

STC-Module 3: Stopping the mode cycles (by Eckhard Roediger)

After introducing the model (Module 1) and the MCC (module 2) the next step is to ask the couple to identify and stop upcoming mode cycles themselves. After you stopped them in the session and pointed out the mode cycle to them they know how it looks like and how it feels to get into them.

Therapist: *"Now you are aware of your most typical mode cycle. Being in a mode cycle is like being in a shooting during war. There is no winner and it only means a loss of blood or in your case of "emotional substance" in your relationship. This is why you have to stop the cycles without any "ifs and buts". It does not matter, who of you two becomes aware of the active mode cycle first. Whoever that is, he has my permission to step out by giving a sign. What sign do you want to agree upon?... If you let me make a suggestion: What usually works best is the "time out" sign that coaches use interrupting a basketball game" Show them the T-sign. "Do you guys think this could work?.....Once one partner shows this sign, the other partner needs to stop. The interrupting partner has to set a time when the both of you are going to meet again to continue every-day life. Then please separate into two different rooms without any further discussion and try to rebalance yourselves. When the time to join again has come, please continue business-as-usual without any discussion. Treat yourself like "friendly foreigners" e.g. like friends, neighbors of workplace colleagues. You have this pattern in your repertoire. So please apply it to each other too. The time for discussion is in the sessions with me. Any questions?.....Do you both agree to this homework assignment for the next week?"*

You cannot continue therapy unless the couple does not manage to limit mode clashes and cool down their emotional struggling. This is the first significant contribution the couple needs to make.

Homework assignment: Ask the couple to stop as many clashes as possible. Praise and encourage them to continue trying, even if they fail sometimes!