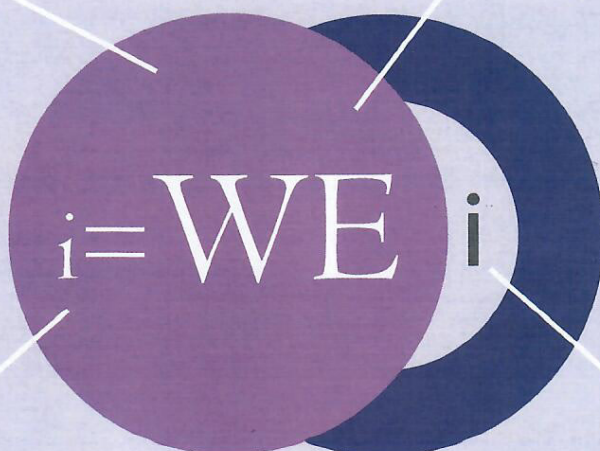


The Hostile-Dependent (Angry Escalating) Relationship

Partners have low capacity to treat each other as separate, autonomous beings. Understanding, interest and empathy for the other are believed to be counter productive to achieving emotional security in the relationship.

Can be fiery, aggressive, no-holds-barred interactions. No issue is too small to become a source of argument as to who is right. A limited range of angry feelings are expressed intensely and strongly. Little or no understanding of each other occurs.



One or both attempt to manage, control and dominate the other. This is done in an attempt to eliminate differences and the perceived threat that differentiation represents. Partners may oscillate back and forth in mutual attempts to create a state of sameness, or one person may tend to dominate while the other submits.

Boundaries are rigidly guarded and extremely sensitive to perceived intrusion. Individuals are highly reactive.

Interventions

The first intervention in an angry/escalating relationship is to stop the destructive aggression and the escalating cycle of blaming-defensiveness. Anger can be converted to constructive, non-demanding assertion. It then has the opportunity of being heard as self-definition — a statement of feelings, thoughts, values. Many couples believe that intimacy and closeness is threatened if they don't think, feel, and act as a single "we." However, when partners demand agreement and sameness, the options for the relationship are limited and the end result, rather than creating intimacy has the opposite effect; it ends up as a constant demand for domination and submission.

Suggestions

Stop the angry/escalating interaction immediately. Help partners take clear time-outs. #1 Job for each partner is to calm themselves down. Remember partner is a separate person, entitled to think and feel exactly as they do. Get to know them. Not being in agreement is not a threat to intimacy. When ready to re-engage, help them slow down, follow "I-to-I" guidelines, and decide specifically who Initiates, and who Inquires. Stick to defined roles. Tell the partners: "If you start to feel flooded take a break. Work to not blame or withdraw. Express yourself in feelings, not demands. Listen calmly, remember this is about your partner. It is only about you if you believe it is. Don't take it personally." Interrupt distress maintaining internal dialogue.

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