

Lies & Deception: Learn new strategies for working with couples.

Plan

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The major purpose of the therapist defining your role clearly is to get yourself out of the position of changing the partner. It is also to encourage the couple to have a vision – a direction. The more the goals focus on the interplay between striving for a positive goal and eliminating ineffective defenses, the more effectively you will have set the stage. This will also help to illuminate their motivation and internal conflicts. The more you accept symbiotic requests and demands initially and the more vague and open-ended the goals, the harder it will be to extract yourself later.

The FIRE Drill is based on two concepts:

- 1) You can't create a flourishing relationship by only fixing what is wrong
- 2) Where your attention goes, the energy flows.

The FIRE Drill consists of four elements that give your couples a way to organize and prioritize objectives. This structure enables them to harness more of their energy and become more collaborative.

- Focus: What do you want to create together? Individually?
- Integrity: Are you being the kind of partner you aspire to be?
- Reflection and Research: Why is your partner so distressed?
- Encouragement and Empathy: How do you support your partner in an ongoing way?

Meeting as a couple will help you stay on track. By working first individually and later together, you can set a positive direction for your future.

Focus– Creating Your Vision

Couples Vision: A strong desire that is aligned with your values and supported by a plan.

A vision involves fantasizing and identifying something you really want. A vision contains enough passion that you are willing to put in sustained effort to bring it about. This focus involves identifying, recalling or revising the important dreams you had when you got together with your partner. Just allow yourself to think creatively

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Fill in any of the following sections with your vision of how you want your relationship to be:

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Initiator-Inquirer Process

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1.

2.

Hobbies

1.

2.

Health

1.

2.

You know you have described your vision when:

- The results are hard to achieve, i.e. it will require “stretching”.
- You are excited when you think about it.
- The results of the vision are meaningful to you.
- The results make a difference in your life and, often, a make difference in someone else's life.
- The results are visible and, at least to some degree, measurable.
- The results will reflect your strengths and core values.

Unfortunately, some attitudes may get in the way of constructing or realizing your own vision. Examples are:

- I can't really have what I want
- I want something only if someone else wants it too
- What I want is not that important
- Even if I begin, I will eventually fail
- My partner will laugh at it or not be supportive
- I can't stand how anxious I feel when imagine getting what I want
- I feel guilty for wanting too much

If you can't construct a vision, start writing down what kind of job, family, marriage, or career you would absolutely hate to have. Take, for example, the worst job you can imagine. Write down all the qualities, conditions, and situations that would make for a very, very miserable working experience, then reverse the qualities and

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Your vision also evolves as you move toward it. It will require new skills and capabilities. Ask yourself an important question: "What will I have to do, that I don't want to do, to realize this vision?" Every vision will carry with it some undesirable task(s). Don't let these make you believe your vision is wrong. Accept that your vision will involve some drudge work that you won't enjoy. As you get clearer on your individual and collective vision, write it down to clarify what it looks like.

The more detail your vision has, the more compelling it will be. Alert! Alert! In the beginning stage, do not think about or discuss impediments. The best way to kill a budding dream is to ask, "Well, how is that going to happen?" or "Are you really serious about wanting that?" Asking these questions will surely strangle emerging desires before you see the bigger picture.

Writing out your plan of action, after you have established the agreed upon objective, will help solidify your vision and also help keep you on track.

Integrity

Close the gap between how you currently function and how you aspire to be.

Integrity means living congruently. Integrity is when you close the gap between how you are and how you want to be. Integrity allows you to shift away from partner reform. Some skills/acts of integrity might be:

- Be emotionally resilient under difficult discussions. Avoid the common defensive coping mechanisms of finger pointing, resentful compliance, whining, confusion and withdrawal.
- Negotiate and propose solutions that work for both partners.
- Do what you say you are going to do.

Acting with integrity will allow you and your partner to function as a team.

1. What do you have to do/change/adjust in order to be a more effective partner?

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2. What do you do when you are at your worst?

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3. What positive behaviors will you do instead?

4. What values do you aspire to?

Reflection and Research

Learn about your barriers and the skills necessary to become the partner you aspire to be

In order to move forward, you need to first reflect on how you get in your own way. You also want to learn about the values, goals and aspirations of your partner.

1. What gets in the way of you being the kind of partner you want to be?

2. What is so distressing to your partner about you or your interaction? Why?

3. List the skills you need to create your desired relationship:

4. Questions I would like to ask to better understand my partner's distress:

5. Questions I would like to ask to better understand my partner's goals:

Encouragement and Empathy

Give your partner ongoing support and understand the effect of your actions on your partner

Encouragement is expressing ongoing support, appreciation and recognition for the contributions and qualities your partner brings to the relationship.

Empathy is understanding your partner's distress, aspirations, insecurities, values and goals. It is also understanding the effect of your actions on your partner. For example. empathy is understanding (cognitively and emotionally) what your partner's day was like without responding negatively.

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1. How do you give ongoing support to your partner?
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2. How well do you understand your partner's vulnerabilities?
3. Can you support your partner's desired goals?
4. Can you extend, nurture and help create soothing moments of connection?
5. When things go wrong, can you support and aid in repair attempts?

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Yehuda says:

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I liked this article a lot – it is practical and really deep.

A key point here I think – is the attitude of not let commitment vague each side dreams – but letting each side self commitment