same as another person's distorted version. We accept that we can get things wrong, but not that we did get it wrong on that occasion.



A few of the filters which distort the facts

Filter

- Self Delusion
- Blame filter
- Narcissistic filter
- Controlling filter
- Critical Filter
- Paranoid filter
- Victim filter
- Jealousy filter

Belief Behind Filter

- [My version of events is always reliable]
- [It's usually your fault]
- [I'm a good person: you are the problem]
- [I usually know best, so do it my way]
- [You usually get it wrong]
- [You 're getting at me again]
- [I never get what I want]
- [You will give in to temptation]

These are examples of filters we use to shape how we look at things.
The same event triggers a different 'reality' for different people depending on their filters.

Our filters screw up the way we look at things without our realising what's happening!

Try to avoid psychological games. Here are some played by couples

Payback A passive aggressive game which is all about revenge, about getting even. It's a retaliation game which is often played over a long period - months or years.

'You should know what I want[without me saying]. A passive aggressive game where the lead player deliberately does not say what they want and gets upset when they don't get it.

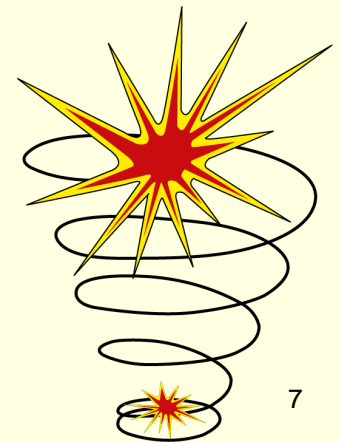
'Yes, but.....' Probably the most played passive aggressive game. Whatever you suggest is not right. Remember, passive aggressive types don't know what they want, but they do know it's not what you want.

Archaeology. This is constantly 'digging up the past', with both parties obsessively accusing the other of having done things in the past which are causing the present problems in the relationship

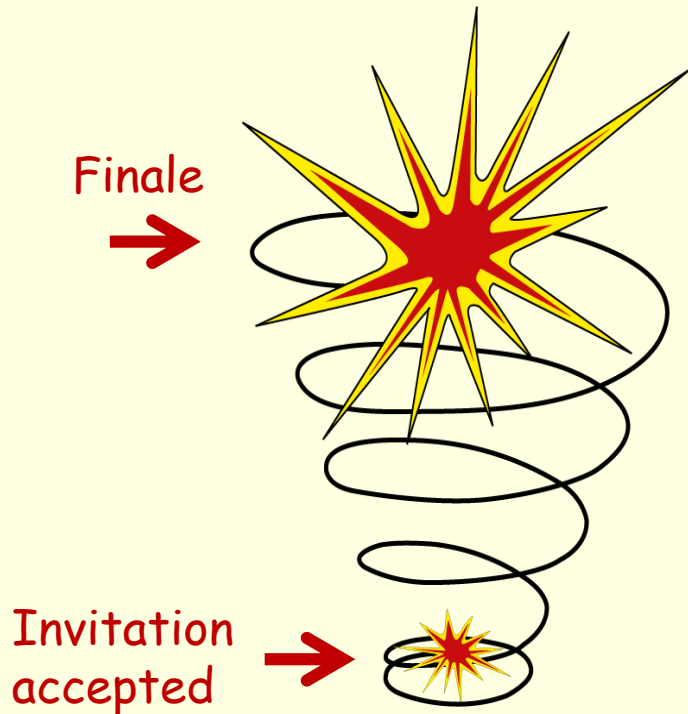
NIGYSOB 'Now I've got you, you son of a bitch' Partner 'A' lets Partner 'B' dig themselves into a deeper and deeper hole, before launching a devastating attack, against which Partner 'B' has no defence.

The favourite psychological game played by couples is 'UPROAR'

1. The 'invitation' to play Uproar happens whenever Partner A says something which causes an angry or hurt feeling in Partner B.
2. Partner B may initially decline the invitation by not responding in a hurt or aggressive way.
3. Partner A may then re-issue the invitation or issue another one.
4. This time, Partner B may take exception and respond accordingly.
5. Partner A now feels hurt or angry at the response and raises the stakes with a supplementary invitation.
6. **Game on! The anger spiral is triggered!**



Don't play the 'Uproar' game



- It's important to discuss the Uproar game and the invitations [things said and done that cause arguments].
- Key to avoiding Uproar is to spot the invitation into a game and decline it [by not rising to the bait].
- Maybe you could agree a humorous codeword to use when an invitation is received, a codeword which says 'let's not play' e.g. 'sausages'.

When resisting Uproar invitations, acknowledge your partners feelings, 'I can see you are upset/angry/annoyed, but let's not fight, let's discuss'.