



THE GLENDON  
ASSOCIATION

& PSYCHALIVE

# Why Am I Still Single?

Learn the Barriers that Ward Off Love



with Lisa Firestone, Ph.D.



**Lisa Firestone, Ph.D.**

Director of Research and  
Education  
The Glendon Association

Senior Editor  
PsychAlive.org



**THE GLENDON  
ASSOCIATION**

(For Professionals)  
[www.glendon.org](http://www.glendon.org)

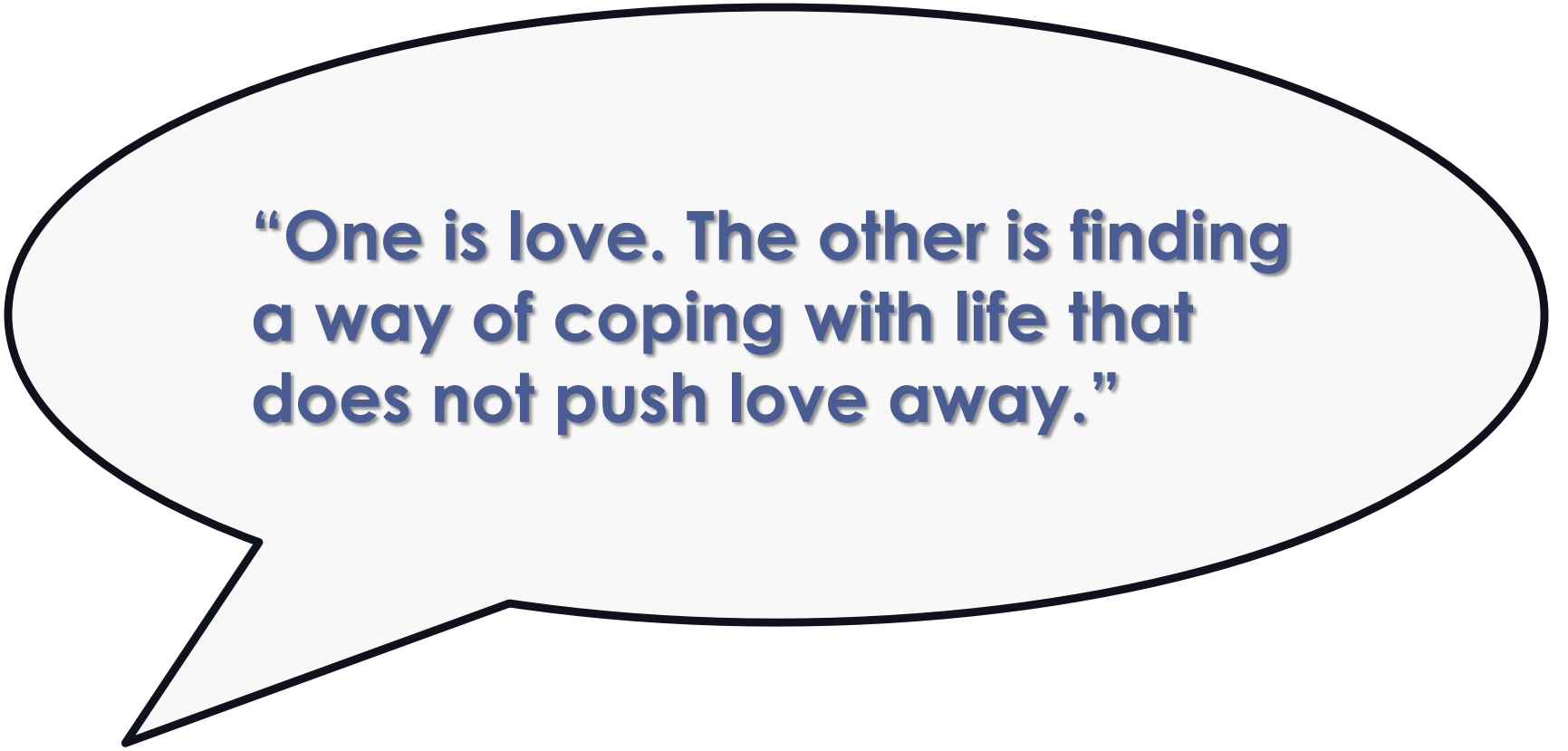
**PSYCHALIVE**

(For the Public)  
[www.psychalive.org](http://www.psychalive.org)

**A 75-year study at Harvard University found one true key to a happy and fulfilling life...**

**love!**

**Dr. George Vaillant's two ingredients for a happy life:**



**“One is love. The other is finding  
a way of coping with life that  
does not push love away.”**

## Poll #1

What do you believe gets in the way  
of people finding love?

Themselves

Lack of suitable potential partners

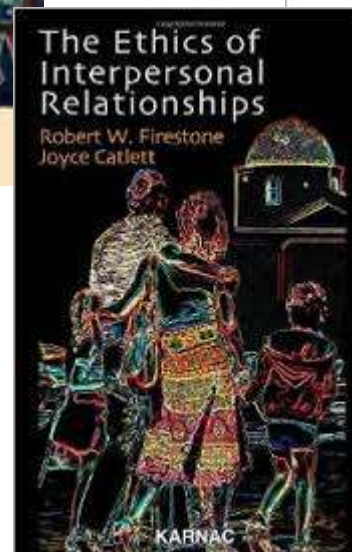
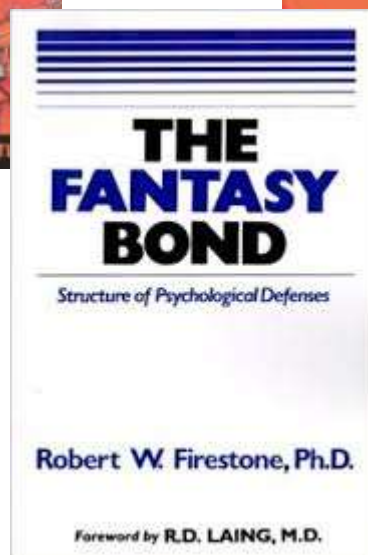
Circumstances

# Theoretical Approach

## Separation Theory Robert W. Firestone, Ph.D.



- Integrates psychoanalytic and existential systems of thought
- Two kinds of emotional pain
  - Interpersonal
  - Existential
- The core conflict
- Formation of defenses in childhood
- Defended versus undefended lifestyles
- The Fantasy Bond and the Critical Inner Voice



# Our Tolerance for Love

- Every person is, to some degree, intolerant of love
- Our tolerance for love is established early in our lives
- In many unrealized ways, we may be giving up on love
- To the degree that we control the amount of love we will tolerate, we control our romantic destiny

# Attachment Style

**Your attachment style shapes the filter through which you view the world and serves as a model for relating.**

# 4 Things People Want in a Relationship:

SAFE

+

SEEN

+

SOOTHED

=

SECURE

# The Fantasy Bond

A Fantasy Bond is an illusion of connection, originally an imaginary fusion or joining with the mother. It is used 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.

# Fantasy Over Real Love

- A “fantasy bond” describes an illusion of connection between a couple that is substituted for feelings of real love and intimacy.
- Forming a fantasy bond is an often unconscious act of self-parenting and self-protection, in which two people become pseudoindependent, replacing the real relating involved in being in love with the form of being a “couple.”
- The degree of reliance on a fantasy bond is proportional to the degree of frustration and pain experienced in a person’s developmental years.

# **Manifestations of a Fantasy Bond**

- **Withholding from your partner**
- **Acting like a parent or child**
- **Putting partner up on a pedestal**
- **Becoming hypercritical toward your partner**
- **Focusing on form over substance**
- **Feeling like you can't do things on your own**
- **Controlling your partner**

## Poll #2:

Which of these manifestations  
do you see in yourself or your patients?

Withholding

Acting parental or childish

Idealizing

Becoming hypercritical

Controlling

# How Attachment Style Affects Relationships

**Secure Attachment:** Securely-attached adults tend to be more satisfied in their relationships.

**Anxious-Preoccupied Attachment:** People with an anxious attachment tend to be desperate to form a fantasy bond. Instead of feeling real love or trust toward their partner, they often feel emotional hunger.

**Dismissive-Avoidant Attachment:** People with a dismissive-avoidant attachment have the tendency to emotionally distance themselves from their partner.

**Fearful-Avoidant Attachment:** People with a fearful-avoidant attachment live in an ambivalent state, in which they are afraid of being both too close to or too distant from others.

# Defenses Against Love

Hurtful interactions and dynamics in childhood lead people to put up walls or perceive the world through a filter that can negatively impact them as adults.



# Defenses Against Love

- It can be hard for people to see when their defenses are up.
- Instead, they blame their singleness on external forces.

*Women are way too complicated.*

*There are no decent men left out there.*

*I'm too old to fall in love.*

**As adults, people's defenses may lead them to:**



- **Repeat patterns they saw in their parents**
- **Choose someone similar to a person from their past**
- **Recreate familiar relationship dynamics**
- **Engage in unhealthy defenses formed as adaptations to painful events**

# Critical Inner Voice

## The Language of the Defensive 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.



# 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.”

# 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'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.
- **Don't be too vulnerable or you'll just wind up getting hurt.**

## 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 #3

Are you aware of these “voices” in yourself or your patients?

Yes, often

Yes, sometimes

No, never

# Isolation and Routine

## **The Danger of Comfort Zones:**

- Feels harder to take risks or put self out there
- Increases our anxiety
- Strengthens our critical inner voice

# The Role of the Critical Inner Voice in Isolation & Routine:

## Self-Soothing:

“Just stay in tonight and relax. You’re fine on your own. Have a glass of wine. Watch that TV show.”

## Self-Punishing:

“What a loser you are, home alone again. You’ll be lonely the rest of your life. You’re not getting any younger! No one will be attracted to you.”

# **Voices in Pickiness/ Hypercritical Attitudes**

- **View the world from critical or distrusting eyes**
- **Write off potential partners before giving them a chance**
- **Think of dating certain people as “settling”**
- **Have unrealistic expectations**
- **Tear partner or potential partners apart**
- **Listen to self-soothing voices (“You don’t need him/her. You’re better off on your own.”)**

# Rule-Making

## Dangers of Rulebooks:

- Encourages game-playing
- Closes us off from how we feel
- Creates a perpetual cycle of disappointment
- Promotes acting with less sincerity and authenticity

# Fear of Competition

- Fear of competing
- Fear of “losing” (rejection)
- Fear of “winning” (being chosen)



**Until you make the  
unconscious conscious, it  
will direct your life, and  
you will call it fate.**

**- C.G. Jung**

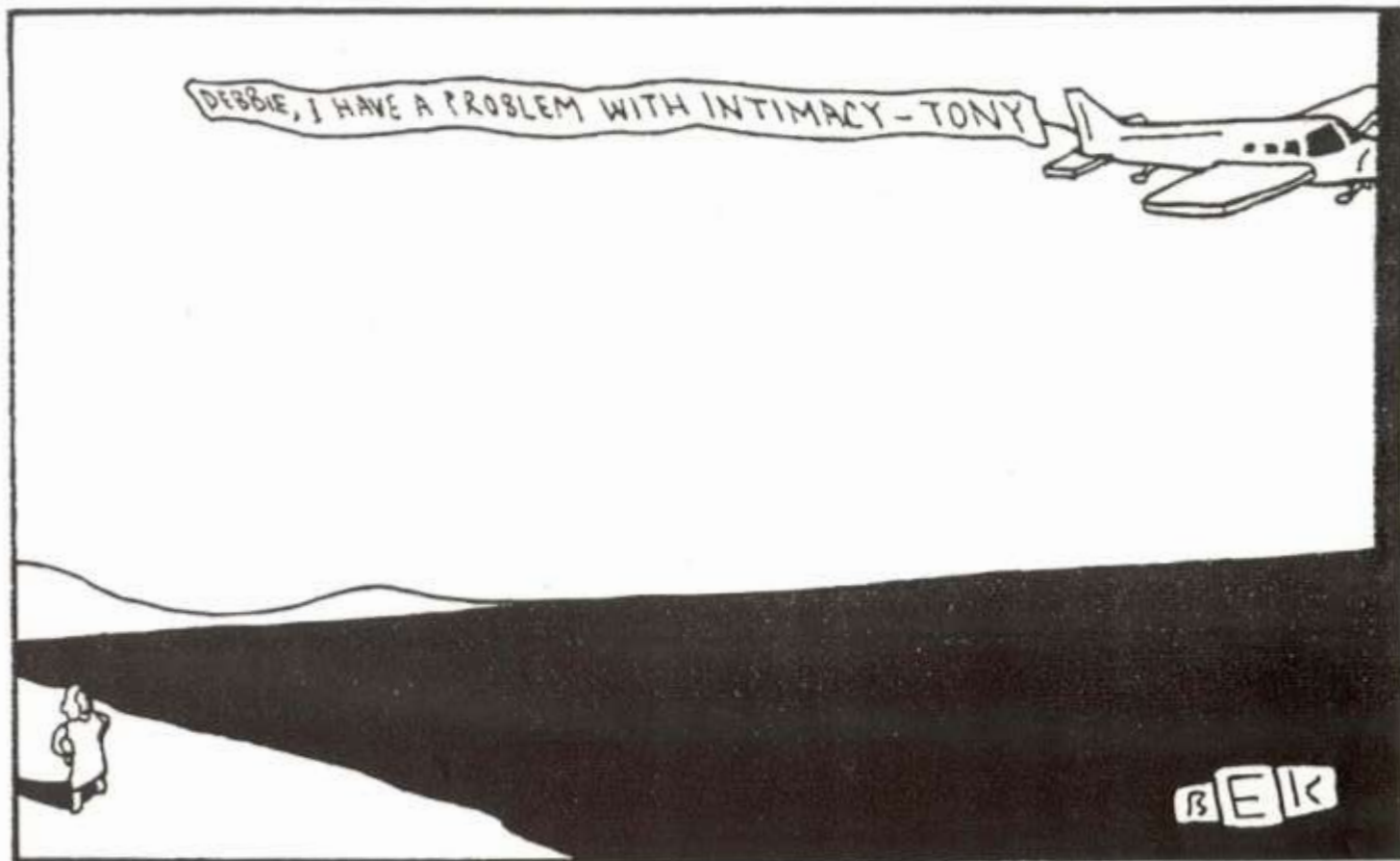
# Fear of Intimacy

*Interpersonal relationships are the ultimate source of happiness or misery. Love has the potential to generate intense pleasure and fulfillment or produce considerable pain and suffering.*

*- From Sex & Love in Intimate Relationships*

*Most of us profess that we want to find a loving partner, but the experience of real love disrupts fantasies of love that have served as a survival mechanism since early childhood... Pushing away and punishing the beloved acts to preserve one's negative self-image and reduces anxiety.*

*- Robert Firestone, Ph.D.*



# Reasons People are Afraid of Love:

1. Arouses anxiety or guilt
2. Makes us feel alone/ breaks parental connections
3. Reminds us of past hurts/rejections
4. Makes us feel more vulnerable
5. Causes us to feel self-critical/experience identity crisis
6. Brings up pain and sadness
7. Stirs up existential fears



# Ways We Defend Against Love

- Play the victim
- Withhold
- Lash out/ push away
- Withdraw into fantasy
- Become critical
- Build up bitterness
- Resist being vulnerable
- Write people off more easily
- Become pseudo-independent



# Factors That Contribute to Relationship Distress

- Selection
- Distortion
- Provocation



# Selection:

## What We Want in a Partner Vs. What We Choose

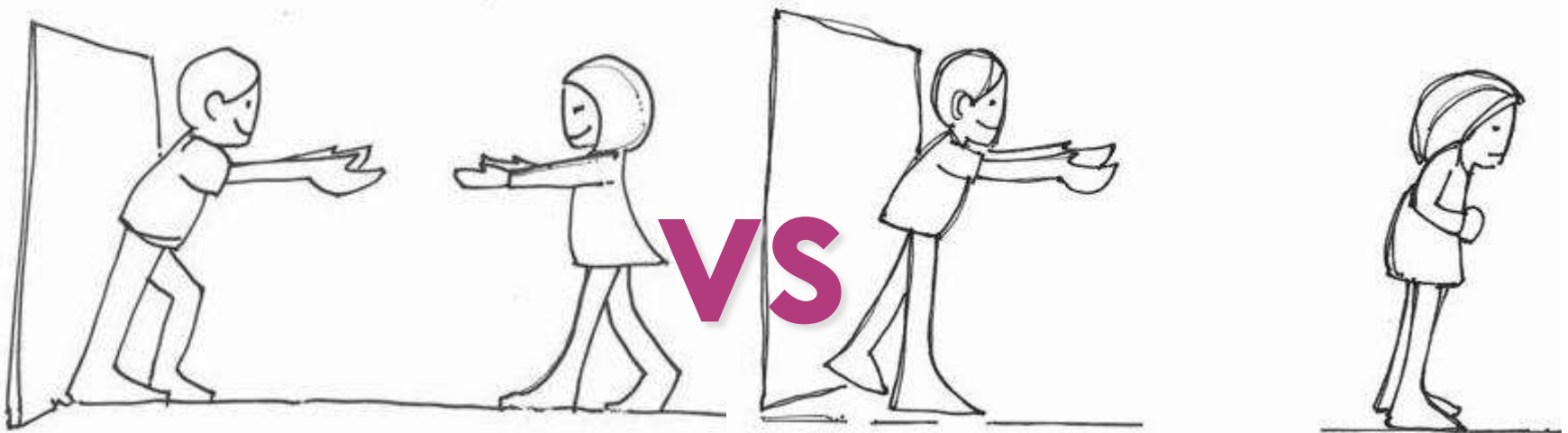
- Why are we drawn to certain people?
- Who we choose has a lot to do with our past.
- When we act on our defenses, we tend to choose less-than-ideal relationship partners whose defenses fit with ours.



# Why We Choose the Lovers We Do



Ayala Pines, Ph.D.



# Possible Signs of Poor Selection:

- Exaggerated magnetism
- Sense of completion (i.e. finding your “missing piece”)
- Mimics your past (stirs up old feelings)
- Thoughts that you can change/ save the person

# Distortion

## How we distort our partners:

- Focus on the negative
- Project our past onto our them
- Turn their attribute into flaws
- See the world through a false lens

# Seeking Love

- **Seeking love isn't an easy quest.**
- **It's important to fight the patterns inside us that hold us back from getting what we want.**
- **We can't shield ourselves from the world or keep ourselves from getting hurt.**
- **Achieving intimacy is a brave battle, but it is one well-worth fighting for.**



We accept the  
love we think  
we deserve.

The Perks of being a Wallflower

# Defining Love

**Actions that fit the description of a loving relationship include:**

- Expressions of affection, both physical and emotional
- Wish to offer pleasure and satisfaction to the other
- Tenderness, compassion and sensitivity to the other's needs
- Desire for shared activities and pursuits
- Appropriate level of sharing of one's possessions
- Ongoing, honest exchange of personal feelings
- Offering concern, comfort and outward assistance for the loved one's aspirations



# Defining 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 can you do to  
challenge yourself and  
achieve love?**

# Importance of Staying Open

- One of the most important things we can do to find love
- Can lead to a more authentic and substantial relationship



# Look Inside Yourself

- Think about the partners you select
- Note if there are patterns to your selections
- Ask yourself how you could break these patterns
- Be open to a different type of person
- Try dating outside your comfort zone
- Give these opportunities a chance, even though they may make you feel uncomfortable at first

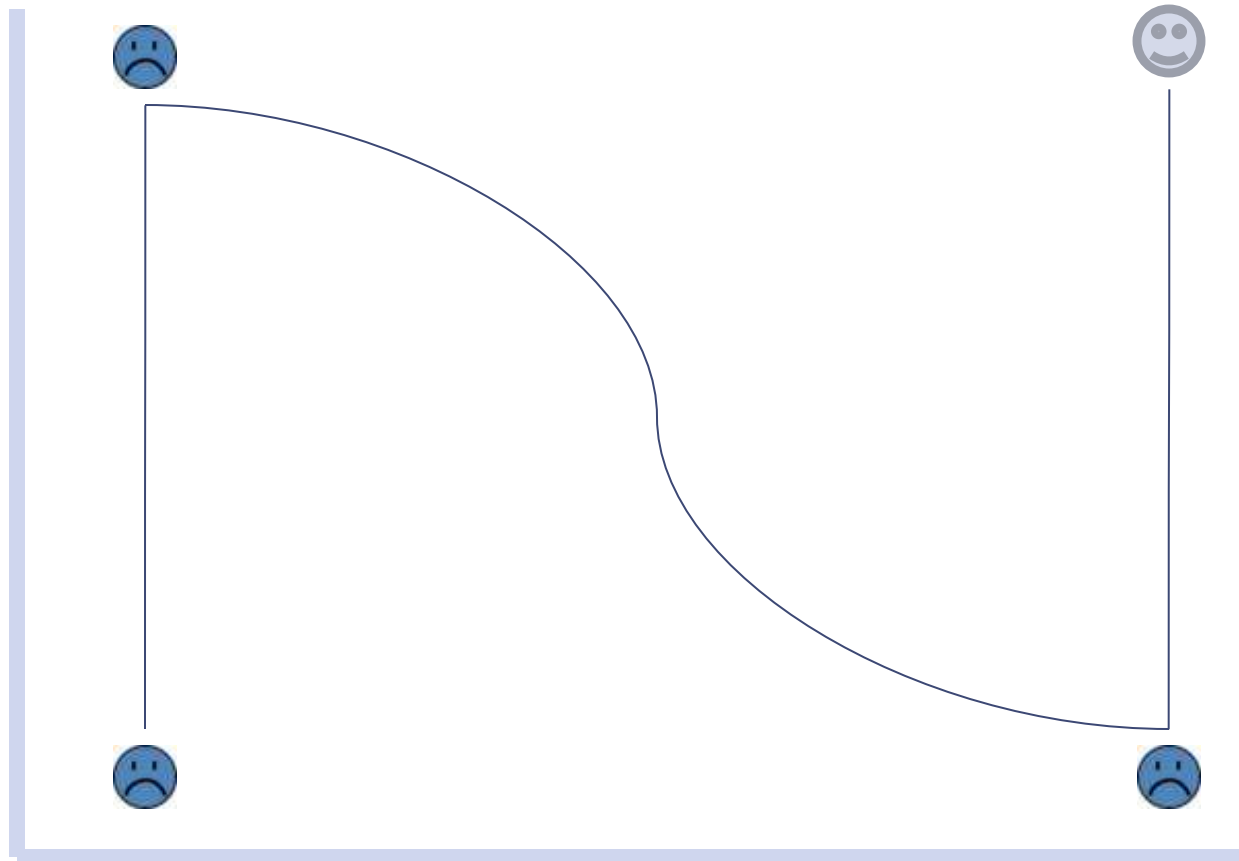


# **Six Qualities to Look for in the “Ideal” Partner and to Develop Yourself:**

- **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**

# Differentiation and Linkage

**Linkage**  
(emotional  
closeness)



**Differentiation**  
(individuation as an individual)

## Exercise from *Conquer Your Critical Inner Voice*



# 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 from *Conquer Your Critical Inner Voice*

# 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 from *Conquer Your Critical Inner Voice*

# 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 from *Conquer Your Critical Inner Voice*

# Relationships: Your Critical Inner Voice/The Real You

- What my critical inner voice says about relationships

---

---

---

---

- What I realistically think about relationships

---

---

---

---

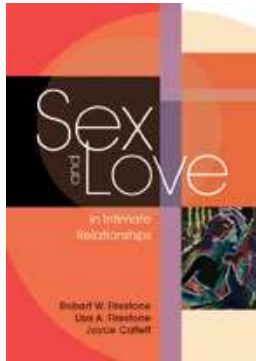
## Exercise from *Conquer Your Critical Inner Voice*

# Actions to Take to Create the Relationship I Want

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



## Exercise from *Sex and Love in Intimate Relationships*



### **An Imaginary Conversation About Relationships**

**What would your mother/father say about you, your partner and your relationship?**

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



# Voice Therapy:

## Steps in the Therapeutic Process 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



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

**- Epictetus**

# 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



# Personal Power

- Personal power is an attitude or state of mind that we can develop.
- We cultivate our personal power by:
  - ❑ Getting in touch with our own unique desires
  - ❑ Conquering our critical inner voices
  - ❑ Pursuing our goals



# Interpersonal Neurobiology

C urious

O pen

A ccepting

L oving

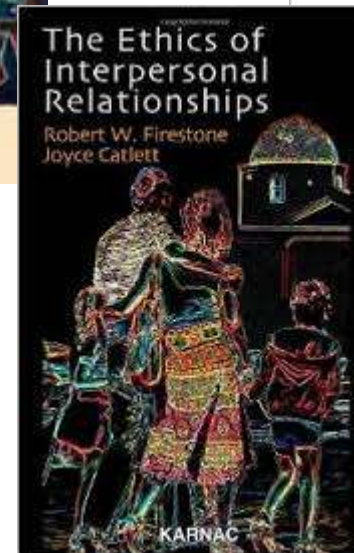
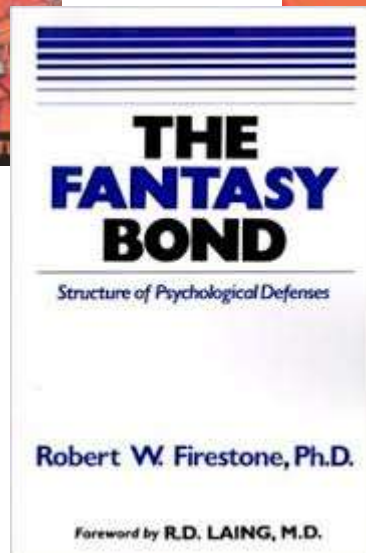
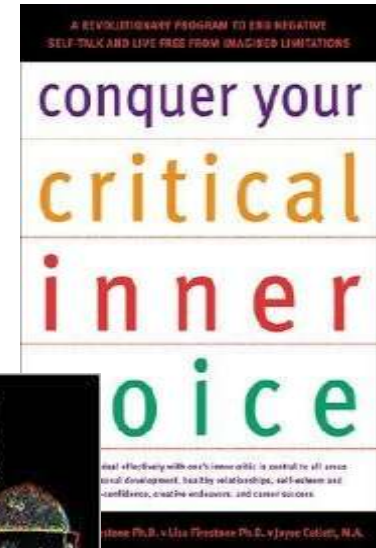


how lucky i am to have something  
that makes saying goodbye so hard.

winnie the pooh



# Books



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

# eCourses

## **Creating Your Ideal Relationship: How to Find and Achieve the Love You Say You Want**



**See all upcoming and archived PsychAlive eCourses at  
<http://ecourse.psychalive.org/>**

# Upcoming Webinars

**Upcoming Free & CE Webinars from PsychAlive:**



See the full list at [www.PsychAlive.org](http://www.PsychAlive.org)  
[http://www.psychalive.org/pl\\_resource\\_type/webinar-resources/](http://www.psychalive.org/pl_resource_type/webinar-resources/)

# YouTube

## Visit the PsychAlive YouTube Channel



See the full list at [www.PsychAlive.org](http://www.PsychAlive.org)  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/PsychAlive>

## To receive your CE's for this Webinar:

- ❖ Upon completion of this Webinar, you will receive an email with all CE materials, including an accompanying article, an evaluation form and post test for you to complete online. Instructions will be given in the email.
- ❖ A recording of this Webinar will also be emailed to you. Those unable to attend this live Webinar may view the recording and complete the CE forms to receive 3 CE Units for \$35. A link to this recording will be sent to you as soon as it's available.



## Contact:

[glendon@glendon.org](mailto:glendon@glendon.org)

800-663-5281



**THE GLENDON  
ASSOCIATION**

(For Professionals)

[www.glendon.org](http://www.glendon.org)

**PSYCHALIVE**

(For the Public)

[www.psychalive.org](http://www.psychalive.org)