

A close-up photograph of a man and a woman smiling and looking at each other. The man is on the left, and the woman is on the right. The background is a soft, light blue-grey gradient.

Real Love Vs Fantasy

How to Keep Romantic Love Alive

with Dr. Lisa Firestone



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



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A romantic scene of a couple walking on a sandy beach at sunset. The man is wearing orange pants and the woman is wearing a white dress. The background is a soft, hazy orange and yellow sky over the ocean.

Romantic Love

vs. Passionate or Companion-like Love

- “Romantic love,” characterized by “**intensity, engagement and sexual interest,**” is associated with marital satisfaction, well-being, high self-esteem and relationship longevity.
- “Passionate” or “obsessive love” has the same features as romantic love but also includes feelings of uncertainty and anxiety. Passionate/obsessive love works well in short-term relationships, but it hurts long-term relationships.
- “Companion-like love” leads to only moderate satisfaction in both short-term and long-term relationships.”
- Romantic love can last in a long-term relationship and keep both people happy.



Romantic Love vs. Passionate or Companion-like Love

“Couples should strive for love with all the trimmings...Couples who’ve been together a long time and wish to get back their romantic edge should know it is an attainable goal that, like most good things in life, requires energy and devotion.”

- Researcher Bianca P. Acevedo, Ph.D.

Three Parts to This Webinar:

Part 1:

What is a
fantasy
bond?

Part 2:

Why do we
form
fantasy
bonds?

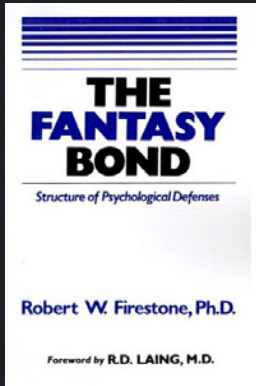
Part 3:

How can
we break
free from a
fantasy
bond?

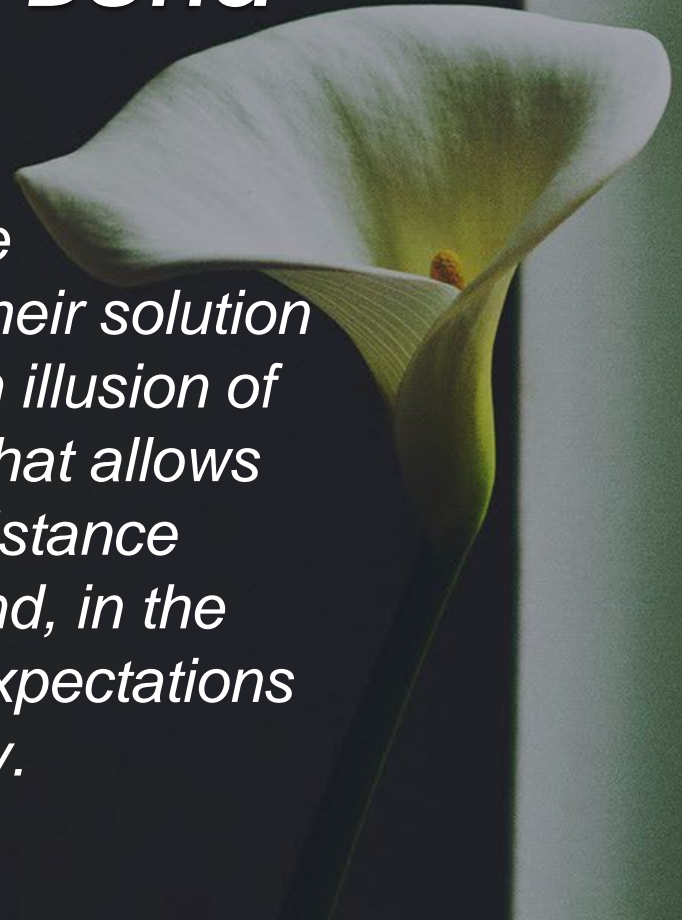


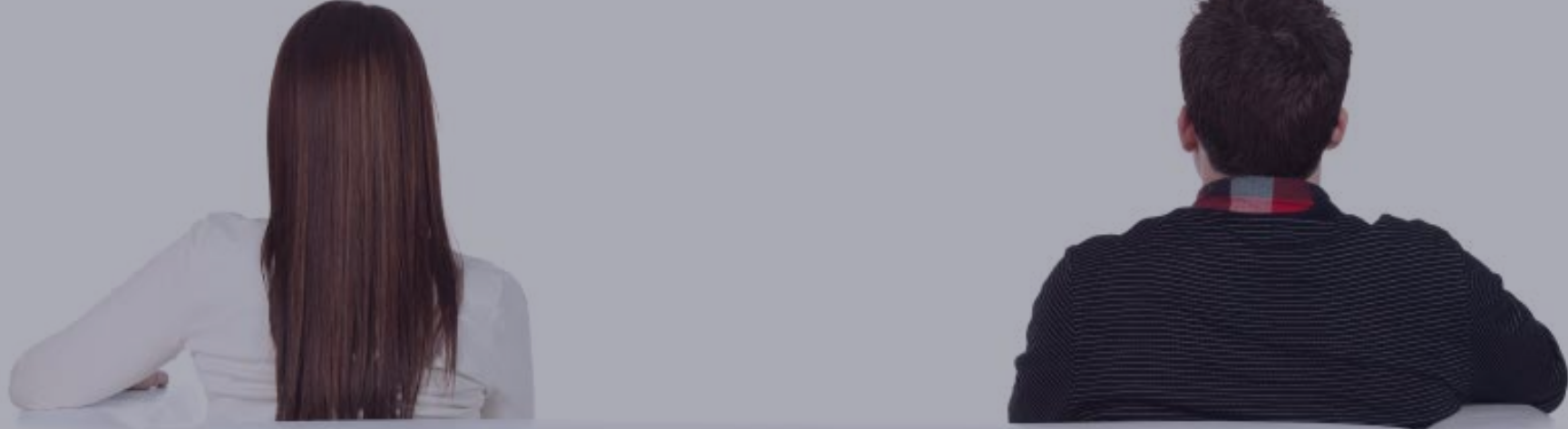
What is a Fantasy Bond?

“ From *The Fantasy Bond*



Most people have a fear of intimacy and at the same time are terrified of being alone. Their solution is to form a fantasy bond – an illusion of connection and closeness – that allows them to maintain emotional distance while assuaging loneliness and, in the process, meeting society’s expectations regarding marriage and family.





Definition of the Fantasy Bond

A “fantasy bond” describes an illusion of connection between a couple that is substituted for feelings of real love and intimacy.

A man and a woman are sitting on a light-colored bench, seen from behind. The woman on the left has long, straight brown hair and is wearing a white long-sleeved top. The man on the right has short dark hair and is wearing a dark, textured sweater over a red and blue plaid shirt. A large, light gray rounded rectangular box is overlaid on the lower half of the image, containing text. The background is a plain, light gray wall.


Definition of the Fantasy Bond

Forming a fantasy bond is an often unconscious act of self-parenting and self-protection, in which two people become pseudo-independent, replacing the real relating involved in being in love with the form of being a "couple."

A woman with long dark hair and a man with short dark hair are sitting on a light-colored bench, seen from behind. They are facing away from each other. A large, semi-transparent white box with rounded corners is overlaid on the lower half of the image, containing text. The background is a plain, light gray.

Definition of the Fantasy Bond

The degree of reliance on a fantasy bond is proportional to the degree of frustration and pain experienced in a person's developmental years.

A man and a woman are sitting on a red leather tufted sofa. Both are looking down at their smartphones. The woman on the left has her hand to her face, looking bored. The man on the right is also looking at his phone with a similar expression. The background is a wood-paneled wall.

What are the characteristics of a Fantasy Bond?

Signs You May Have Formed 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
- Less eye contact and physical affection
- Loss of independence

Couple Interactions Chart

Interactions in an Ideal Relationship	Interactions in a Relationship Characterized by a Fantasy Bond
Nondefensiveness and openness	Angry reactions to feedback
Open to trying anything within reason	Closed to new experiences
Honesty and integrity	Deception and duplicity
Respect for the other's boundaries, priorities and 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

Couple Interactions Chart

Interactions in an Ideal Relationship

**Interactions in a Relationship
Characterized by a Fantasy Bond**

Nondefensiveness and openness



Angry reactions to feedback



Couple Interactions Chart

Interactions in an Ideal Relationship

**Open to trying anything
within reason**



**Interactions in a Relationship
Characterized by a Fantasy Bond**

Closed to new experiences



Couple Interactions Chart

Interactions in an Ideal Relationship

Interactions in a Relationship
Characterized by a Fantasy Bond

Honesty and integrity



Deception and duplicity



Couple Interactions Chart

Interactions in an Ideal Relationship

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



Interactions in a Relationship Characterized by a Fantasy Bond

Overstepping boundaries - Other seen only in relation to self



Couple Interactions Chart

Interactions in an Ideal Relationship

**Interactions in a Relationship
Characterized by a Fantasy Bond**

**Physical affection and
personal sexuality**

**Lack of affection, inadequate or
impersonal, routine sexuality**



Couple Interactions Chart

Interactions in an Ideal Relationship

Interactions in a Relationship Characterized by a Fantasy Bond

Understanding - lack of distortion of the other

Misunderstanding - distortion of the other



Couple Interactions Chart

Interactions in an Ideal Relationship

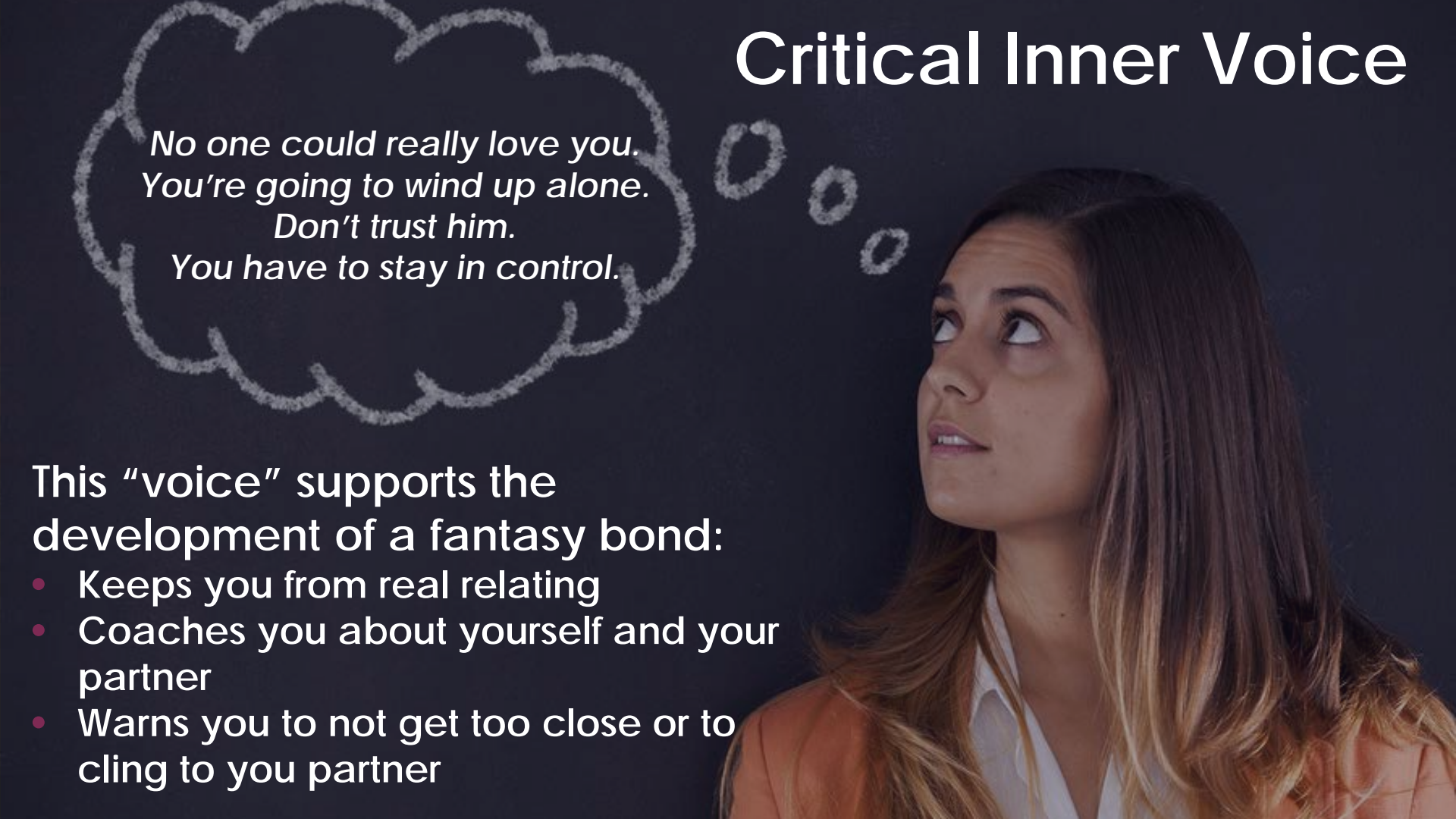
**Interactions in a Relationship
Characterized by a Fantasy Bond**

**Noncontrolling, nonmanipulative
and nonthreatening**

**Manipulations of dominance
and submission**



Critical Inner Voice




*No one could really love you.
You're going to wind up alone.
Don't trust him.
You have to stay in control.*

This "voice" supports the development of a fantasy bond:

- Keeps you from real relating
- Coaches you about yourself and your partner
- Warns you to not get too close or to cling to you partner

Critical Inner Voice



*No one could really love you.
You're going to wind up alone.
Don't trust him.
You have to stay in control.*

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. It affects every aspect of our lives: our self-esteem and confidence, and most importantly, our personal and intimate relationships.

Why do we
form fantasy
bonds?





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**

Origins of a Fantasy Bond

A black and white photograph of a young child looking out a window. The child's face is in profile, looking towards the left. In the background, a blurred face of an adult is visible, likely the parent, looking at the child. The lighting is soft and natural, coming from the window.


- Illusion of connection we originally form with our parent to help relieve early anxiety and emotional pain
- Process of self-parenting - see and treat ourselves the way we were seen and treated by our primary caretakers, both punishing and soothing ourselves
- Fantasy bond extends to our adult relationships
- Defenses we form limit our capacity for real love and closeness



The Fantasy Bond



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A man and a woman are jogging on a paved path on a hill. The woman is on the left, wearing a colorful floral hoodie and black leggings, with her hair blowing in the wind. The man is on the right, wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt and black shorts. They are both smiling and looking towards each other. In the background, a city is visible under a warm, golden sunset sky.

How Can We Break Free From a Fantasy Bond?

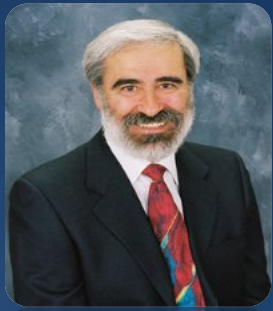


Integration

Daniel Siegel, M.D.



- Two differentiated people coming together and linking, not merging.
- Becoming a "we" while staying a separate self.



Merge or Coevolve?

David Schnarch, Ph.D.



Are you living with a fused identity?

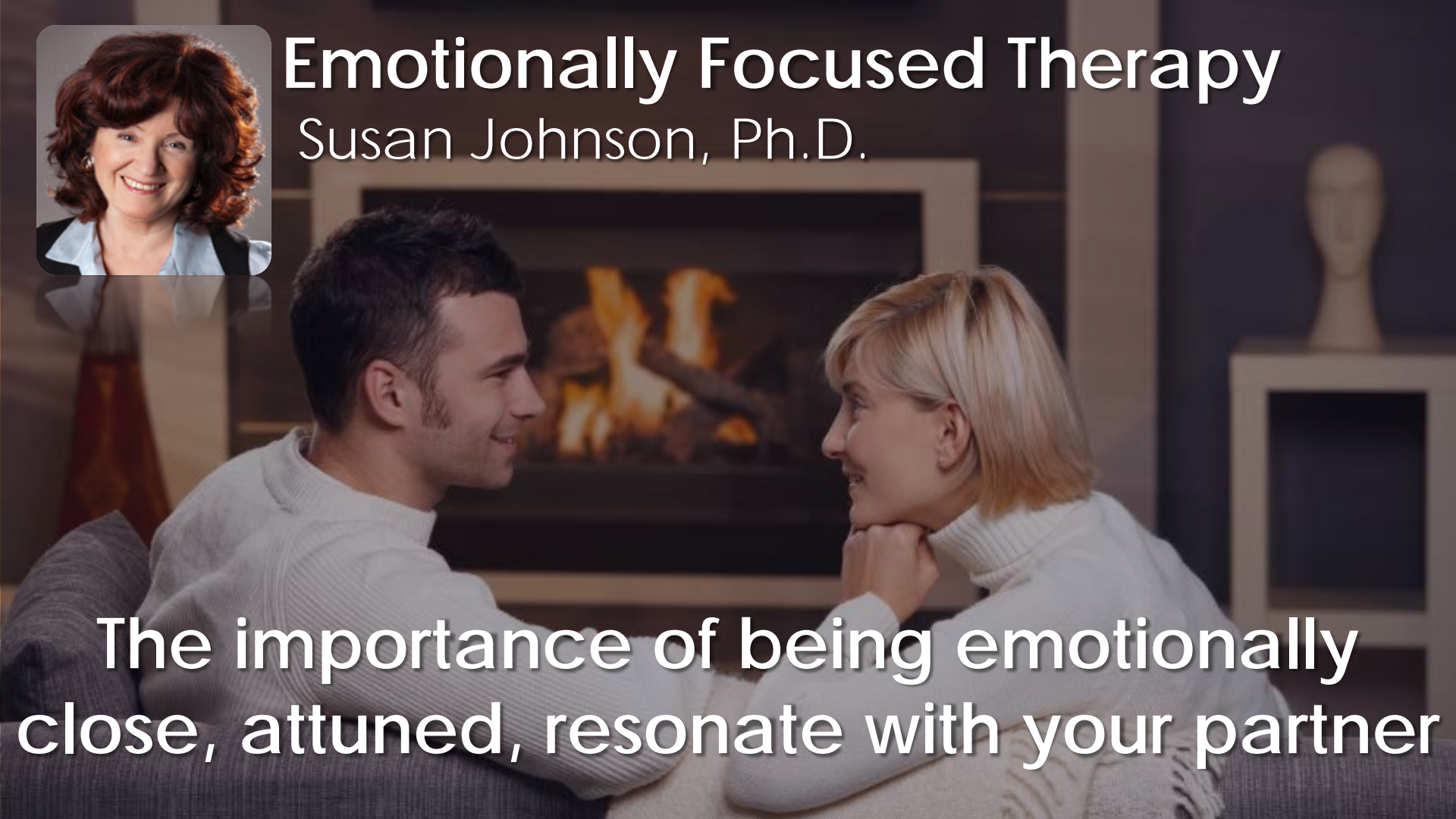
OR

Are you helping each other to evolve → to be a better person? Coevolution.



Emotionally Focused Therapy

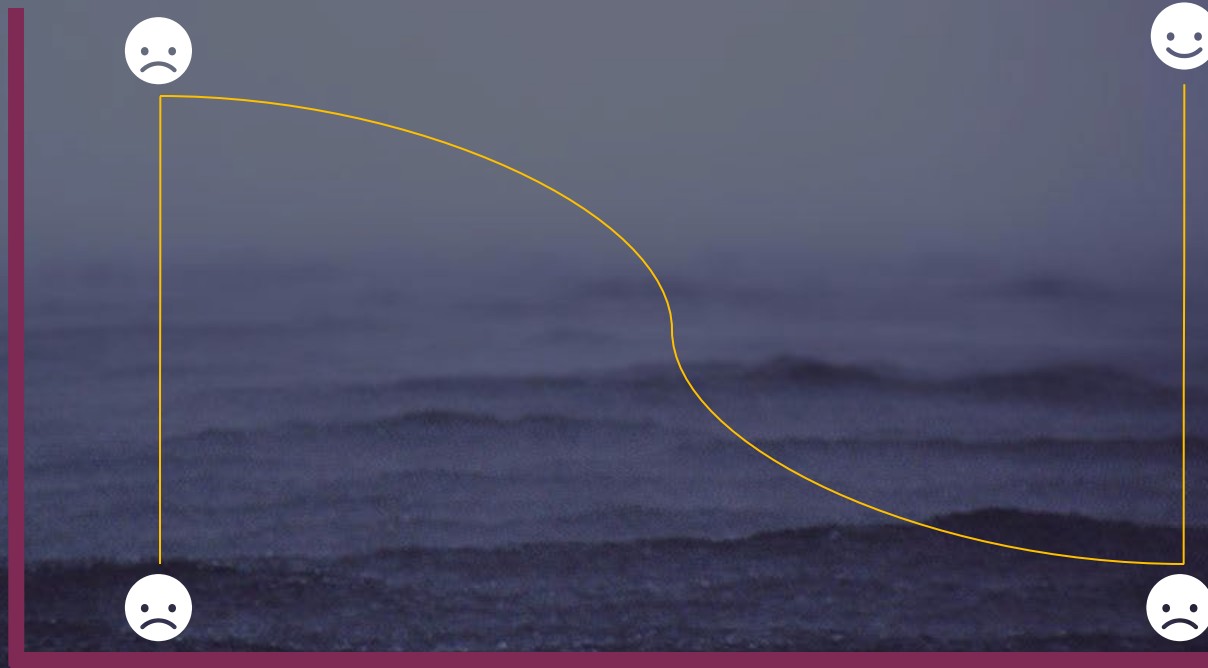
Susan Johnson, Ph.D.

A man and a woman are sitting on a grey couch in a living room, facing each other and smiling. The man is on the left, wearing a white sweater, and the woman is on the right, wearing a white turtleneck sweater. In the background, a fireplace with a warm fire is visible, and a white bust is on a side table to the right.

The importance of being emotionally close, attuned, resonate with your partner

Differentiation and Linkage

Linkage
(emotional closeness)



Differentiation
(individuation as an individual)


Actions that counter a fantasy bond:

1. Express love in a way your partner would experience as loving.
2. Be affectionate.
3. Slow down and be present.
4. Make eye contact.
5. Try something old.
6. Try something new.
7. Break routine.
8. Avoid passivity and control.
9. Talk as an "I" instead of a "we."
10. Be aware of your critical inner voice.



Don't Play the Victim

Be An Active Participant in Your Relationship

- 
- A young man and woman are shown in profile, looking towards the left. The woman is in the foreground, resting her chin on her hand, looking thoughtful. The man is behind her, also looking thoughtful. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.
- Assume responsibility for your relationship
 - Give up victimized language and thinking
 - Avoid the use of passive aggression to get what you want

The background of the slide features silhouettes of a man and a woman standing back-to-back with their arms crossed. The man is on the left, and the woman is on the right. The word "Withholding" is written in white text across a dark purple horizontal band at the top of the image.

Withholding

What does it look like?

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

A photograph of an elderly African American couple riding bicycles outdoors. The woman is on the left, wearing a white t-shirt and blue jeans, smiling broadly. The man is on the right, wearing a pink polo shirt and blue jeans, also smiling. They are both looking towards the camera. The background is a soft-focus green landscape with trees and foliage. The word "Generosity" is overlaid in large white text across the center of the image.

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're 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.



Goals for Your Relationship

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

Our Definition of Love

A top-down photograph showing two hands, palms up, holding a dense, heart-shaped arrangement of small green sprouts. The sprouts are vibrant green and appear to be young plants with small leaves and thin stems. The hands are positioned on either side of the heart, with fingers slightly spread. The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly soil or asphalt.

"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

A top-down photograph showing two hands held palm-up, cradling a heart-shaped arrangement of small, vibrant green plants. The plants are densely packed and form a clear heart shape. The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly soil or asphalt. The overall composition is centered and balanced.

"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."

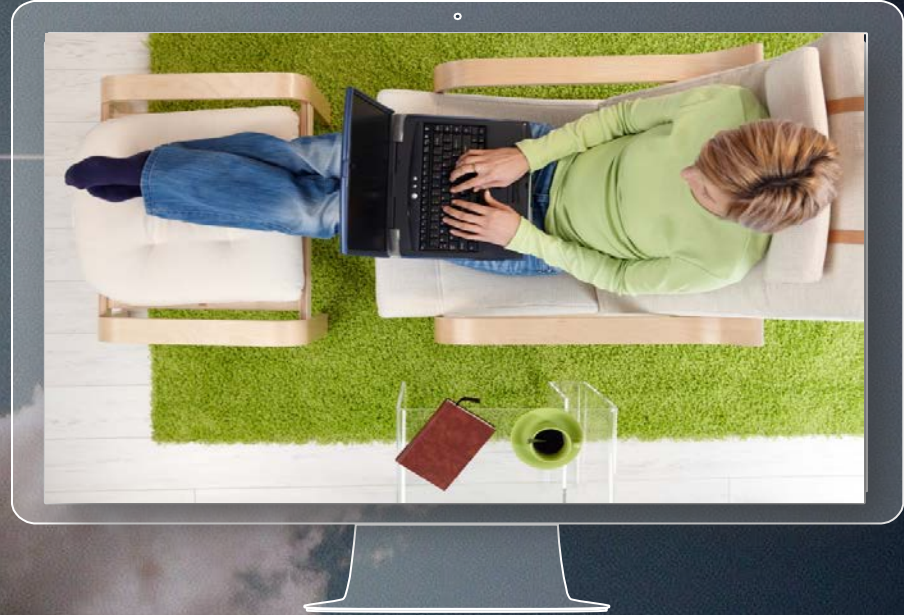
6 Qualities to Look for in a Partner and Develop in Yourself:

A young couple is shown in profile, sitting on a light-colored sofa. The woman on the left has her hair in a ponytail and is wearing a purple top. The man on the right is wearing a blue polo shirt. They are both holding dark-colored mugs and looking towards each other with slight smiles. The background is a bright, out-of-focus indoor setting.

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

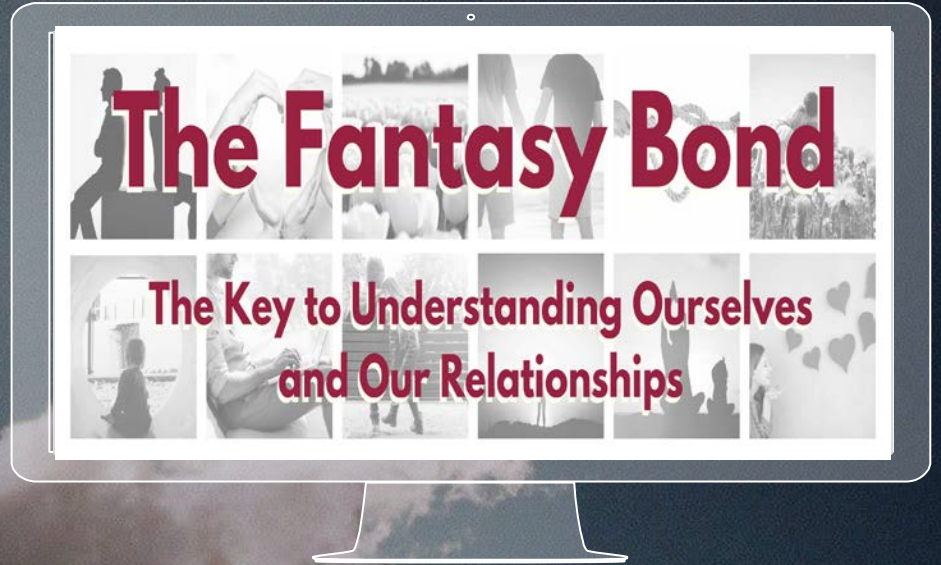
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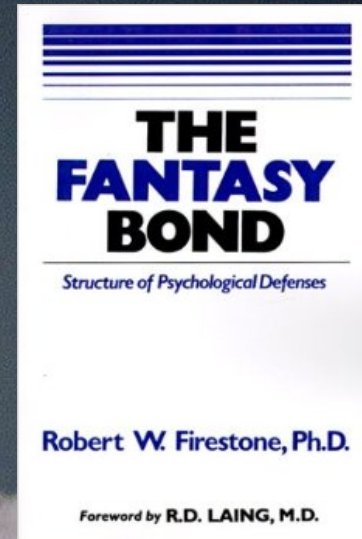
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Thank you!

Any questions?

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