

## Couples Survival

# Couples' Survival: Maintaining Connection in a Disconnected World

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## "Poisoned by these fairytales..."

- Walt Disney and Donna Reed betrayed us!
  - Battles and strife at the start, apparently blissful "happily ever after"
  - Stereotypical roles and expectations
  - Instilled throughout the culture even when we work against it
- Powerful influence even if not desired
- Resentment, disappointment, failure, shame when the dream does not come true



## Connection

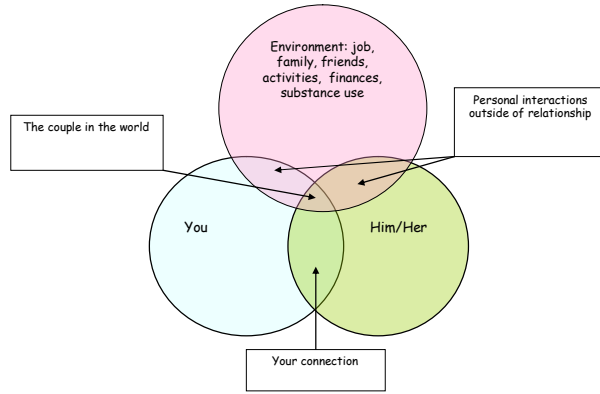
- What is it?
  - More than communication
  - Not always blissful or happy
  - Sharing of an essence beyond words
- What is the risk to connect?
- When do you feel it most?



## Disconnection

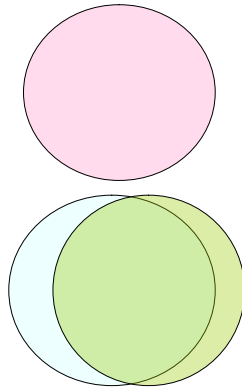
- What disconnects you?
  - External / Environment
    - Distractions
    - "Black holes" of energy and time
  - Internal
    - Emotional illiteracy
    - Avoid / withdraw
    - Shadows of fear
- Downward spiral of disconnection

# Picture Your Relationship



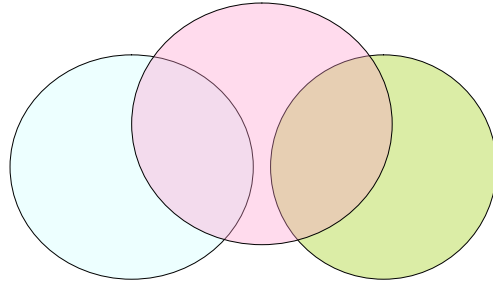
# The Fairy Tale / Honeymoon

Fulfilled by connection without distractions



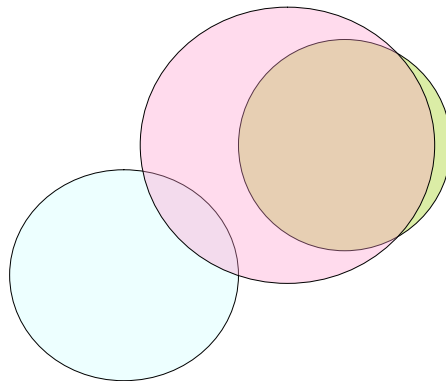
## **"Roommates"**

Absorbed in life details but disconnected



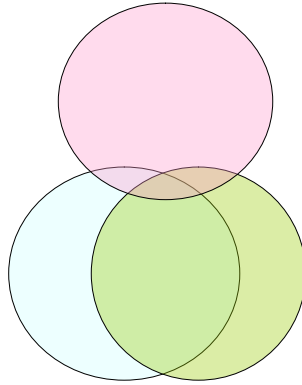
## **Workaholic, Affair, Addict**

One or both so absorbed there is nothing left to connect with



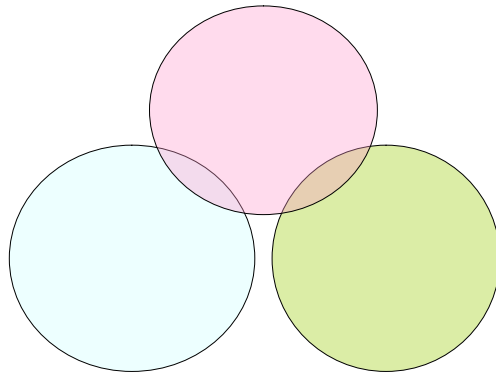
## **"Survival retreat" - successful**

Able to find reconnection in withdrawal from the environment  
Can be source of renewal and recharging but effect may not last



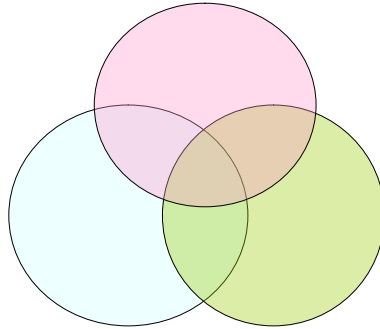
## **"Survival retreat" - not successful**

Withdraw from environmental demands but unable to re-establish connection



## Healthy Balance

Able to maintain personal space and personal interaction with environment as well as connection with each other. Moreover, connection is able to thrive in the midst of the environment - requires a joint purpose or mission.



## Building a Foundation: Couples/partners commitment

- When we are in relationship, we commit to goals, hopefully mutually defined and spoken out loud...
- As partners in relationship we commit to developing ourselves both as individuals and as a couple, and holding each other accountable to the behaviors that support our goals.

## Accountability

- Responsibility to someone or for some activity.
- The obligation to bear the consequences for failure to perform as expected.
- The Mother of Caution!

## Accountability

- Taking responsibility for my own actions, the motivation behind those actions and the consequences of my actions.
- Recognize and embrace my shadow, that which I repress or hide or deny.

## Post-it Notes and greeting cards can change your life!

- "If you always do what you always did you always get what you always got." (duh...)
- "I know it's not your fault but it's my intention to blame you anyway!" (Well, of course!)

## Integrity

- Acknowledge my behavior and take responsibility for its effect on others...
- Brings me into integrity, making my words and deeds congruent...
- The degree to which my words and deeds are congruent indicates how much I can be trusted.

## Levels of Accountability: Below the Line

- Wait and Hope "Somebody should do something!"  
"This too shall pass."
- Blame Self "It's my fault."; Guilt
- Blame Others "It's *their* fault."
- Denial "This has nothing to do with me,"  
"That's *your* stuff."

## Levels of Accountability: Above the Line

- Acknowledge the Situation "I'm a piece of the puzzle."
- Accept Ownership "It starts with me."
- Find Solutions "This can work."
- Take Action and Learn Make it happen;  
renewal.

## Communication

- Interactions sometimes create spaces where we fill in the blanks or create a story in our head to explain what is happening.
- The words we use can influence what we think about our experience.
- Experience evokes emotions that may drive an action that is incongruent with the stimulus.

## Crucial Conversations. Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High

- Kerry Patterson
- Joseph Grenny
- Ron McMillan
- Al Switzler

## High performing couples/partners have learned how to manage crucial conversations

- Get all relevant information out in the open.
- Create dialogue, a free flow of meaning between two (or more) people.
- Start with the heart...the right motive.
- Stay focused on the goal to identify expectations and create a plan.

## Having a model for communication makes a difference...

- Guides you as you navigate the conversation.
- Helps you stay focused when you find yourself getting defensive
- Grounds you when you inch toward wanting to be right.

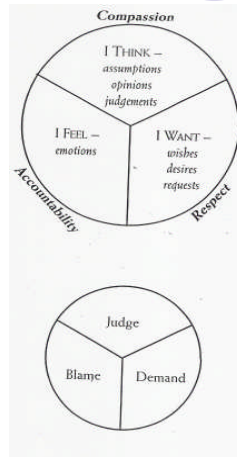
Without a plan, we sometimes are prone to react...

Stimulus → Response

With a pause for reflection, we can respond in a way that is more authentic with who we truly are...

Stimulus → Response  
Reflect

## The Awareness Wheel



## Fallout:

- An incidental or unexpected effect, especially one that is undesirable, consequent to an event or process.
- Any adverse and unwanted secondary effect.
- The Mother of Avoidance!

...can look like/sound like:

Messy  
Lots of noise/chatter  
Formal action  
Fear  
Uncertainty  
Silence  
Emotional/physical withdrawal

...and on the other side?

Clarity  
Peace and quiet  
Safety  
Certainty  
Open Communication  
Longevity  
Bliss

## The Paradox: Power and Vulnerability



- We can define power as the ability to act, the capacity for action, the capability to influence change.
- We can define vulnerability as being susceptible to physical or emotional injury, or to attack. Open to criticism, liable to succumb.

## Power and Vulnerability in Relationship



- Power as strength, trust, truth, resiliency, commitment in the face of fire.
- Vulnerability as emotional availability, willingness to risk, authenticity, awareness of shadow.

## The Paradox then...

- In order to create *real* power in my relationship, I must be willing to trust, to be vulnerable, to reveal most amazingly and simply my true self.

## Reconnecting - an ongoing process

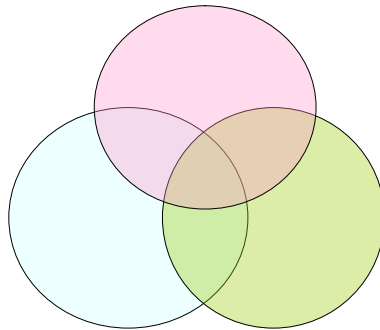
- Rituals
  - Greetings
  - "Secret anniversaries of the heart"
- Retreats
  - Dates, mini vacations
  - Make them important enough to happen
- 5:1 Balance
  - Be nice - a lot (Doesn't he/she deserve it?)
  - Especially important in conflict
- Talk out loud
  - Speak what you are unsure of

## Long Term Success

- Couples Mission - a reason for being a couple beyond the mortgage and the kids
- Communities of Couples
  - Couples were never meant to do it alone
  - All couples need assistance and support

## Healthy Balance

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**We Bless You On Your  
Journey**

