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Psychotherapy
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Group Seminar Audio Series

“Dirty John” Showcases the 4 Errors of the Neurobiology of Attraction

The “Dirty John” story, podcast, and recent Bravo TV series have brought increased awareness to the devastating impact persons with narcissistic and sociopathic qualities can have on those whom they target. In recent months, I have been using “Dirty John” to discuss with patients the neurobiological dynamics of attraction. Scientific evidence now supports Freud’s theoretical claims that we are drawn to individuals who have the potential to activate within us our neurobiological set-point which was formed in childhood. Essentially a well-calibrated neurochemical and hormonal system, this set-point causes repeated patterns of idiosyncratic errors of thought and perception that persist throughout adulthood. It is these errors which draw persons to non-viable and potentially quite hurtful, if not traumatizing, romantic partners. *This seminar was recorded on March 2, 2019 in Laguna Hills, CA.*

Key Excerpts:

- *The emerging field of interpersonal neurobiology provides evidence for Freud’s notion of the repetition compulsion. Our brain talks to other brains in a particular way that is conditioned by our neurobiological history.*
- *In the “Dirty John” story, essentially what happened was a woman could not recognize the great white shark in her life; that misperception or inhibited reactivity is neurobiologically-based.*
- *Based on the contexts in which we are raised, our brains and nervous systems become organized in a particular way, with hormonal and neurophysiological set-points established. These set-points seek people and situations that affirm them, that match them. If they are not matched, they would be set into a kind of neurophysiological withdrawal and that would cause too much chaos in the system.*

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Key Excerpts (continued)

- *The child is dependent on the caregiver and must create and sustain an attachment bond with the caregiver, even in non-ideal circumstances. The child must bond and does so with the aid of neurobiology. That neurobiology mechanism stays “online” for the rest of our lives.*
- *The compulsion to bond, along with the neurobiology that has been set up, creates the conditions necessary for toxic relationships to begin and to be sustained. Mistaken identity, over-reactivity, and creating drama where there is none are only a few of the ways our neurobiological set-points impact our perceptions and emotional reactions in relationships in maladaptive ways.*
- *It is our neurobiology which keeps us in toxic relationships. This is a rising theme in scientific literature on domestic violence.*
- *Others often collude with our neurobiological template, but a healthy partner is the exception. The healthy partner creates with you an interdependent relationship, not a relationship that is toxic or codependent. In an interdependent relationship, what the other wants is only more of you, an intense manifestation of you in the world that is not bond-dependent. In unhealthy relationships, maintaining the bond is the priority over and above any expression or manifestation of who you really are.*