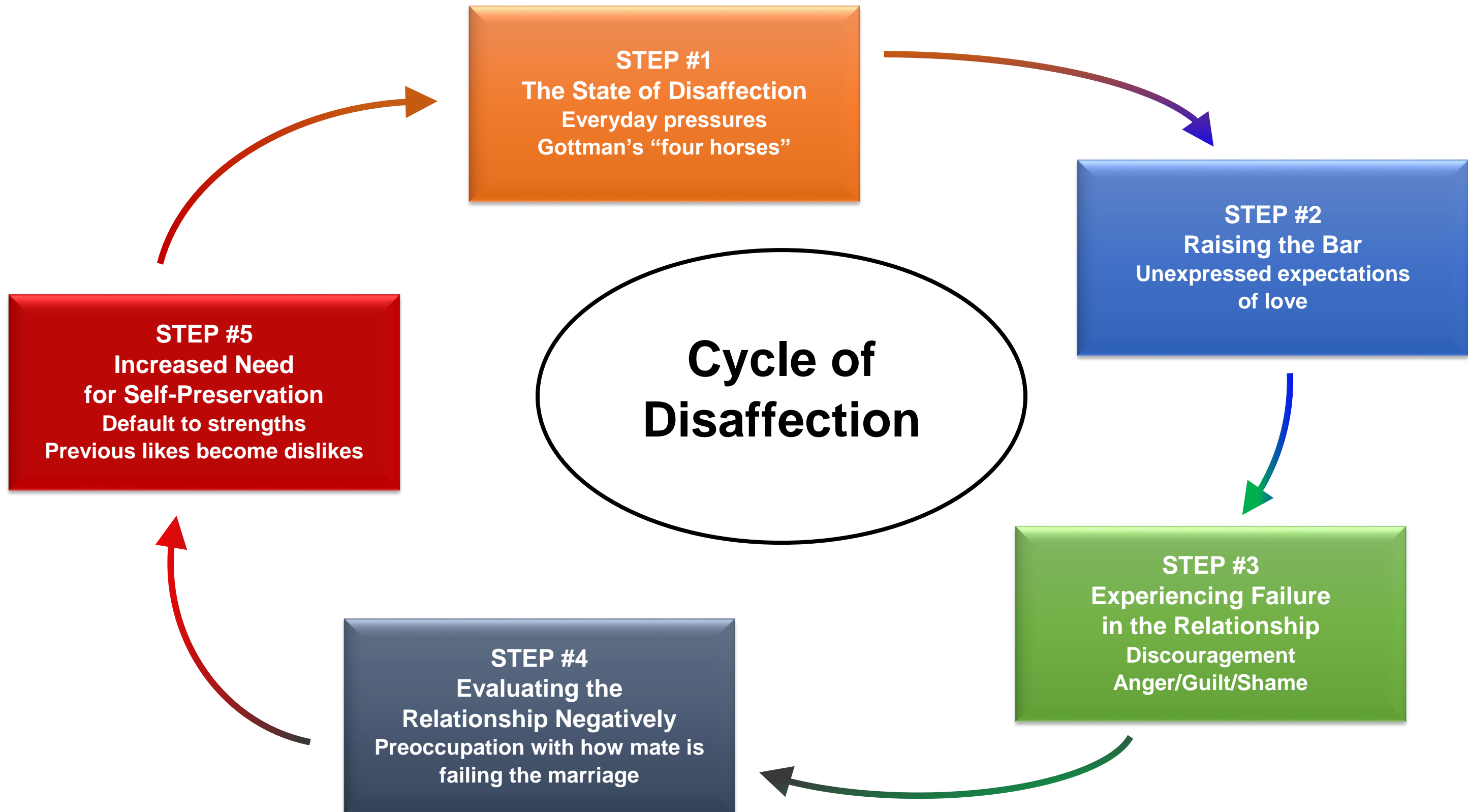


THE CYCLE OF DISAFFECTION

There appears to be what I call a "Cycle of Disaffection" ... that occurs in failing marriages.



- **STRESS**

We're pulled in every direction, busy and going nowhere fast, having to do more with less time. Before long, tempers flare, stomachs ache, hearts break. Hurried decisions become bad decisions. And bad decisions make people hurt.

Marriage becomes a perpetual uphill climb. And our hurt makes us irritable, discouraged, and very difficult to live with. Some have just flat-out been overwhelmed by life, wayward kids, financial pressures, loss, health problems, and demanding work schedules. Take an inventory. What stresses have been tearing at your relationship since you married?

- **EVIL**

Satan is the great confuser and the ultimate liar. He magnifies our weaknesses and fears and uses them as wedges that come between us. Peter described the evil one as a "roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (*1 Peter 5:8*). And he's out to take as big a bite as he can out of your marriage.

- **FALSE EXPECTATIONS**

Here are a few of the most common: Marriage will complete me. —Life will be easy now. —My spouse won't hurt me. —Love will keep us together.

Marriage brings together two people who have many human frailties that are at first magnified, then hopefully, in Christ, strengthened into godly traits. But it takes a lot of humility, grace, and constant work at understanding what's reasonable for you and your spouse to expect from each other.

- **SELFISHNESS**

In our marriage we don't really want to hurt each other. But we do. We fail each other. We say hurtful words. Marriage was designed to be a team effort, one of loving and giving, of making a commitment to our mate. But selfishness, so rampant in our culture, creates an "island of me," when we should be sharing the "island of we."

- **SCRIPTS FROM THE PAST**

A lot of our behavior is influenced by scripts that were written for us long ago. For instance, if one or both of our parents abandoned us when we were children, we'll live today as if we expect those we love to abandon us in the here and now. We need, therefore, to look for those elements of our lives that are unresolved —physical, emotional, or sexual abuse; the effects of parental divorce. Then we need to deal with those losses and hurts in sound, biblical ways.

- **SPEED**

Intimacy takes time, but when we live in the fast lane, intimacy falls by the wayside. For example, maybe we think a date night will solve our problems. But what happens on date nights when things haven't been going well? One lousy night! The result is loneliness, anger, feelings of rejection, and sorrow. A natural response to this pain is to create a gap between you and your partner—which can pave the way for destructive cycle of conflict and distancing."

As we look upon the "disaffection" that occurs so easily in our marriages, especially in today's world, we're reminded of the scripture verse that says, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (*Romans 12:2*).