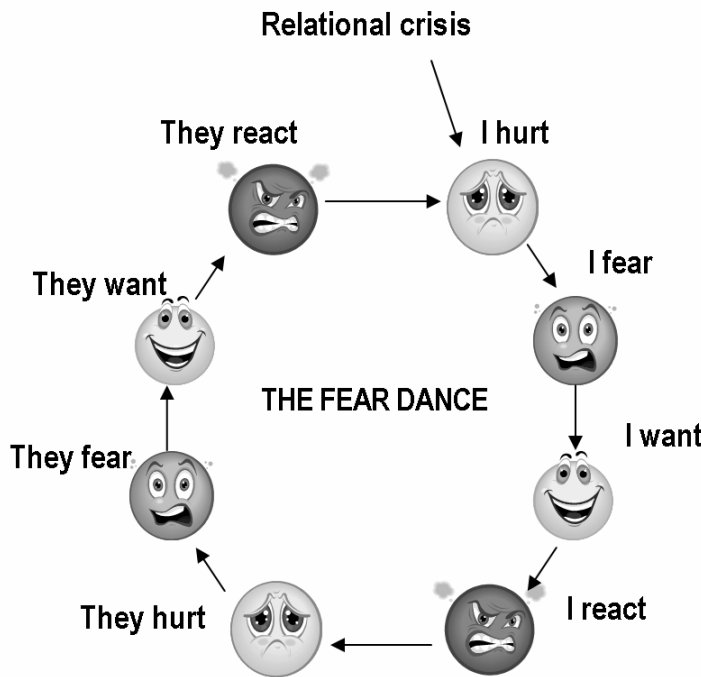


We all have conflict. What we do not see so clearly is that at the core of our conflicts is FEAR. We're not talking about fear in the sense of being afraid for your safety. We're talking about emotional fear. These emotional fears become our "buttons".

When someone pushes your fear button, you tend to react with unhealthy words or actions aimed at getting the other person to change and give you what you want. Often your reaction triggers the core fear of the other person, who then reacts with unhealthy words or actions to try to get you to fulfill his or her wants. This cycle becomes the Fear Dance and it keeps us stuck.



## So how does the Fear Dance work?

This diagram traces the steps of the dance, what goes on inside us and how our actions cause a similar pattern in others:

**You hurt.** What does your hurt look like? Think of the range of emotions you feel when you are wounded: bewilderment, sadness, disconnection, anger, confusion, worry, rage, frustration, horror, and embarrassment. Those are just a handful of the words that could describe your real-life hurts.

**You want.** When you hurt, you want a solution. You want things that will make you feel better. Without realizing it, you often expect that the other person will change to satisfy you and give you what you want. You see that person both as your problem and as your solution: You think, If only he or she would change.

**You fear.** When a conflict stirs powerful emotions of hurt and want, it also touches specific fears. Think about your own troubled relationships. You want to connect, but you fear you're not attractive enough (or competent enough or smart enough or whatever). You want to be accepted, but you fear you're not good enough. You want respect, but you fear the other person will look down on you. Do you see how your fears actually reflect your wants? When you feel your wants won't be fulfilled, you experience fear.

**You react.** Most people—consciously and unconsciously—fall into well-worn patterns of reacting when someone pushes their fear buttons. You may fear losing control, so you try to seize control. You may fear losing connection, so you try to seize connection. Reactions are "strategies" we employ to get the other person to help us with our wants.

This means that it's not merely your fears that disrupt and injure your relationships; it's how you choose to react when someone pushes your fear buttons. Most of us use unhealthy, faulty reactions to deal with our fear, and as a result we sabotage our relationships.

Come hear more about the **Fear Dance** from Dr. Greg Smalley

In chapel: **Tuesday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2007**