



Breaking Free from Bad Relationship Patterns

Lisa Firestone, Ph.D.

In this Webinar:



- ✓ Identify patterns of recreating past dynamics in adult romantic relationships
- ✓ Learn how early attachment style influences attractions and behaviors
- ✓ Understand how people select, distort, and provoke partners to recreate old, familiar feelings
- ✓ Recognize the role childhood defenses and the “critical inner voice” play in relationships
- ✓ Break free of limiting patterns to enjoy stronger, more fulfilling relationships

Welcome!

Lisa Firestone, Ph.D.

*Director of Research and Education-
The Glendon Association
Senior Editor - PsychAlive*

Contact:

Email: lfirestone@glendon.org

Facebook: facebook.com/drlisafirestone

Twitter: [@DrLisaFirestone](https://twitter.com/DrLisaFirestone)



**THE GLENDON
ASSOCIATION**

www.glendon.org

PSYCHALIVE
Psychology for Everyday Life

www.psychalive.org

Three Parts to this Webinar:



Part 1:

*Where patterns
come from*

Part 2:

*How patterns
play out*

Part 3:

*Overcoming
patterns*



1. *Where Patterns Come From*

What is Attachment Theory?



How do I get these
people to take care
of me?

Understanding Attachment

- Attachment patterns are formed in infancy, during the first two years of life.
- Once established, it is a pattern that affects us throughout our lives, particularly in how we relate in intimate relationships and with our children.





Attachment Theory

Humans rely on attachment figures for:

- Protection (*safe*)
- Support (*seen*)
- Emotion regulation (*soothed*)



From: "Secure and Insecure Love: An Attachment Perspective" Phillip R. Shaver, Ph.D.

Patterns of Attachment in Children

○ Category of Attachment

- Secure
- Insecure – avoidant
- Insecure- anxious/ambivalent
- Insecure - disorganized

○ Parental Interactive Pattern

- Emotionally available, perceptive, responsive
- Emotionally unavailable, imperceptive, unresponsive and rejecting
- Inconsistently available, perceptive and responsive and intrusive
- Frightening, frightened, disorienting, alarming



We have different attachments to different people.



Father

Mother



Grandparent



**Aunt
or Uncle**

Internal Working Models

- Our early relationships provide a template for how relationships go.

*Can I depend on others? Will they
sooth me when I need it? Will they
see me for who I really am?*



Internal Working Models

- Early attachment patterns impact how we behave in relationships and how we expect others to act.
- Tend to repeat or recreate early attachment patterns throughout our lives.
- Perceive people as reflections of our past, assuming they will think and behave in certain patterns
- Unconsciously choose partners who fit these patterns, project these patterns onto our partner, or elicit these behaviors from our partner



Adaptations

Our early adaptations and the defenses we formed shape how we behave in relationships.

For example:

- Do you feel you shouldn't depend on others and should take care of yourself?
 - Do you feel you need to get your partner to take care of you. Are you preoccupied by getting their attention?
 - Are you trapped in a bind of being afraid to get close, yet terrified of being alone?
-



Patterns of Attachment

Patterns in Childhood

Secure

Insecure - avoidant

Insecure - anxious/ambivalent

Insecure - disorganized

Patterns in Adulthood

Secure

Dismissive

Preoccupied

Fearful-Avoidant





Separation Theory

Robert W. Firestone, Ph.D.

Integrates psychoanalytic and existential systems of thought

Two kinds of emotional pain:

UNDEFENDED



DEFENDED



INTERPERSONAL



EXISTENTIAL



FANTASY BOND



CRITICAL INNER VOICE

The Fantasy Bond



- 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.

The Critical Inner Voice

The Language of the Defensive Process



The critical inner voice refers to a well-integrated pattern of destructive thoughts toward ourselves 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 affects every aspect of our lives: our self-esteem and confidence, and most importantly, our personal and intimate relationships.



2. How Patterns Play Out

Is Your Attachment Style Affecting Your Relationship?

Secure Attachment:

Tend to be more satisfied in their relationships

Preoccupied 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

Is Your Attachment Style Affecting Your Relationship?

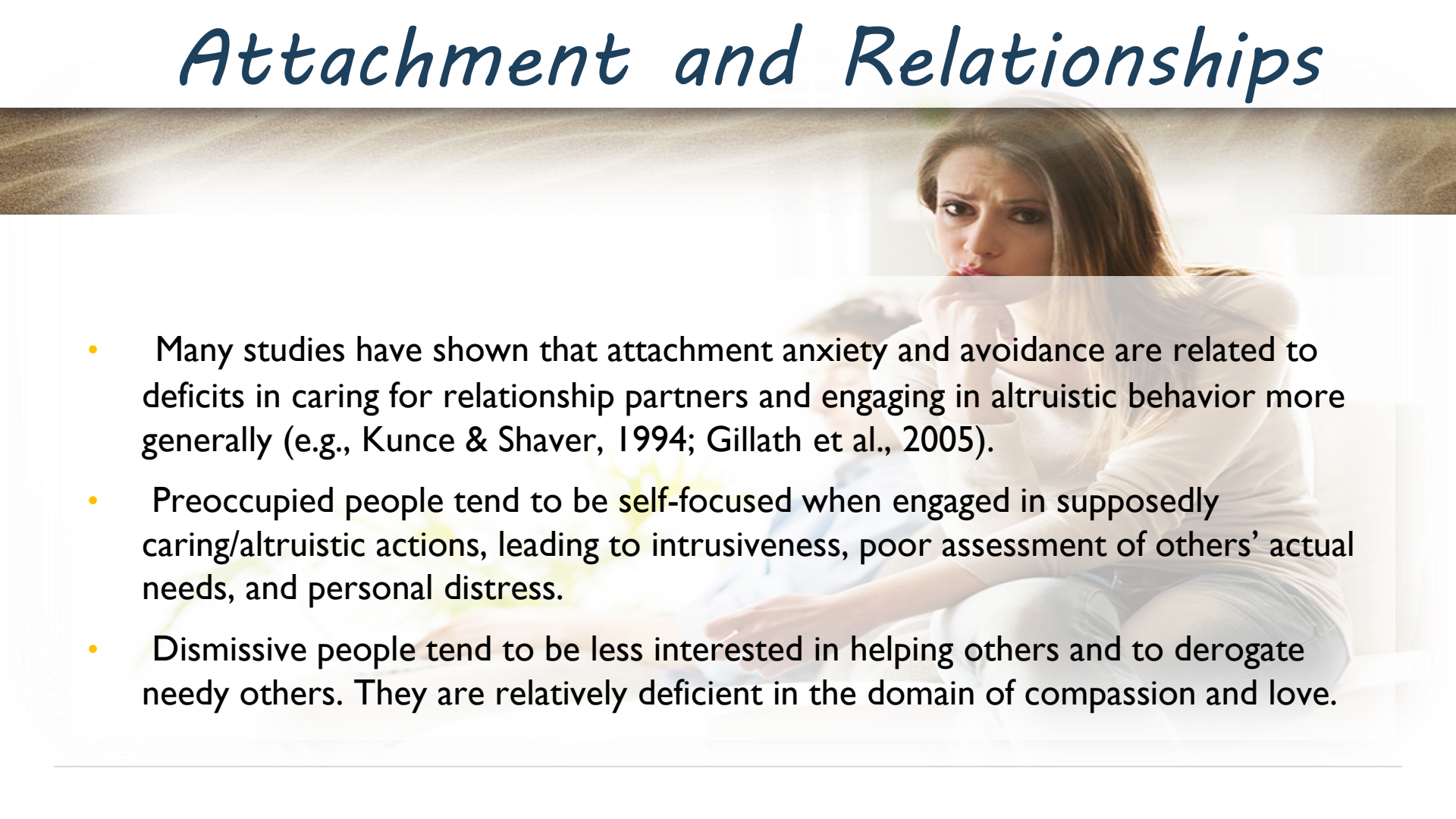
Dismissive Attachment:

Have the tendency to emotionally distance themselves from their partner

Fearful-Avoidant Attachment:

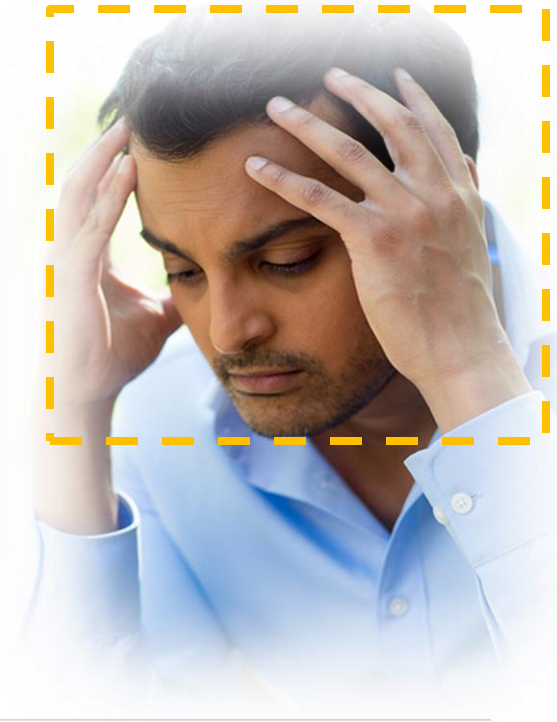
Live in an ambivalent state in which they're afraid of being too close to or too distant from others

Attachment and Relationships

- 
- Many studies have shown that attachment anxiety and avoidance are related to deficits in caring for relationship partners and engaging in altruistic behavior more generally (e.g., Kuncce & Shaver, 1994; Gillath et al., 2005).
 - Preoccupied people tend to be self-focused when engaged in supposedly caring/altruistic actions, leading to intrusiveness, poor assessment of others' actual needs, and personal distress.
 - Dismissive people tend to be less interested in helping others and to derogate needy others. They are relatively deficient in the domain of compassion and love.
-

Preoccupied Attachment

- Self-critical and insecure
- Seek approval and reassurance from others
- Anticipate rejection, loss of interest, and abandonment
- Worried and not trusting
- Clingy and overly dependent with their partner
- Feel resentful and angry when partner doesn't provide attention and reassurance



Dismissive Attachment

- Resist a depth of emotional closeness and intimacy
- Feel intruded on by too much contact
- Disconnected from own wants
- Use indirect strategies such as hinting, complaining, sulking
- Tend to be overly focused on themselves
- Often appear distant and aloof
- Denigrate needs of others
- Find it unnecessary to disclose their thoughts and feelings
- Tend to withdraw when partner approaches them



Perpetuating Cycles

- Both partners may engage in behaviors that push or provoke each other in ways that encourage each other to play the other half of old, familiar dynamics.
 - Their relationships start to look more and more like those of their past
 - Reinforces each partner's working model, confirming what they already believe about love and relationships
-



Two Main Conflicts

Attachment

- Pursuer/ Distancer



Identity

- Dominant/ Submissive



Why are We Defended Against Love?



Arouses sadness and painful feelings from the past



Arouses guilt in relation to surpassing a parent



Disconnects people from a “fantasy bond” with their parents



Arouses anxiety and makes us feel vulnerable



Provokes a painful identity crisis



Stirs up painful existential issues

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

Manifestations of a Fantasy Bond

- Withholding from your partner
 - Polarizing - 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
-



How the Voice Process Impacts Relationships

Self-Punishing Voice Process in Relationships:

EXAMPLE: “You can’t make anyone happy. You’re so unlovable. 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:

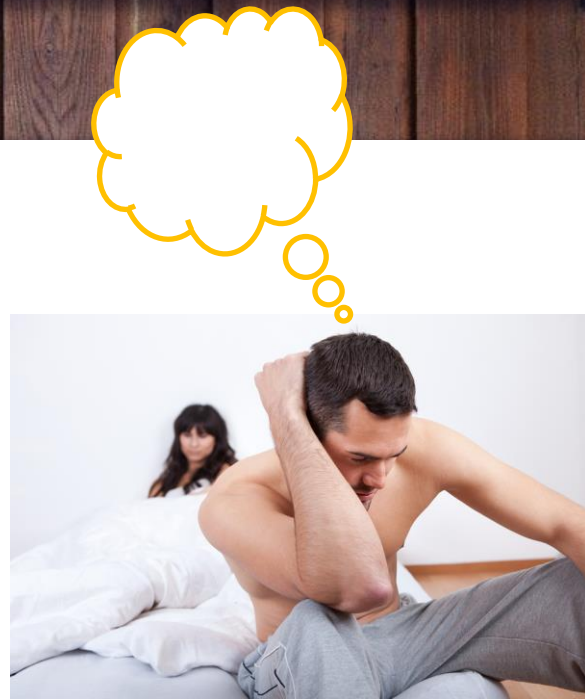
- You're never going to find another person who understands you.
 - Don't get too hooked on her.
 - You're not really a nice person.
 - He doesn't really care about you.
 - She is too good for you.
 - You're better off on your own.
 - As soon as she gets to know you, she will reject you.
 - You've got to be in control.
 - Maybe you're losing yourself in this relationship.
 - You're just like your mother/father!
-
- Don't be too vulnerable, or you'll just wind up getting hurt.**



Common “Voices” in Relationships

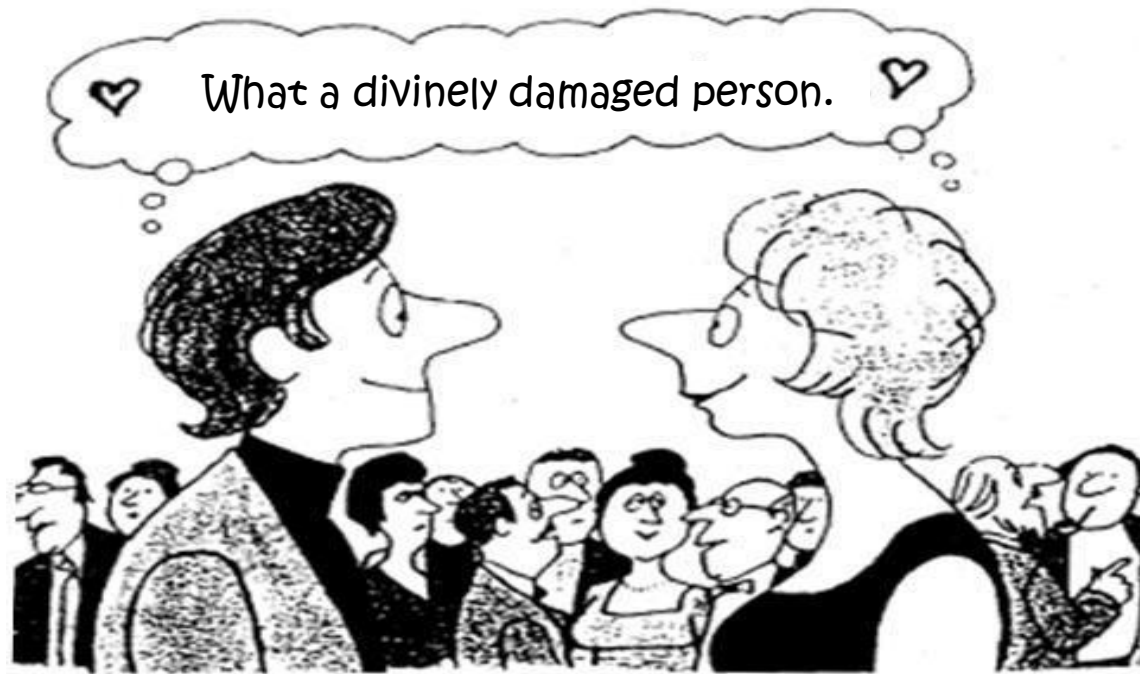
Voices About Your Partner:

- 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.
- You shouldn’t be too vulnerable. She’ll take advantage of you.
- He’s going to leave you. You’d better be perfect to keep him around.



What You Want in a Partner Vs. What You Choose





Factors That Contribute to Relationship Distress

- Selection
- Distortion
- Provocation



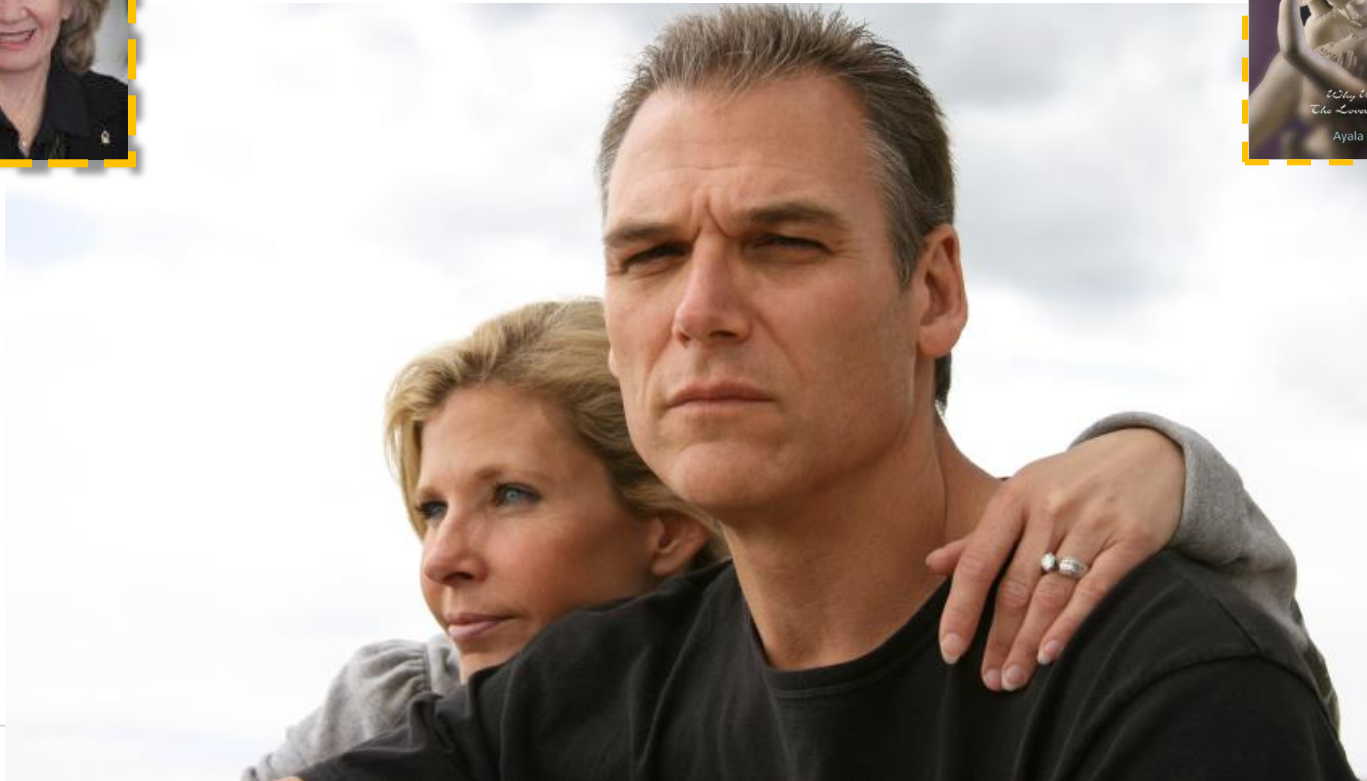
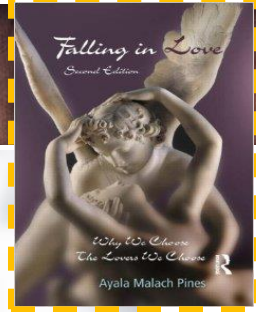
Selection



Why We Choose the Lovers We Do



Ayala Pines, Ph.D.



Selection:

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.
- Represents a person from our past
- Replicates old dynamics or makes us feel old ways



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 alter or save the person



Distortion



Distortion



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

Distortion:

Why do we distort our partners?

We tend to distort at points when we become anxious:

- Reaction to acting against our defenses
- Reaction to love directed toward us
- Fear of intimacy, defense against closeness
- Fear of loss



Distortion

How we distort our partners:

- Focus on the negative
 - Project our past onto them
 - Turn their attributes into flaws
 - See them through our projections
-



Provocation



Provocation:

Why do we provoke our partners?

- Reaction to breaking with an old identity.
- Pain of getting what we've always longed for.
- Challenges defenses.
- Discomfort of emotional closeness.



Provocation:

We create our own worst nightmare.

- Get them to voice our critical inner voice.
- Act in ways that push them away.
- Get them to treat us in ways we were treated.





3. Overcoming Patterns

A man with a beard and brown hair is shown in profile, looking out of a window. The background is a blurred view of trees and a building, suggesting an indoor setting with a large window.

Look Inside Yourself

If you're single:

- 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 dating outside your comfort zone
- Give these opportunities a chance, even though they may make you feel uncomfortable at first



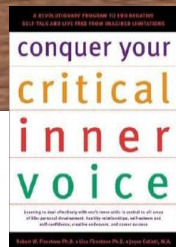
Look Inside Yourself

If you're in a relationship:

- If you polarize, do the opposite
- Be open to new things
- Think about how it feels and not how it looks
- Be open to dating outside your comfort zone
- See partner and self through a realistic and compassionate perspective
- Be open to feedback

Identify Critical Inner Voices that are Interfering in Your Relationship





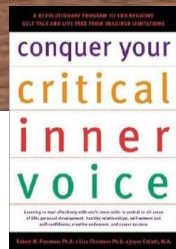
Exercise from Conquer Your Critical Inner Voice

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).

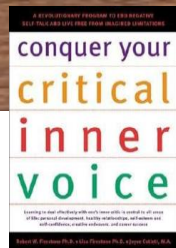


Exercise from Conquer Your Critical Inner Voice

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

- What my critical inner voice says about me

- What I realistically think about myself

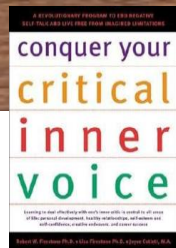


Exercise from Conquer Your Critical Inner Voice

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

- What my critical inner voice says about my partner

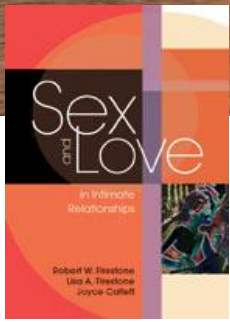
- What I realistically think about my partner



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 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

*Cognitive/ Affective/
Behavioral Approach*



Voice Therapy

**A Psychotherapeutic
Approach to Self-Destructive Behavior**

Robert W. Firestone Ph.D.

Voice Therapy:

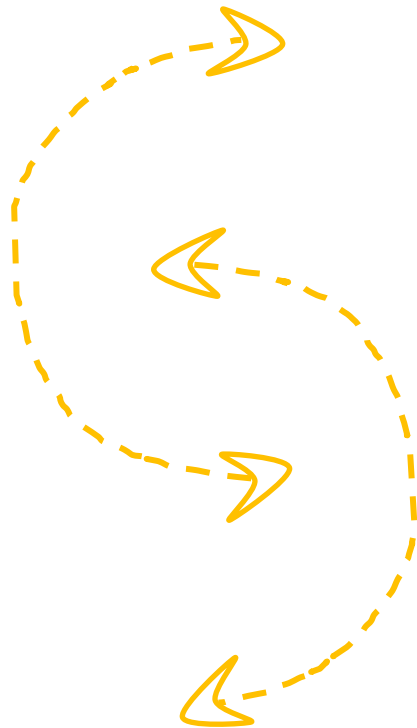
Steps in the Therapeutic Process with Couples

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
7. Sharing voices with each other between sessions

If you are interested in attending a voice therapy training or in getting training materials please contact jina@glendon.org or visit www.glendon.org.

Break the Cycle of Destruction

- Couples often know what to say to each other to trigger the other person. Resist making these statements.
- In moments when you're triggered, you may start to panic.
- At these times, you may hear your inner critic coaching you to take destructive actions.
- You can get ahold of these moments and learn to pause.
- Reflect on what it is you want to happen (anger pushes away, vulnerability brings people closer).
- Be vulnerable rather than lashing out.
- Come back to yourself. Take breaths, and don't lash back. Stay being who you want to be.
- Don't side with your critical inner voice.
- When you label your feelings, it calms you. ("Name it to tame it.")



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
-

Earned Secure Attachment

Uncover ways of defending oneself from getting close and being emotionally connected and work toward forming an “earned secure attachment.”

- Choose a partner with a more secure attachment style
- See a therapist
- Create a coherent narrative



Coherent Narrative

- Technique for developing inner security, which allows us to form healthier adult relationships
 - No matter how difficult a person's childhood was, if they're able to make sense of and feel the full feeling of what they experienced as children, they're better able to form healthier ties in the present.
-

What's your story?

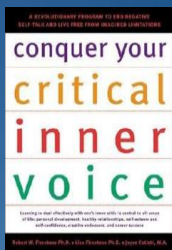


“

“The fantastic news is that if you can make sense of your childhood experiences—especially your relationships with your parents—you can transform your attachment models toward security. The reason this is important is that relationships— with friends, with romantic partners, with present or possible future offspring—will be profoundly enhanced. And you’ll feel better with yourself, too!”

- Dr. Daniel Siegel





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

“

*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

A close-up profile of a woman with long dark hair, looking upwards with her eyes closed against a bright blue sky with light clouds. The image has a soft, inspirational feel.

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

Avoid Withholding

- Don't hold back positive qualities
 - Be sensitive to partner's wants and needs
 - Do the thing that makes them feel loved
 - Be the person they fell in love with
-



Taking Responsibility for Your Half of the Dynamic

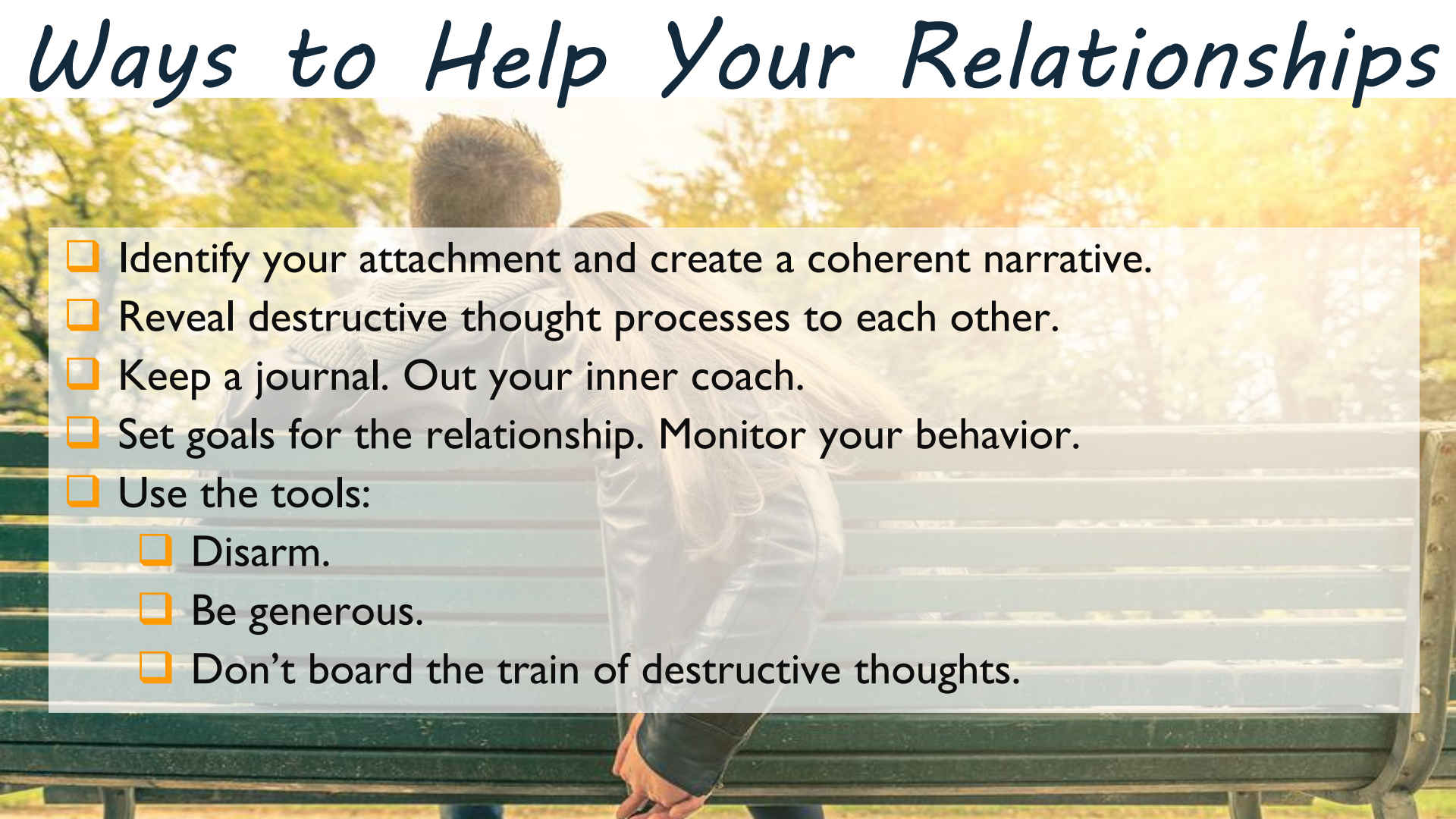
Think about what your partner does that you don't like. Then, think about what you do right beforehand that may affect his or her behavior.

Unilateral Disarmament

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



Ways to Help Your Relationships

- 
- ☐ Identify your attachment and create a coherent narrative.
 - ☐ Reveal destructive thought processes to each other.
 - ☐ Keep a journal. Out your inner coach.
 - ☐ Set goals for the relationship. Monitor your behavior.
 - ☐ Use the tools:
 - ☐ Disarm.
 - ☐ Be generous.
 - ☐ Don't board the train of destructive thoughts.

“



*Far too many people are looking
for the right person, instead of
trying to be the right person.*

- Gloria Steinem

“



*We cultivate love when we allow
our most vulnerable selves to be
deeply seen and known.*

- Brene Brown

Webinars

Visit

**www.psychalive.org for a
full list of upcoming and
archived CE Webinars**



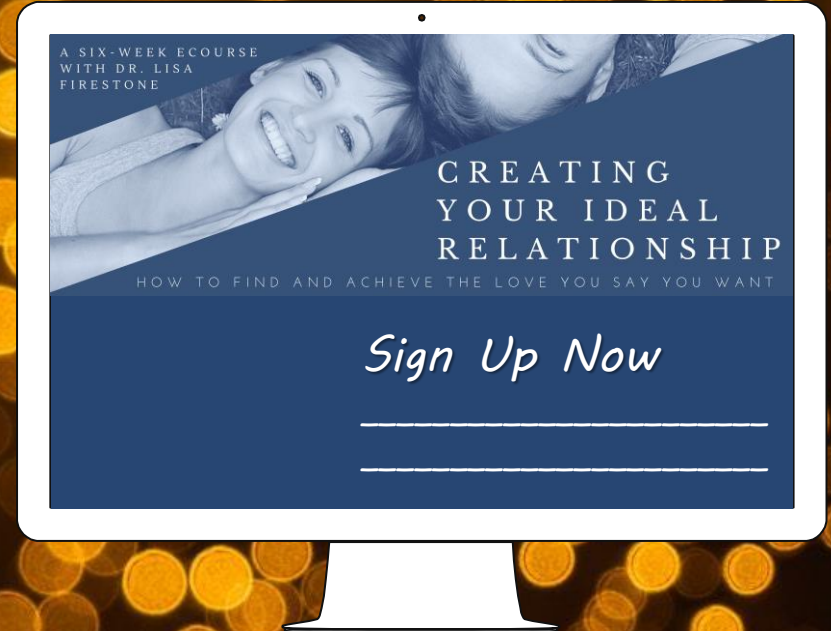
eCourses

Visit

ecourse.psychalive.org

for a full list of online

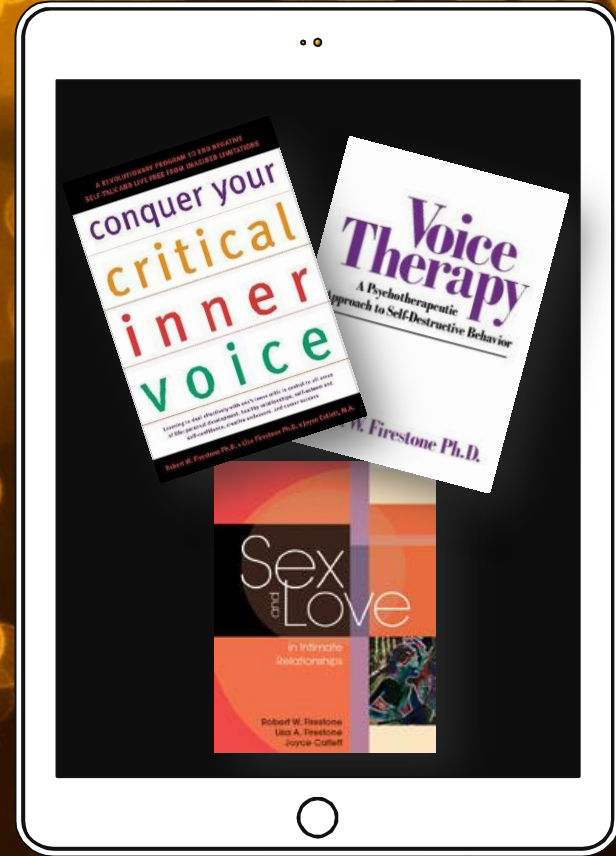
courses



Books

Visit

psychalive.org to see
all books and
resources from this
Webinar



CE Information

CE's for this Webinar are optional and sold separately through R. Cassidy Seminars. A link to purchase 1.5 CE's will be e-mailed to registrants following the live Webinar. For those purchasing or watching this Webinar as an archived recording, a link to purchase home study CE's was provided with your purchase confirmation. Registrants can earn 2 home study CE's by watching the Webinar and completing a reading assignment.

Thanks!



Any questions?

Lisa Firestone, Ph.D.

lfirestone@glendon.org



THE GLENDON
ASSOCIATION

PSYCHALIVE

Psychology for Everyday Life

www.glendon.org www.psychalive.org

Contact:

Glendon@Glendon.org

800-663-5281

Follow Us:

