

Basic Styles of Relationship Dysfunction

Distilled from Psychoanalytic/Psychodynamic, Structural, Strategic, Constructionist, Behavioral, Integrative, Solution-focused, Narrative, Feminist, and Somatic approaches.

1. Circular Self-Escalating Systemic Patterns

Problem Maintaining Solutions - taking a role or behavior to avoid the difficulty, which then perpetuates the difficulty by evoking a complimentary role in the partner in an attempt to maintain balance.

- persuer/distancer
- giver/taker
- listener/talker
- emotional/rational
- dominant/submissive
- angry/withdrawn
- attacker/defender
- optimist/pessimist
- impulsive/conservative
- hierarchical/affiliative
- overfunctioning/underfunctioning

Aversive Conditioning - attempt to shape behavior by using unpleasant consequences

- Blaming
- Shaming
- Nagging
- Threatening
- Punishing
- Labeling/Name-calling

2. Cognitive Distortions and Deletions

Appraisals and interpretations of behavior may not be accurate but supports one's undifferentiated core beliefs

- Transference and Projection-meaning is filtered through O.R. lens
- Overgeneralization/globalizing - one event represents all events
- Mind-reading - projection and overfunctioning
- Selective abstraction - focus on one aspect of an event deleting and or denying other aspects that are foreign or repugnant

- Inadequate communication styles
- Failure to interpret body signals and sensations
- Unresolved and ignored trauma and tragedy

3. Boundary and Structural Problems

- Too loose, chaotic, conflict adherent, enmeshment, lack of order
- Too tight, rigid, conflict avoidant, disengaged, rigid rules and roles
- Dependency and Co-dependency/Symbiosis
- Inappropriate Coalitions-Triangles (e.g. - in-laws, children, affairs, people, work, substances)
- Failure to accept differences as a path to intimacy and deepening
- Parentification/infantilization

4. World Issues

Antiquated or Frozen Family Traditions concerning orientations around:

- **Equality** (gender, racial, economic, physical)
- **Power** (who takes charge when)
- **Freedom** (spiritual, sexual).....get acted out in the couple relationship.