MENTAL HEALTH: INTIMACY & HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

• Summarize the theories and practice of Current Couples Therapy
• Demonstrate the role of race, class, gender, culture, religion and sexual orientation play in one's overall mental health and ability to engage in intimacy.
• Identify how unresolved emotional attachments in a family of origin can stay with us as adults affecting our life, relationships and intimacy.
• Identify myths that play a role in Intimacy, Sexual Performance and Dysfunctions
• Apply strategies for changing relationships and level of differentiation by resolving the past in the present.
• Identify assessment Techniques and Diagnostic tools that are culturally appropriate and Sensitive to working with Black couples.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR IN A RELATIONSHIP?
THE PURPOSE OF RELATIONSHIPS

• We want someone to bear witness to our lives
• Provides us with the opportunity to Grow Up
• People Growing Machine
• It is not good for man to be alone.

WHY COUPLES SEEK THERAPY

• Couples typically seek treatment seven years too late
• Save the relationship
• Coming in as a last ditched effort
• Sex, Money, Children & In-Laws

“Let’s compromise. You do everything I say and I’ll say everything you do.”
EMOTIONALLY FOCUSED THERAPY

Access and represent the emotional responses underlying each partner’s narrow and rigidly held interactional position

Facilitate a shift in accessibility and responsiveness

Building blocks of a secure bond

The focus here is always on attachment concerns (safety, trust & contact)

IMAGO THERAPY

According to Imago theory, you are created in a state of connection and joy, whole and complete.

We become wounded during the early nurturing and socialization stages of development by our primary caretakers (usually inadvertently).

The purpose of marriage is to address the emotional traumas and help each finish childhood.

You seek to recreate the conditions of your childhood so that you can use your adult competence to complete your developmental tasks and grow up — in other words, to finish your childhood.
GOTTMAN
THE SOUND RELATIONSHIP HOUSE

• Couples must become better friends, learn to manage conflict, and create ways to support each other’s hopes for the future.
• Masters vs. Disasters
• They accept influence from one another
• They maintain about a 5-to-1 ratio of positive-to-negative interactions

DIFFERENTIATION BASED COUPLES THERAPY

• Balance of the “We” and the “I”
• We usually accommodate out of fear of losing, but a highly differentiated person will accommodate... differently and for different reasons
• Most types of therapy encourage couples to accommodate... not “working through”
• Crucible encourages couples to “take their own shape” show up authentically as the wholeself.

THE CULTURAL CONTEXT

The Historical Context
Socialization
Relationship Patterns in the Black Family of Origin
Inter-Transgenerational Trauma
INTIMACY AND VULNERABILITY

- How we cope with the context
- Defense Mechanisms for Intimacy and Sex
- Showing up for the Wedding, Not the Relationship
- The Plantation Relationship

BLACK IDENTITY & SEXUALITY

- How did you come to understand sex and sexuality?
- Physiologically uninformed
- Pleasure Gap

To ask, to receive, to give, to share, to refuse, to play/imagine.
SEX IS A LANGUAGE

- Gives us an opportunity to express our non-verbal connection to one another
- What is your sex and intimacy communicating to your partner?
- Let's get this over with
- I really want you

Gourmet Sex vs. Peanut Butter & Jelly Sex

HOW PHYSICALLY PLEASURABLE IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP?

How physically pleasurable is your relationship?

I enjoy our relationship, but I can't climax.

How ironic! I make our relationship, but I enjoy my orgasms.
HOW TO TURN YOUR PARTNER ON

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT YOUR BODY?

THE QUANTUM MODEL
THE CROWDED BED

Who is in the bed with you?
Emotional Filters
Carrying old baggage
Rule Books & Play Books

SEXUAL DIFFICULTIES THAT DRIVE EMOTIONAL DISCONNECT IN THE RELATIONSHIP

- Negative Attitudes towards sex
- Negative attitude towards partner
- Inaccurate information about sex
- Co-morbidity - General medical conditions associated with Sexual Dysfunctions
- Smoking & Excessive Alcohol use
- Use of SSRIs (anti-depressants)

DOES SIZE MATTER?

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TOUCHING
WITHOUT FEELING

CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS AND TREATMENT OPTIONS

• Work from a strength-based lens in rebuilding the Black Relationship.
• Exploring Differentiation with a Cultural Lens
• Assist the couple to communicate with self and others about what their needs are in the relationships with self and others.
• Make Harmony, Balance, Interconnectedness and Authenticity the goal of the couple in treatment.
• Help them to “Hold on to self” vs. the identity they may have internalized from society and plays out in the relationship.
• The highest value lies in the interpersonal relationship with others.
REFERENCES


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