



THE GLENDON  
ASSOCIATION

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# The Fantasy Bond



with Lisa Firestone, Ph.D.



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**"Regret that we had Siamese Attachment Surgery? Never!"**

# Three Parts to This Webinar

- Theory
- Identification/ Assessment
- Treatment

# Separation Theory

Robert W. Firestone, Ph.D.



- ❖ Integrates psychoanalytic and existential systems of thought
- ❖ Two kinds of emotional pain:
  - Interpersonal
  - Existential
- ❖ The core conflict
- ❖ Defended versus undefended lifestyles
- ❖ The concept of the **Fantasy Bond**
- ❖ The concept of the **Critical Inner Voice**





# Separation Experience Throughout the Lifespan

- Birth
- Toddlerhood
- Going to School
- Moving
- Dating
- Marriage
- Becoming a parent
- Potential divorce
- Loss of parent
- Becoming a grandparent
- Loss of spouse
- Death





# Definition of the Fantasy Bond

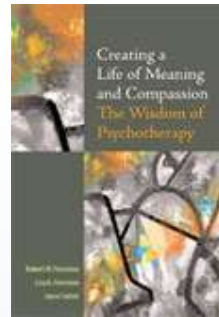
## **The Fantasy Bond:**

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.





# Three States of Fantasy Involvement



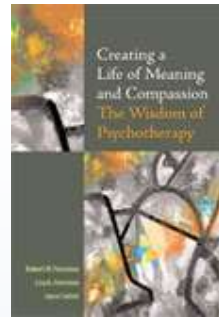
- The individual with extreme propensities for fantasy and imagined fusion who moves toward increased isolation and withdrawal from other people
- The individual who, to varying degrees, uses elements reality to reinforce and support an ongoing fantasy process rather than really investing in relationships and career
- The individual who lives a realistic committed life, whose actions correspond to his or her aspirations and abilities







# Manifestations of a Fantasy Bond

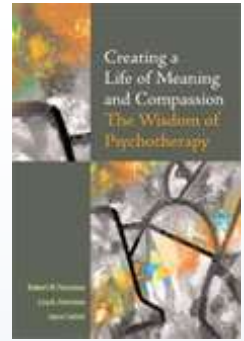


- Withholding
- Polarization of parent-child ego states
- Idealization/denigration of the other
- Loss of independence
- Form versus substance





# 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 the most trouble for your patients?

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:

Have you had patients who have experienced these voices?

Yes

No



# 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





Birth →  
Trauma →



Baby →  
Genetic  
Structure  
Temperament  
Physicality  
Sex





# Self-System Parental Nurturance

Unique make-up of the individual (genetic predisposition and temperament);  
harmonious identification and incorporation  
of parent's positive attitudes and traits and  
parents positive behaviors: attunement,  
affection, control, nurturance; and the effect  
of other nurturing experience and education  
on the maturing self- system resulting in a  
sense of self and a greater degree of  
differentiation from parents and early  
caretakers.







# Personal Attitudes/ Goals/Conscience

## Realistic, Positive Attitudes Toward Self

Realistic evaluation of talents, abilities, etc...with generally positive/compassionate attitude towards self and others.

Goals  
Needs, wants, search for  
meaning in life

Moral Principles

## Behavior

Ethical behavior  
towards self and others

Goal Directed  
Behavior

Acting with  
Integrity





# Anti-Self System

Unique vulnerability: genetic predisposition and temperament

Destructive parental behavior: misattunement, lack of affection, rejection, neglect, hostility, over permissiveness

Other Factors: accidents, illnesses, traumatic separation, death anxiety



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.



# Anti-Self System

## Self-Punishing Voice Process

### Voice Process

1. Critical thoughts toward self



2. Micro-suicidal injunctions



3. Suicidal injunctions – suicidal ideation



### Behaviors

Verbal self-attacks – a generally negative attitude toward self and others predisposing alienation.

Addictive patterns. Self-punitive thoughts after indulging.

Actions that jeopardize, such as carelessness with one's body, physical attacks on the self, and actual suicide

### Source

Critical parental attitudes, projections, and unreasonable expectations.

Identification with parents defenses

Parents' covert and overt aggression (identification with the aggressor).




# Anti-Self System

## Self- Soothing Voice Process

### Voice Process

### Behaviors


### Source



1a) Aggrandizing thoughts toward self.

Verbal build up toward self.


Parental build up



1b) Suspicious paranoid thoughts towards others.

Alienation from others, destructive behavior towards others.

Parental attitudes, child abuse, experienced victimization.



2. Micro-suicidal Injunctions

Addictive patterns. Thoughts luring the person into indulging.

Imitation of parents' defenses.



3. Overtly Violent thoughts

Aggressive actions, actual violence.

Parental neglect, parents' overt aggression (identification with the aggressor).



# 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.”





## Poll #3:

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

- Themselves
- Their partner or potential partners
- Circumstances

# Factors That Contribute to Relationship Distress

- Selection
- Distortion
- Provocation





# Some Definitions of Love

- Love is patient and is kind; love doesn't envy. Love doesn't brag, is not proud, doesn't behave itself inappropriately, doesn't seek its own way, is not provoked, takes no account of evil; doesn't rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

(I Corinthians 13:4-13)

- We still know so little about this madness of the gods... But of one thing I am convinced: no matter how well scientists map the brain and uncover the biology of romantic love, they will never destroy the mystery or ecstasy of this passion. I say this from my own experience.

Helen Fisher, *Why We Love*





# Some Definitions of Love

- Love makes us who we are, and who we can become.  
Lewis, Amini, & Lannon, *A General Theory of Love*, 2000
- 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
- ...the Buddhist concept of compassion, defined as removing sorrow and bringing happiness to others, gives love substantial meaning... *Yoraku* – the second component of compassion in the Buddhist sense – means the giving of pleasure... It is the joy of living... the ecstasy of life. It includes both material and spiritual pleasure. Without the deep feelings of fulfillment and the ecstasy generated by the emotions of life, pleasure in the truest sense is impossible.  
Gage, R.L. (Ed.) *Choose Life: A Dialogue: Arnold Toynbee and Daisaku Ikeda*, 1976



# 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 what we mean when one is told by a family member that “Mommy or Daddy really loves you, but he or she just doesn’t know how to show it.”
- 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

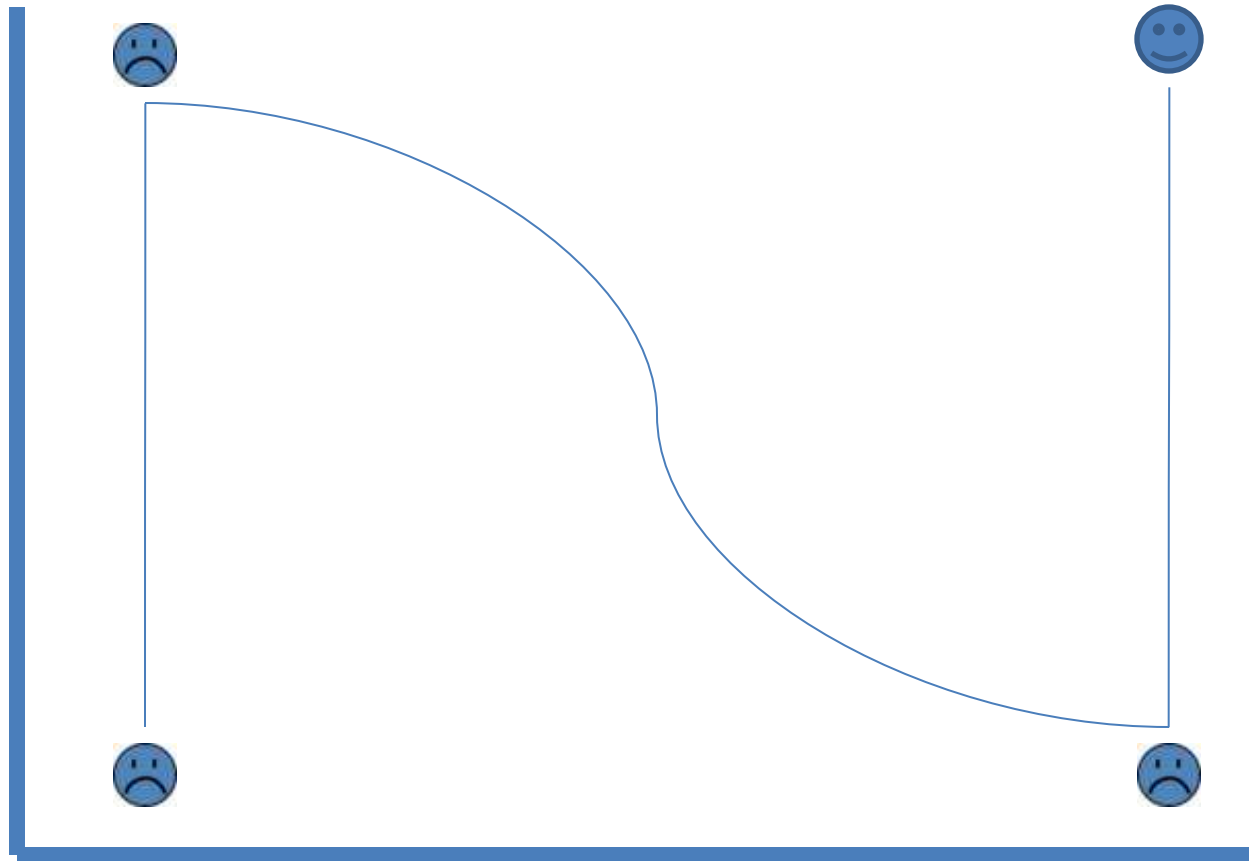
- Love is not to be confused with emotional hunger, that is, a desperate, immature need for dependence on another that drains the other person's vitality.
- Love is not to be confused with a deep longing to find total confirmation of oneself in the other.
- Love is not a word to be bandied about as in 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)



# Integration

Linkage of differentiated parts

Becoming a “we” while being yourself



# Differentiation

Child Self



Real Self



Parent Self



# Four Steps of Differentiation

- Differentiate from self-punishing voices
- Differentiate from undesirable traits in your parents that you see in yourself
- Differentiate from the defensive reactions you had (as a child self) and self-soothing voices
- Formulating and learning to live by your own values – who do you want to be?







# Couple Interactions Chart

<b>Interactions in an Ideal Relationship</b>	<b>Interactions in a Relationship Characterized by a Fantasy Bond</b>
<b>Nondefensiveness and openness</b>	<b>Angry reactions to feedback. Closed to new experiences</b>
<b>Honesty and integrity</b>	<b>Deception and duplicity</b>
<b>Respect for the other's boundaries, priorities and goals, separate from self</b>	<b>Overstepping boundaries. Other seen only in relation to self</b>
<b>Physical affection and personal sexuality</b>	<b>Lack of affection; inadequate or impersonal, routine sexuality</b>
<b>Understanding--lack of distortion of the other</b>	<b>Misunderstanding--distortion of the other</b>
<b>Noncontrolling, nonmanipulative, and nonthreatening</b>	<b>Manipulations of dominance and submission</b>



## Poll #4:

Do you use assessments when treating couples?

Yes

No



# 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



# Behavioral Checklist for Therapists

Describe each partner along these dimensions on a scale of 1 to 5:

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

---

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

First Partner                      1   2   3   4   5                      /   Second Partner:   1   2   3   4   5

respect for other's boundaries:

First Partner                      1   2   3   4   5                      /   Second Partner:   1   2   3   4   5 vulnerable

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

First Partner                      1   2   3   4   5                      /   Second Partner:   1   2   3   4   5

honest (straightforward, non-deceptive):

First Partner                      1   2   3   4   5                      /   Second Partner:   1   2   3   4   5

physically affectionate:

First Partner                      1   2   3   4   5                      /   Second Partner:   1   2   3   4   5 sexuality

(satisfied with sexual relationship):

First Partner                      1   2   3   4   5                      /   Second Partner:   1   2   3   4   5 empathic and

understanding (lack of distortion of the other):

First Partner                      1   2   3   4   5                      /   Second Partner:   1   2   3   4   5 communication

(sense of shared meaning, feel understood):

First Partner                      1   2   3   4   5                      /   Second Partner:   1   2   3   4   5

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

First Partner                      1   2   3   4   5                      /   Second Partner:   1   2   3   4   5

sense of well-being:

First Partner                      1   2   3   4   5                      /   Second Partner:   1   2   3   4   5

self-confidence:

First Partner                      1   2   3   4   5                      /   Second Partner:   1   2   3   4   5

optimism:

First Partner                      1   2   3   4   5                      /   Second Partner:   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).



# Poll #5

Do you use exercises or homework assignments  
when treating couples?

Yes

No





# 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**

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

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# 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**

---

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---

---

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

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---

---

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# Exercise 4.4:

## Relationships:

### Your Critical Inner Voice/The Real You

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

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■ **What I realistically think about relationships**

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## Exercise 4.5: Goals for Your Relationship

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





# Exercise 10.3

## An Imaginary Conversation About Your Sexuality

What would your mother/father say about your sexuality, your partner and your sexual relationship?

- What would my mother/father say?
- What would I say back to my mother/father?







# Steps in Voice Therapy with Couples

1. Formulating the problem
2. Verbalizing the voice and releasing affect
3. Developing insight about the source of the voice
4. Answering back to the voice
5. Developing insight about how voices are influencing behaviors
6. Planning corrective suggestions for changing behavior

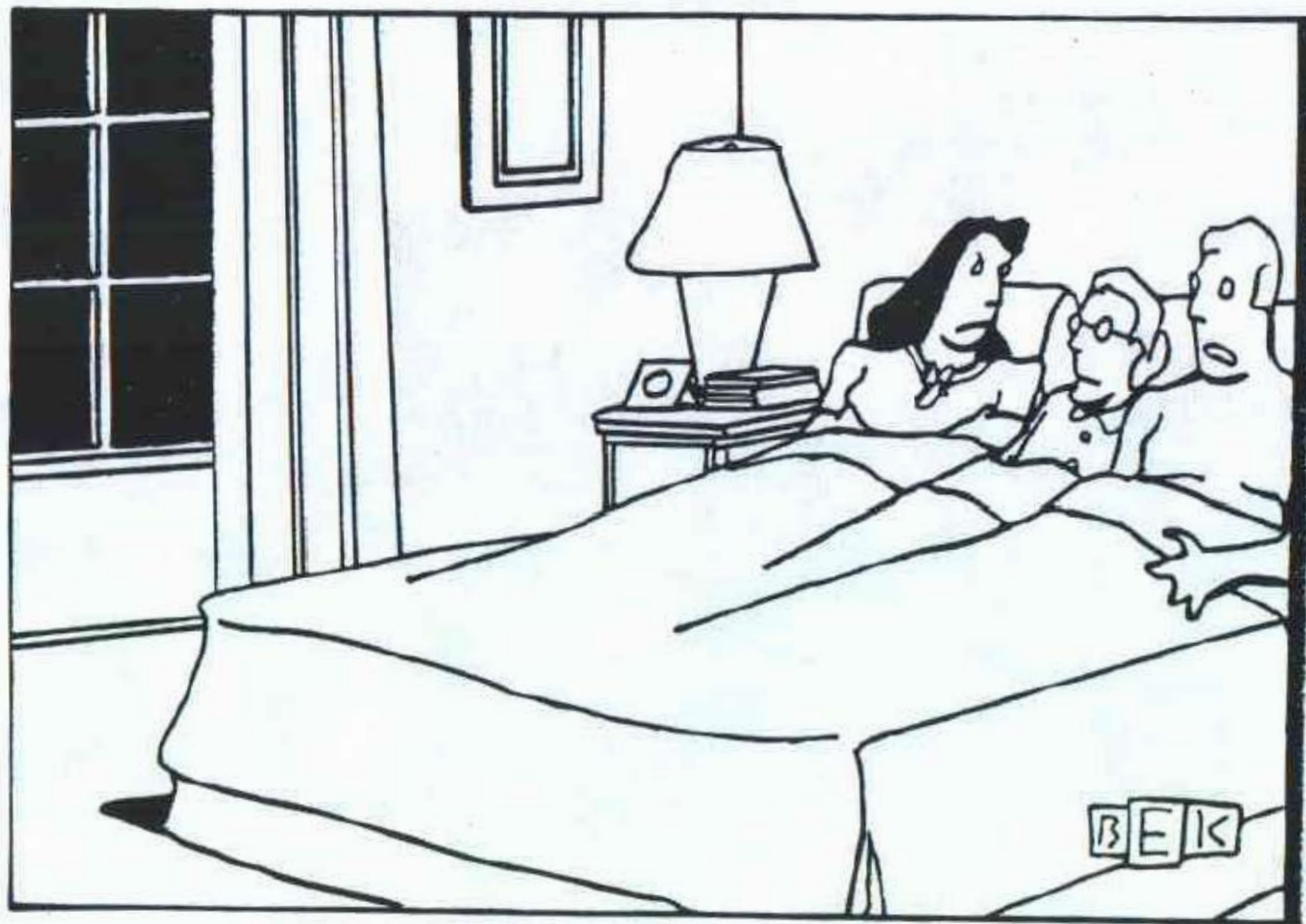




# Steps in Voice Therapy with Couples

7. Between sessions, couples are encouraged to reveal their negative thoughts to each other when they occur during the sex act
  - They are encouraged to maintain physical contact while “giving away” self attacks and critical thoughts
  - Results of these experiences are discussed in subsequent sessions





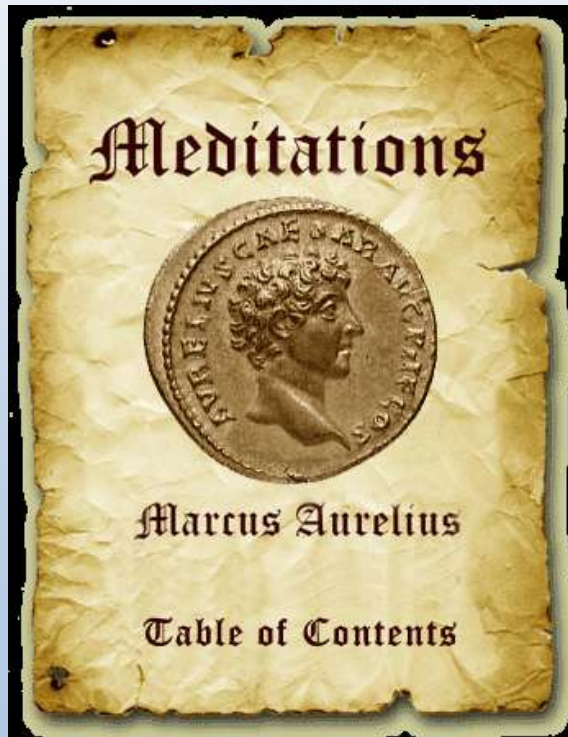
*"For heaven's sake, Melissa, she's my mother. I can't tell her to leave."*

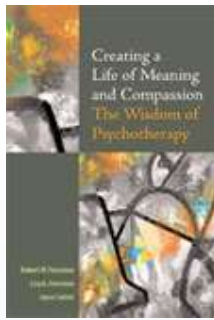


# Coping with Anger, Avoid Passivity, and a Victimized Point of View

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

- Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*





# Don't Play the Victim

## Be An Active Participant in Your Relationship

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





# Three Types of Power

## **Overt Negative Power:**

characterized by aggressive tendencies and is exercised through the use of force and/or coercion to control others. It can be manifested within a relationship.







# Three Types of Power

**Covert Negative Power:** based on passive-aggression and expressed in behaviors indicating weakness, incompetence and self-destructive tendencies that manipulate others in the interpersonal world by arousing their feelings of fear, guilt and anger. The exercise of covert negative power through subtle manipulations may be even more destructive in interpersonal relationships than direct force as a means of controlling others.







# Three Types of Power

**Personal Power:** based on strength, confidence, and competence that individuals gradually acquire in the course of their development. Personal power represents a movement toward self-realization and transcendent goals in life; its primary aim is mastery of self, not others.





# Withholding

What does it look like?

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





## Poll #6:

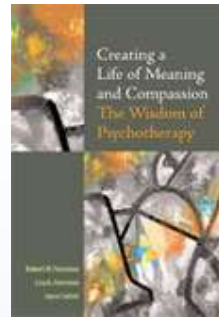
Do you notice ways that your patients are withholding with their partners?

Yes

No



# 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.

# From Parenting from the Inside Out

Dr. Daniel Siegel



## 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 #7:

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

Yes

No





# Interpersonal Neurobiology



C urious

O pen

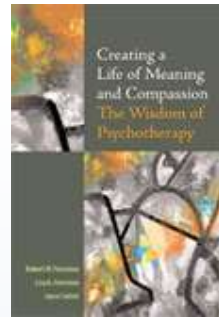
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# Ways to Help Relationships



- 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”

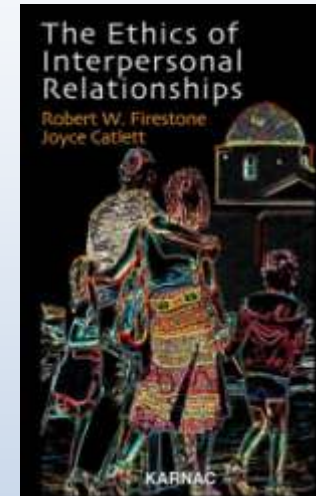
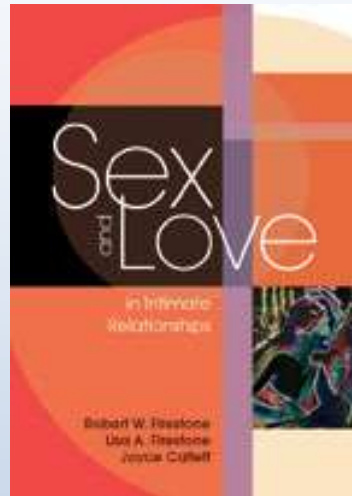


# Guidelines for Continued Personal Development in Your Relationship

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

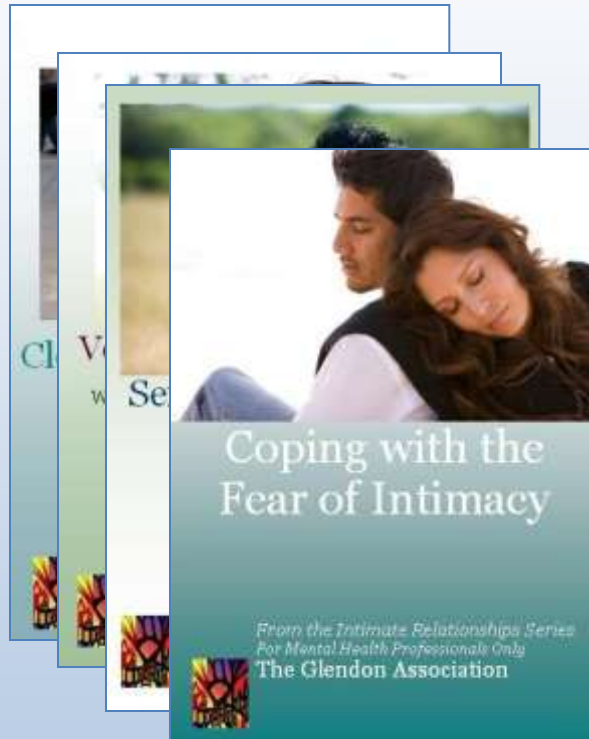


Visit [www.psychalive.org](http://www.psychalive.org) for resource links

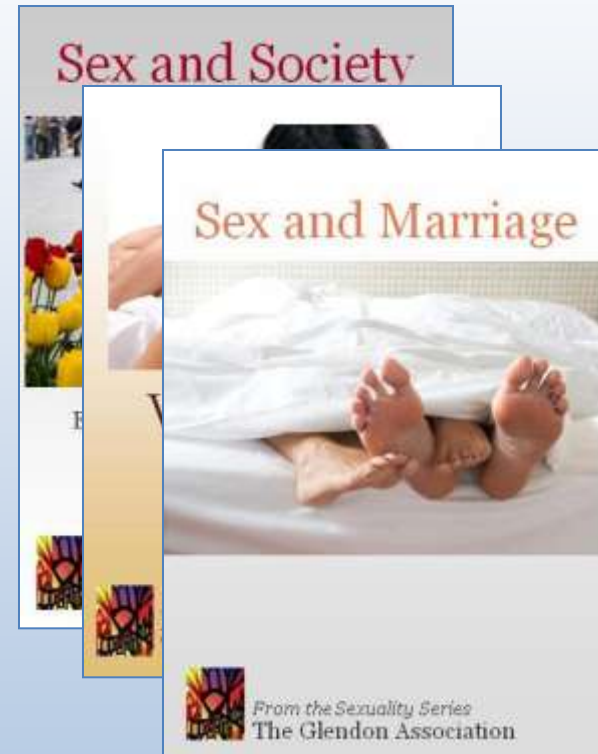


# Resources: Films

## Intimate Relationships Series



## Sexuality Series



Visit [www.psychalive.org](http://www.psychalive.org) for resource links



# Upcoming Webinars with Dr. Lisa Firestone

## For Professionals:



### **Suicide: What Every Mental Health Professional Needs to Know**

Sep. 25

4pm – 5:30pm PDT

## For the Public:



### **Real Love or a Fantasy Bond**

April 24

11pm – 12pm PDT



### **Understanding & Preventing Suicide**

Sep. 18

11am – 12pm PDT



### **How to Raise an Emotionally Healthy Child**

Dec. 4

12pm – 1pm PST

Learn more or register at <http://www.psychalive.org/2012/01/upcoming-webinars-2/>



# Upcoming Webinars with Special Guest Presenters



**Dr. Sheldon Solomon**



**Grave Matters:  
On the Role of Death in Life**  
May 22  
4pm – 5:30pm PDT



**Self-Esteem and the Role of  
Death Awareness in Your Life**  
June 12  
11am- 12pm PDT



**Dr. James Gilligan**



**Understanding & Effectively  
Treating Violence**  
Oct. 16  
4pm – 5:30pm PDT



**Why Does Violence Occur &  
How Can We Prevent It?**  
Nov. 13  
11am- 12pm PST

Learn more or register at <http://www.psychalive.org/2012/01/upcoming-webinars-2/>





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