

Connections

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How to Mess Up a Relationship (Part I)

With proper application and ingenuity the following methods may impair or destroy monogamous relationships. We post this list for your consideration; no liability expressed or implied.

1. **Lie.** This is basic and effective. To maximize bad results, lie about something important to the other person(s) and arrange to be caught in the lie in such a way as to produce maximum shock. Additional stress points awarded for keeping the lie going for a while before discovery, which increases the disorientation and sense of betrayal in the deceived person(s). Lying about sex gets double points. Lying about being married gets triple mess up points. Creative lies of omission (i.e. "not telling") with fancy rationalizations and condescension get gold stars.
2. **Avoid self-knowledge.** This is more elegant than strategy 1, as it combines a bold sweep of denial with sorties of distraction aimed at oneself. This tactic is most effective when combined with tactics 3 and 4. Self-destructive or addictive behavior has also been found very effective in avoiding self- knowledge by our researchers. When combined with an endearing attitude of helplessness, this strategy has been efficacious in attracting "rescuers" or "white knights" on whom one can then practice strategies 4 and 3, in that order.
3. **Blame the other person(s).** If anything goes wrong, hey, it must be their fault, right? This eliminates the need for messy things like validation and negotiation, which can be embarrassing, particularly if one is using strategy 2.
4. **Disclaim responsibility.** This is a little more complex than strategy 3, and often includes what is referred to as "codependency." The classic way to play this strategy is to cater to the partner(s) involved while repressing one's own desires and questions. This allows a good head of resentment to build up, and one can justify anger by saying one has done so "much" for one's partner(s) and gets no thanks, etc. In its most refined state, this strategy makes the other person(s) responsible for setting the direction, pace and content of the relationship, for which one can then blame them if one's own expectations or needs are not met. Using strategy 2 to avoid knowledge of these expectations and needs gets double points.

To be continued in April *CONNECTIONS*

SUGGESTED READING

Sam Keen, *To Love and Be Loved*

KIND WORDS

Re: *Connections*

I just received my first issue of your newsletter and

*found it to be one of the more positive and hopeful things
I have seen on the web.*

Chuck Simpkinson, Ph.D., founder and editor *Common Boundary Magazine*

RE: COUPLES WORKSHOP

"Your workshop exceeded my expectations. Although it seems that all of the exercises we have done dredged up some of the pain that goes with a lot of buried minefields, each class has pulled us up to a new level of spiritual maturity in the marriage. You have managed to ask and expect a level of maturity in a relationship I would not have considered achievable. I would characterize your gift to me as providing a way to new hope from a shipwreck of lost innocence. I encourage you to hold up your vision of what a marriage can be for all of us."

Linda Strand
Couples workshop participant

RE: SINGLES COACHING

" What I most appreciated about the workshop was 'the authenticity and openness of John and Harriet and their obvious commitment to their relationship."

Mary Vogel
Workshop participant

"... and their excitement about this work."

Rhonda Gordon
Workshop participant

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