

Gottman Method Couples Therapy

Treating Escalating and Avoidant Couples

Part 2

What is a Distant couple?

- ▶ Avoids or minimizes conflict
- ▶ Tend to make negative assumptions about partners emotional state
- ▶ Flooding leads to withdrawal
- ▶ Often report distant relationship even when not in conflict
- ▶ Often report loss of shared values and goals
- ▶ Sexual connection is often minimal
- ▶ Usually have several repeating issues (gridlocks) but they are rarely discussed

Distant Couple Intake Video

- ▶ Show Video DC 1 Narrative and OHI

Multi-Method Assessment

- ▶ Couple's narrative usually filled with pain around disconnection
- ▶ Couple's history usually has low connection stories
- ▶ History often contains hesitation to commit with long dating periods
- ▶ Conflict conversation seeks agreement
- ▶ Questionnaires may show low friendship, loneliness and low shared meaning but mixed conflict management scores
- ▶ 4 horsemen and flooding are present but usually lead to shutdown
- ▶ Repair skills tend to be low

Distant Couple Conflict Conversation

- ▶ Show DC2 Conflict Conversation

Distant Couples - Treatment

- ▶ Emotional Conversations (Gottman-Rapoport)
- ▶ Stress reducing conversation
- ▶ Address 4 horsemen as they appear
- ▶ Dan Wile intervention to increase emotional expression
- ▶ Uncover hidden issues (Dreams within Conflict)
- ▶ Establish new behaviors (Compromise Ovals)
- ▶ Process negative events (Aftermath of a Fight or Regrettable Incident)
- ▶ Rituals of Connection to increase turning toward
- ▶ Adjective Checklist and other Fondness exercises

Gottman Rapoport



Understanding Must Precede Persuasion and Problem-Solving



Assumption Of Similarity



Speaker:



Gentle Start-up



Positive Need



Listener:



Take Notes



Postpone agenda, listen with empathy

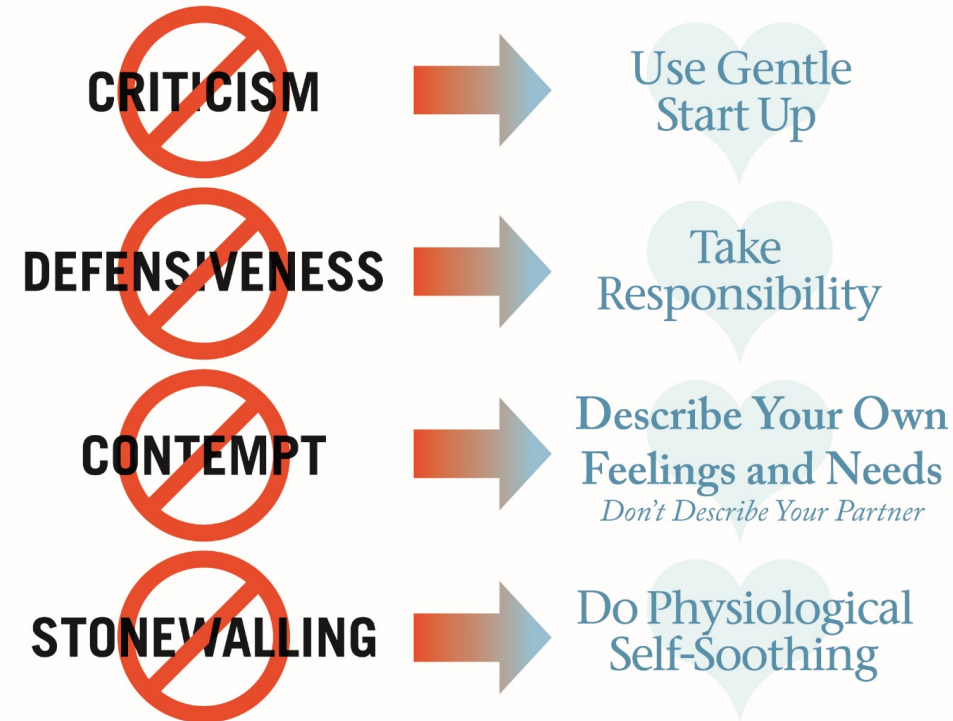


Validate

Stress Reducing Conversation

- ▶ Stressors are outside of relationship
- ▶ Speaker/Listener format
- ▶ Focus stays on speaker
- ▶ 10-15 minutes per person
- ▶ No problem solving
- ▶ No siding with the enemy
- ▶ Can ask open-ended questions to deepen the conversation
- ▶ Express empathy
- ▶ Daily Ritual

Stop the Four Horsemen with their Antidotes



The Four Horsemen

Dan Wile Intervention

Speak	Speak for each
Kneel	Kneel beside them, don't stand over them, be at least eye level
Interrupt	Interrupt Attack – Defend
Re-state	Have client say it in his or her own words (transfers skill to client)

Dreams within Conflict



Dreams Within Conflict Goals:

Postpone persuasion or problem-solving
Deepen understanding of issue



Speaker-Listener structure



Speaker's job, refer to Sample Dreams



Listener's job, refer to Sample Questions



Coach one partner to ask the other partner questions from the handout.



For very difficult cases – ok for therapist to address questions to Speaker. But try to keep it dyadic.



Switch roles

Dreams Within Conflict Video

- ▶ Show DC 3 Dreams Within Video

Compromise Ovals

For either solvable or perpetual/gridlocked problem.

Both partners must feel understood before compromise (Gottman-Rapoport Intervention, Dream Within Conflict)

Perpetual/gridlocked issues = reach a temporary or partial compromise on part of the larger issue.

Gridlocked during Compromise? Do a Dreams Within Conflict before proceeding.

Aftermath of a Fight



Rituals of Connection



- ▶ Create meaning, traditions in the relationship
- ▶ *The Intentional Family* by William Doherty
- ▶ Formalized turning towards
- ▶ Informal rituals of connection
- ▶ Help with friendship and meaning

Adjective Checklist



- ▶ Each couple chooses 4-5 Adjectives
- ▶ Shares brief story of a time partner displayed that character trait
- ▶ One partner shares each adjective and story
- ▶ Switch and other partner shares each adjective and story

Adjective Checklist Video

- ▶ Show DC 4 Adjective Checklist