

IS IT INTIMACY OR CO-DEPENDANCY?

What pearls of wisdom did the pillars of modern psychology teach us about intimacy? Dr. Sigmund Freud would say that the initial stage of any relationship is a stage of illusion. Each partner projects his/her version of romantic love.

There is the unconscious need in a marriage to repeat familiar patterns, which Dr. Freud called "repetition compulsion." When we fall in love, we actually fall in love with a person who reminds us of our mother or father, with whom we can repeat the pattern of interaction from our family of origin, thus repeating the original Oedipus (for men) and Electra (for women) complex.

According to this theoretical approach, if our parents were healthy and capable of intimacy and we didn't come from dysfunctional families, we know how to be intimate. However, if they were dysfunctional, then our ability to form intimate relationships is markedly reduced. Skills of communication and interaction are learned through modeling or, later in life, through psychotherapy and group support.

Dr. Carl Jung saw the dynamics of romantic love and marriage from a different perspective. Within each individual's psyche one has his own contrasexual. For the woman, the contrasexual would be the Animus, and for the man then Anima. They represent the image of the other sex that we carry within us. Every man has his own Eve within him, and every woman as her own Adam.

The latent, undifferentiated, still unconscious contents of the psyche are always projected. Just as we experience our own shadow through someone else, we experience our basic contrasexual components through another. When we fall in love, we are actually falling in love with our own projected

Animus, and projected Anima for the man.

At times we project our own intimate significant other these qualities that we are not willing or able to acknowledge in ourselves. When we start our own inner journey, we may find within us the shadows that we need to embrace the shadow of the other.

According to Dr. Erick Berne, the psychiatrist who formulated the concepts of transactional analysis, forming a relationship is to enter into a game complete with rules and strategies. Most people don't recognize love relationships or marriage as a game. As a result, they don't realize that they can choose to play, or not to play. They also don't recognize that different players at the game of love use different sets of rules. To succeed in an intimate relationship, it is important to know what games your partner is playing and what rules she/he is following.

The most common game in a relationship is the power game patterns of dominance and submission, or co-dependent and counter dependant. The counter dependent is a person who outwardly appears secure and independent but privately insecure and fearful. Co-dependents appear insecure and seek to lose themselves in others. Underneath, however, they are often strong and capable people. Co-dependents are afraid of the strength so they channel it into taking care of others, and, to properly care of someone else, they are not above attempting to control and manipulate. Both are fearful of being abandoned. Psychological games are repetitive interactions between couples without known payoffs.

Addictive relationships produce an intoxicant emotion called infatuation. Like drugs and alcohol, the feeling of infatuation has the power to hangar how we feel and act. The relationship becomes a central focus and obsession. When we become

intoxicated, we have blinders on. Our minds shut down and we do our thinking with other parts of our anatomy. Infatuation is a state of temporary insanity marked by intense euphoria, the inability to think clearly, logically, or rationally about our partners.

An addictive relationship is a relationship without any substance. Both partners share intense feelings without sharing a broad base of other values, lifestyle preferences, or respected traits. The relationship makes both partners feel a "high" and a "charge." When the passion is gone, little else is left. The very nature of the addictive relationship creates pain, struggle, guilt, and confusion.

In the healthy relationship, the partner is valued as a human being more highly than the intense feelings. Passion and sexuality, although important, are secondary features. They are enjoyed for what they are and kept in an appropriate place. The relationship does not substitute clear, logical, or responsible behavior.

Martin Buber, in this famous work, "I and Thou," presents the concept of relationships as the key to complete understanding of human life. The "I, thou" relationship is a direct exclusive encounter marked by equality or, to use Buber's term, reciprocity. By communication with you, my being is enriched. It cannot be found by seeking, but by Grace.

The "I, thou" relationship is the basis of our spiritual life and the actualization of our destiny, by recognizing our "true self" and true self of the other. This is the essence of intimacy.