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A Psychological Approach to Couple Therapy®

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SEWING PARTNERS TOGETHER:  
TECHNIQUES FOR MOVING  
COUPLES TOWARD SECURE  
FUNCTIONING

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Approach to  
Couple Therapy®

INSTITUTE

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THERE ARE TWO MAJOR  
TRACKS IN ANY TREATMENT  
MODEL

What is it

What to do about it

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OUR CHALLENGE AS  
COUPLE THERAPISTS IS  
THIS:

We need to find out what is actually going on!  
Who are these people?  
What do they *really* want?  
And what are they *up* to?

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- The reason we can't get this info readily is because we (most of us) have been trained only to listen to the words
- And we haven't paid close enough attention to the body
- We're wired for words from the beginning which is why we are mesmerized when people talk
- Not a problem with animals and babies

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NARRATIVES LIE

There are reasons why words are NOT reliable

1. People don't know what they are doing (most of the time) or why
2. In the absence of knowing, people make shit up
3. People also lie
4. Memory drives knowledge
  - Memories are shaped by present state and state changes perception
  - Things are rarely what they seem
  - Even for us as therapists, we are shackled by the same limitations
  - We don't know what is going on and we are making shit up too

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OUR BIG JOB

Locate pain, amplify it, and leverage it toward secure function – rinse and repeat

Move partners toward clarity within a secure functioning environment

Find the baby

No angel, no devils

Partners are more alike than not

Where there's one, there's the other

Look both ways or else

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### What is Secure Functioning?

- Partners are in the foxhole together
- Partners put the relationship first (couple bubble)
- Partners have each other's backs
- Partners are experts on one another
- Partners are fully collaborative, fully mutual
- Partners are mostly fair, just, and sensitive
- Partners fully agree to principles of both personal and mutual good (e.g. thou shalt not kill)
- Partners use attraction, not fear, guilt, or shame
- Partners care for the self and the other simultaneously
- Partners are good stewards of the safety and security system

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### What is Secure Functioning?

- Partners never threaten the relationship itself
- Partners tell each other everything (why not?)
- Partners accept each other as burdens
- Partners accept that we are in each other's care
- Partners are the go to people
- Partners protect each other in public and private
- Partners' decisions are always based on what is good for *both*
  - Broker win/win situations
- Partners administer to each other immediately when in distress

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### We have to rely on the body not the narrative

- *Crossing Technique*
- This technique of getting and using information will greatly speed up the information you get and are able to use now and in the future
- Here's what it looks like: I cross watch and track with my eyes, I cross question partners, and I cross interpret partners to each other
- Here's what it is
  - Cross tracking
  - Cross questioning
  - Cross commenting (interpreting)
- Here's how it works

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### Conclusion

- Before we can do anything, we must be clear about what it is that is in front of us
- People lie, deflect, defend, hide, mislead, and most of all, make things up in the absence of knowing why they do what they do
- Real time is too fast
- We are all automatic
- Memory drives state, and vice versa
- State changes alter perception
- The couple therapist must apply pressure and maintain a certain level of stress and distress otherwise partners won't care or be interested
- Cross track, cross question, and cross interpret (comment) as a way to sew partners together

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WIRED  
for  
LOVE

HOW UNDERSTANDING  
YOUR PARTNER'S BRAIN AND  
ATTACHMENT STYLE CAN HELP  
YOU DEFLUSE CONFLICT AND  
BUILD A SECURE RELATIONSHIP

STAN TATKIN, PSYD  
FOREWORD BY HARVILLE HENDRIX, PHD

LOVE and WAR  
in Intimate Relationships

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in Couple, Divorce

Marion Solomon Stan Tatkin  
Foreword by Daniel J. Siegel

YOUR  
BRAIN  
ON LOVE

THE NEUROBIOLOGY OF HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

STAN TATKIN, PSYD

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WIRED  
for  
DATING

HOW UNDERSTANDING  
NEUROBIOLOGY and ATTACHMENT  
STYLE CAN HELP YOU  
FIND YOUR IDEAL MATE

STAN TATKIN, PSYD, MFT  
FOREWORD BY HARVILLE HENDRIX, PHD,  
and HELEN LAKELEY HUNT, PHD

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HAVE FUN WITH YOUR  
COUPLES!

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