



Wendy Trainor  
*communication and healing*

## Escalation

Janet: (angrily) You are late again tonight. You didn't even have the courtesy to call. You are getting more and more like your father every day! You are so irresponsible!

Mike: (wounded) That hurts. You know I'm not like my father!

Janet: He was unreliable and so are you!

Mike: And you are a paragon of virtue! You're so perfect!

Janet: Well, at least I put forth the effort – unlike certain people I know!

Often when we are angry and attack our partner they will retaliate with a counter attack and then we will respond in kind. We all have a lot of ammunition on each other and this can escalate to the point of being totally out of control. Usually, at some point, one will storm off in an effort to end the encounter. Unfortunately, the wounds from the harsh words are taken to heart and last long after the argument is over.

It is important to learn to talk about our underlying feelings – those more vulnerable emotions that lurk underneath our anger. This, in turn, invites a more tender response from our partner.

Janet: (hurt) You are late again tonight. You didn't even have the courtesy to call. I feel hurt and angry. It feels like I am not important enough for you to think about when you are out.

Mike: That really upset you didn't it?

Janet: Yes. I understand that you will be late sometimes. I would just like to think I am important to you and you would let me know.

Mike: I understand what you are saying. You don't feel important to me when I don't let you know what is happening with me. I will be sure to let you know in the future.

Janet: I would appreciate that.

Often couples don't feel safe enough in their relationship to express their more vulnerable feelings to their partner. They are afraid of being attacked by their partner when they are open and vulnerable. Couples get locked into negative cycles that keep them feeling distant. Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy helps couples establish a secure bond so they can begin to create positive ways of interacting that reinforce the sense of connection they are longing for.

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