

Workshop 13

# Relationship Issues

# From Fusion to Fission

- © What, then, happens to loving altruism? A variety of forces can cause its erosion after marriage. Fortified by the security of marriage, those who felt lonely while single no longer experience the relationships as an antidote to loneliness
- © Inevitably, as partners begin to assert their own desires and conflicting interests, disagreements arise
- © 'contrary' or 'arbitrary'

## The Self-serving Bias

- A more insidious problem is the “self-serving bias.” Without realising it, people have a tendency to interpret events in a way that puts them in the most favourable light, or serves their own self-interest
- The self-serving bias widens the gap in understanding between spouses
- Because marriage bond is such an emotional one, it is much harder for partners to implement the goals of their compact than for them to gorge the bonds in other working relationships.
- A lack of the necessary skills and appropriate attitudes weakens the working relationship, which must be strong of the partners are to carry out the practical goals of marriage.

- Setting standards and judging your spouse
- The intrusion of symbolic meanings
- Differing expectations about roles in the family
- Quality time together
- Division of labour
- Child rearing
- Sexual relationship ( intimacy)
- Budgetary problems
- Problems with In-Laws

# Conflict: Negotiation and Resolution

- Conflict within the couple is a natural function of differences. Conflict cannot be avoided, but it can be managed to produce positive negotiated outcomes.
- Conflict can result from tension caused by forces external to the couple, as when economic conditions lead to conflicts over finances.
- Conflict also occurs when one member of the couple perceives inequity or experiences an imbalance in rewards
- Anger can be signal of underlying problems. It can be a manipulation. Constructively dealing with anger prevents abuse and violence
- Verbal abuse can occur with or without physical violence. It involves criticising name calling, and belittling the partner
- Physical violence in a relationship is a cue to separate the partners and treat each individually. Power and control issues for the male batterer must be dealt with
- Strategies such as reframing, use of metaphors, relationship contracting, and a role reversals may be employed to deal with a couples conflicts.

# Sources of conflict

- Social context
- Situational stress
- Perceptual difference theories
- Equity theory
- Exchange theory
- Attribution theory
- Behaviour/event theories of conflict
- Negotiation theory
- Developmental theory

# Verbal conflict and anger

- An anger Genogram
- Anger as manipulation or defence
- Withdrawn partners
- Characteristics of verbal abuse

# Conflict issues and partners

- Blame
  - › Justification
  - › Rationalisation
  - › Debilitation
  - › Vilification
- Triangulation
- Interactive conflict patterns
- Pursuer-distancer pattern
- Reminder procrastinator pattern
- Parent-child pattern

# Developmental stage of couples conflict

- Stage 1: Early Disagreement
- Stage 2: Repeated Conflict
- Stage 3: Severe Conflict
- Stage 4: Severed couple's Relationship

# Violence in a couple relationship

- Scope the problem
- Definition of *Battering*
- Recognising a potential problem
  1. Experienced physical or psychological abuse as a child
  2. Had father who battered mother
  3. Displays violence towards other people
  4. Uses guns for protection from other people
  5. Loses temper frequently and more easily than necessary
  6. Commits acts of violence against objects and other things rather than people
  7. Uses alcohol excessively
  8. Displays unusual amounts of jealousy
  9. Expects partner to be present or available at all times
  10. Becomes engaged when he give advice and it is not taken
  11. Appears to have dual personality
  12. Exhibits sense of overkill in his cruelty or kindness
  13. The partner is afraid of his anger; preventing him from being angry becomes important part of the partners' behaviour
  14. Has a rigid idea of what people should do, usually determined by male or female sex role stereotypes.

# The cycle of violence

- Tension building stage
- Explosion stage
- Love stage
- Reasons why women stay or returning to abusive situation
- Counselling for batterers and victims of Domestic Violence
- The batterer
- The abused women

# Equity in a couple's relationship



Figure 10.2 Equity wheel

Source: Used by permission of the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, 202 East Superior St., Duluth, MN 55802, 218-722-2781 [www.duluth-model.org](http://www.duluth-model.org)

# Negotiation and problem solving for couples

- Conflict training
- Problem solving model
  - 1) Clearly define a joint definition of the problem
  - 2) Brainstorm multiple possibilities for solutions to the problem
  - 3) Narrow the possibilities to three
  - 4) Prioritise the possibilities(rank order)
  - 5) Choose one possibility with the understanding that, if it does not work, the second will be attempted
  - 6) Decide the particular. Each person's responsibility for the outcome must be clearly stated rather than assumed
  - 7) Do it!
  - 8) Evaluate the effectiveness of the situation attempted
  - 9) If the situation isn't resolved, try the second option
- Fair fighting

# Clinical interventions

- Reframing
- Using metaphors
- Contracting
- Role reversal
- Case example

## Allocation of the integrative model

- > Stage 1: Assessing and obtaining an interactional view of the problem
- > Stage 2: Goal setting
- > Stage 3: Adopting new perceptions and behaviours
- > Stage 4: Maintaining new perceptions and behaviours
- > Stage 5: Validating new perceptions and behaviours

# 1. Assessing and Obtaining an Interactional View of the Problem

- Saul states that Morena complains and nags.
- Morena wants closeness and more time with Saul.
- They both agree they want more time together for fun and to feel close.

# 2. Goal Setting

- Play time for talking and dating in order to feel close.
- Couple will meet regularly to negotiate individual and couple time so they will feel more included.
- They will problem-solve travel plans to feel united.
- They will plan a vacation together to be adventurous and romantic.

# 3. Adopting New Perceptions and Behaviors

- Negotiate and implement a contract for couple time.
- Vacation for one romantic week.
- Establish 30-minute meetings to talk about feelings and relationship issues.

**How the couple will relate to each other with differing needs**

# 4. Maintaining New Perceptions and Behaviors

- Will hold each other accountable for communication time.
- Weekly date must occur or they will confront each other.

# 5. Validating New Perceptions and Behaviors

- Congratulate each other on commitment.
- Identify Morena's distress as a signal if they get off track.
- Saul will be certain contract is maintained.
- Vow to address special issues.
- Will make follow-up appointment in 3 months.

# Considerations for working with couples conflict

1. Determine the cause of relationship stress and view it from and interactional perspective
2. Assess the style of conflict each partner uses and attempt to design interventions that interrupt the pattern
3. Assess the capability for violence in the relationship and cease couples therapy if violence is present.
4. Be aware of the destructive nature of the verbal abuse and educate the couple of the destruction, if appropriate
5. Assess the degree of power and control each person possess and help both move toward and equitable relationship to promote problem solving
6. Help the couple reduce blame by learning more useful communication skills
7. Understand the stages of relationship conflict and provide appropriate interventions for each stage
8. Know the cycle of violence and refer the battered victim with a protective plan and a plan for individual or group therapy
9. Use a psycho educational approach to help clients learn fair fighting and problem solving skills
10. Be aware of the need for specificity with any relationship contracting

# Types of interpersonal conflict

- Pseudo conflict
- Value conflict
- Policy conflict
- Ego conflict
- Withdrawal
- Accommodating
- Forcing
- Compromising

**Table 11.2** Collaborating through problem-solving discussion

1. <i>Define the problem</i>	<i>What's the issue being considered?</i>
2. Analyze the problem	What are the causes and symptoms?
3. Develop mutually agreeable criteria for judging alternative solutions	What goals will a good solution reach?
4. Generate alternative solutions	What could we do? List before discussing each.
5. Select the solution that best fits the criteria identified	Select one or a combination from those listed

**Table 11.3** Styles of conflict management

Approach	Characteristics	Goal	Outlook
<b>Withdrawal</b>	- Uncooperative, unassertive	- To keep from dealing with conflict	- "I don't want to talk about it."
<b>Accommodating</b>	- Cooperative, unassertive	- To keep from upsetting the other person	- "Getting my way isn't as important as keeping the peace."
<b>Forcing</b>	- Uncooperative, assertive	- To get my way	- "I'll get my way regardless of what I have to do."
<b>Compromising</b>	- Partially cooperative, partially assertive	- To get partial satisfaction	- "I'll get partial satisfaction by letting the other person get partial satisfaction as well."
<b>Collaborating</b>	- Cooperative, assertive	- To solve the problem together	- "Let's talk this out and find the best solution possible for both of us."