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Psychotherapy
Couples
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Group Seminar Audio Series

Reenactment

Freud's concept of "reenactment" suggests that psychological forces compel us to create the circumstances necessary to repeat prior traumatic relational experience again and again. Perhaps in no other area of life does this impact us more than in our romantic relationships. The mind seems motivated to re-create what was previously experienced but forgotten (dissociated). Sandra Bloom's article "Reenactment," the work of Harville Hendrix, and Philip Perry's piece "Imago Theory Explains Why We Choose a Partner That (sic) Fits With Our Past" (bighthink.com) were discussed in this seminar.

Please note: This interactive seminar in which Dr. Tobin presented to a small live audience as part of the ongoing Relationship Group was recorded on June 2, 2018 in Laguna Hills, CA.

The next page contains key excerpts from the seminar

Reenactment

Key Excerpts:

- *We are repeating things in our contemporary life and in our romantic relationships that are basically unresolved issues from our very early developmental history. We are repeating scenarios and dynamics that are familiar to us and are essentially going to retraumatize us.*
- *We were all born into a group, our first group, our family. And in that family we had to play a role and take on certain tendencies or predispositions. We had to take our role in that family and adapt to the culture of this family. We grow up organizing all those tendencies together into a personality that we think is ours. But the real you did not create this personality. It was something you had to organize unconsciously as a child to adapt.*
- *The relational world is inevitably imperfect. In early life development, we accumulate a series of relational traumas. The mind organizes itself around these traumas and the traumas cannot be fully understood nor psychologically digested. This is mystification. Mystification is when something happens early in child development that the child cannot explain. So the child is mystified.*
- *Mystification is the essence of trauma, i.e., is when something is happening to you that you cannot explain. Relational trauma for a child is the same kind of thing -- the child cannot understand or make sense of what is happening. So what the child's mind does is disassociate from it, meaning the mind of a child splits, splits away from it. That's known as dissociation. As development goes on, these bits of traumatic mystified experience accumulate and are placed in the storage bin of the mind, meaning we can't really remember them.*
- *In dissociation our mind is not able to process this traumatic material so the trauma doesn't ever evaporate. It remains and gets imprinted. It's stored in the mind and stays alive. It's not dead, it's alive. It's like live energy. We don't even know it's there.*
- *If it was just a blind spot that wouldn't be so bad, but here's what really happens to that stuff. It's not a blind spot. That stuff dictates every element of our future experience. Meaning you will repeat the essence of that dissociated experience again and again and again in your life and especially in your love relationships. So it's not just a blind spot. It becomes formulaic.*
- *You've selected a partner who has qualities that you strongly value because of your own history -- you choose someone who you think will not hurt you in the ways you have been hurt before. But, paradoxically, the person turns out not to be that; the person turns out to be something very familiar. It's not bad luck, it's not coincidence. It's psychologically determined.*