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# Group Seminar Audio Series

## Loving Defensively: Personality Styles and Romantic Tendencies

Based in early developmental events, the personality organizes to fend off future rejections and disappointments in the interpersonal realm. In this way, an individual's personality style or character structure generally resides within one of four levels, with each level corresponding to a greater or lesser degree of optimal functioning and versatility. These include the neurotic, narcissistic, borderline and psychotic levels of character organization. At each level resides a particular set of interpersonal and emotional tendencies that impact the degree of relational intimacy and determine the type of dysfunction in love relationships. *This interactive Relationship Group seminar was recorded on November 3, 2018 in Laguna Hills, CA.*

### Key Excerpts:

- *Character structure refers to the notion that our personalities are organized based on early developmental traumas, either major significant traumas or minor relational traumas. Personality is kind of like emotional armor -- it is inherently defensive, and it impacts our capacity for intimacy. Part of what we all have to do is come to terms with our character structure and that of our partner's.*
- *Adult love is just armor hitting armor. We are simultaneously attempting to connect and attempting to defend. We are trying to contact each other, and also defend, with our armor.*
- *Otto Kernberg depicted three levels of character structure: neurotic, borderline, and psychotic.*

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## Key Excerpts (continued)

- *Neurotics have a relatively accurate sense of their own strengths and weaknesses. They know what their moral values are and their strengths and weaknesses. They see others in realistic ways. They don't idealize or devalue others. They can hold the good and bad of other people together.*
- *The borderline level cannot do this. Borderlines idealize others, then devalue and reject them. They can't hold others together in their mind in a cohesive way. They split others apart into all-good and all-bad. Borderlines are very sensitive. They're not consistently secure. Any slight or criticism is like a torpedo into their soul. They don't let things go. They judge other people. They get very reactive to other people.*
- *Persons who reside at a borderline level usually have two problems with intimacy. One problem is that they may feel abandoned when they're not; the other problem is that they feel engulfed when they're not being engulfed.*
- *The narcissistic level falls between the neurotic and borderline levels. In this region of character structure, the value of others is intolerable. Self-worth is so tenuous or lacking that the narcissist approaches and desires others of value; once engaged with a person of value, the psychological goal of the narcissist is to devalue the person – and, in doing so, attempt to gain value. Value is obtained only by destruction of the other.*