It’s a pretty big slice!
And a Sprinkle of Mental Illness.

Marriage and Relationship Therapy.....
With a Slice of Addiction

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Objectives

• Identify the reasons relationship work is difficult and why the cases are so complicated.
• We want to be able to enter this couples scenario with confidence that we will help.
• Protect ourselves and the integrity of our practice.
• Breakdown and simplify our relationship strategies for the best long term outcome of everyone involved.
• Review real case studies to provide further details on how to use relationship therapy to improve marital, relationship, and substance abuse outcomes.
How Do They Get Here?

- They pick the wrong person.
  - White dog hair hunts down and finds a black garment or is it the other way around?
  - For every mentally ill person there is a rescuer or a predator.
  - Borderline and Antisocial/Narcissistic clients. People get tired.
  - They get fooled.
  - The preacher’s daughter and the long haired boy next door with a motorcycle.
  - The old fashioned way. They earn it with poor choices over time.

I RSVP’d!
How Do Clients Get Here-cont.

- Our clients watch others and repeat. Family patterns are strong.
- Peer Groups
- Biology
- Desperation
- Neglect
- Accident
- INFIDELITY!
- The heritability of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is estimated at up to 35%, but varies widely when individual PTSD symptoms are examined. Epigenetics.
Our Cases are Extremely Complicated.

Many of our clients are mentally ill, have a personality problem, are products of divorce, neglected or broken partnerships, have families with substance abuse and or mental health issues, have no real relationship role models, are battling something they can’t or won’t tell anyone, and just can’t get along with another person.

Piece of cake, with ice cream, right!?
Wading In

• If we can cure the underlying issue will substance abuse will disappear?
  – What’s the danger of believing that is usually true?
  – That’s a big difference between MH and SA pros.

• Quickly assess and diagnose, identify and separate the problems, get the right care, and let’s not hurt anyone further. Guiding principles of counseling couples.

• Active addiction, infidelity, psychosis, or violence in a relationship setting, for me, means no. The other person, yeah. Get them on their own, refer.

• Assessment is ongoing. Collect facts, every detail, use collateral info, and will know 1/2 of what you need.

• It’s like Scotty trying to beam you up with no location. One for the older crowd.
Complications Abound

• Dual Diagnosis
  – Some problems lend themselves directly to relationship problems.
  – Difficulty in self care immediately transfers to relationship problems.
  – Prevalence of MH and SA problems.
    • BI POLAR DISORDER.
    • Personality Problems and SA.
    • Low IQ.
    • Depression and Anxiety
    • ADHD/ADD
Bipolar I and Bipolar II Similar Rates of Comorbidity.

- Age of onset lowered from age 24 to 20.7.
- A Bipolar diagnosis lowered the age of onset of SA.
- 42-58% incidence alcohol and or drug problems.
- “Comorbid bipolar disorder and substance use disorder are frequently the rule rather than the exception.” - Psychiatry Advisor, 8/1/19
- If mania exists, 14 x more likely to have drug abuse and 6 x more likely to have alcoholism than the general population.
- Medication compliance!!!!!! Who wants it when you have mania? Not me, I’m Happy!
- Younger vs. Older mania and depression.
How does impulsivity affect a marriage or relationship?

- Cheating and *grandiose sexual behavior with reasonable outcome expectations*. LOL
  - People get hurt. They retaliate. People gain the upper hand and use it. People can’t handle fantasy.
- Financial/Gambling/Shopping/Eating Disorders
- Bills don’t get paid. Children get neglected.
- No mutual decisions, just asking for forgiveness.
- Angry, physical altercations, and deep unresolvable resentments.
  - Minor arguments become huge, EPO’s, violence, DV cycle, ongoing shame and guilt, trapped people.

I am single!
Personality Complications

Opposites Attract in the Beginning and Then They Repel

- Attachment Style - Secure vs. Insecure
- Conflict Style - Avoidant vs. Assertive vs. Aggressive
- Borderline and Antisocial clients.
- The Rescuer and the Victim.
- Codependency x 2.
- Getting children grandparents to take sides.
- Joint Custody, Custody issues, Attorneys
- Strict vs. Easy and getting further apart.
- Poor parenting role models.
- Divorce, Adoption, Estranged or Absent Parents.

She was in the living. Made it difficult.
Substance Abuse Complications

“The alcoholic is like a tornado roaring his way through the lives of others. Hearts are broken. Sweet relationships are dead.” AA p. 82

- People are under the influence of a poison.
- May be their only experience of relating/intimacy.
- How can you serve 2 master’s?
- Relapse and the trust problem.
- Understanding Addiction........Education Reception.
- The magnet of the codependent.
- “A drowning person will eventually kill themselves, unless they build an island of casualties on which to climb upon.” Please treat everyone!
Anxiety and Depression Issues

How do anxiety and depression affect relapse potential? One or both partners??

Anxiety-High comorbidity

• Fear vs. love responses
• Spouse to spouse distress
• Future oriented-NITM
• Self-medicating = anxiety
• Fear and Anxiety to Anger
• Scattered, poor P solvers
• Lister, do it all with no part

There is a certain amount of sadness to my job.

Depression-High comorbidity

• Struggle to be active
• Sad people are sad-DD
• Dark side is hard to forget
• Men-depression to low Q
• Women-low Q to depression
• Spouses higher depression
Lack of Resources

• What do women need when they have a child?
  – Network of family, other women, parents, grandparents, friends, and security.
  – Where do these people go when a woman abuses substances and struggles with MH issues?

• What do men need? Do they know it?

• Cheating is high during pregnancy, why?

• Lack of resources and or support at any point in a relationship is a problem. During a crisis, it is unforgiving.
  – Marriage, birth, death, MI break, SA bottom or relapse.
Marriage Success Roadblocks

• Best Predictors of Marriage Success
  – Age at first Rodeo
  – Education
  – Money, Job Stability, and Planning.

• What do our clients do?
  – Get hitched at The Ridge, right??
  – Seek out and attract sickness
  – Ignore “Red Flags” that say don’t ignore me!
  – Marry or attach young.
    » Long unhealthy relationship in grade school/high school
  – Denial
  – Chemistry/Love is Blind—allows them to overlook a red flag. Maybe biological?
  – Promise and then change.

These *are* useful tips. Wow!
Parenting Complications

The relationship is bad and you have to be a roommate, financial partner, and of course a parenting team.........well it goes south fast doesn’t it?

- We don’t always agree! It’s okay when you aren’t high, drunk, or mentally ill.
- Secrets
- Manipulation of the child for their own benefit.
- Getting children and their own parents to take sides.
- Joint Custody, Custody issues, Attorneys
- One too hard, one too soft....and getting to far.
- Poor parenting role models.
- Divorce, Adoption, Estranged or Absent Parents.
Strategies That Work

• What if many of the relationship problems arise from being stuck developmentally?
• What do we say about a substance abuser that starts at age 14 and stops at 30?
  – We say developmentally maybe they are 16, right?
  – Eric Erickson some really good ideas about this.
What is the biggest predictor of divorce?-According to Gottman

**contempt** noun

con·tempt  |  \kən-ˈtem(p)t\  

**Definition of contempt**

1  a  : the act of despising : the state of mind of one who despises : DISDAIN
   // glared at him in contempt

   b  : lack of respect or reverence for something
   // acting with contempt for public safety

2  : the state of being despised

3  : willful disobedience to or open disrespect of a court, judge, or legislative body
   // contempt of court
What is the antidote?

According to Gottman

Fondness: Tender affection.
Admiration: A feeling of respect and approval. An object of esteem. Wonder.

Ask you clients to make a list of things they are fond of and admire about their spouse/partner. Then, have them try to do at least 2 of those every day, morning and night. It is reciprocal.

Upon contempt, ask them to refer to the list again. Usually only one will win out over time. The winner decides the relationship.

Remember the crisis during times of need? Huge contempt. Here is your solution. Time and love does heal, if we let it.
Transaction Analysis
by Eric Berne. His book is *Games People Play*.

- Holding a particular psychological position has profound implications for how an individual operationalizes his or her life. There are four.
  - *I'm OK & you are OK*. Healthiest position about life & it means that I feel good about myself & that I feel good about others & their competence.
  - *I'm OK and you are not OK*. In this position I feel good about myself but I see others as damaged or less than and it is usually not healthy.

Yeah, still not OK!
Transactional Analysis
by Eric Berne. His book is *Games People Play.*

- **I'm not OK & you are OK.** In this position the person sees him/herself as the weak partner in relationships as the others in life are definitely better than the self. *This person will unconsciously accept abuse as OK.*

- **I'm not OK and you are not OK.** This is the worst position to be in as it means that I believe that I am in a terrible state and the rest of the world is as bad. Consequently, there is no hope for any ultimate supports.

Perhaps hopscotch?
Parent, Adult, Child Ego States

I am the Critical Parent! lol
Transactional Analysis
by Eric Berne. His book is *Games People Play.*

The way in which we initiate and respond has a big impact on our relationships, and how the other person responds/relates back.

Group Exercise
1. Take a form of interaction between 2 partners.
2. One has a SA disorder. One has a personality DO. Make ‘em up quickly.
3. Give half your table one ego state and half the other.
4. Write down the attributes, behaviors, thoughts, feelings of your ego state during a conflict. What does that look, sound, feel like?
5. Remember to catch the response & reaction as the conflict progresses.

A partner is so elusive. Works fine, until I have to deliver the news.....it’s all downhill from there.
Transactional Analysis
by Eric Berne. His book is *Games People Play.*

- Adult
- Parent
- Child

- Group 1 take Adult-Child
- Group 2 take Parent-Child
- Group 3 take Adult-Adult

It’s really the inner child that keeps me going most days.
This is why we need to have people partially well before they engage in relationship therapy.

- How can we help those that are hopelessly locked into a relationship corner they can’t solve.
- Keeping in them couples counseling during that time probably does more damage than good.
- Why not individual therapy first, to get these things manageable?
- Our providers are pretty quick to refer to 1:1 and with success.
When to Use Individual vs. Conjoint Therapy.

**Individual**
- For 3-6 months after inpatient or partial
- Active cheating, using, mania, violence, etc.
- Is struggling accepting responsibility.
- Dishonest
- Looking to gain advantage
- Divorce underway, custody issues

**Conjoint**
- Maybe an educational session with partner?!
- After 1:1 has produced.
- Compliant with meds.
- Attending Self Help.
- Taking advice, seeking care.
- Here for the right reasons.
- Willing to be transparent.
- Both partners are committed to the process.
Strategies That Work

• Joining
  – The relationship is what I am dedicated to.
  – I might line up against you or with you at any given time. Want a drink or candy? lol
  – It might get worse before it gets better.
  – Some people prefer Diet Coke vs. Diet Pepsi or vice versa. It’s okay. Tell me.
  – Remember, I didn’t cause this. You brought it to me.
  – Let’s be direct and honest with each other.
  – Who wants to start?

You can join me now. Pay is good, but the benefits stink. What can you do? Damn corporations. lol
Strategies That Work

• Evaluating
  – What do people want or need?
    • Needs questionnaire, there are many.
    • Have them go on record and write it down.
  – Homework 1st session is usually
    • 2-3 things I am doing that hurt.
    • 1-2 things I need
    • What I am willing to do to make this right?
  – Remember contempt?
    • Second session 2-3 things I admire and respect and will acknowledge, unless they want to fight some more.
Strategies That Work

• Talking to each other
  – When they look at me, I direct them to each other.
  – Letters, notes, written requests........not electronic. Writing on paper leads to an emotional release and the reader is less defensive or at least can’t fire back.
  – Conflict resolution. Rules for fair fighting. “Parent” becomes the referee and the “Child” acts out. Hold them to it.
  – Ask them to agree to being first to apologize. Reward each other for +.
  – Go to bed on good terms, always.
Strategies That Work

• Talking to each other-Cont.
  – Limit arguments, disagreements, to an hour. After that, apologize.
    • Teach them that getting in someone’s space with humility and love will help.
    • Reciprocate every positive action.
  – Use the HALT approach to fighting.
  – Understand how a hormonal cycle can contribute to conflict.
    • What if 90% of your major fights are during this time? We cover that in therapy.
Strategies That Work

- Review needs Q & make schedules
- How long has it been since you were on an overnight alone? A week away-no kids?
- Date night, schedule and avoid cancelling.
  - When you are on a getaway of any kind.....no conflict allowed. Enjoy the time.
- I like scheduling the potential conflict.
  - Every Sunday at 11am let’s talk for an hour. Bring up the issue respectfully and let’s agree to end well.
- Encourage positive rewards for every thing the other person does in our plan. Don’t we all want to hear what we have done well?
- Research-5:1 positive to negative. Go big! 10:1
Strategies That Work

• Helping with resources.
  – We don’t have the money, time, or resources to go out/away together or alone?
    • How can a relationship thrive or even survive without the intimacy and emotional strength that provides?
    • The park might be free, let’s help.
  – Case Manage Their Resources!
    • Get and give ideas and solutions for these.
    • You can always tell the most insecure person in this process by their responses.
    • Refer for some help 1:1
Strategies That Work

• Infidelity
  – Serial Cheater vs. 1 timer.
    • I don’t do serial cheaters. They cause harm.
    • I do ask why the person is with them still.
    • I refer that person for help.
  – Trust and security are the problems.
    • Monitoring and knowing vs. Trust
    • People are afraid to get burned again.
    • I know I should leave, but I can’t
      – Religious, insecure attachment, MI, $$
      – So if I stay, bad, if I leave bad
        » 67% of second marriages end in D.
Best Songs for Difficult Relationships


Cuts Like a Knife by Bryan Adams.
Movies Depicting Difficult Relationships and or MI/SA.

- Psycho-Norman Bates and his mother.
- Fatal Attraction-Glenn Close nails the BPD.
- Mr. Jones-Richard Gere-BiPolar-Of course he sleeps with his therapist.
- The War of Roses-Movie about marital discord.
- Cat on a Hot Tin Roof-Old, but twisted.
- Kramer vs. Kramer-Pretty good depiction of divorce.
- American Beauty-It’s just messed up, all the way.
- Gone Girl-Can’t unpick the wrong person.
- As Good as it Gets-A lighter one on the list.
- Fear-Reese and Mark | Enough-Jennifer Lopez
- Leaving Las Vegas-True alcoholic and a rescuer.
- Boxing Helena-You need a strong stomach.
- Sleeping with the Enemy-Julia Roberts got fooled.
- Presumed Innocent-Great Harrison Ford movie.
Dangers of Marriage/Relationship Counseling Before They Are Ready.

- Do no harm! We have an obligation. H or H?
  - We can’t save a relationship if someone dies. These are the people you see on the news. Please be careful. We can make things worse.

- You might want to avoid couples therapy with APD, BPD, NPD. Why?
  - They generally do not want to act with you as a professional, but need you to help their cause.

- What about the partners that come first and or later, and want to talk to you in private?
  - PPD, DPD, victims that need rescued.
Dangers of Marriage/Relationship

- If you like child custody cases, become a pro at it, and do custody evaluations. For the rest of us amateurs, Godzilla!
  - Don’t lose your license or practice over a case.
- If you have a favorite, you shouldn’t be doing the counseling. Join with the relationship.
- Don’t keep secrets or conversations private.
- Use your liability insurance if you really believe in the cause.
- Don’t respond alone or in a vacuum.
- If you answer a board letter without an attorney, it looks suspicious.

Secrets are killers.
Is Do No Harm greater than HIPPA?

What do you do when can’t remain objective?

Make sure you get some training, have your paperwork properly figured out, and you are locked in when doing this kind of work.

You could become a target if you see the people we talked about before and don’t comply.

You can’t always get what you want..Mick Jagger.

Clients are not the professionals. You are. Direct the care. Set your boundaries. Live to see another client.
Rewards

• You come in contact with the entire family. They will use you later when new difficulties or life stages present themselves.

• What families don’t have to go through divorce, get to see recovery, or the problems were mild?
  • We might prevent further clients, right?

• These people get to pass on a healthy family system.

• Families develop an attitude toward treatment that helps every generation.

• You get to see them on vacation!
Cases

• The 50 Million Dollar Man.
• The Dog Painting.
• New Boyfriend’s House Burned Down.
• The preacher’s daughter and the long haired boy next door with a motorcycle.
• The “Porn” Addict.
• The Porn Addict.
• The Extortion
• Katy

If I could only reveal the Kennedy files. Dang confidentially agreements.
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Full references upon request.