Introduction to The Gottman Method of Relationship Therapy

Gottman Research

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<tr>
<th>Age in Years</th>
<th>Number of Couples</th>
<th>Length (Months)</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Reference</th>
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What is dysfunctional when a relationship is ailing?

More negativity than positivity in conflict discussion
Escalation of negative affect – The four horsemen

Four Horsemen Film

4 Horsemen and Their Antidotes

- Criticism – Softened Startup
- Defensive – Accept Responsibility
- Contempt – Respect, Appreciation, Talk about Yourself, Not Your Partner
- Stonewalling – Soothe

What else is dysfunctional when a relationship is ailing?

- Emotional disengagement & withdrawal
- The failures of repair attempts
- Negative sentiment override
- Maintaining vigilance and physiological arousal
- Chronic physiological arousal
- Failure to Accept Influence
  - Emotional disengagement
  - Escalation in response to low intensity negative
**What is functional when a relationship is going well?**

- Match in preferred conflict styles
- Dialogue rather than “gridlock” with perpetual problems
  - Soft Startup
  - Accepting Influence
  - Effective Repair Attempts
  - De-escalation of negativity
  - Anger OK (without four horsemen, abuse)
  - More positive affect during conflict for newlyweds
    - Predicts relationship stability and happiness
    - Dialogue regarding perpetual problems
  - Preemptive repair

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**Sound Relationship House Theory**

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**Gottman Assessment**

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**Assessment - Overview**

- Three session process – 90 minutes each
  - **Session 1**
    - Informed Consent, Narrative, Oral History, Conflict Discussion, Explanation of Questionnaires
  - **Session 2**
    - Individual Interviews
  - **Session 3**
    - Feedback session

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**Session 1**

- Informed Consent
- Narrative
- Oral History
  - Oral History Film
  - Conflict Discussion
    - Conflict Discussion Film
  - Explain questionnaires

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**Questionnaires**

- Paper-based
- Gottman Checkup
  - Gottman Check-Up Film
Session 2
- Individual Interviews
  - Individual narrative
  - Relevant family history
  - History of prior relationships
  - History of prior therapy
  - Commitment to the relationship and discrepancies
  - Hopes and expectations for the relationship (including getting out)
  - Personal goals
  - Cost/benefit analysis

Session 3
- Feedback Session
  - Overview of the history of the relationship and the genesis of the concerns
  - Explain these in the context of the Sound Relationship House results
  - State their interventions associated with each level
  - Briefly explain each level
  - Summarize Diagnostic Formulation
  - Propose treatment plan, revise with partner’s input
  - Entire presentation should be 10-15 minutes

Overview
- Friendship Interventions
  - Philosophy, Purpose, Goals

Gottman Method: Friendship Interventions

Key Friendship Interventions
- Love Maps
  - Creating A Love Map of Your Partner’s World
- Fondness and Admiration
  - “I Appreciate” Checklist
- Turn Towards
  - Stress Reducing Conversation
  - Stress Reducing Conversation 17:00 - 18:00
  - Build A Ritual Connection

Gottman Method: Conflict Interventions
Overview

- Philosophy, Purpose, Goals

Key Conflict Interventions

- Flooding
  - Pulse Rates, etc.
  - Soothing exercise

Four Horsemen

- Criticism
- Defensiveness
- Contempt
- Stonewalling
  Four Horsemen Film

Softened Startup

Softened Startup

- I feel........when, and I need........
- Exercise from the 7 P’s book
  Soft Startup Film

Gottman Rapaport

John Gottman developed this technique using Anatol Rapaport’s Technique for Diplomacy
- Speaker uses soft startup to discuss an issue, feelings, needs
- Listener listens and writes
- Listener empathizes
  Example, “I can see why you would feel that way because....”
- Listener repeats back speaker’s position to the satisfaction of the speaker
- Switch roles

Dreams In Conflict

Structured interview partners use to discuss a perpetual problem
- Speaker describes his or her position through asking a series of questions asked by the listener
- Questions help speaker describe “symbolic meaning” or “life dreams” behind the issue
- Increased understanding between speaker and listener
- Switch roles
- Increases depth of understanding leading to better compromises or living better with differences
  Dreams in Conflict Film
Compromise Ovals

Partners draw an oval within an oval on a sheet of paper
- **Inner oval**
  - Contains areas where each partner cannot be flexible
- **Outer oval**
  - Contains areas where partners can be flexible
  - Partners share contents of inner and outer ovals with one another
  - Ask one another a series of questions to better understand each other’s flexible/inflexible areas
  - Attempt to identify a better, more acceptable compromise

Gottman Resources - Books


Gottman Resources

- [www.gottman.com](http://www.gottman.com)
- Couples Workshops
- Professional Trainings
- Research Overview
- Products for Couples and Clinicians

Summary and Conclusions

- Research
- Theory
- Intervention
Contact

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