Five Forces Destroying Your Relationship You Probably Never Heard Of

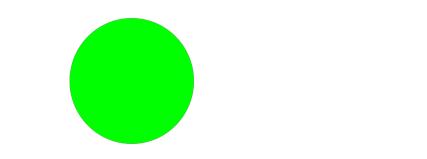
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Why this presentation?

•To highlight the value of systems theory when it comes to understanding and improving relationships.

What are forces?

- Underlying relationships, are five systems set up to program your relationship for success or failure.
- A system is another word for how you and your partner behave; how you organize your relationship; and the underlying assumptions you make about how a relationship should function.



We all know what hurts

•There is a practical reason why problems and symptoms get more of our attention than the system: pain

To make this information more personally meaningful...

- •You can apply it to:
 - Primary love relationships
 - Friendships
 - Family relationships
 - Work relationships

Force #1—SECURITY

- Happy stable relationship systems are secure.
- They have an underlying commitment to physical, emotional, financial, and sexual fidelity as well as, safety.
- They are safe because they are honest, forthright, and responsible.
- Arguments never lead to thoughts or threats of leaving.

To understand the importance of security, it helps to look at the opposite.

- •insecure, impermanent, unstable, unsafe,
- ambivalent, undependable,
- vulnerable, unattached,
- not committed, inconsistent

Secure relationships meet the terms of agreement

- In primary love relationships
- In friendships
- In the family
- At work

Quick assessment of security

- 1. We both give our relationship the time and attention it needs to thrive.
- 2. Our communication style is one of our greatest relationship strengths.
- 3. Our words and actions toward one another are respectful.
- 4. We are both careful about keeping our commitment strong.
- 5. We both work to make our relationship financially secure.

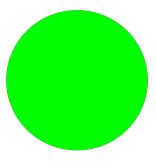
Bottomline:

• Can I trust this person?

Secure relationships meet the terms of attachment

- •Show up
- Tune in
- Understand
- Act congruently

Why is this important?



How to strengthen security

- Examine your commitment
- Take action to strengthen your commitment
- Ask if your partner feels secure
- Ask what you can do to strengthen security
- Spend more quality time together
- Listen to and remember your partner's wishes
- Make sure you understand your partner's point of view on important matters
- Behave in a way that shows you are committed
- Increase the level of trust

Force #2--EQUITY

• Is this relationship fair?

Quick assessment of relationship equity.

- 6. Our relationship feels fair.
- 7. Our love grows with each passing year.
- 8. We are known for our loving support of one another.
- 9. We balance our time and energy in a way that benefits the relationship.
- 10. We are good at meeting one another's needs.

Look at the opposite of fair.

- Would you want a relationship that was:
- Unfair
- Deceitful
- Dishonest
- Unreasonable
- Unsympathetic
- One-sided
- Immoral

Common complaints in an unfair relationship I'm not happy I work harder than you. You don't see what needs to be done. This isn't working. I feel unappreciated. I feel unsupported. I feel alone.

Keep in mind:

- Inequity builds resentment.
- Resentment leads to criticism.
- Criticism can lead to contempt.
- Contempt signals the end of the relationship.

To increase equity in the relationship

- Ask your partner if the relationship feels fair
- Express appreciation in the ways your partner desires
- Ask how you can help
- Be generous with your resources
- Make sure you are pulling your weight
- Adapt your role to changing times and transitions
- Transform resentment, criticism, and blame into desires
- Ask, "what is it like living with me?"
- Would you want your favorite child to be in a relationship with someone just like you?

Force #3--RELATIONAL

 Do you think and act like a person in this relationship?

Would you want to be in a relationship with someone:

- Self-absorbed
- Self-centered
- Selfish
- Rigid
- Who thinks unilaterally (It's all about me!)
- Uninterested and unconcerned about your feelings, thoughts, or preferences
- Preoccupied with their own thoughts, feelings and interests.

Quick assessment of relationality

- 11. We each make decisions with the other person in mind.
- 12. We each feel like a priority in one another's lives.
- 13. Our commitment is strong even when we are apart for a period of time.
- 14. Our relationship truly feels like teamwork.
- 15. We willingly make sacrifices to please one another.

Being relational is not just being fair...

•It's the lack of care or concern for your partner's feelings, thoughts, or desires.

Good bad examples of relationality—or the lack of it.

- Refusing to attend partner's family events
- Being unkind or indifferent to partner's family
- Refusing to support partner's work requirements
- Being rigid about family decisions such as childcare, religious participation, food, travel, visiting
- Refusing to support partner's personal goals such as further education, socializing with friends, hobbies
- Being inflexible regarding gender roles
- Refusing to address normal expectations in a committed love relationship such as affection, sex, sharing household duties, sharing financial gains, socializing together, keeping the home in a comfortable fashion

If this seems too controlling...

- Think systemically.
- It's not about critiquing every single action.
- It's about conjoint thinking.
- Making decisions, acting, with the other person in mind.

Individuals who think relationally might not even know they are doing it.

- •How was your day?
- Here's what happened today.
- •What do you think about this?
- •I think it's time for some romance.
- •I'm thinking about...what do you think?
- •Thanksgiving is coming, what are your thoughts?
- •Anything I can do to help?
- Let me take care of that.

We went through a period of pathologizing conjoint thinking

- Calling it co-dependence.
- Unfortunately, we "threw the baby out with the wash water"

There is research evidence related to couples who practice conjoint thinking and talking...

Using "we" and "us" talk

Creating a more relational system

- 1. Talk about expectations
- 3. Cover major concerns before they happen
- 4. Seek input from your partner on a regular basis.
- 5. When you drop the ball, be the first to admit it.
- 6. Agree ahead of time how you will communicate when agreements are not being met.
- 7. Be willing to amend your agreements if need be
- 8. Make it a point to revisit positive experiences from the past that include the two of you.

Force #4--FLEXIBLE

- Able to adapt to changing circumstances
- Easygoing
- Accommodating
- Forgiving
- Open-minded
- Changeable
- Willing to negotiate
- Obliging

If you don't quite understand the benefit of flexibility,

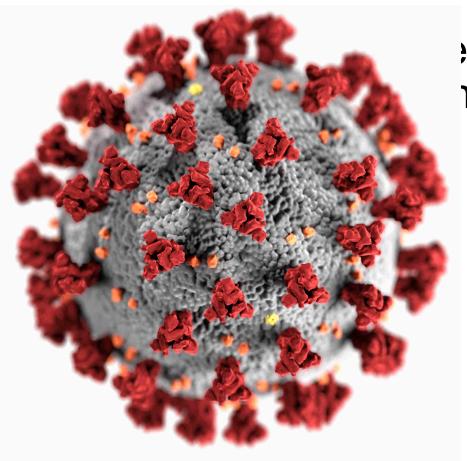
- consider living with someone who is:
- rigid, inflexible, stiff, intractable, unyielding, set in opinion
- Who wants to sign on for that?!
- If you have lived or worked with someone unalterable opposed to change
- who is oppositional
- who is defiant
- who demands "my way or the highway"
- It's not fun, it's stressful.

Quick assessment of flexibility

- 16. Our relationship manages the inevitable ups and downs very well.
- 17. My partner and I are comfortable taking on different roles in our relationship.
- 18. When plans don't work out the way we want, we are capable of making new plans together in a comfortable fashion.
- 19. We manage change well as a couple.
- 20. We manage our differences well as a couple.

The inevitability of change

 Life is guarante adjustments yc



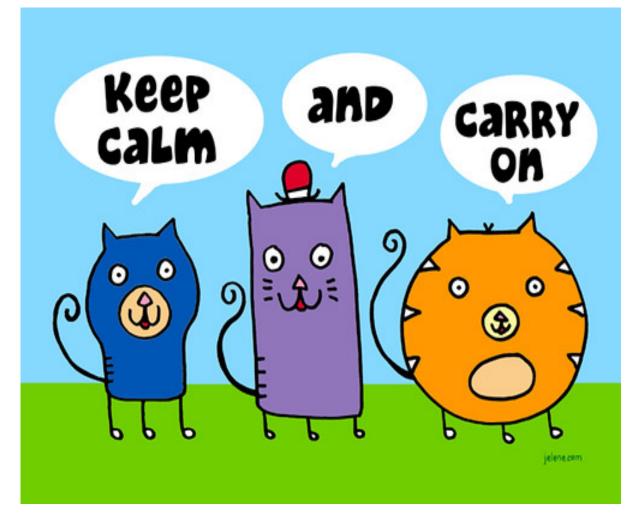
list of possible limited.

Think about negotiating these normal life experiences with a rigid, inflexible person.

- Moving
- Relationship conflict
- Unemployment
- Underemployment
- Financial hardship
- Disasters such as fire, flood, hurricanes
- Illness, chronic illness
- Disability
- Children will disability or special needs
- Caregiving demands
- Lifestyle downsizing
- Death of a close family member

The key to flexibility is

- Emotional regulation
- The ability to...



To be more flexible

- 1. Think out-of-the-box.
- 2. Stay in the moment. Most anxiety and fear comes from catastrophizing the future, thinking the worst that could happen and dwelling on it
- 3. If you tend to react instead of respond; if your first reaction to any change is to reject it; just don't do something, stand there.
- **4. Reappraise the situation.** You've likely heard: "Rejection is protection."
- 5. Stay productive. "Just do the next right thing."
- 6. Use your partner as a resource.
- Get advice. Most problems are universal and others have navigated them successfully so don't be afraid to seek advice.
- Stay positive. Negative thinking can overwhelm you and make flexibility virtually impossible.

Force #5--VITAL

- Is the relationship full of life?
- Do you share goals and aspirations?
- Do you share a passion?
- Are you interesting and interested?
- Are you actively involved in keeping the relationship going?
- Is your relationship growing together or growing apart?

Consider the opposite

- Boring
- Cold
- Dull
- Dying
- Lifeless
- Uncaring
- Stagnant
- Growing apart

Quick assessment for vitality

- 21.We make it a point to keep our relationship fresh and interesting.
- 22. We have several activities we both enjoying doing together.
- 23. We each make an effort to make our relationship fun.
- 24.We each make an effort to keep ourselves attractive to one another.
- 25. We show interest in one another.

Vitality is easy to discount

- Warning signs:
- You are bored when together.
- Best times happen with others.
- •Your sex life is an oxymoron?
- •The vision of your life following this same pattern makes you depressed?
- •You resent the fact that you thought the relationship would be far more enjoyable?
- •The relationship feels like more of a burden than a boost?
- •You fantasize about life without your partner?

I interviewed several happy, stable couples

- I know he has my back.
- She has supported me through some tough times.
- He is my best friend.
- She is my best friend.
- He is always there for me.
- We each anticipate one another's needs.
- She gives direction to my life and keeps me on course.
- He will tell me when I am wrong—but at the right time, in the right way.
- She's my first choice to spend time with.
- She takes care of me.
- I'm always in her plans.
- He makes me a priority.

Implied in each of these statements is an action, behavior, task, or deed

These relationships are active versus inactive, busy, versus bored.

Are you in the game of life?

Vitality doesn't have to look outlandish

It doesn't even have to include a crowd

Vitality comes by being engaged in life

Vital relationships prevent loneliness