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A empirical research-based approach to relationships

Gottman and Levenson, 2002 found that divorce was not predicted by the presence of negative affect or negative affect escalation. What characterized couples who divorced later in their marriage was “the absence of positive affect during conflict.” These couples also appeared emotionally disengaged.

This is reflected in taking one’s partner for granted, not being responsive to his or her emotional needs, inability to laugh together, smile at the other, being tender. When they argue, it

leaves a bad taste in their mouths and they often brood. No acceptance and closure

Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

1. Criticism
2. Contempt
3. Defensiveness
4. Stonewalling

The issue is not anger but how anger is expressed. Must also respect that anger is usually an expression, a cover for more vulnerable feelings: Hurt, Disappointment, Sadness

Positive couples—those with lower risk of divorce have a positive-to-negative affect ratio of 5:1. In unstable marriages the ratio was 0.8:1

Sound Relationship House Theory

Arrange in hierarchical order

1. Build Love Maps - road maps into one's partner's inner world built by asking open-ended questions

Love map: "That part of your brain where you store all the relevant information about your partner's life." Goldman, i.e., the major events in the other's history. Keep updating

2. Build the fondness and admiration system by expressing affection and respect in small, everyday moments.

Cannot overstate this. We tend to begin to take the other person for granted, like they are merely a part of us like one's foot and arm.

3. Turn toward instead of away or against by noticing a partner's bid for emotional connection

How easy it is to ignore the other's bid for connection. Sometimes bad time, but acknowledge and explain your situation and commit to be there.

4. Allow positive sentiment override, which means not taking neutral or negative partner actions personally (if processes 1, 2, and 3 are not working, negative sentiment override results in which even neutral acts are perceived as negative.)

Beware of negative attributions and what their source is

5. Take a two-pronged approach toward managing conflict by using a gentle approach in presenting complaints, accepting influence, physiological soothing, and compromise, and by establishing a dialogue with perpetual problems that examines the existential dreams without conflict.

Work through the issues not by arguing, but listening and responding, even if that means asking the other to clarify what

he or she means or is saying. Emotions color how we hear.

Do not think what you're going to say when they other stops speaking

Agree to disagree

6. Honor one another's life dreams.

Be respectful, even if this presents a conflict that must be addressed.

7. Build the shared meaning system by establishing formal and informal rituals of connection, supporting one another's life roles, creating shared goals and values, and common views of symbols.

From Gottman & Gottman, 2008

What are expressions of positive affect? "Play, fun exploration, adventure, curiosity, self disclosing, conversations, romance, courtship, female libido and good sex."

Susan Johnson proposes that positive emotions and a positive attachment are critical for promoting forgiveness and reconciliation in a relationship.

Brian Johnson's law: Everyone is difficult to live with.

Gottman and Gottman estimate that couples are emotionally

available to one another about 25% of the time and mismatched 75% of the time. They also estimate that 69% of couple conflicts are perpetual. They never get resolved.

Gottman and Gottman propose that relationships work to the extent that people have chosen a relationship with a set of perpetual problems with which the partners can learn to live.

At the heart of a happy relationship is mutual respect for and enjoyment of each other's company. (Gottman & Silver, 1999)

A happy couple's secret weapon is what Gottman calls "**repair attempt**" which refers to "any statement or action—silly or otherwise—that prevents negativity from escalating out of control.