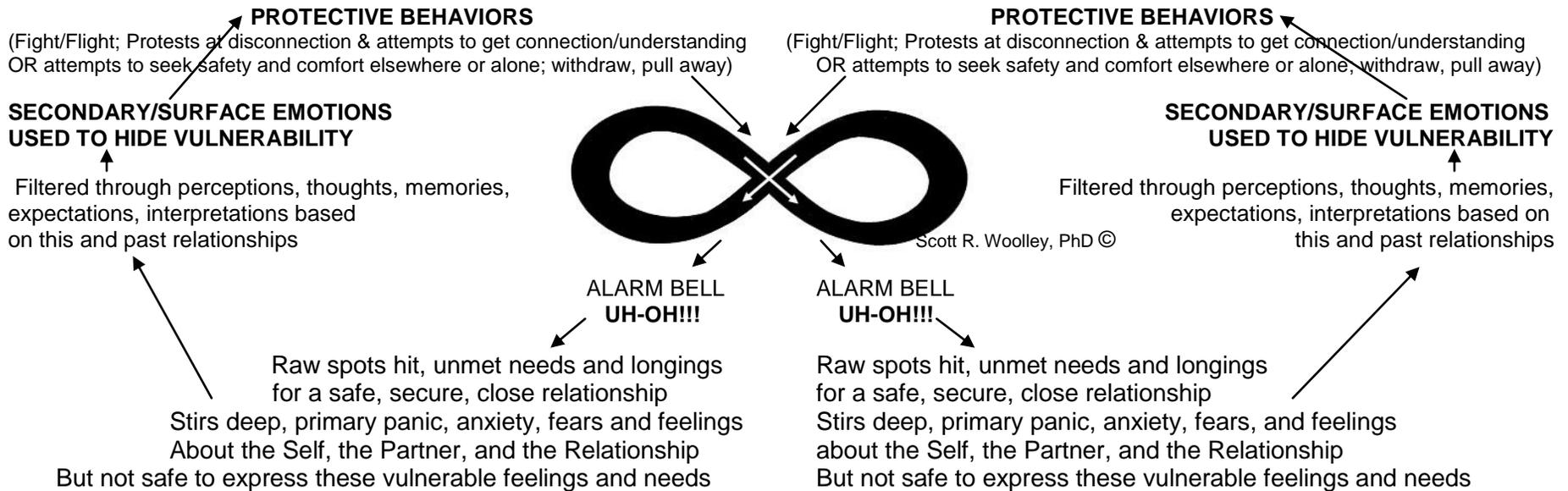


## THE NEGATIVE CYCLE – YOUR COMMON ENEMY - THE PROBLEM YOU CAN BOTH WORK ON TOGETHER



We all have needs to feel loved, cared for, treasured; to feel our bond is safe and secure (attachment needs and longings) from cradle to grave. When our needs aren't met by the person whose love we need, some try again gently, some fight to get them met (complaint, criticism, demands, pleading, control), and some inhibit or try to turn off the need (avoid conflict, withdraw, pull away, addictions, or turn to others for understanding and comfort). We may have begun to develop these ways of coping early in life. The brain has built neural pathways, reinforced over time, that lead us to cope in these ways automatically.

If it feels like our partner's behavior threatens the safety or security of our bond → Our brain's alarm bell rings, based on our perceptions, thoughts, memories, and expectations from this relationship and relationships with parents and others → Our rapid filter leads us to feel fear about the relationship and/or ourselves in this relationship. If we can't vulnerably, with trust, tell our partner our deep, primary emotions (fear of being unlovable, rejected, seen as inadequate; fear of losing the relationship, being abandoned; etc.) and ask for what we need (soothing, reassurance of being loved, comfort, validation, understanding, safety and security), and/or our partner can't or won't meet these needs → Our hearts will beat faster, adrenaline will flood our system, we'll lose blood from our pre-frontal cortex (thus lose good judgment, develop tunnel vision) and we'll move into self-preservation, not couple-preservation, and into fight or flight (maybe freeze first), reacting from secondary emotions (anger, frustration, irritation, disdain, contempt, disappointment, etc.) with protective behaviors (numbing, fighting, blaming/criticizing, defending, withdrawing, avoiding conflict, addictions, etc.) to avoid expressing vulnerability and longings → That will sound the alarm bell in our partner, → Who will then use his/her rapid filter, bypass primary emotions and needs, fill with adrenaline, lose blood from the pre-frontal cortex, and → React from his/her secondary emotions with his/her protective behaviors → Our alarm bell rings again → And on and on.

Over time, the pattern becomes rigid and happens more and more quickly. Couples feel stuck in these repeating cycles of isolation, disconnection, and pain. Learn how each person affects the other (often unwittingly). Step out of the pattern, slow down together, bring your bodies back to homeostasis and work for couple-preservation. Providing safety and security for your partner, even though you are upset, will build new neural pathways leading to these behaviors and reactions that bring calm to your partner, rather than push them to protect themselves. These positive cycles will lead to mutual connection, safety, security, trust and comfort. Together, fight the real problem: the automatic negative cycles.