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How to Make Love Last: Overcoming the Fear of Intimacy



with Lisa Firestone, Ph.D.



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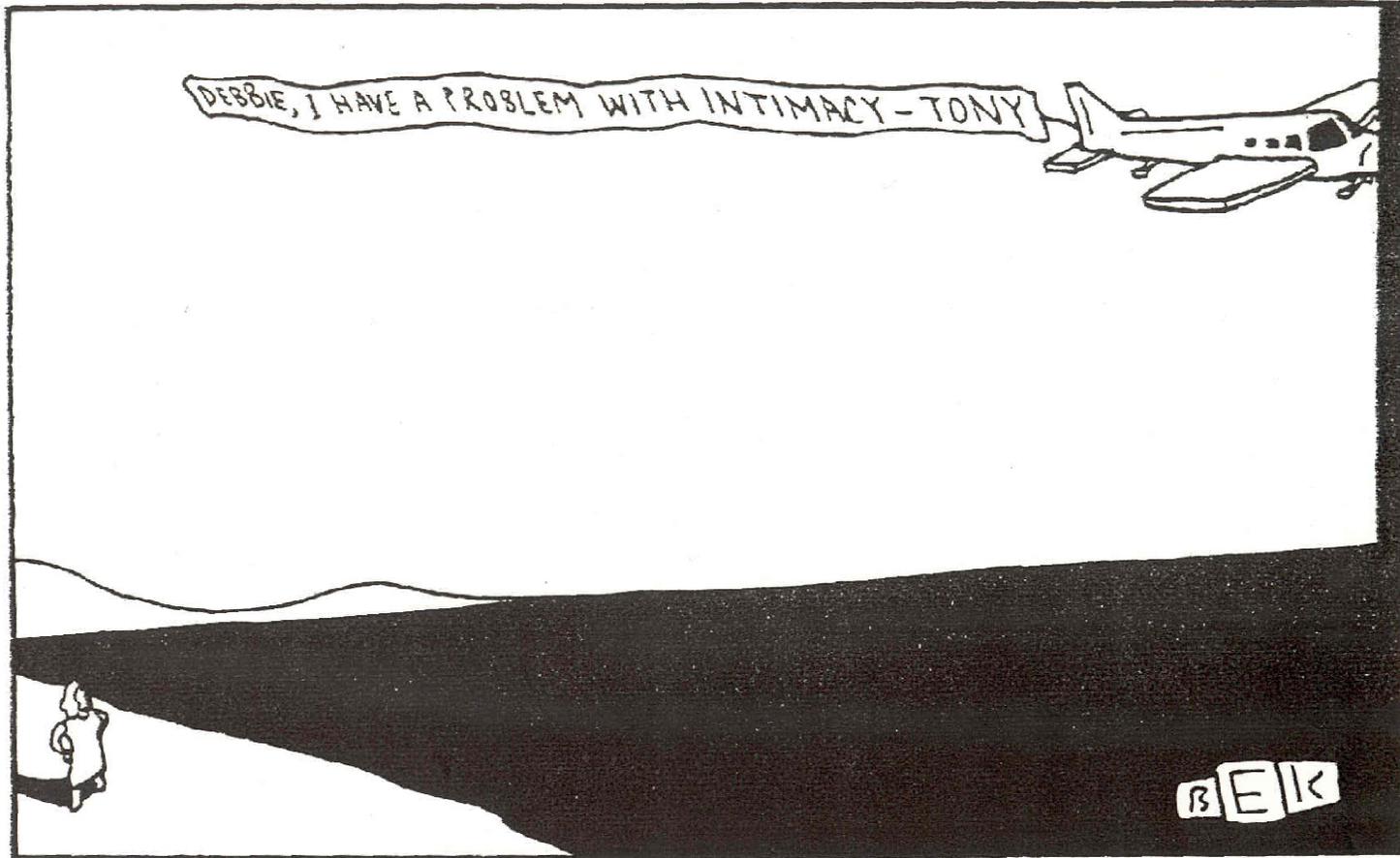


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Three Parts to This Webinar on Fear of Intimacy:

- Understanding
- Identifying
- Overcoming



"Before you chop off my head, don't you think we should see a counsellor?"



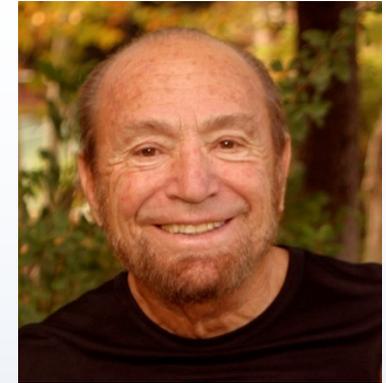
Part One: Understanding the Fear of Intimacy





Separation Theory

Robert W. Firestone, Ph.D.



- ❖ The concept of the **Fantasy Bond**
- ❖ The concept of the **Critical Inner Voice**





Definition of the Fantasy Bond

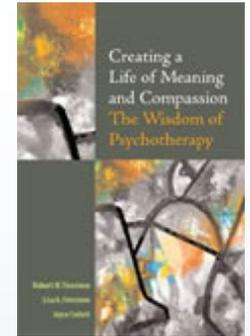
The Fantasy Bond:

A Fantasy Bond is an illusion of connection, originally an imaginary fusion or joining with the mother. It is used here to describe both the original imaginary connection formed during childhood and the repetitive efforts of the adult to continue to make connections in intimate associations.





Ways People Get Stuck



- Idealization of parents and family
- Maintenance of a negative self-image
- Projection of negative parental qualities and behaviors onto others





Poll #1:

Which of these causes you to get stuck?

Idealization of parents and family?

Maintenance of a negative self-image?

Projection of negative parental qualities
and behaviors onto others?



Definition of the Voice Process

Voice Process:

The critical inner voice refers to a well-integrated pattern of destructive thoughts toward our selves and others. The “voices” that make up this internalized dialogue are at the root of much of our maladaptive behavior. This internal enemy fosters inwardness, distrust, self-criticism, self-denial, addictions and a retreat from goal-directed activities. The critical inner voice effects every aspect of our lives: our self-esteem and confidence, and most importantly, our personal and intimate relationships.





Common “Voices” in Relationships

Voices About Yourself:

- ❖ You’re never going to find another person who understands you.
- ❖ Don’t get too hooked on her.
- ❖ He doesn’t really care about you.
- ❖ She is too good for you.
- ❖ You’ve got to keep him interested.
- ❖ You’re better off on your own.
- ❖ As soon as she gets to know you, she will reject you.
- ❖ You’ve got to be in control.
- ❖ It’s your fault if he gets upset.
- ❖ Don’t be too vulnerable or you’ll just wind up getting hurt.





Common “Voices” in Relationships

Voices About Your Partner:

- ❖ Men are so insensitive, unreliable, selfish.
- ❖ Women are so fragile, needy, indirect.
- ❖ He only cares about being with his friends.
- ❖ Why get so excited? What’s so great about her anyway?
- ❖ He is probably cheating on you.
- ❖ You can’t trust her.
- ❖ He just can’t get anything right.





Poll #2:

How many of you have experienced any of these “voices?”



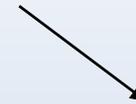
Division of the Mind

Parental Ambivalence

Parents both love and hate themselves and extend both reactions to their productions, i.e., their children.



Parental Nurturance



Parental Rejection, Neglect Hostility





Parental Nurturance



Self-System

Unique make-up of the individual; harmonious identification and incorporation of parent's positive attitudes and traits; and the effect of experience and education on the maturing self-system.

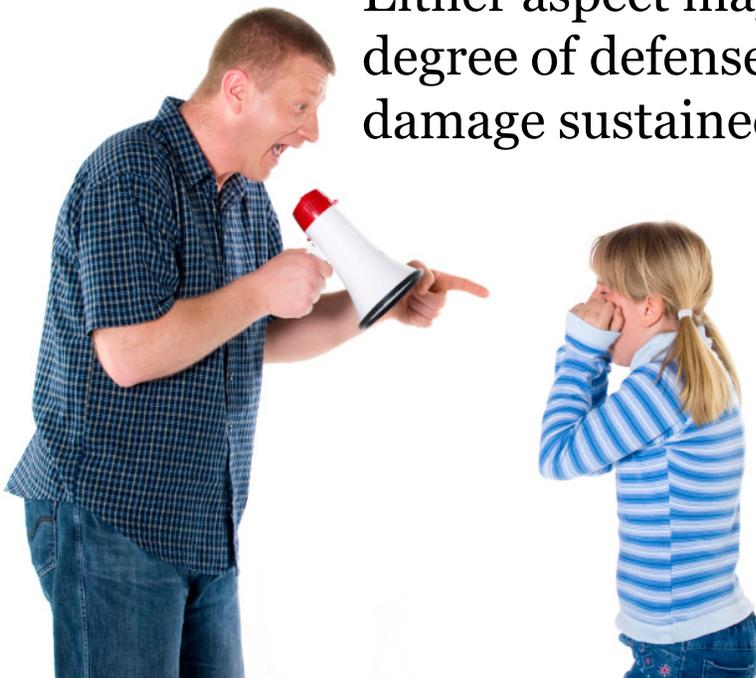


Parental Rejection, Neglect, Hostility

Other Factors: accidents, illnesses, death anxiety

Anti-Self System

The Fantasy Bond (core defense) is a self-parenting process made up of two elements: the helpless, needy child, and the self-punishing, self-nurturing parent. Either aspect may be extended to relationships. The degree of defense is proportional to the amount of damage sustained while growing up.





How the Voice Process Impacts Relationships

Self-Punishing Voice Process in Relationships:

EXAMPLE:

“No one will ever love you. He/She will never care about you. You’ll just wind up alone.”

Self-Soothing Voice Process in Relationships:

EXAMPLE:

“You are just fine on your own. You can take care of yourself. You don’t need anyone else. Don’t trust him/her.”



Personal Goals

I need:



Food

Thirst

Sex

Safety

I want:



Affiliation

Achievement

Activity

This is what gives meaning
to my life.



Love

Compassion
for Others

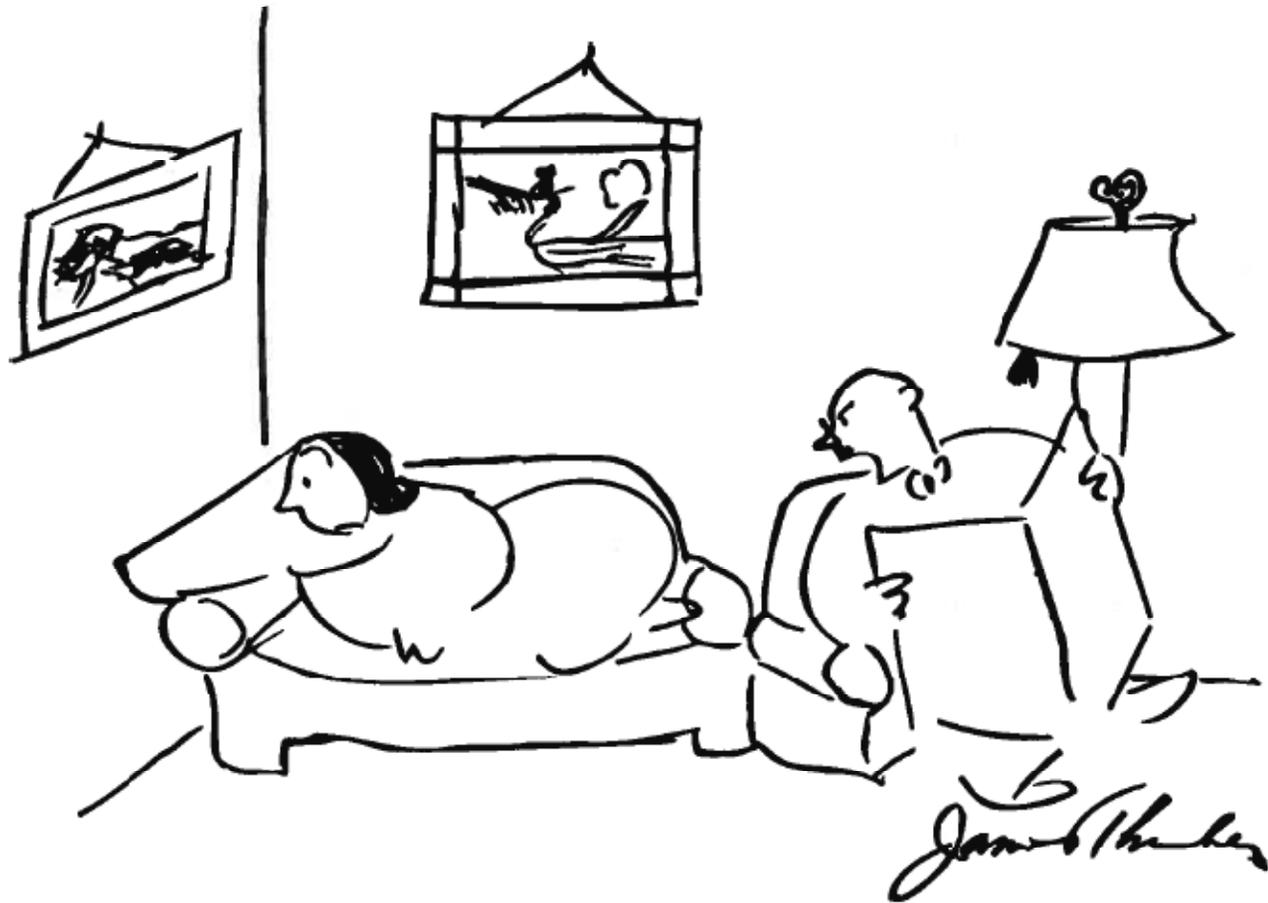
Generosity



Poll #3

What do you believe is getting in the way of your having satisfying intimate relationships?

- Yourself?
- Your partner or potential partners?
- Circumstances?



"Well, who made the magic go out of our marriage—you or me?"



*“Seek not good from without: seek it within yourselves
or you will never find it.”*

- Epictetus





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In this exclusive video series, Dr. James Gilligan talks about what triggers violent behavior and how to treat violent individuals. See more here

About PSYCHALIVE

Our desire to discover who we are – why we feel and act

Key Topics

- > Addictions
- > Anger

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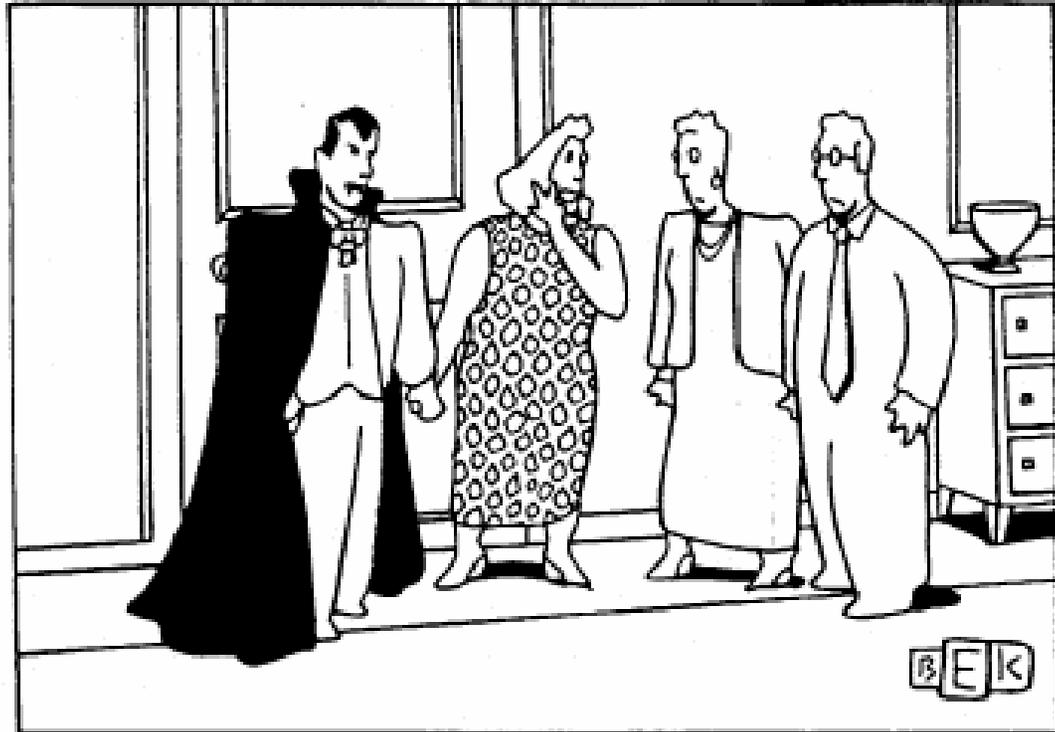




Factors That Contribute to Relationship Distress

- Selection
- Distortion
- Provocation





"I know. But I think I can change him."





"When I fell in love with you, suddenly your eyes didn't seem close together, now they seem close together again."



1/2







Definitions of Love

- There is only one proof for the presence of love: the depth of the relationship, and the aliveness and strength in each person concerned; this is the fruit by which love is recognized.

Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving*, 1956





Our Definition of Love

- “Defining love in behavioral terms is a challenging undertaking.”
- “In our view, actions that fit the description of a loving relationship are expressions of affection, both physical and emotional; a wish to offer pleasure and satisfaction to one’s mate; tenderness, compassion, and sensitivity to the needs of the other; a desire for shared activities and pursuits; an appropriate level of sharing of one’s possessions; an ongoing, honest exchange of personal feelings; and the process of offering concern, comfort, and outward assistance for the loved one’s aspirations.





Our Definition of Love

- “Love includes feeling for the other that goes beyond a selfish or self-centered interest in the loved one. As such, love nurtures and has a positive effect on each person’s self-esteem and sense of well-being. Love is truth and never involves deception, because misleading another person fractures his or her sense of reality and is therefore a serious human rights violation that adversely affects mental health.”





What Love is Not

- Love is not selfish, possessive, or demanding, or a proprietary right over the other.
- Love is never submission or dominance, emotional coercion or manipulation.
- Love is not the desperate attempt to deny aloneness or the search for security that many couples manifest in their desire for a fused identity.





What Love is Not

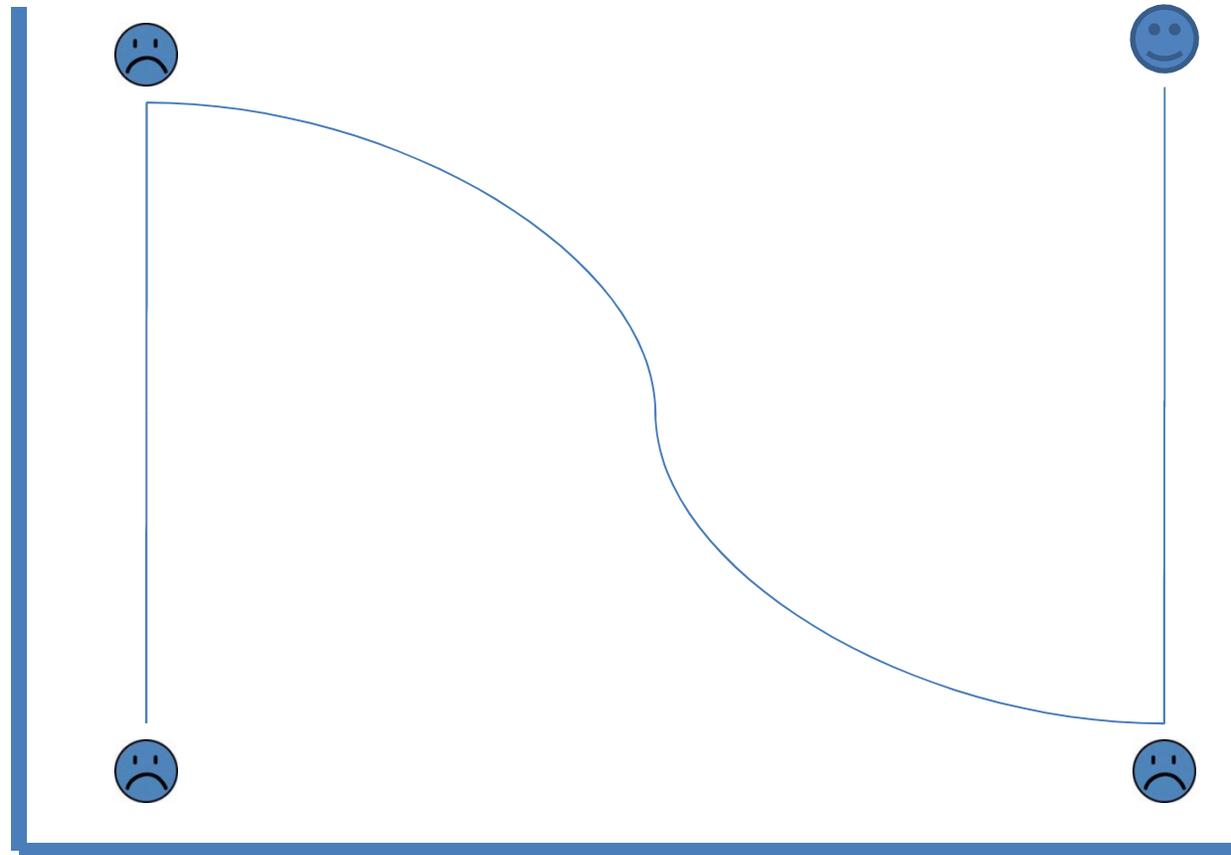
- Love is not to be confused with emotional hunger, that is, a desperate, immature need for dependence on another that drains the other person's vitality.
- Love is not to be confused with a deep longing to find total confirmation of oneself in the other.
- Love is not a word to be bandied about as in a couple's collusive attempt to maintain control of one another
- Love does not relate to an inner state of mind that has no recognizable outward manifestations





Differentiation and Linkage

Linkage
(emotional closeness)



Differentiation
(individuation as an individual)



Poll #4:

Which of these characterizes you in a relationship?

- Don't have a sense of myself and can't get emotionally close?
- Can get emotionally close but don't have a sense of myself?
- Have a sense of myself as an individual but can't get emotionally close?
- Have a sense of myself as an individual and can be emotionally close?



Couple Interactions Chart

Interactions in an Ideal Relationship

Nondefensiveness and openness

Honesty and integrity

Respect for the other's boundaries, priorities and goals, separate from self

Physical affection and personal sexuality

Understanding--lack of distortion of the other

Noncontrolling, nonmanipulative, and nonthreatening

Interactions in a Relationship Characterized by a Fantasy Bond

Angry reactions to feedback.
Closed to new experiences.

Deception and duplicity

Overstepping boundaries.
Other seen only in relation to self

Lack of affection; inadequate or impersonal, routine sexuality

Misunderstanding--distortion of the other

Manipulations of dominance and submission



Part Two: How to Recognize Fear of Intimacy





Behavioral Checklist for Partners

Describe yourself and your partner along these dimensions on a scale of 1 to 5:

1. Does not describe me/does not describe partner at this time.
2. Describes me on infrequent occasions/describes partner on infrequent occasions.
3. Describes how I am some of the time/describes how my partner is some of the time.
4. Describes how I frequently am/describes how my partner frequently is.
5. Describes me most or all of the time/describes my partner most or all of the time.

non-defensive and open (able to listen to feedback without overreacting/open to new experiences):

Self: 1 2 3 4 5 / Partner: 1 2 3 4 5

respect for other's boundaries:

Self: 1 2 3 4 5 / Partner: 1 2 3 4 5

vulnerable (willing to feel sad, acknowledge hurt feelings, etc.):

Self: 1 2 3 4 5 / Partner: 1 2 3 4 5

honest (straightforward, non-deceptive):

Self: 1 2 3 4 5 / Partner: 1 2 3 4 5

physically affectionate:

Self: 1 2 3 4 5 / Partner: 1 2 3 4 5

sexuality (satisfied with sexual relationship):

Self: 1 2 3 4 5 / Partner: 1 2 3 4 5

empathic and understanding (lack of distortion of the other):

Self: 1 2 3 4 5 / Partner: 1 2 3 4 5

communication (sense of shared meaning, feel understood):

Self: 1 2 3 4 5 / Partner: 1 2 3 4 5

non-controlling, non-manipulative, and non-threatening:

Self: 1 2 3 4 5 / Partner: 1 2 3 4 5

How would you rate yourself along these dimensions?

sense of well-being:

1 2 3 4 5

self-confidence:

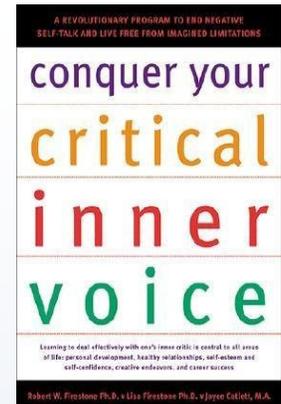
1 2 3 4 5

optimism:

1 2 3 4 5



Exercise 4.1: The Firestone Voice Scale for Couples



Circle the frequency with which you experience the following critical inner voices:

0 = Never 1 = Rarely 2 = Once in a While
3 = Frequently 4 = Most of the Time

- 0 1 2 3 4 It's a man's job to take care of a woman.
- 0 1 2 3 4 You're never going to find another person who understands you.
- 0 1 2 3 4 Men are so insensitive. They're so opinionated. They don't want you to have your own views about anything .
- 0 1 2 3 4 Don't get too hooked on him (her).



Exercise 4.2: You in Your Relationship: Your Critical Inner Voice/The Real You

- **What my critical inner voice says about me in my relationship**

- **What I realistically think about myself in my relationship**



Exercise 4.3:

Your Partner in Your Relationship: Your Critical Inner Voice/The Real You

- **What my critical inner voice says about my partner in my relationship**

- **What I realistically think about my partner in my relationship**



Exercise 4.4: Relationships: Your Critical Inner Voice/The Real You

- **What my critical inner voice says about relationships**

- **What I realistically think about relationships**



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Part Three: Overcoming the Fear of Intimacy





Exercise 4.5: Goals for Your Relationship

- Goals I have for my relationship
- Actions to take to achieve my goals





Poll #5:

Which of these goals do you have for your relationship?

- to be emotionally close?
- to be more open in my communication and get along better with my partner?
- to change my partner?
- to be more intimate with my partner?
- to choose a better partner?



Differentiation

Child Self



Real Self



Parent Self

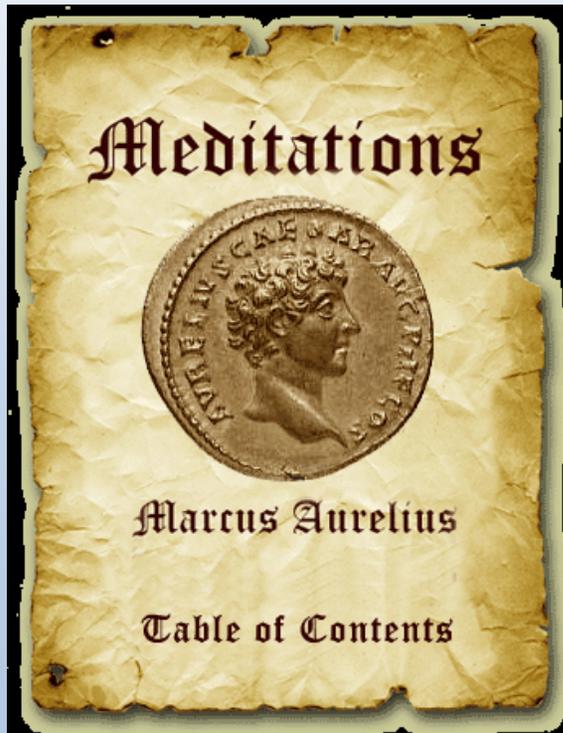




Coping with Anger, Avoid Passivity, and a Victimized Point of View

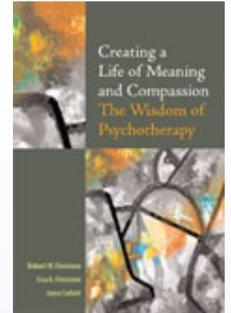
“Reject your sense of injury and the injury itself disappears”

- Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*





Don't Play the Victim Be An Active Participant in Your Life



- Assume responsibility for your life
- Give up victimized language and thinking
- Avoid the use of passive aggression to get what you want





Withholding

What does it look like?

- Holding back positive qualities
- Feeling victimized or consumed by others



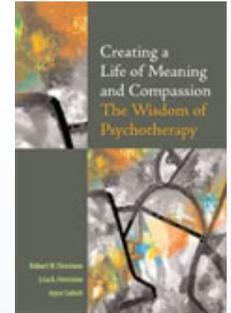


Poll #6:

How many of you notice ways that you are withholding with your partner?



Generosity



1. Giving something that is sensitive to the person. It's not about material things. It's about being giving of yourself.
2. Be open to the person expressing appreciation.
3. Be open to receiving the generosity of others. It's important to let others do things for you.
4. Showing appreciation for the generosity directed toward you.





Unilateral Disarmament

- Defuse escalating arguments by dropping your stake in winning
- Say something warm and understanding
- Stress that it doesn't really matter who's right
- Express physical affection



The technique of Unilateral Disarmament does not imply that you are surrendering your point of view or deferring to your partner's opinion. It simply indicates that you value being close to your partner more than winning your point.



Poll #7:

Do you think you could try unilateral disarming
with your partner?



From Parenting from the Inside Out Knowing Minds

Dr. Daniel Siegel



Compassion: The ability to feel with another; to be sympathetic, tenderhearted.

Compassion is a caring stance toward the distressful emotional experience of another person. Compassion may depend on mirror neuron systems, which evoke an emotional state in us that mirrors that of another person, enabling us to feel another person's pain.

Empathy: Understanding the internal experience of another person; the imaginative projection of one's consciousness into the feelings of another person or object; sympathetic understanding. This is a cognitively complex process that involves mental capacities to imagine the mind of another. Empathy may depend on the capacity for mind sight, mediated by the integrated right hemisphere and prefrontal regions of the brain.





From Parenting from the Inside Out Knowing Minds

Mindsight: The capacity to “see,” or imagine, the mind of oneself or another, enabling an understanding of behavior in terms of mental processes. Other synonyms for this process are “mentalizing,” “theory of the mind,” “mind reading,” and “reflective function.”



Monitor to Modify



Integration

Linkage of differentiated parts

Becoming a “we” while being yourself





From Parenting from the Inside Out

Practices of Integrative Communication

- **Awareness.** Be mindful of your own feelings and bodily responses and others' nonverbal signals.
- **Attunement.** Allow your own state of mind to align with that of another.
- **Empathy.** Open your mind to sense another's experience and point of view.
- **Expression.** Communicate your internal responses with respect; make the internal external.
- **Joining.** Share openly in the give-and-take of communication, both verbally and nonverbally.
- **Clarification.** Help make sense of the experience of another.
- **Sovereignty.** Respect the dignity and separateness of each individual's mind.



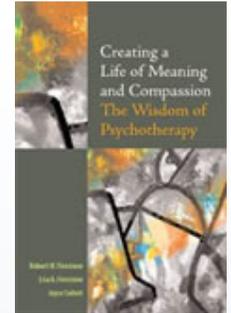


Poll #8:

Do you feel you can now use these practices of integrative communication with your partner?



Ways to Help Relationships



- Reveal destructive thought processes to each other
- Utilize journaling to understand the voice process in couple relationships
- Set goals for the relationship
- The strategy of “unilateral disarmament”

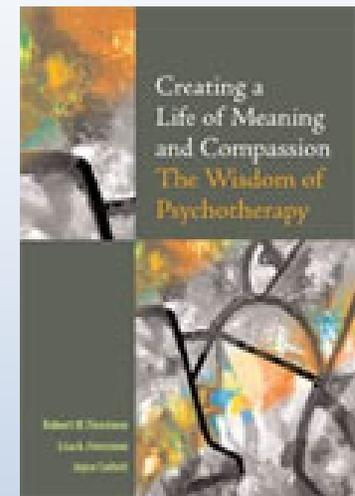
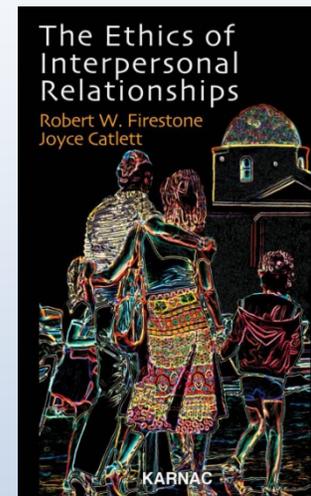
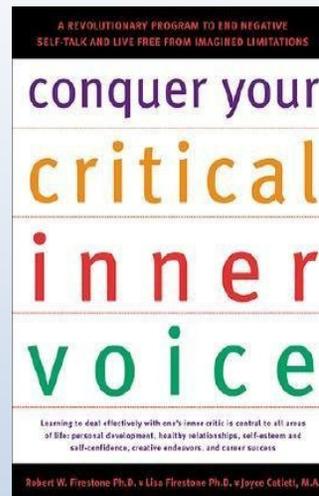
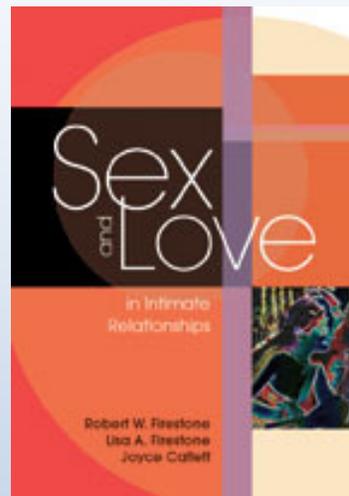
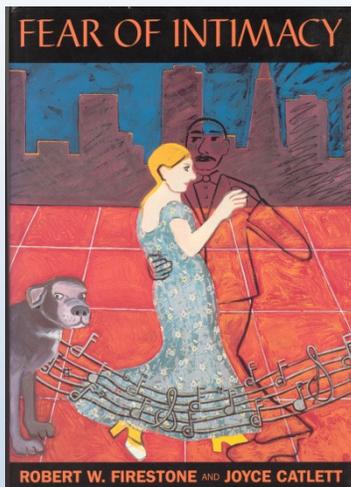


Guidelines for Continued Personal Development in Your Relationship

Six Qualities to Look for in the “Ideal” Partner and to Develop Yourself:

- ❖ Nondefensiveness and openness
- ❖ Honesty and integrity
- ❖ Respect for the other’s boundaries, priorities, and goals that are separate from yourself
- ❖ Physical affection and personal sexuality
- ❖ Understanding – lack of distortion of the other
- ❖ Noncontrolling, nonmanipulative, and nonthreatening attitudes and behaviors

Resources: Books

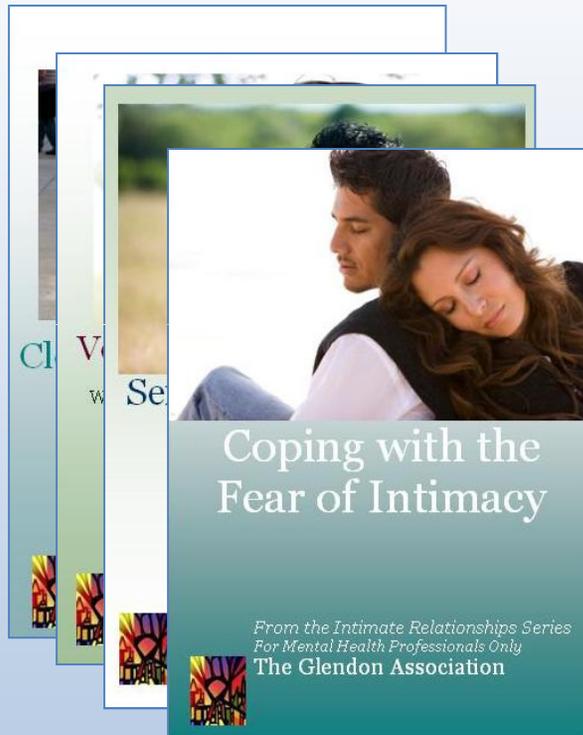


Visit www.psychalive.org for resource links

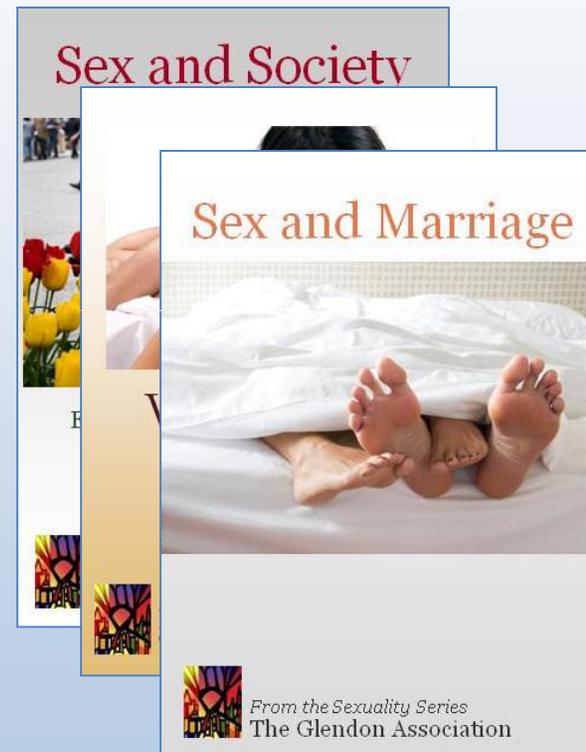


Resources: Films

Intimate Relationships Series



Sexuality Series



Visit www.psychalive.org for resource links



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Professional Psych Seminars: Fear of Intimacy (6 CEs)

- Feb. 26 - Los Angeles Area
- March 4 - Los Angeles Area
- May 14 - San Francisco Area

For more information contact propsysem@aol.com

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Understanding and Preventing Violence:

CE Webinar for Professionals – March 8 (2 CEs, \$25)

Free Webinar for the Public – April 5

For more information contact jina@glendon.org

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