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Psychotherapy
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Group Seminar Audio Series

The “Burden of Correction” in Partner Choice

Our choice of a romantic partner is determined by the past. More specifically, we select a new partner who we believe and hope will “correct” what went wrong in our previous relationships. At times this can actually be an effective strategy that enables us to form a new relationship with a person who ultimately may be a better partner. However, often the “burden of correction” projected onto our new partner fails to correct anything and may even backfire, resulting in more intense problematic relationship issues and sabotaging the potential of this new bond. In this group seminar, we explore the motive to correct in our romantic relationships and consider ways to support the development of a new relationship unencumbered by previous failed relationships. *This seminar was recorded on February 2, 2019 in Laguna Hills, CA.*

Key Excerpts:

- *After a relationship ends, especially a “bad” relationship, people are motivated to find a more suitable partner and create a better relationship; in particular, a new relationship that does not repeat the problems of the previous relationship.*
- *On the other hand, we are driven unconsciously to seek what is “familiar” to us, which often leads us to find a new partner who ultimately does not “correct” the problems of our previous relationship.*
- *Freudian thinkers focus on these two competing motives and consider them to be fundamental to the human condition. We want to grow, evolve, find fulfillment, find a better partner, be happier, and we don’t. Freud’s notion of the “repetition compulsion” captures the dynamic of recreating or enacting in new relationships the problems of previous relationships.*

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Key Excerpts (continued)

- *In all relationships, even good ones, difficult and stressful interpersonal events do not get fully resolved. Our unconscious relational minds store this partially unresolved material, and it is this material which motivates us to repeat and enact negative dynamics with our new partners.*
- *Denial, accommodation, emotional processing, and assimilation are the 4 main ways we process difficult emotional dynamics and events in our relationships; I list these 4 from the most maladaptive/dysfunctional to the healthiest.*
- *Accommodation has to do with putting up with things, tolerating them, working around them.*
- *Emotional processing involves candid dialogue between partners about their relationship; emotional processing is the essence of most forms of couple therapy.*
- *Assimilation is the highest order of processing and involves being permanently altered by experience as we internalize it. It's the highest order of psychological health and promotes personal evolution and change.*
- *As time goes on, both within and across relationships, whatever we fail to assimilate we will mostly likely introduce into our next relationship, inadvertently causing a chain reaction that usually sabotages the new relationship and converts it into a toxic bond.*
- *Fueled by unresolved material from the past, new relationships are damaged by projections and misconceptions that are inaccurately applied to our new partners. What essentially begins to happen is that we fail to correctly distinguish our new partner from our previous partner: they become lumped together and treated as one.*
- *Over-reaction occurs in all relationships based on the injuries of previous relationships. But we all need to realize there is not one “ideal” partner out there. Our new partner is going to injure us in ways similar to how we have been hurt before, but this doesn't necessarily mean our new partner is simply like all of our other bad partners. It may just mean that our old wounds are being aggravated by a person who is ultimately “good” or “good enough” for us.*