

## Caring Actions, Not Crabby Reactions



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*Content on this side is intended for the educator's reference. The information on the back can be photocopied and shared with clients.*

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**Objective:** Clients will understand the difference between caring actions and caring reactions and be able to identify examples of both.

**Audience:** This tool is appropriate with clients who struggle to express themselves in caring ways or who are frequently irritable or “crabby” with their partners.

**Estimated Time:** 10-20 minutes

**Educator Instructions:** Before reading the instructions on the tool, start with the Discussion Starter provided below or something similar. The tool could be left with the client and completed before your next visit. If you meet with them as a couple, have each person take a turn in sharing how they would react to each example. If needed, come up with other examples and encourage the client/couple to practice how they would respond in a “caring” way.

**Discussion Starter:** Research shows that happy couples have far more positive moments than negative ones. This isn't because those couples are special, or just lucky. It is possible to *choose* to stay positive, even when we're tempted to be irritable, angry or “crabby.” With this activity, let's have some fun thinking about “crabby reactions” – they are often easier and more common when we are feeling stressed. And, let's also seriously think about “caring actions.” It takes more effort to show “caring actions” but these actions are what keep couples together. Let's take a look at some examples first [discuss examples]. Now, let's practice what you would do.

**Follow-up:** During your next visit, inquire about the clients' progress in replacing their “Crabby reactions” with “Caring actions.”



## Caring Actions, Not Crabby Reactions



Happy couples have far more positive moments than negative ones. This isn't because those couples are special, or just lucky. It is possible to *choose* to stay positive, even when we're tempted to be irritable, angry or "crabby." How do you react to your partner?

### Here are some examples of couple moments, with a "Crabby Reaction" and a "Caring Action."

- Example 1:** Your partner answers their cell phone while you are trying to tell them something important.
- Crabby reaction:** Shout at your partner while they're on the phone, and give them the cold shoulder when they hang up.
- Caring action:** Wait patiently; when the phone conversation ends, say, "That hurt my feelings. I felt ignored."
- Example 2:** You are very busy, helping one child with their homework and changing another child's diaper at the same time. Your partner walks in and says, "Is dinner ready yet?"
- Crabby reaction:** You say, "You can cook your own dinner! Can't you see I'm busy! I can't believe you never help out around here!"
- Caring action:** You say, "I could really use your help. Can you take care of the kids, or would you rather get dinner started?"

**What would you do?** Now practice how you would react to your partner. Read the following examples and come up with your own Crabby Reactions and Caring Actions for each one.

Your alarm clock didn't go off this morning, and now you are running late for work. Your partner is still asleep in bed and the children aren't ready to leave for school yet.

**Crabby reaction:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Caring action:** \_\_\_\_\_

You've been looking forward to watching your favorite TV program, but when the time comes your partner insists he or she wants to control the remote.

**Crabby reaction:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Caring action:** \_\_\_\_\_

You and your partner have agreed on a budget for your money. At the end of the month, your partner has spent too much on eating out, and you barely have enough money to pay your bills.

**Crabby reaction:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Caring action:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Healthy, happy couples use more caring actions instead of crabby reactions each day.**

**Choose to stay positive!**