

Lexicon of Marital Conflict

What two characteristics do all of these statements have in common?
The answer is at the end of the list.

1. You always ...
2. You never ...
3. You should ... (do XYZ)
4. You're the one who ...
5. I thought you said ... (which is why I cannot trust anything you say)
6. Why do I always have to be the one who ...
7. Why am I the one who always has to change?
8. You always think you're right.
9. Who made you an expert on ...?
10. You always have to have it your way.
11. You always get to do what you want.
12. I can't believe you did that.
13. You just think you know it all.
14. You don't really mean that.
15. You're not really sorry.
16. You're just saying that.
17. That's what you always say.
18. Uh huh, yeah, right.
19. Why do you always have to be that way?
20. There you go again.
21. Like you really mean it.
22. You don't talk to your friends like that.
23. Do you hear how you sound?
24. Whatever I say you have to say the opposite.
25. I think you just like to argue
26. That's where you're wrong.
27. So I'm just wrong again.
28. Why can't you just be honest? / Try being honest for once.
29. Why can't you just ...
30. Why do you always have to ... (e.g., be that way; be right)?
31. Why can't you just listen for once?

32. Don't tell me what to do!
33. Don't tell me what I feel / what I should feel!
34. Don't tell me what I'm thinking because you don't know.
35. You should know.
36. I shouldn't have to explain it to you.
37. I don't want to have to teach you.
38. It's not my job to grow you up.
39. I don't feel like raising another child.
40. It's too late for that; you had your chance.
41. As I said, it was *your* fault.
42. I don't want to talk about it.
43. You can never just leave it alone, can you?
44. Just answer the question.
45. Why do you always have to turn everything into an argument / a fight?
46. You're always picking fights.
47. I'm not letting you get away with this (again).
48. I'm going to show you what it feels like / what you did to me.
49. You don't know anything about that / what you're talking about.
50. You started it.
51. You've got an answer / excuse for everything, don't you.
52. Please don't do it just because I asked you to / I got angry.
53. Now are you happy?!
54. That's not how everyone else is.
55. It doesn't work like that.
56. Whatever.
57. Did you have to say that?
58. Why do you always have to say that?
59. You just don't understand.
60. You wouldn't / couldn't understand.
61. Look what you did / caused (the kids are crying / you woke up the baby)?
62. What's the matter with you?
63. Why do I always have to be the bad guy?
64. Would it kill you to say "Thank you" or "I'm sorry".
65. You don't appreciate anything I do for you.
66. You never listen ...
67. You know what's wrong with you ... ?
68. So everything I do is wrong.
69. It's always about you, isn't it?
70. It's never good enough for you.
71. Don't punish me just because you're mad at someone else.

72. Don't punish me just because you're mad at yourself.
73. What are you so mad about?
74. You're not kind or respectful to me.
75. It's always tit-for-tat with you.
76. You're so judgmental.
77. With you, everything is always black or white.
78. Did you forget to take your medication today?
79. You don't have to say it; I already know what you're thinking.
80. If I knew this about you, I would never have married you!
81. I'm sorry I ever met you.

What two characteristics do all of these statements have in common?

- 1) Each item has no content, no topic, no issue.
- 2) Each item is used to shut down communication by being:
 - a. Oppositional – denying or opposing the other person's narrative
 - b. Defensive – explaining and justifying
 - c. Counter-attack – verbally striking back at the other person

The result of each is to escalate an argument, creating a "cyclone", and blocking movement toward resolution.