

PRINTABLE WORKSHEET

Do you shut down in arguments?

A self-check for flooding and stonewalling, plus a 20-minute break routine. Rate each statement: 1 = rarely, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often, 4 = almost always.

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| 1. In an argument, my heart races or I feel hot, and I can't think straight. | ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 |
| 2. I go quiet or blank when my partner is upset with me. | ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 |
| 3. Partway through a hard conversation, I stop being able to take in what my partner is saying. | ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 |
| 4. I leave the room, or badly want to, to stop an argument. | ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 |
| 5. I say things I regret once things get heated. | ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 |
| 6. I give short answers, or agree just to make it stop. | ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 |
| 7. Afterwards, I avoid bringing the topic back up. | ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 |
| 8. It takes me hours, or longer, to feel normal again after a fight. | ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 |
| 9. My partner says I shut them out, or that they can't reach me. | ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 |
| 10. I'd rather keep the peace than say what I really think. | ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 |

Flooding (items 1, 3, 5, 8): ____ / 16 **Shutting down** (items 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10): ____ / 24

Flooding of 10+ or shutting down of 14+ is high. Both high: flood, then shut down. Shutdown only: avoiding conflict to keep the peace. Flooding only: flood and fight.

The 20-minute break

Call it: "I'm getting flooded. I want to finish this, and I can't do it well right now. Twenty minutes, then I'm back."

• **0–5 min, breathe:** cyclic sighs — in through the nose, a second short inhale, then a long, slow exhale through the mouth.

• **5–15 min, move:** walk, stretch, step outside. Don't rehearse the argument.

• **15–18 min, settle:** notice your heart and jaw. If not calmer, a few more slow sighs.

• **18–20 min, prepare:** what was my partner trying to tell me? What's one thing I can own?

Come back: "I'm back. Before I say my side, let me make sure I heard yours."

Interactive version, with your results calculated for you: victoriarelationshiptherapy.ca/tools-shutdown-flooding-check.html