

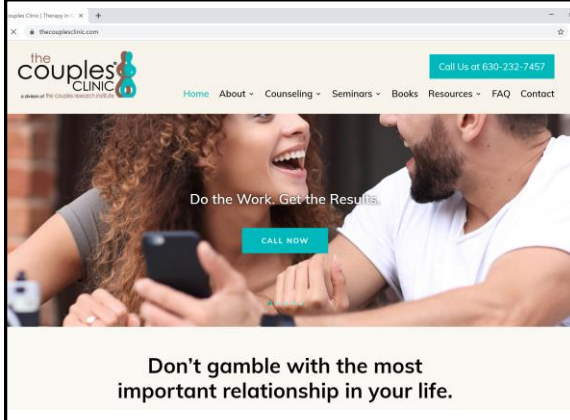
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Pragmatic/Experiential Therapy for Couples

Brent J. Atkinson, Ph.D.



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Don't gamble with the most important relationship in your life.

2

Scientific Advances

1. Breakthrough discoveries regarding exactly what people who do well in their relationships do differently than people who don't do well.
2. Discovery of specific practices that can rewire the automatic habits and inclinations that often interfere with intimate relationships.

3

Scientific Advances in Two Fields

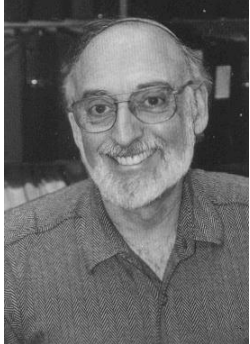
1. Breakthrough discoveries regarding exactly what people who do well in their relationships do differently than people who don't do well.

4

Longitudinal Studies

(Since 1975, following couples for up to 15 years)

5



John Gottman

6



7



8

91% accuracy in predicting eventual fate of the relationship.

9

The Love Lab

10

Prerequisite Skills

There are prerequisite skills for having a satisfying, enduring relationship.

11

1 out of 4

12

Why?

1. At the moments when the skills are most needed, people often aren't even trying.

13

Crucial Moments

When you don't like the way your partner is thinking or acting.

14

We Let Ourselves Off the Hook

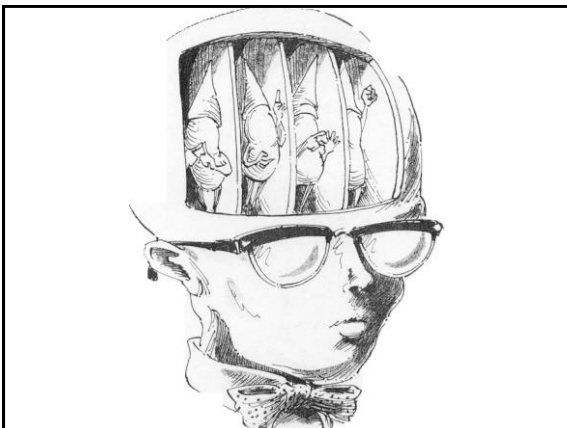
"I'm only acting this way because my partner is acting that way!"

15

Why?

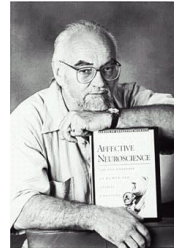
1. At the moments when the skills are most needed, people often aren't even trying.
2. Even when they are trying, their brains produce automatic urges, tendencies, and inclinations often take them in the wrong direction.

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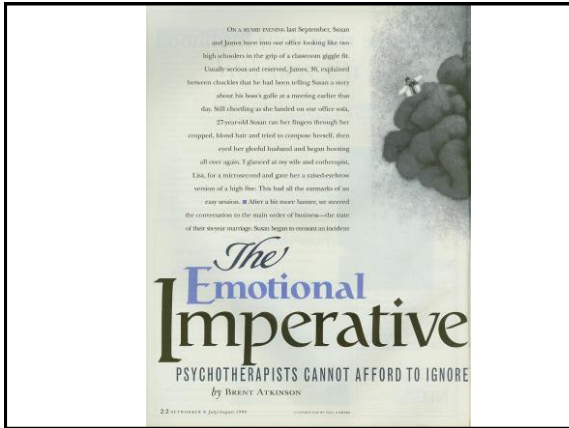
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Jaak Panksepp

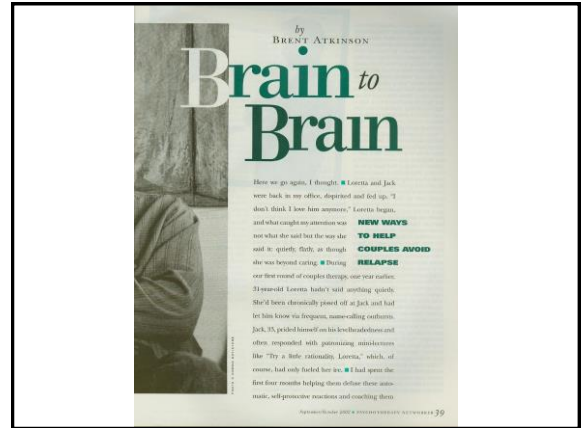


Affective Neuroscience

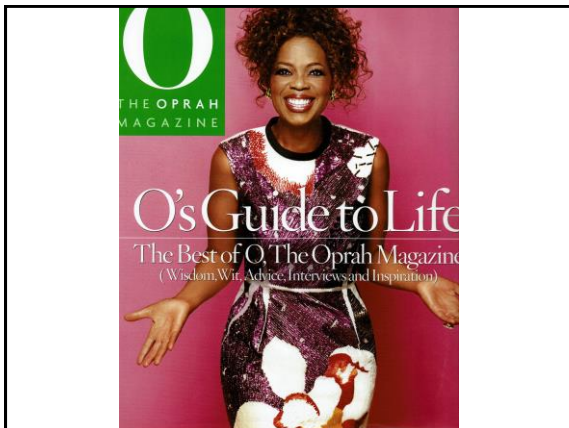
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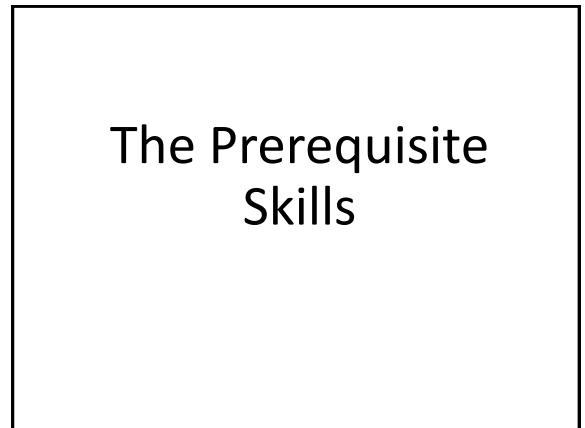
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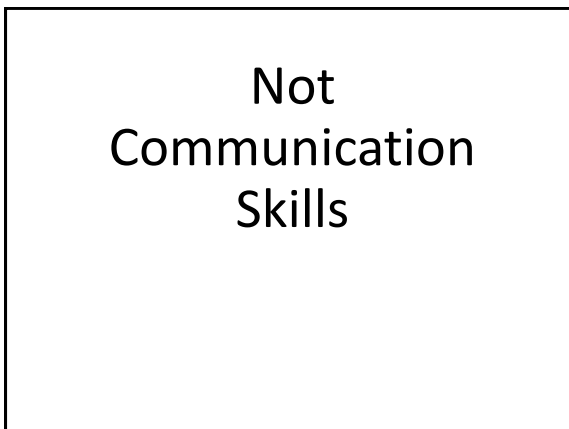
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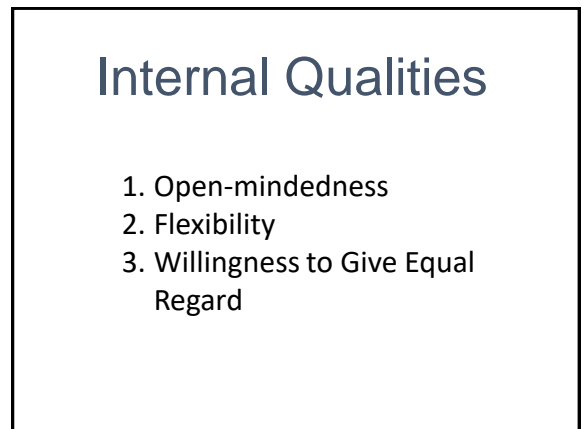
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Most of us tend to believe that when we are upset with our partners, it's because our partners have behaved badly.

(Their behavior is selfish, irresponsible, immature, inconsiderate, etc..)

25

Studies suggest that when partners get upset with each other, the vast majority of the time, neither partner has done anything that is intrinsically wrong.

26

69% of upsets are due to conflicting values, priorities, beliefs or personality tendencies for which there is no generally-accepted standard.

27

Things That *Really Are Wrong*

1. Physical aggressiveness or threats of physical aggression.
2. Intentional lying or deliberate deception.
3. Violating a mutually agreed upon standard of faithfulness in the area of sexual conduct.
4. Breaking a clear agreement with no good reason.
5. Badmouthing or undermining one's partner.
6. Violating one's partner's privacy or personal space.
7. Making an irreversible, unilateral decision regarding something about which one knows that one's partner has strong feelings.

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Studies indicate that when people use the following words to describe their partner's actions, their partners usually aren't doing things that are inherently bad for relationships. Rather, they have legitimately different priorities, preferences or values.

Selfish	Inconsiderate
Irresponsible	Self-Absorbed
Inattentive	Unrealistic
Insensitive	Unfeeling/Uncaring
Immature	Needy
Unrealistic	Controlling
Irrational	Negative
Short-Sighted	Overreacting
Biased	Lazy
Misguided	Rude

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Video:
I don't see the need

30

Core Differences in Emotional Wiring

Partners are often wired very differently when it comes to how they cope with stress and maintain a sense of emotional stability. One partner's [legitimate] way of maintaining emotional stability can directly interfere with other partners.

31

Core Differences

1. Independence First vs. Togetherness First
2. Invest in the Future First vs. Live for the Moment First
3. Predictability First vs. Spontaneity First
4. Slow to Upset vs. Readily Upset
5. Problem Solving First vs. Understanding First

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Video:
It's not about the nail

33

God's Cruel Joke?

(Opposites Attract)

34

Video:
Swiss Sweaty T-Shirt Study

35

Video:
Letter to the kids

36

Skill #1:

Avoid Erroneous Fault-Finding

- Believing that your partner's behavior is wrong when it isn't.
- Believing that your partner's viewpoint is off-base when it is arguably as legitimate as your own.

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Openness and Flexibility Skills

1. Avoid Erroneous Fault-Finding
2. Find the Understandable Part
3. Identify Underlying Needs, Values and Worries
4. Offer Assurance
5. Give and Ask For Equal Regard

38

“What if I'm making every effort to be flexible, open-minded, and willing to “give and take, but doesn't reciprocate?”

39

Effective people stand up for themselves without making a big deal of it.

40

“Standing Up” Skills

6. Stand Up for Yourself without Making a Big Deal About the Fact that You Had To.

- Ask and Offer
- Broaden the Scope
- Temporarily Distance Yourself
- Don't Make a Big Deal of it
- Try Again Later
- Refuse to Continue Business as Usual (only if needed)

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Summary of Skills Needed for Effectiveness During Disagreements

The "Openness and Flexibility" Skills

1. **Avoid Erroneous Fault-Finding.** Don't jump to conclusions. Give the benefit of the doubt and with an open mind, ask your partner why she is acting the way she is. Think: "Do you think I could have done this differently right in the present situation?" Get clear about objectives, different needs, needs, options, priorities or standards.
2. **Find the understandable part.** Find and acknowledge the part of the message or viewpoint that you can understand or agree with, even if you can't agree with everything she's saying.
3. **Identify the Underlying Needs, Values and Worries.** If their values don't make sense to you, instead of concluding that they are faulty, assume that there are things influencing her that aren't immediately apparent to you. There may be underlying needs, values or worries that are influencing her viewpoint or actions in the present situation in ways that you don't understand. Ask her, "what do you think I don't understand?" (Try to explore the needs, values or worries that you know that may be influencing you.)
4. **Offer Assurance.** Assume her that you're trying to be flexible and keep an open mind, and that you realize that you may have highlighted important needs, values, priorities or concerns that she may be able to discuss with you. Let her know that there is no reason why your viewpoint or perspective should count more than hers.
5. **Give and Ask for Equal Regard.** Let your partner know that you're willing to keep an open mind to the potential merit of her viewpoint. If a decision needs to be made, be willing to be flexible and attempt to find a middle ground, ask her to do the same.

The "Standing Up" Skills

6. **Standing Up for Yourself without Making a Big Deal About the Fact that You Had To.** Continue a non-judgmental attitude with a willingness to seek the best when your needs, needs or priorities are not being given equal regard.
 - a. **Ask and Offer.** Without making a big deal of it, ask her to try to be more open-minded or flexible, while offering assurance that you don't expect her to agree with you or to just blindly comply with your wishes - you're just asking her to be open to the possibility that you might have a legitimate viewpoint and to be willing to give and ask for equal regard with you.
 - b. **Broaden the Scope.** If the counterpart is too dismissive or inflexible, rather than assuming that her behavior is due to inflexibility, consider ways to broaden the scope. Consider that she might be overreacting because she's had a bad day or you said something that hurt her, or because she's feeling stressed or out of control in another area of her life. Ask her about it, and be willing to discuss it. This relates to your request.
 - c. **Temporarily Distance Yourself.** If she continues to criticize or disregard you, let her know that you don't want to be treated her right now.
 - d. **Don't Make a Big Deal of it.** When you're by yourself, lighten up and let go of anger and resentment. You don't have to make a big deal of her inflexible behavior or closed-minded attitude. It's not a crime that she would do this. It's a challenge for her to be completely open to things that are important to her and to be heard and treated the same as you. This goal needs to be seen that she respects your feelings and opinions.
 - e. **Try Again Later.** Begin a new conversation without a chip on your shoulder. Don't try to get your partner to see the "logic" that she should be closed-minded attitude now. (You're interested in opening things up rather than the issue that didn't get resolved and try to resolve it again, beginning with the Openness and Flexibility Skills.)
 - f. **Refuse to Continue "Business as Usual" (only if needed).** Continue an open relationship, flexibility and willingness to give and take in general aspects of conversation. If your partner still refuses to do the same, make it clear that it doesn't feel right to you to proceed everything is okay. Inform her of your intention to just move forward with the rest of your life. Clarify that you're still willing to try to find common ground, and that you're still offering equal regard because it doesn't feel like she cares about you enough to give you your opinion and priorities equal regard.

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Case Example: Grace and Adam

43

Recordings

- Recording 1 – Instructions on how to use the recordings
- Recording 2 – When you feel freshly upset with your partner
- Recording 3 – When you are the one who becomes frustrated or upset first.
- Recording 3.5 – When your partner's behavior seems wrong
- Recording 4 – When your partner is the one who feels frustrated or upset first.
- Recording 5 – Getting on the same page with your expectations.
- Recording 6 – When being open and flexible isn't enough
- Recording 7 – If your partner criticizes you harshly or puts you down.

<http://thecouplesclinic.com/dhrs-rec/>

90-91

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Recording 2:
When You Feel Freshly Upset with Your Partner



Ch.8

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Recording 3:
When You Are the One Who
Becomes Frustrated or Upset
First



Ch.8

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Recording 3.5:
When Your Partner's Behavior Seems
Wrong



Ch.8

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Recording 3:
When You Are the One Who
Becomes Frustrated or Upset
First



Ch.8

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Openness and Flexibility Skills

1. Avoid Erroneous Fault-Finding
2. Find the Understandable Part
3. Identify Underlying Needs, Values and Worries
4. Offer Assurance
5. Give and Ask For Equal Regard

Ch.2, 157

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Recording 6:
When Being Open and Flexible Isn't Enough

Ch.8

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"Standing Up" Skills

6. Stand Up for Yourself without Making a Big Deal About the Fact that You Had To.

- Ask and Offer
- Broaden the Scope
- Temporarily Distance Yourself
- Don't Make a Big Deal of It
- Try Again Later
- Refuse to Continue Business as Usual (only if needed)

Ch.2,157

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Knowing it is one thing;
Doing it is another

52

Friendship Skills

1. Curiosity About Your Partner's World
2. Noticing and Acknowledging the Positive
3. Pursuing Shared Meaning
4. Making and Responding to Bids for Connection

32-35

53

Caring "Acts"

54

Pragmatic/Experiential Therapy for Couples (PET-C)

TR: 1-2

55

PET-C

Pragmatic Focus

- Therapist begins by accepting the client's goal: "I want more responsiveness from my partner."
- Therapist helps each partner see that s/he is going about trying to get more responsiveness in ways that 1) are highly predictive of non-responsiveness, and 2) have been shown to be damaging to relationships in themselves.
- Therapist paints clear picture of more effective alternatives.

TR: 1-2

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Pragmatic Cornerstone

If you want more responsiveness from your partner...

- You need to develop the ability to think and act like people who almost always get the kind of responsiveness that they'd like to have from their partners.
- and -
- You need to stop thinking and acting like people who hardly ever get the kind of responsiveness that they'd like to have from their partners.

TR: 1-2

57

Most couples therapists spend a lot of time helping people get what they want and need from their partners even though they are going about trying to get it in ways that are highly predictive of relationship failure.

TR: 1-2

58

PET-C

Experiential Focus

- Once clients are "on board," therapist helps them come to understand that their relationship habits are rooted in deeply-conditioned nervous system tendencies and cannot be changed through good intentions alone. They need methods for reconditioning the way their nervous systems operate.
- Clients engage in daily practices that rewire the way their nervous systems operate when they become emotionally triggered, and increase naturally-occurring feelings of love and connection.

TR: 1-2

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I want my partner to be more responsive



The best way to get more responsiveness from my partner is to learn to think and act like people who almost always get responsiveness from their partners (and learn to stop thinking and acting like people who rarely get responsiveness from their partners.



In order to get better at thinking and acting like people who are good at getting responsiveness from their partners, I need to acquire nervous system tendencies and inclinations that carry me in the right direction.

60

Case Example:
Referral from Dr. Phil

61

Individual Assessment Interviews

62

Assessment Sessions

1. Joining
 - “My therapist ‘gets’ me”
 - “My therapist likes me”
2. What are each partner’s disagreement-Related Habits?
3. How much validity does each partner see in the other’s complaints?
4. To what extent is each partner villainizing the other?

TR: 4-8

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The Four Phases of the Pragmatic-Experiential
Method for Improving Relationships

Mutual Disarmament Phase

The therapist helps each client understand that...

- Few relationships survive when one or both partners erroneously believe that the other partner is more to blame for the unsatisfactory condition of the relationship.
- When one partner believes that the other is more to blame, it’s rarely true.
- It’s likely that his/her habits have likely been just as damaging to the relationship as his/her partner’s habits.

TR: 10-11

64

The “Kiss of Death” Intervention

TR: 10-11

65

Common Sources of Bias the Fuel Mistaken
Beliefs About Overall Blame

1. The mistaken assumption that obvious offenses are more damaging than disagreement-related offenses

Ch. 6

66

Common Sources of Bias the Fuel Mistaken Beliefs About Overall Blame

2. "I'm only behaving this way because my partner is behaving that way!" (My behavior is a justifiable reaction to the provocative/unreasonable actions of my partner.)

Ch. 6

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Delivery-Type Offenses

- erroneous fault-finding;
- unwillingness to compromise;
- acting "high and mighty";
- putting one's partner down

Responding-Type Offenses

- defensiveness;
- dismissiveness (reverse erroneous fault-finding);
- shutting down;
- walking away prematurely;
- unwillingness to talk about an issue;
- failing to stand up for oneself and instead, blaming one's partner for being selfish or controlling

Ch.6, 64

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Common Sources of Bias the Fuel Mistaken Beliefs About Overall Blame

3. The mistaken assumption that one shouldn't need to stand up for oneself because one's partner shouldn't be selfish or controlling in the first place.

Ch. 6

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Letter of Release

Compose a letter to your partner that presents a compelling case for why you don't think your partner is any more to blame for your relationship problems than you are. Describe the specific ways that you know you've contributed to the current condition of your relationship, and tell your partner why you have come to the realization that your contributions are as significant as your partner's.

TR: 12-16

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Video:
Releasing Partner from
Role of Villain

77

Video:
The "Kiss of Death" Intervention

TR: 10-11

78

Getting Husband on Board

79

Cultivating Receptivity

1. Indulge yourself in the positive qualities of your client. The client should sense that you are fond of him/her.
2. Take the time to let your client know that you "get" what it's like to be him/her.
3. Look for ways to put yourself on the same level as the client.
4. Assure client that you're not trying to tell him/her what to do or what to believe, and that you're of the opinion that s/he should do or believe whatever seems right to him/her.
5. Operate from a state where your first reaction is to welcome and accept whatever the client says or does.
6. Invite the client to share his/her reservations... welcome them... be happy when they come.
7. Look for ways to help the client avoid feeling shamed for having relationship habits that predict bad relationship outcomes.
8. Remind the client that you think his/her partner's habits just as off-track as his/hers are.
9. Avoid getting a "serious tone" as you talk. Keep it relaxed and light, but don't avoid sharing your thoughts directly.

TR: 17

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Cultivating Receptivity

10. Let the client sense that you're not getting your jollies from pointing out his/her bad habits. Rather, you're being truthful because you like him/her and you want him/her to have the kind of love and respect from his/her partner that you know s/he can have.
11. (After hearing client's reservations) "Let me give you a few things to think about." (rather than disputing client's thoughts/feelings)."
12. Don't act like you can expertly do the habits and are therefore in a position to point out what the client is doing wrong. Instead, say something like, "in situations like this, people who are really good at getting their partners to be responsive say to themselves things like...; and they say to their partners things like..." and they do things like...
13. Follow each moment in which you challenge the client with one of the above ways of cultivating receptivity.
14. Let the client feel your hopefulness and excitement about how his/her life could change if s/he chooses to change his/her habits.

TR: 17

81

Discussion: Where is the line between having a healthy opinion and judging others?
(Contempt)

82

The Mutual Disarmament Phase: Typical Progression

Week 1

Session 1: Conjoint assessment interview

Session 2: Individual assessment interview with partner 1. In last 10 minutes, give first half of the Kiss of Death Intervention. Ask each partner to read Chapters 1-6 and write a first draft of the letter detailed in Exercise 1 (Chapter 7).

Session 3: Individual assessment interview with partner 2. In last 10 minutes, give first half of the Kiss of Death Intervention. Ask each partner to read Chapters 1-6 and write a first draft of the letter detailed in Exercise 1 (Chapter 7).

Week 2

Session 4 & 5: Individual Sessions – Each client gives reflections on the insights they learned from Chapters 1-6 about their own dysfunctional relationship habits. Therapist share's his/her impressions about the client's dysfunctional habits (second half of Kiss of Death intervention). Therapist reviews client's draft of the letter in order to have much understanding s/he has regarding mutual blame and the degree to which client is assuming mutual responsibility. Client is typically asked to revise the letter.

Week 3

Session 6 & 7: Therapist meets with each partner individually to review his/her letter and continue working on dropping/revolving villainizing beliefs and attitudes. Therapist spends just a little bit of time talking with client about which direction the therapy will take once letters are written and shared (e.g., healing conversation about past hurts; or navigating present frustrations more effectively).

Week 4

Session 8: Each partner reads his/her letter (or speaks from notes), releasing the other from role of villain and explicitly assuming mutual responsibility for the condition of the relationship. Therapist helps each partner accept and express appreciation for partner's letter. If needed, therapist meets with each partner individually to help him/her process reactions to partner's letter. Therapist prepares partners for the next phase of therapy.

TR: 21

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Assessment Sessions

1. Joining
 - "My therapist 'gets' me"
 - "My therapist likes me"
2. What are each partner's disagreement-Related Habits?
3. How much validity does each partner see in the other's complaints?
4. To what extent is each partner villainizing the other?

TR: 4-8

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Video:
Husband Problem Description

85

Video:
Wife Problem Description

86

Assessment Sessions

1. Joining
 - “My therapist ‘gets’ me”
 - “My therapist likes me”
2. What are each partner’s disagreement-Related Habits?
3. How much validity does each partner see in the other’s complaints?
4. To what extent is each partner villainizing the other?

TR: 4-8

87

Video:
Joining with Husband

88

Video:
Joining with Wife

89

Front End

“Launcher” of Complaint	“Fielder” of Partner’s Complaint
Erroneous Fault-Finding	<u>Defensiveness</u> (I didn’t do anything wrong!)
	<u>Dismissiveness</u> (Actually, there’s something wrong with what you want!)

TR: 18

90

Making a Big Deal of Partner's Inflexibility or Closed-Mindedness.
Acting as if your partner is awful for being closed-minded or inflexible

Failing to Broaden the Scope
Assuming partner is acting this way due to selfishness etc. rather than looking *beyond the present situation* for reasons that could make your partner's inflexibility at least somewhat more understandable.

Failing to "Ask and Offer"
Neglecting to point out to your partner that you are trying to be open and flexible, but so far it seems like s/he's not willing to do the same.
Neglecting to ask...

- "Do you find anything at all understandable or legitimate about my perspective?"
- "Can you acknowledge that there's no way to know for sure whose perspective is best?"

TR: 19

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Unwillingness to Give Equal Regard
Acting as if the only acceptable solution is for partner to do what you want.

Failing to Ask for Equal Regard
Neglecting to offer proposals that take both perspectives into account.

Giving in to Keep the Peace
Failing to require equal regard when asking doesn't work

TR: 20

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Relationship Offense Configurations		
	Unwilling to Compromise	Fail to Stand Up
Erroneous Fault-Finding	My Way or the Highway Erroneous Fault-Finding Unwilling to Compromise	All Bark, No Bite Erroneous Fault-Finding Failing to Stand Up
Defensiveness/Dismissiveness	Get Off My Back Defensive and/or Dismissive Unwilling to Compromise	Conflict Avoider Defensive and/or Dismissive Failing to Stand Up
	Doormat No erroneous fault-finding, defensiveness, dismissiveness or inflexibility Failing to Stand Up	

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Video:
Wife's Problematic Habits

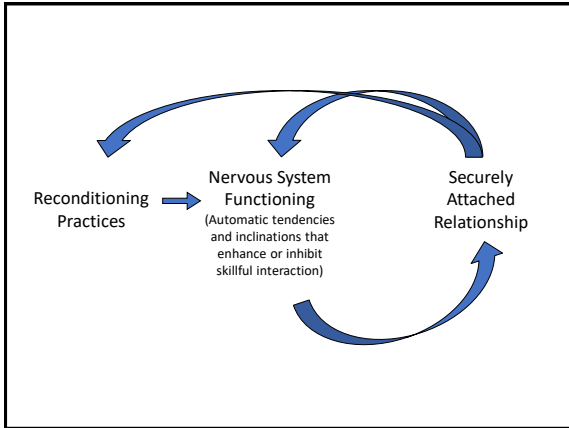
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Video:
1st Half of Kiss of Death Intervention:
Wife

95

Video:
Wife Next Session

96



97

Video:
Wife Reads Her Letter

98

Video:
Husband Reads Letter

99

What makes a "good enough" letter?

TR: 15-20

100

No Formal Letter

101

Relentless Focus on Self-Responsibility

102

Showing Husband the Door

103

Your Cases

Make list of as many recent situations you can think of where a couple had a disagreement that had not been resolved by the time the therapy session occurred.

- For each situation, indicate on scale of 1-10 how familiar you are with the details.

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The Four Phases of Pragmatic-Experiential Therapy for Couples

Navigating Everyday Frustrations (NEF)

1. Therapist helps partners interact more skillfully during sessions as they discussed unresolved frustrations.
2. Between sessions, each partner engages in skill-building exercises that improve his/her ability to effectively navigate disagreements.
3. Partners get on the same page with a game plan for handling perpetual differences.
4. As needed, each partner engages in exercises that re-wire automatic internal reactions that take him/her in the wrong directions during disagreements.

TR: 51-52

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The Four Phases of Pragmatic-Experiential Therapy for Couples

Navigating Everyday Frustrations (NEF)

1. Therapist helps partners interact more skillfully during sessions as they discussed unresolved frustrations.

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In-Session Intervention Methods

1. Stunt Double Method
2. Session Breaks for Recalibration

107

Stunt Double Method

Helping Wife Stand Up

108

Stunt Double Method

Helping Wife Stand Up

109

The Argument

110

Session Break

111

Three-Stage Method for Getting an Attitude Shift (GAS Method)

Stage 1: The Therapist Endorses the Client's Goal

- "It isn't working. Your partner isn't being flexible or open to what you're saying, right?"
- "I want you to be more powerful in there, and I think I know how you can do it."

TR: 29

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Three-Stage Method for Getting an Attitude Shift (GAS Method)

Stage 2: The therapist paints a clear picture of needed changes.

- "You would need to look and sound something like this..."
- The therapist gives a holistic "feel" for the kind of attitude, internal state and verbal communication that would increase the client's effectiveness by speaking on the client's behalf to his/her (empty chair) partner about the disputed issue. The therapist's statements are always formulated based on the predictive habits.

TR: 29

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Three-Stage Method for Getting an Attitude Shift (GAS Method)

Stage 3: The therapist invites the client to discuss reservations about the suggested perspective or course of action.

- "What would make it difficult for you to adopt that attitude and say something like that?"
(Therapist responds to reservations using usual methods for cultivating receptivity and usual responses to common reservations)

TR: 29

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If Your Partner is Upset with You...

3b. Look Past the Criticism. Consider the possibility that beneath his criticism, he wants (or wishes) something that is a valid sort of thing for a person to want.

- To say the following things to yourself:
 - "You might not like the way he's talking to you, but that doesn't mean that it's okay to discount the needs or priorities that are driving his complaint."
 - "Just because you might not want the same things or have the same priorities doesn't mean that he's wrong."
 - "You can acknowledge that his needs or priorities are valid without agreeing to go along with them. Your needs and priorities are valid, too, and if you're an equalizer then he, you have the right to expect him to work with you toward a middle ground."

(For more detailed guidance, listen to Recording 4 at <http://www.marriage.com/900/04/>)

4. Find the Understandable Part. Ask clarifying questions until you think you understand the legitimate want, need, or expectation behind his behavior or complaint (even if you don't agree with it). If you're having a hard time because he's talking angrily or harshly, don't make a big deal of it, just try to understand him. Say something like:

"I'm having a hard time listening, and I think you're trying to say something important. Could you try to tell it down to earth?" If he doesn't take it down a notch, withdraw from the conversation, saying something like, "It seems like you need to wait some anger but I can't do this. I'm willing to talk, but not right now."

5. Validate. Let him know that his opinions and preferences have merit, even if yours are different. Say something like:

- "There's something wrong with what you wanted (or with what you were doing). You wanted it (or were doing it) because... [summarize the legitimate want, need or motivation that is behind his behavior or expectation]."

6. Clarify and Legitimize Your Differences. If you and your partner are not on the same page about the best way to handle situations like this, say something like:

- "It sounds like if I was up to you, this is what the expectations would be in this sort of situation (substance...), and if it was up to me, this is what the expectations would be (substance...). I'm thinking that there are probably more than one way to organize this kind of situation and there's probably merit to both of our positions."

7. Offer to Work Together. Suggest that the two of you take a few minutes to think about a possible solution that might take both of your preferences into account. If you can think of one, make a proposal. Be open to any suggestions that he may have.

If he is critical or dismissive of your perspective, don't make a big deal of it. Just say something like, "Hey, I'm trying to be respectful of your perspective, and I need for you to try to respect mine. (Check) we have different opinions and I want like we need to try to work together to find a solution that works for both of us as much as possible. How about if we first fighting each other and try to work toward some sort of compromise?"

(If in the end, your partner insists on having his own way or that he is right and you are wrong, listen to Recording 5 at <http://www.marriage.com/900/05/>)

TR: 34-35

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Preparing for a Successful Follow-Up Conversation
(I have a male partner)

1. Do what it takes to get to a place inside where the previous upsetting conversation no longer seems like that big of a deal. Consider the following:
 - "Just because your partner seemed indifferent or closed-minded in the previous conversation doesn't mean that he's going to continue to be that way in the next conversation."
 - "Even partners who have great relationships often don't get anywhere in the first round of arguments, the will probably be more open-minded and flexible in the next conversation if you can let go of your frustration about the previous disagreement, avoid trying to punish him, and approach the next conversation fresh, with a good attitude."
 - "It's possible that your partner doesn't mean some of the things he said (or implied) during the previous disagreement. His upsetting words or attitude may have been due to 1) misinterpreting your intentions or actions, 2) feeling threatened, 3) the instinctive tendency to defend or attack in the heat of the moment, 4) having a bad day, or 5) being mad at you about something else."
 - "Even if you're pretty sure that your partner is coming into the follow-up conversation thinking that he is right and you are wrong, you don't need to be alarmed. In the end, you can stand up for your opinions and priorities, making sure that they count as much as his."
2. Let go of the urge to get your partner to see how badly he acted during the previous disagreement. If you don't like the way he acted, remember that the best way to get him to change the way he acts during disagreements is to meet more effectively the next time he acts that way, not complete about how he acted in a previous disagreement.
3. Let go of the urge to hold him accountable for what he said in the previous disagreement. Instead, give him a chance to say freshly what he means and how he feels. If he contradicts what he seemed to be saying in the previous disagreement, don't punish him for apparently changing his mind. He's the reason. Allow for a "do over."
4. Be clear about your goals for the follow-up conversation:
 - Getting on the same page with how to resolve the specific situation that sparked the previous disagreement.
 - and/or
 - Preventing future frustrations by getting on the same page in advance with a default plan regarding how to handle situations that are similar to the one that sparked the previous disagreement.

TR: 36

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The Four Phases of Pragmatic-Experiential Therapy for Couples
Navigating Everyday Frustrations (NEF)

3. Partners get on the same page with a game plan for handling perpetual differences.

TR: 38

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Getting on the Same Page

The Steps

TR: 38

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The steps

1. Agree pm the area pf frequent disagreement to discuss
2. Is there a larger or more encompassing area that should be considered?
3. Each partner spends time between sessions answering:

"If it was up to you and your partner was going to be okay with whatever I decided, what would you want the expectations to be?"

TR: 38

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The steps

4. Write your preferred expectations down. They should be:
 - Specific
 - Realistic
 - Fair
 - Pure Version
5. Don't get too attached!

TR: 38

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The steps

6. Once you have written your preferred expectations, prepare for coming conversation.
 - a) Listen listen to Recording 5 <https://thecouplesclinic.com/dhrs-rec/> and prepare to react effectively if...
 - Partner starts criticizing your past behavior
 - You have the urge to criticize partner's past behavior.
 - Partner says or implies that your ideas are stupid and that obviously his/hers are better.
 - You really don't like the picture partner is painting and have the urge to dispute or counter partner before s/he has finished.
 - You feel pessimistic that partner will follow through on agreements made.
 - b) Consider that you may not be as far apart as it seems.

TR: 39

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The steps

- c) Be familiar with the major types of compromise:
 - Meet in the middle
 - Give and Take
 - Flip a Coin
 - d) Understand the importance of the agreements
 - e) Don't enter into agreements lightly
7. Create a shared document for agreements.
8. Review all agreements once per week.

TR: 40-41

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Common Areas of Frequent Disagreement

1. Differences in how and when time should be spent doing different things.
2. Differences in how responsibilities should be divided.
3. Differences in how money should be spent?

TR: 43-45

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Common Areas of Frequent Disagreement

4. Differences in neatness and organization
5. Differences related to perfectionism
6. Differences with regard to "work first, play later" vs. "play along the way"
7. Differences regarding how to discipline and/or relate to the children
8. Differences in how important it is to be punctual
9. Differences in how much to keep each other informed about schedules

TR: 46-47

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Common Areas of Frequent Disagreement

10. Differences in how important it is for partner to plan romantic things, or to say things that make their mates feel loved, appreciated and special.
11. Differences in how friendly we should be toward (or how much time is okay to spend with) people outside of our relationship
12. Differences in desired frequency of sex or preferred types of sexual activity
13. Differences in how detail we want to know about each other's respective lives and experiences

TR: 46-47

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Common Areas of Frequent Disagreement

14. Differences in expectations regarding how much partners should ask for help if they need it vs. expect partner notice and offer without having to ask
15. Differences in how much partner should ask for help when they are capable of doing tasks for themselves.
16. Differences in how much deliberation is needed before making decisions
17. Differences in ambition versus contentment
18. Differences in how much priority to give to healthy living.

TR: 46-47

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Special Case

Matters of the Heart

TR: 44-50

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Table 12.2 Making a Request for More Connection or Engagement	
<u>Effective</u>	<u>Ineffective</u>
"There's nothing wrong with how you have been acting. It's just different in some ways than what I would like. I realize we're different and I don't expect you to be exactly how I want you to be. I'm sure that part of the solution is for me to make some adjustments in my expectations. But I hope you'll consider trying some different things, too."	"Anyone who has their wits about them would know that this sort of thing is important in a relationship and realize that they should be doing it without being asked!"

TR: 49-50

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Table 12.2 Making a Request for More Connection or Engagement	
<u>Effective</u>	<u>Ineffective</u>
"What do you think might help you feel more like connecting in the way I'm wanting?"	"I don't care if you feel like doing it or not. Grow up! Buck up! It's your responsibility!"
"Any efforts you put into this would mean a lot to me."	Failing to express appreciation when efforts are made. Criticizing the efforts for being sub-standard.
"By the way, what would <u>you</u> like more of?"	Asking Alexandra for changes but neglecting to ask her what changes she would like you to make.

TR: 49-50

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