Building Healthy Relationships

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Pacific Clinics Institute
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The impact of caregiving

Family Caregivers are at increased risk for

- Stress-related physical disorders
- Alcoholism and drug abuse
- Anxiety and depressive disorders
- Marital distress & divorce
The impact of COVID-19

Exacerbating Symptoms

&

Exposing Issues
Outline

➤ A simple framework for Understanding Relationships

➤ When things go wrong: Disconnection!
  • The 3 Things that will drive you APE in your relationships

➤ When things go right: Connection!
  • Communication: The Imago Dialogue
  • Caring Behaviors: The Platinum Rule
What is a relationship?
Two people & the sacred space in-between

Curiosity...Compassion

The Sacred Space in-between

Curiosity...Compassion

NEGATIVITY
Negativity

**Definition:**
Any action that ruptures our connection – whether intentional or accidental

Any thought, word, or deed that tells the other person: “You’re not okay when you think what you think or act the way that you act.”
Don’t Forget The 11th Commandment!!

Thou shalt not shame, blame or criticize thy family member.
Conflict is growth trying to happen
The three things that make you go “APE” in your relationship:

A  Amygdala
P  Past
E  Ego
Is this growth trying to happen?
Understanding Our Reactivity

Connection

Frontal Lobe

Amygdala

Limbic System

Survival
The Fundamental Question

Is it safe?

or

Is it dangerous?
It’s evolutionary...
When it’s safe we

mate
nurture
play
sleep
create
have fun
live
love
It’s evolutionary...
When it’s dangerous we

Fight
Flee
Freeze
Hide
Submit
"My prefrontal cortex still loves you, but my amygdala just booked a one-way ticket to Fiji"
Amygdala Hijack \(\rightarrow\) Two Reactive Styles

‘Maximizer”  
*The Tiger*

- I am the feeling one
- I express myself
- I am the committed one
- I’m the one who cares

P.S. Even tigers get exhausted

“Minimizer”  
*The Turtle*

- I never start fights
- I stay rational
- I keep things calm
- I don’t do things to hurt you

P.S. Some turtles are “snappers”
Our past impacts all of our adult relationships.
Our reactive style

Emotional Issues
Our "baggage"

Childhood wounding

Our past impacts all of our adult relationships
Still Face Experiment
What We Learned

We repeat the patterns of the past.
Our Adaptive Ego

The character adaptations which developed “as emergency solutions in early childhood as a way of coping with our environment. At the time, these coping mechanisms were necessary for survival. But the older we grow, the more they get in the way of living freely as our True Self.”

- Richard Rohr
Our Many Managers
Managers

- Adaptive parts that developed to prevent you from feeling pain of your exiles in the iceberg.
- Do a great job at running your life.
- But sometimes get trapped in some bad roles that can lead to tension in your relationship.
- Be curious and compassionate toward them.
The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

1. **Criticism** – Stating complaints as defects of the other’s personality... “You’re so selfish.”

2. **Defensiveness** – Self protection through righteous indignation or innocent victimhood... “It’s not my fault.”

3. **Contempt** – Negative statements that come from a position of superiority. “You’re such an idiot.”

4. **Stonewalling** – Emotional withdrawal from interaction. Listener gives no cues that he/she is tracking the speaker.
The Antidotes to the Four Horsemen

1. **Criticism** → Gentle start-up, I statements to talk about what you’re feeling and express positive requests

2. **Defensiveness** → Accepting responsibility

3. **Contempt** – Treat each other with respect & build a culture of appreciation.

4. **Stonewalling** – Physiological self-soothing
Conflict is growth trying to happen
THE MOST IMPORTANT TOOL YOU WILL LEARN TODAY...

IMAGO DIALOGUE

A new way to talk &
A new way to listen
The Imago Dialogue

A basic, three-step process to help communicate thoughts, feelings or experiences...
with the intention of being clearly heard and understood, and to hear and understand the other

On a deeper level, it creates, enhances & preserves connection... strengthening two distinct, separate selves
The Imago Dialogue

There is a Sender & a Receiver
Each have responsibilities

One partner sends a message.
The other person receives it.
To really receive the other person

“If one gives answer before hearing, it is folly and shame

- Proverbs 18:13

“You have to listen, and that means turning down the noise in your own mind so that you can hear something other than the sound of your own voice or of your own thoughts.”

- Harville Hendrix
Mirroring

PURPOSE → Why we mirror:
▶ To focus attention and convey that one is listening
▶ The mirroring gaze is without ego... it reflects the face of God to one’s partner.

PRACTICE → How to mirror:
▶ Use whole body listening – posture, gestures, tone of voice – to provide a flat mirror.
▶ “Let me see if I’ve got it. You said...”
▶ “Did I get that?”
▶ “Is there more about that?”
Validation

PURPOSE ➔ Why we validate:
► To acknowledge the other person’s truth
► To honor the other person’s perspective ➔ take a “God’s eye view”
► This does not imply agreement

PRACTICE ➔ How to validate:
► “I’m following you & what you’re saying is important to me.”
► “You’re perspective is valid.”
► “You make sense. And what makes sense is…”
Empathy

PURPOSE → Why we empathize:
- To enter into the other person’s world
- To practice compassion reflective of our shared humanity

PRACTICE → How to empathize:
- “I imagine you might be feeling…. (give 3 guesses)
- “Is that accurate?
- Are there any other feelings?
Brene Brown on Empathy
To really share with my partner?

“You want me to talk about my feelings? Okay – I feel like talking about sports.”
The Imago Dialogue – Sender Responsibilities

I  Intention “WAIT” → Why Am I Talking?  (Terry Real)

S  Self-Soothing → Use self soothing to prepare yourself

A  Appointment → Make an appointment

I  I-Statements → Speak from the “I” perspective – exploring your own experience, feelings, reactions, etc. vs. talking about the other

D  Deepen the Emotion → Go vertical, not horizontal to deepen your sharing

!  Zero Negativity!... No shaming, blaming or criticizing
Imago Dialogue ➔
The Three Steps

Mirroring
Helps us focus our attention
“Let me see if I got that, you said…”
“Did I get that?”
“Is there more?”

Validation
Expresses Understanding & Respect
“You make sense, and what makes sense is…”

Empathy
Enters into the other’s world
“I imagine this leaves you feeling…”
“Is that accurate?”
“Are there any more feelings?”
“First you have to become a mechanic, then you can become a craftsman, then you can become an artist.”
Dialogue & Dialogical

Dialogue as a Practice

Dialogical as a Way of Being
The Platinum Rule

“Do unto others as they would have done unto them”
The 5 Love Languages

The Five Love Languages

1. Words of Affirmation
2. Quality Time
3. Receiving Gifts
4. Acts of Service
5. Physical Touch
Being Dialogical with Anyone

- Ask if it is a good time to talk... if not set an appointment.
- Be aware of your physiology... breathe.
- Own your own reactivity and your APE... be curious to see the iceberg issues that may be triggered.
- Listen to understand, not respond.
- Mirror the person’s message back to them.
- Validate the other’s perspective.
- Empathize with their feelings.
- Speak from the “I” perspective.
- Risk vulnerability before you ask for it.
- Practice the “Platinum Rule.”
Let’s Celebrate Your Relationship!