

A smiling man and woman looking at each other. The man is on the left, wearing a grey polo shirt, and the woman is on the right, wearing a light-colored top. They are both smiling and looking towards each other.

# HOW TO GO ALL IN IN A RELATIONSHIP

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PSYCHALIVE



A romantic couple is shown in a close embrace, their faces nearly touching. The man, on the left, wears a grey and white patterned sweater. The woman, on the right, has long dark hair and is wearing a pink top with a patterned scarf. They are positioned in front of a dark background filled with numerous out-of-focus, warm-toned bokeh lights, suggesting a festive or nighttime outdoor setting. A semi-transparent dark rectangle is overlaid on the image, containing the text.

What does it mean to go “all in” in a relationship?



Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it.

- Rumi






Although, we may think we want lasting love, for many of us, a healthy and equal relationship can pose a threat to the way we see ourselves and the world.



## **2 Parts to this Webinar**

1. What gets in our way?
  2. What can we do about it?
- 

A man and a woman are sitting on a light-colored leather couch, facing each other. The woman, on the left, has dark hair in a ponytail and is wearing a purple tank top. The man, on the right, has short brown hair and is wearing a blue polo shirt. Both are holding black coffee mugs. They appear to be in a relaxed, domestic setting with a bookshelf in the background. A semi-transparent dark grey rectangle is overlaid in the center of the image, containing the title text.

# Part 1

## What gets in our way?





# Theoretical Approaches:

## \***Separation Theory**\*

Fantasy Bond

Psychological Defenses

Fear of Intimacy

## \***Attachment Theory**\*



**LOVE is a learned ability.  
It is not inherent.**

Studies show if you take more loving actions, you feel more loving feelings.

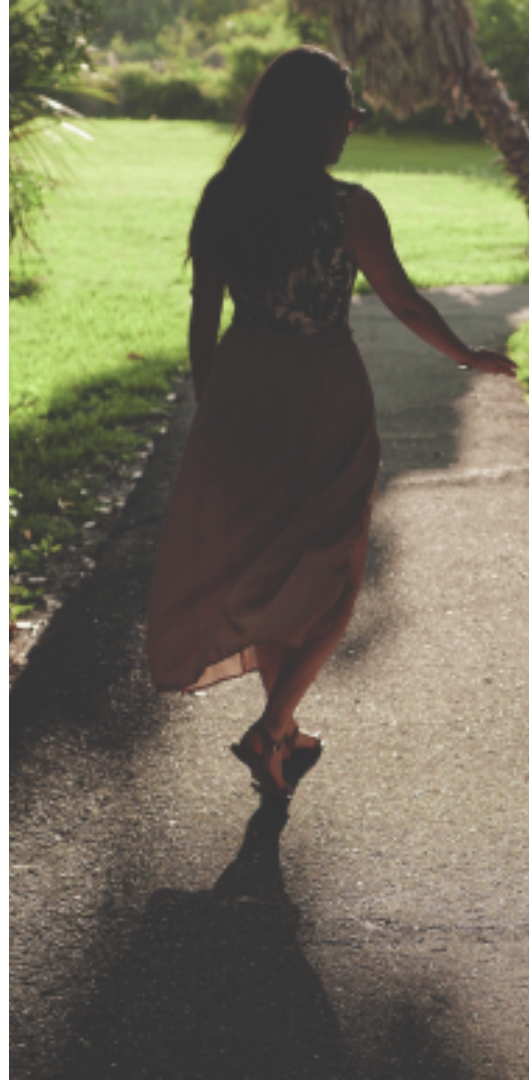


# **Separation Theory**



# **The ways we were hurt in previous relationships, starting from our childhood, have a strong influence on:**

- Why we choose the partners we do
- How we perceive the people we get close to
- How we act in our romantic relationships
- Old, negative dynamics may make us wary of opening ourselves up to someone new.
- We may steer away from intimacy, because it stirs up feelings of hurt, loss, anger or rejection.



# 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**

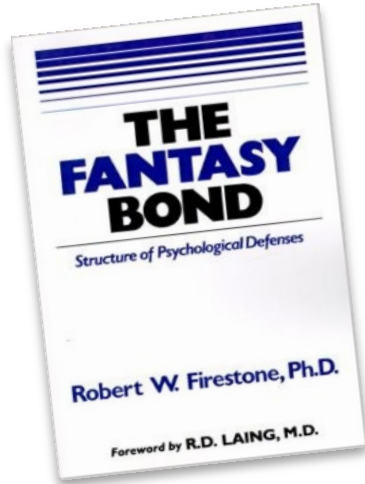




There is only one proof for the presence of love:  
the depth of the relationship, and the aliveness  
and strength in each person concerned; this is the  
fruit by which love is recognized.

- Erich Fromm

# Definition of Fantasy Bond



A **Fantasy Bond** is an illusion of connection, originally an imaginary fusion or joining with the parent. We use the term Fantasy Bond to describe both the original imaginary connection formed during childhood and the repetitive efforts of the adult to continue to make these types of connections in intimate relationships.



# Origins of a Fantasy Bond

- Illusion of connection originally formed with parent to help relieve early anxiety and emotional pain
- Process of self-parenting - see and treat ourselves the way we were seen and treated, 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 in Adult Relationships

- Illusion of connection that is substituted for feelings of real love
- Often unconscious act of self-parenting and self-protection
  - Pseudoindependence
  - Form replaces substance
- Degree of reliance on a fantasy bond is proportional to the degree of frustration and pain in a person's developmental years

# Ways a Fantasy Bond Manifests

- 
- Fantasies about who partner is
  - Settling into routine, deadening behaviors
  - More criticism and projections of parent onto partner
  - Less connection – more distancing and withholding behaviors or taking partner for granted
  - Hating each other – overt nastiness or complete dependency
  - Separations or settling for living distantly together or totally merged identity

# Do you have a fantasy bond with your partner?

No longer engage  
in loving actions?

Withhold, punish or  
criticize your  
partner?

Have rigid  
behavior  
patterns?

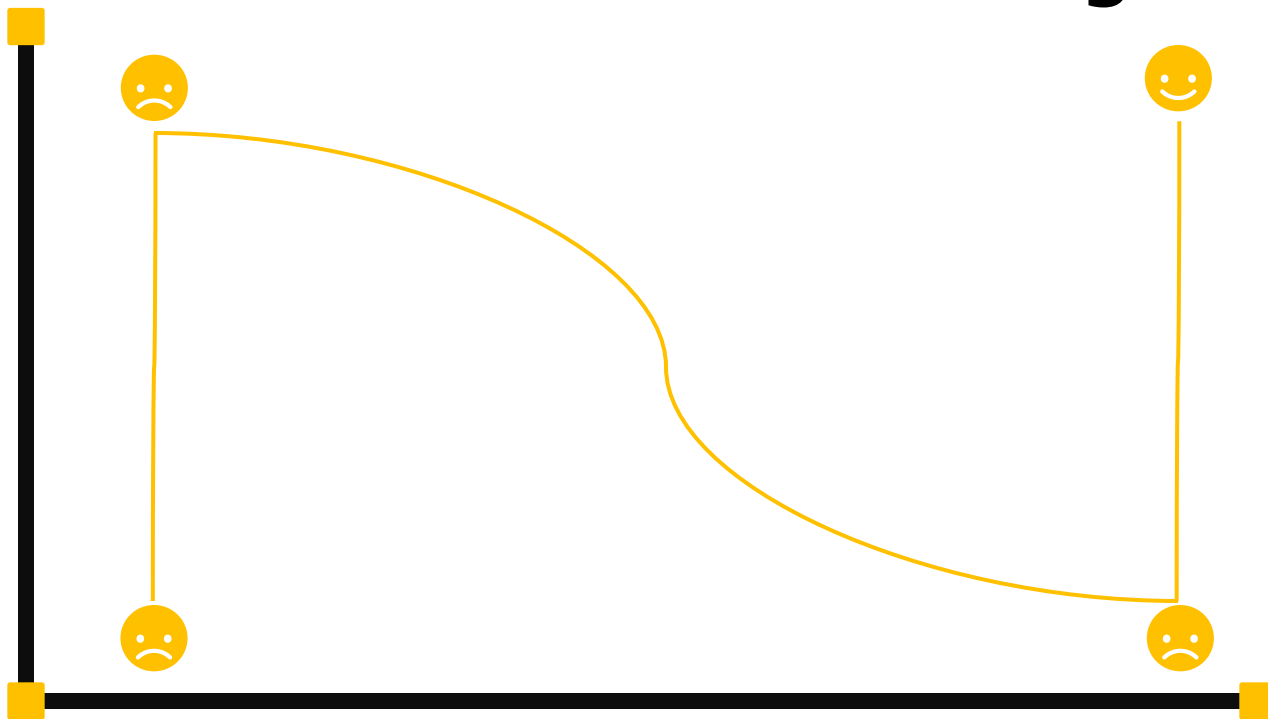
Relate as a  
unit?

Take your partner  
for granted?

Feel like you  
can't live  
without partner?

# Differentiation and Linkage

**Linkage**  
(emotional  
closeness)



**Differentiation**  
(individuation as an individual)





# Psychological Defenses



“When we think we have been hurt by someone in the past, we build up defenses to protect ourselves from being hurt in the future. So the fearful past causes a fearful future and the past and the future become one.”

- Alfred Hitchcock

# Psychological Defenses



- Being loved by someone we love and admire threatens our defenses.
- Habits we've long had that allow us to feel safe, self-focused or self-contained
- Adaptations to our early environment that aren't adaptive in our adult lives

# Reasons We Defend Against Love

What are we afraid of?



Arouses anxiety and makes us feel vulnerable



Arouses sadness and painful feelings from the past



Provokes a painful identity crisis



Disconnects people from a "fantasy bond" with their parents



Arouses guilt in relation to surpassing a parent



Stirs up existential issues



A close-up photograph of a young couple embracing outdoors. The woman, with long reddish-brown hair, is in the foreground, her face partially visible as she looks down. The man, with short brown hair, is behind her, his face mostly obscured. They are both wearing blue jackets. The background is a soft-focus natural setting with trees and foliage. A semi-transparent dark grey rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing white and yellow text.

# 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**

A man and a woman are sitting on a white bench, seen from behind. The woman on the left has long brown hair and is wearing a white top. The man on the right has short dark hair and is wearing a dark patterned sweater over a red and black plaid shirt. They are both looking at a large white rectangular sign that spans the width of the bench. The background is a plain, light color.

## **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

- ❖ **Selection**
- ❖ **Distortion**
- ❖ **Provocation**



# Selection:

## 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

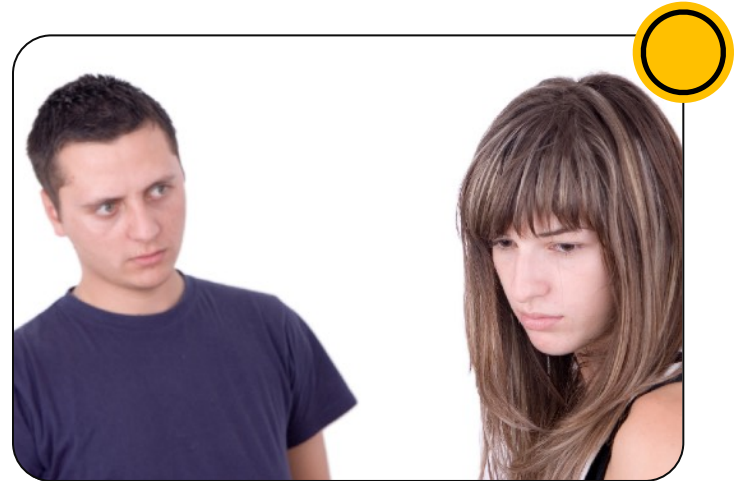
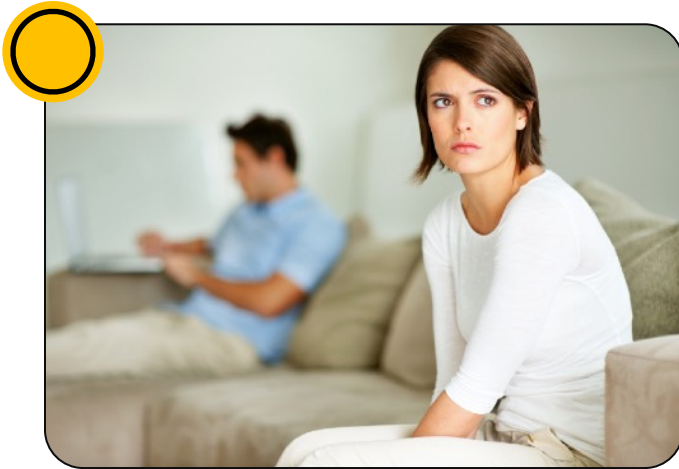




# Distortion:

## Examples of Distortion

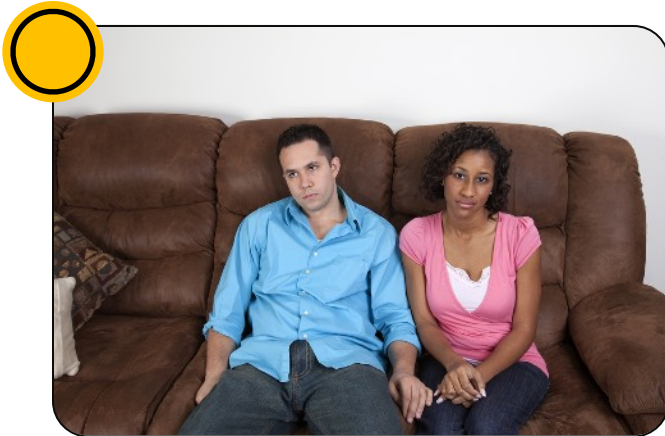
- Focusing in on your partner's negative traits
- Building a case against your partner
- Assigning hidden meaning to what your partner is saying
- Not believing or trusting your partner



# Provocation:

## Examples of Provocation

- Withholding things your partner appreciates
- Complaining or putting your partner down
- Changing the way you treat your partner for the worse
- Saying things that you know will trigger your partner



# 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





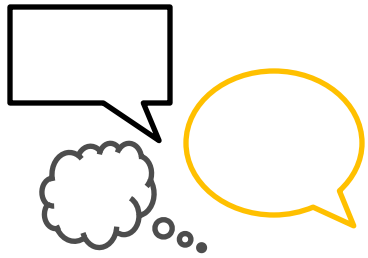
# **The Critical Inner Voice**

# **The Critical Inner Voice**

## The Language of the Defensive Process

- Well-integrated pattern of destructive thoughts toward ourselves and others
- At the root of much of our maladaptive behavior
- Fosters inwardness, distrust, self-criticism, self-denial, addictions and a retreat from goal-directed activities
- Affects 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:** "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:

- 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 he gets to know you, she'll reject you.
- **Don't be too vulnerable. You'll just get hurt.**

## Voices About Your Partner:

- You shouldn't be vulnerable.
- She only cares about being with her friends.
- He is probably cheating on you.
- She's too needy.
- He's going to leave you.





# **Attachment Theory**

# 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.





# Internal Working Models

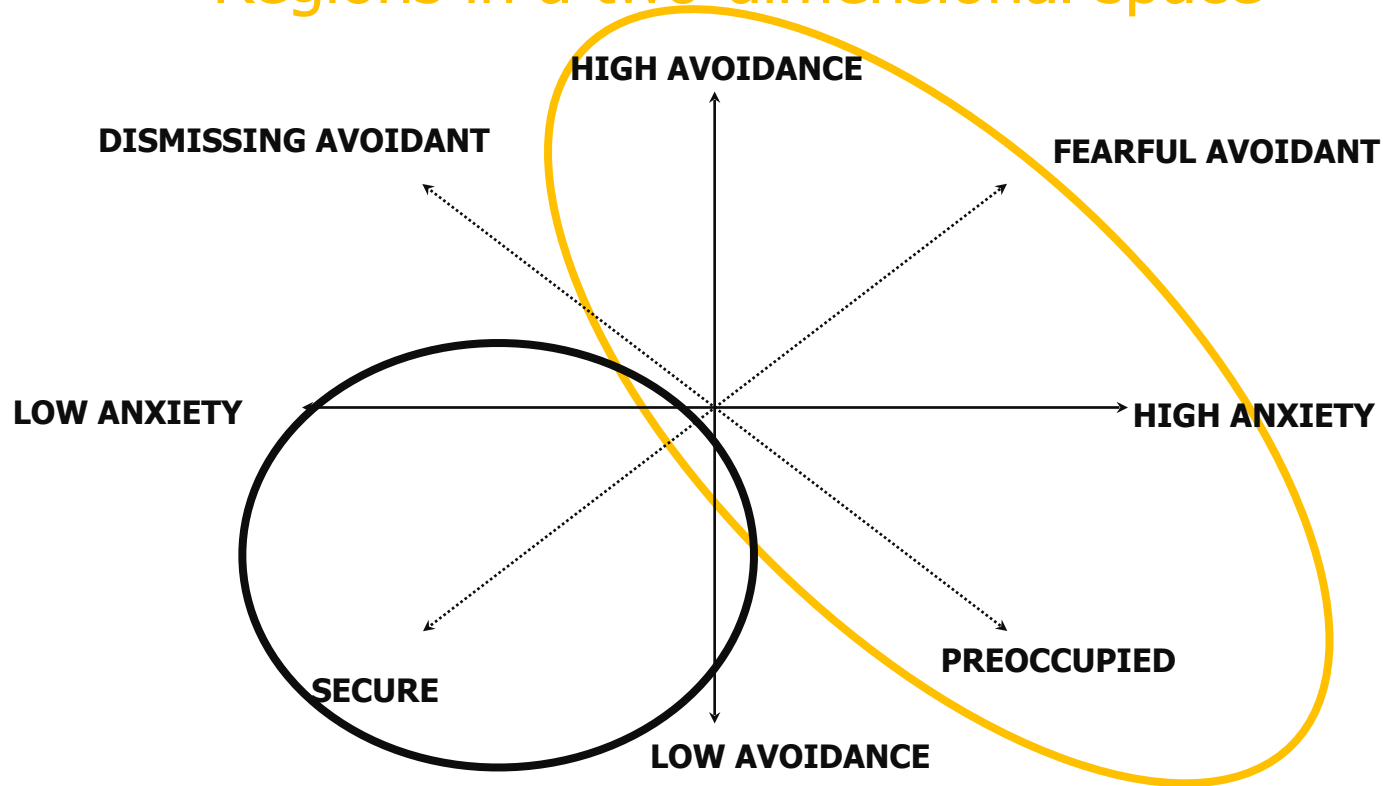
Our early relationships provide a template for how relationships go. Can I depend on others? Will they soothe me when I need it? Will they see me for who I really am?

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# Adult attachment 'styles':

Regions in a two-dimensional space



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

Adapted from Ainsworth et al. (1978), Bartholomew & Horowitz (1991), Fraley & Shaver (2000)

# 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

- Attachment anxiety and avoidance are related to deficits in caring for relationship partners and engaging in altruistic behavior. (e.g., Kuncé & 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.



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



A man and a woman are sitting on a light-colored leather couch, facing each other. The woman, on the left, has dark hair in a ponytail and is wearing a purple tank top. She is holding a black coffee cup. The man, on the right, has short brown hair and is wearing a blue polo shirt. He is also holding a black coffee cup. They are both looking at each other with slight smiles. The background is a bright, out-of-focus interior space with a white shelf holding some items.

# Part 2

## What can you do about it?

# Avoid a Fantasy Bond

- Leave our own inward world and challenge our self-nourishing and punishing habits
- Redirect our energy toward taking chances on finding satisfaction in the external world through goal-oriented behavior



# Actions that counter a fantasy bond:

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



# Relate and interact!

Joke around.

Talk personally.

Continue to let your partner know you.



Ask questions.

Listen.

Express interest.

Continue to get to know your partner.

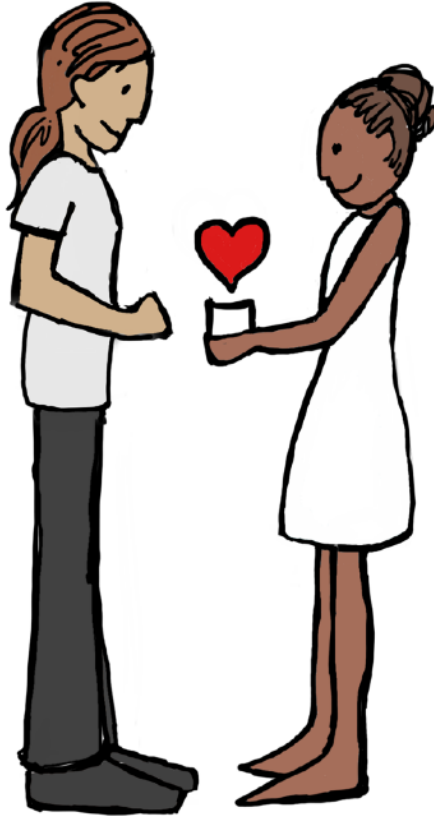


# Be generous!

Notice when something  
is needed

Lend a helping hand

Give a sensitive gift



Offer an ear to listen  
or a shoulder to lean on

Make a thoughtful  
gesture



Express affection!



Accept affection!

From "Daring to Love" with Tamsen Firestone

# 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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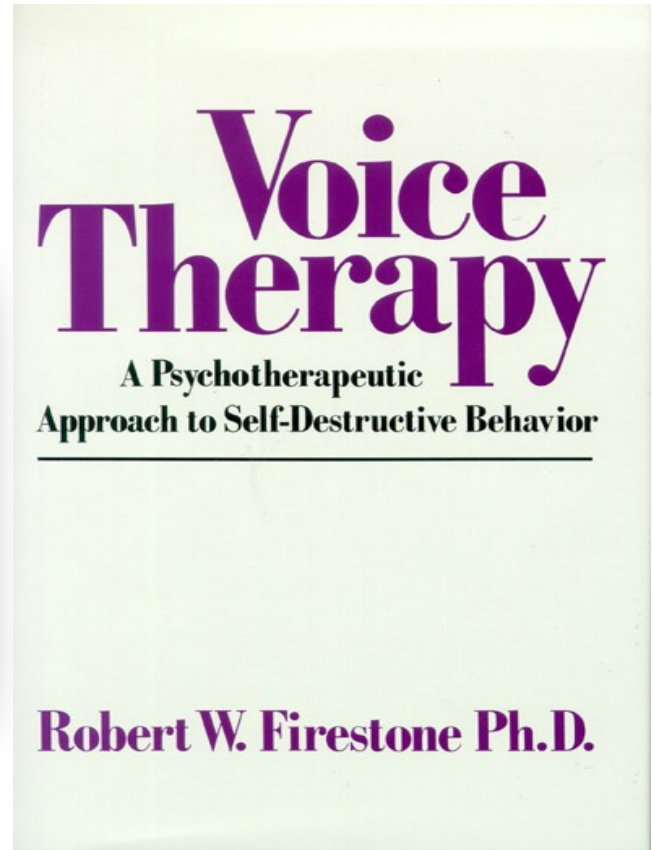
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# Voice Therapy

Cognitive/ Affective/  
Behavioral Approach



# 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](mailto:jina@glendon.org) or visit [www.glendon.org](http://www.glendon.org).

# Goals for Your Relationship

- Write down any goals you have for yourself and what kind of relationship you want. What would the relationship look like? Do you want more closeness? More independence?
- How could you go about achieving these goals? List the actions you will take.
- What actions will you take when you feel triggered? How can you return to the underlying want?
- How will you express this want to your partner?
- What actions will you take to make your partner feel understood?



# Developing Secure Attachment

- Relationship with a partner with a secure attachment pattern
- Therapy
- Coherent narrative








# 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:

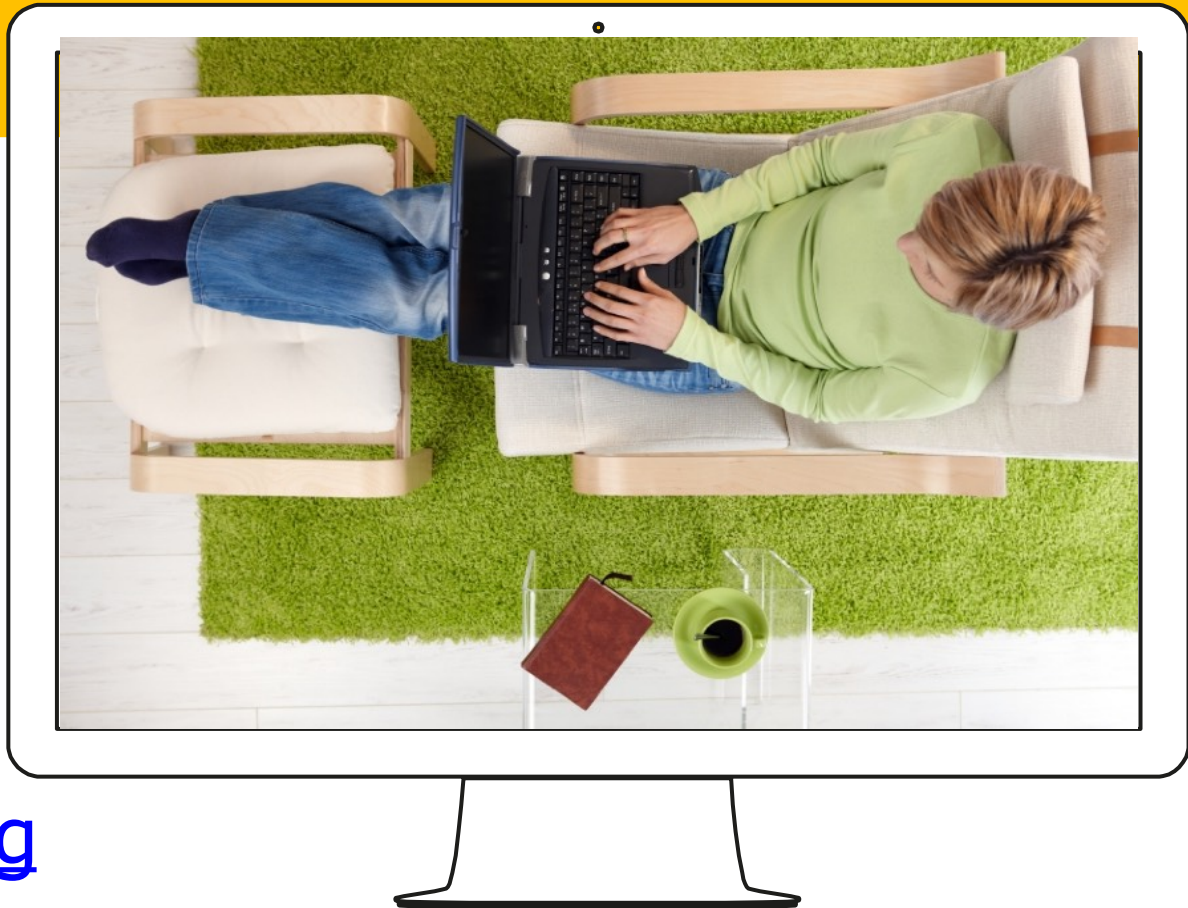
- If you polarize, do the opposite
- Be open to new things
- Think about how it feels and not how it looks
- See partner and self through a realistic and compassionate perspective
- Be open to feedback

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# Thank you!

Any questions?

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