



THE GLENDON
ASSOCIATION

& PSYCHALIVE

Working with High-Conflict Couples



with Lisa Firestone, Ph.D.



THE GLENDON
ASSOCIATION & PSYCHALIVE



Lisa Firestone, Ph.D.

Director of Research and Education – The Glendon Association

Senior Editor – PsychAlive.org

www.glendon.org

www.psychalive.org

Check in through PsychAlive's social media:



**Get the latest
news on
PsychAlive
Webinars and
Events**



Follow us on Twitter

<http://twitter.com/@psychalive>

Tweet this webinar: #psychalivewebinar



Like us on Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/PsychAlive>

Three Parts to This Webinar

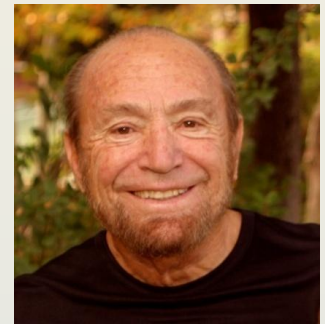
- Theory
- Identification/ Assessment
- Treatment



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

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**



Dr. Robert Firestone on The Fantasy Bond



Definition of the Fantasy Bond

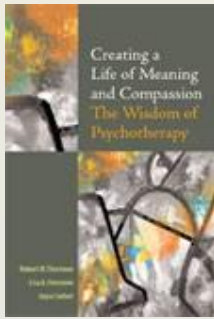
The Fantasy Bond:

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.





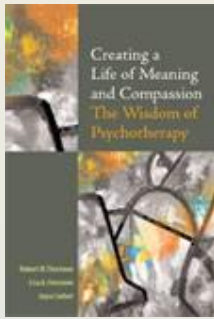
"Regret that we had Siamese Attachment Surgery? Never!"



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

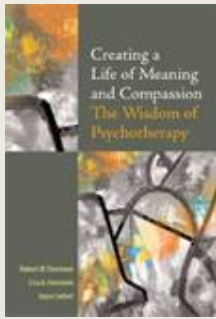




Manifestations of a Fantasy Bond

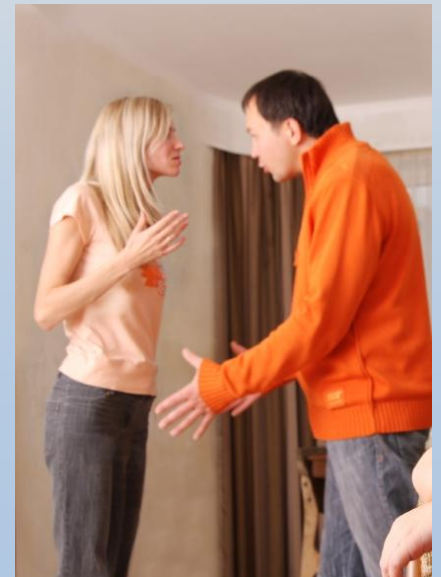
- Withholding
- Polarization of parent-child ego states
- Idealization/denigration of the other
- Loss of independence
- Form versus substance





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:

- ❖ Don't get too hooked on her.
- ❖ He doesn't really care about you.
- ❖ She is too good for you.
- ❖ 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, often
- Yes, sometimes
 - Yes, rarely
 - No, never

Voices in Relationships



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



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 Towards 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

Behaviors

Source

1. Critical thoughts toward self



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

Critical parental attitudes, projections, and unreasonable expectations.

2. Micro-suicidal injunctions



Addictive patterns. Self-punitive thoughts after indulging.

Identification with parents defenses

3. Suicidal injunctions – suicidal ideation



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

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

PsychAlive.org

Account :: Login

PSYCHALIVE

HomeAbout PsychaliveBlogsSubscribeMy Profile

GO

Alive to SELF



Alive to INTIMACY



Alive to PARENTING



Most Popular on PSYCHALIVE



Preventing Teen Suicide



Resources from How to Raise Emotionally Healthy Children



New Webinar Series from PsychAlive's Dr. Lisa Firestone



The N.Y.C Marathon: Inspiration Within The Masses

Share / Save

VIDEO



Dr James Gilligan on Love and the...

0:00 / 1:33

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

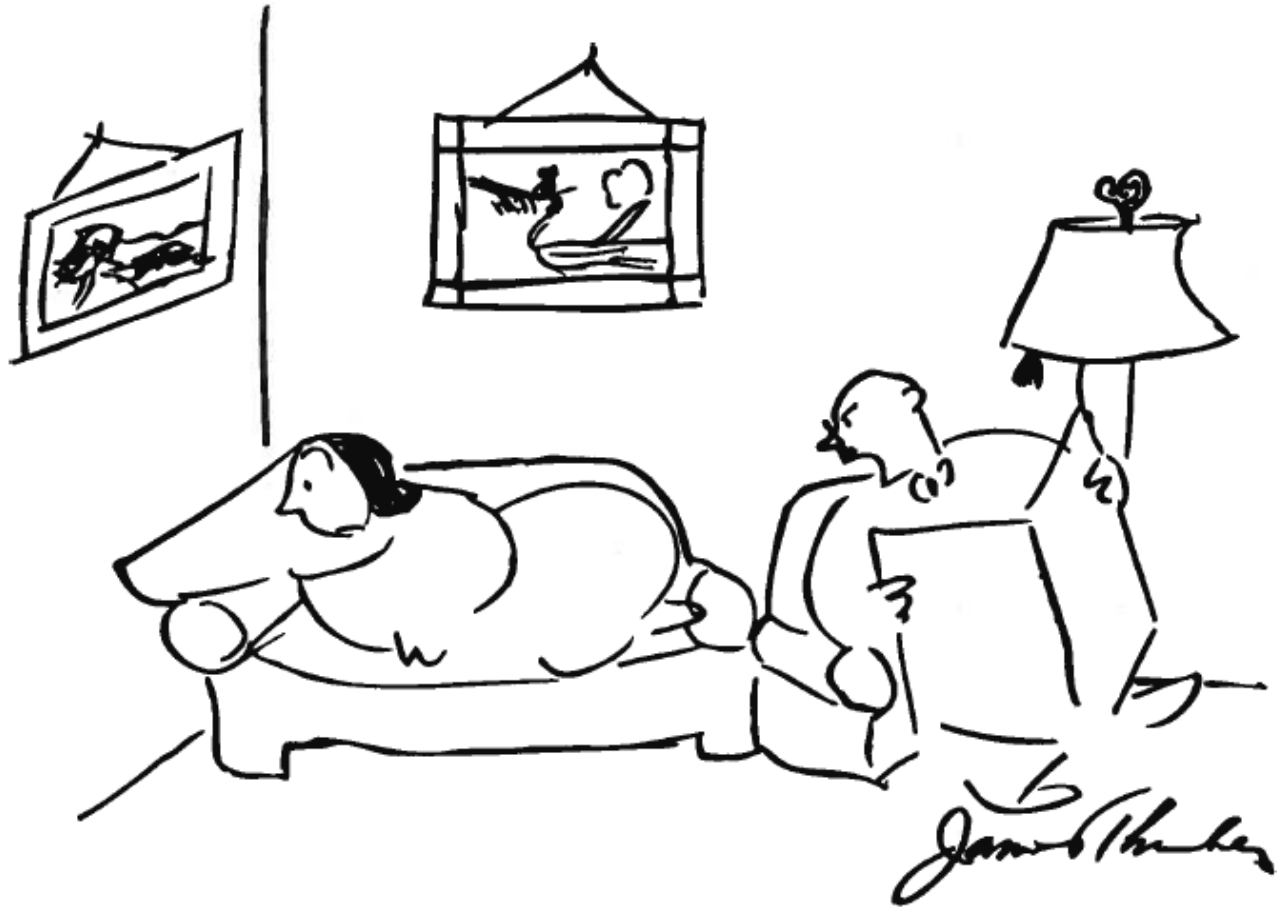
Our desire to discover who we are — why we feel and act



Key Topics

- > Addictions
- > Anger

Media Center



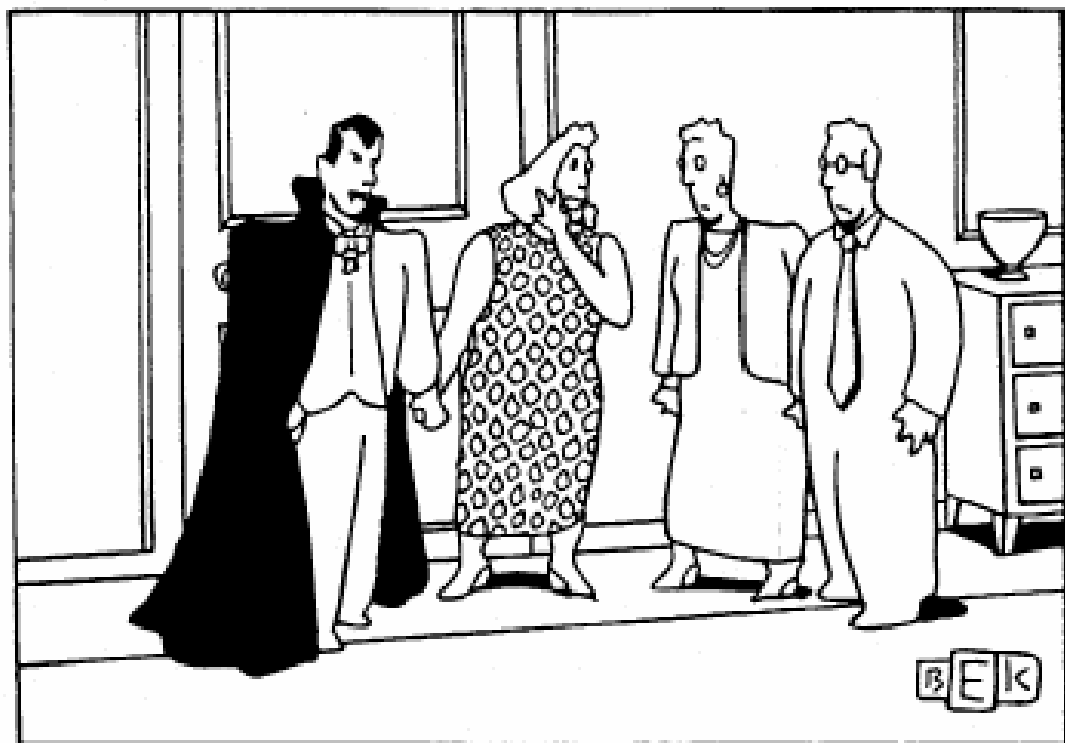
"Well, who made the magic go out of our marriage—you or me?"



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."

Kiss me.

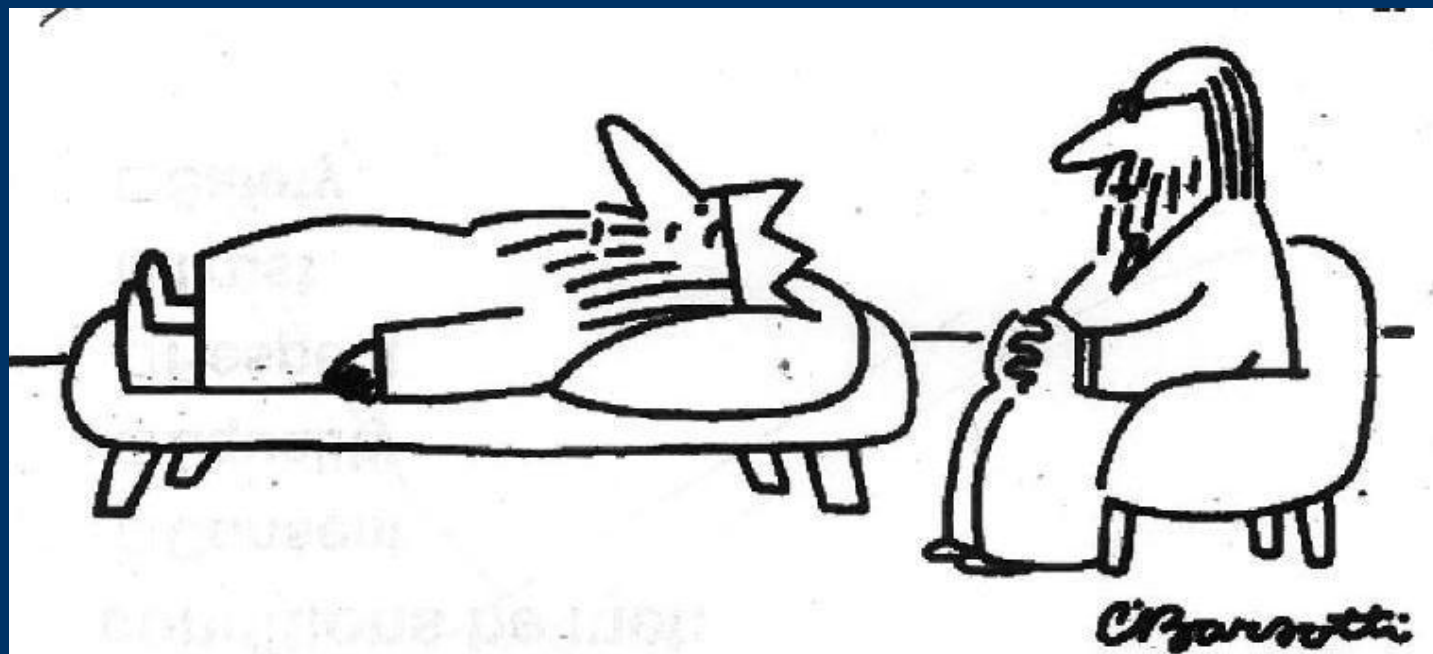
Again? I kissed
you three times
last week.



*But I said "yes"!
What's wrong?*

*It's the sudden change.
I'm accustomed to
being rejected.*

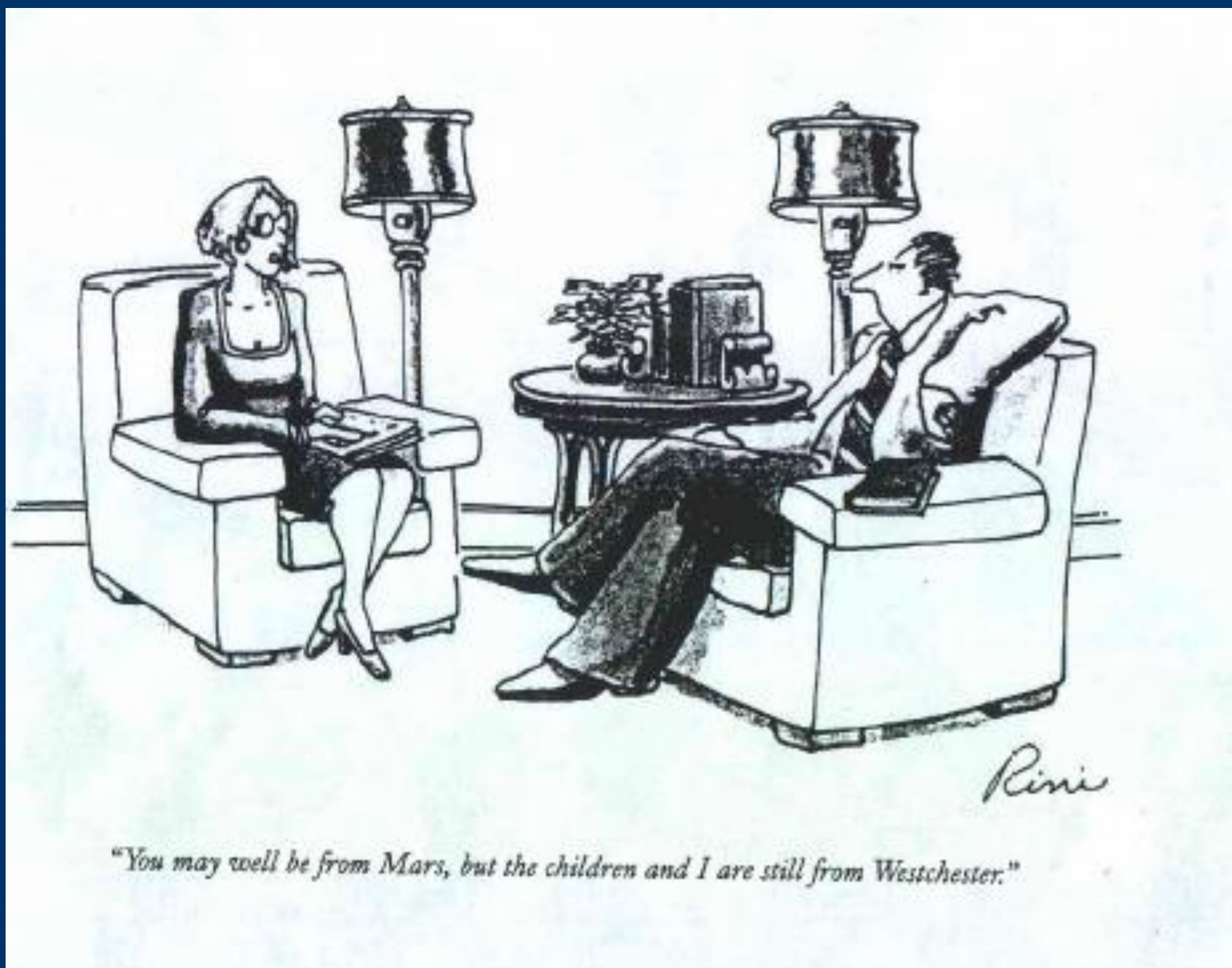




"Enemies, yes, but doesn't your moat also keep out love?"

Distortion





"You may well be from Mars, but the children and I are still from Westchester."

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

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

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

- 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

PsychAlive Workshop & Journal

Journal on PsychAlive at <http://www.psychalive.org/category/psychalive-workshop/>

A screenshot of the 'PsychAlive Workshop' journal entry form. The header includes the 'PSYCHALIVE Workshop' logo and navigation links: Home, About PsychAlive, Blog, Subscribe, and My Profile. A search bar is on the right. Below the header is a banner image of a couple sitting on grass with laptops, and a sidebar with links to 'Alive to SELF Workshop', 'Alive to PARENTING Workshop', and 'Alive to INTIMACY Workshop'. The main content area has the title 'PSYCHALIVE Workshop' and a navigation bar with links: 'My Profile', 'My Workshop', 'Journal Exercises', and 'My Journal'. A 'New Entry' link is highlighted. Below the navigation bar is a horizontal separator line. The form itself consists of a 'Title / Subject' label followed by a text input field, a 'Text' label followed by a large text area, and two buttons at the bottom: 'Write Journal' and 'Cancel, back'.

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 Relationship

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



Steps in Voice Therapy with Couples

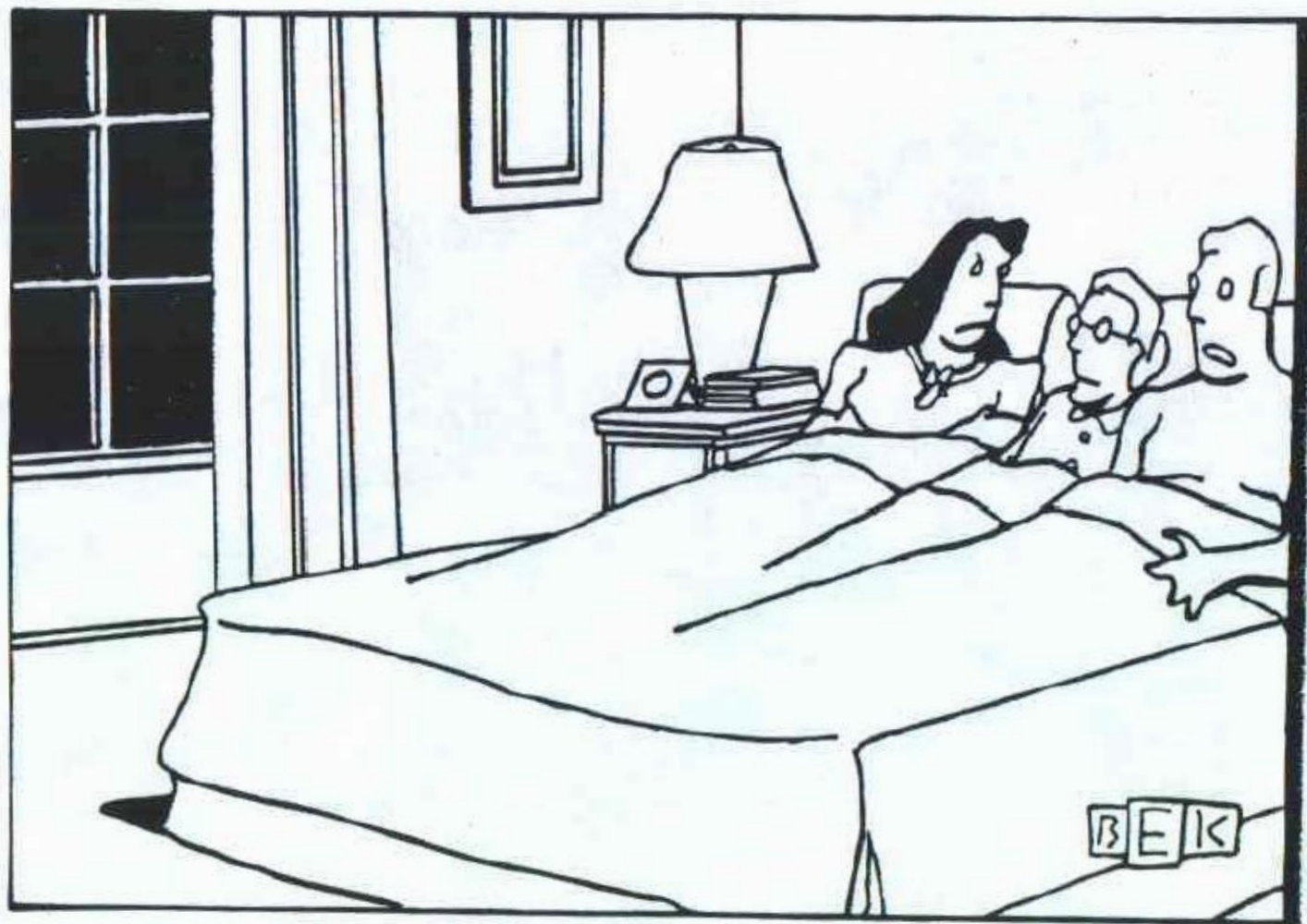
1. Formulating the problem
2. Verbalizing the voice and releasing affect
3. Developing insight about the source of the voice
4. Answering back to the voice
5. Developing insight about how voices are influencing behaviors
6. Planning corrective suggestions for changing behavior



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



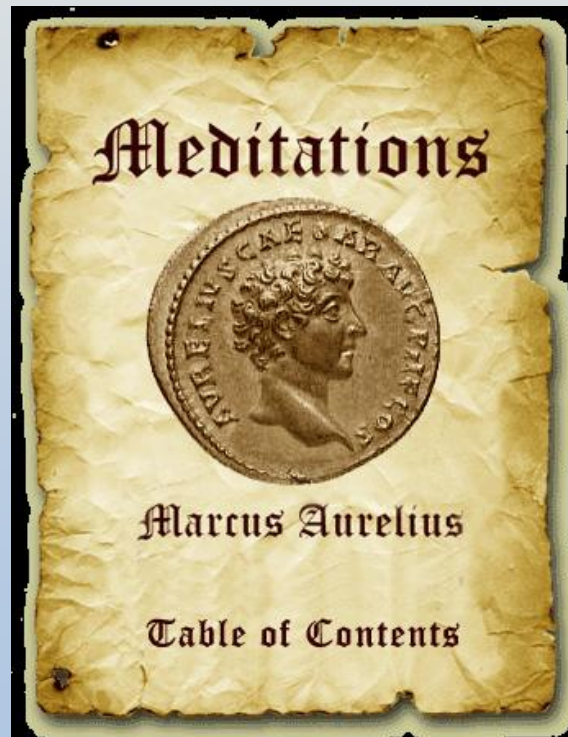


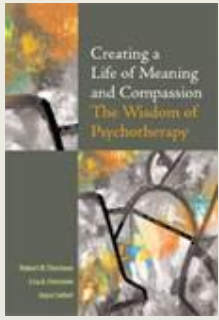
"For heaven's sake, Melissa, she's my mother. I can't tell her to leave."

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

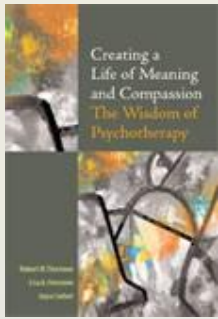




Poll #6:

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?

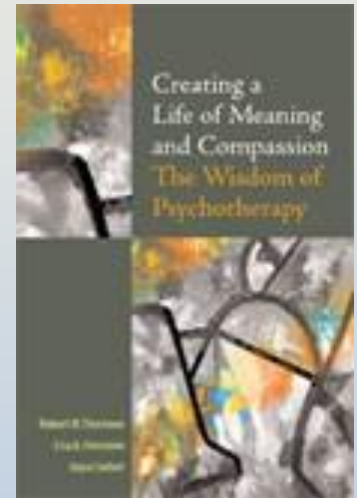
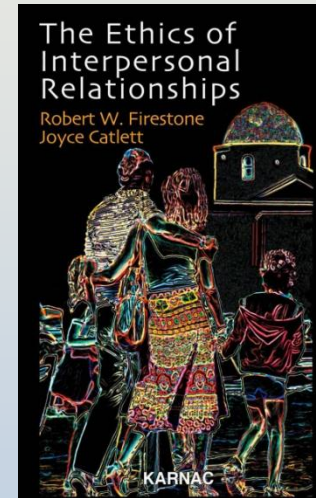
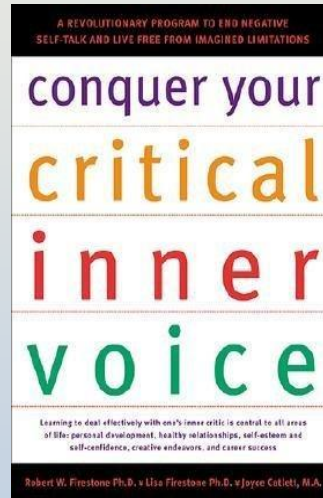
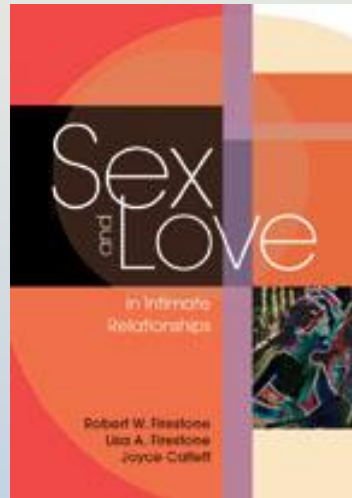
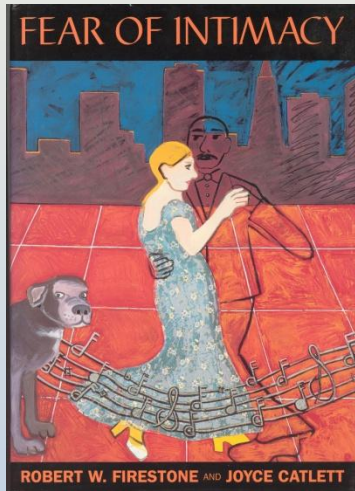
- Yes
- No

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

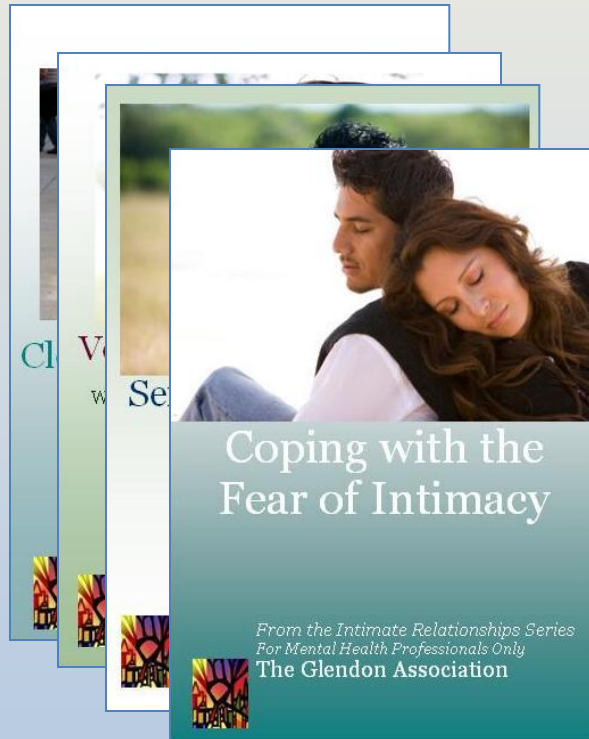
Resources: Books



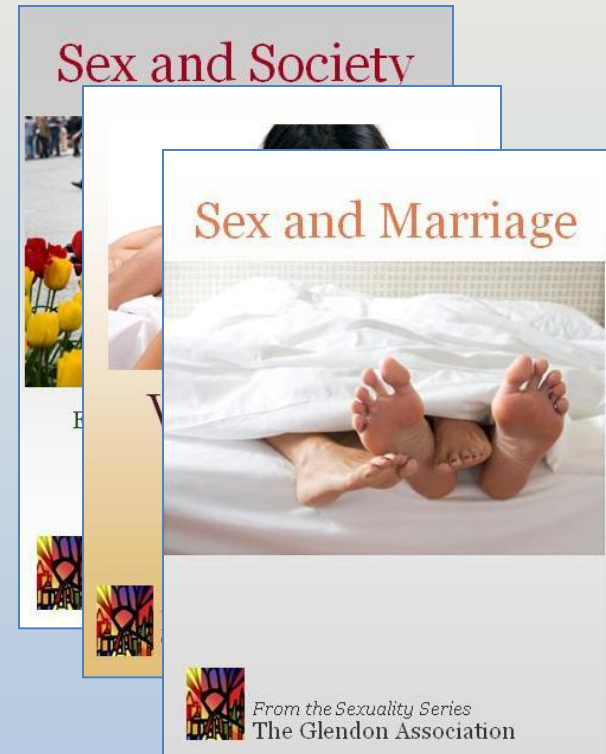
Visit www.psychalive.org for resource links

Resources: Films

Intimate Relationships Series



Sexuality Series



Visit www.psychalive.org for resource links

Upcoming Webinars from PsychAlive.org



February 7:

How to Improve Your Relationship

Free Webinar with Dr. Lisa Firestone

11am – 12pm PST

See a Full List of Upcoming Free and CE Webinars with Dr. Lisa Firestone and other expert presenters at

<http://www.psychalive.org/2012/02/webinars-with-lisa-firestone-ph-d/>



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

Contact:

Glendon@Glendon.org

800-663-5281



Lisa Firestone, Ph.D.

Director of Research and Education
The Glendon Association

Senior Editor
PsychAlive.org



THE GLENDON
ASSOCIATION

(For Professionals)

www.glendon.org

PSYCHALIVE

(For the Public)

www.psychalive.org



To receive your CE's for this webinar:

- ❖ Upon completion of this Webinar, you will receive an email with an evaluation form for you to complete and return to the CE provider. This form can be emailed, faxed or mailed. Instructions will be given in the email.
- ❖ A recording of this Webinar will also be available online. Those unable to attend this live Webinar may view the recording and complete the evaluation form to receive 3 CE Units for \$35. A link to this recording will be sent to you as soon as it's available.