

After the Affair or After the Non Consensual Non-Monogamy



Trainer: Juliet Grayson UKCP Registered
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Juliet Grayson

- I was trained as a 1-2-1 therapist
- 1991: specialist training at the Maudsley Hospital for couples & psychosexual therapy
- 2001 Pessio Boyden System of Psychotherapy (www.therapyandcounselling.co.uk/pbsp)
- Set up StopSO: Specialist Treatment Organisation for Perpetrators and Survivors of Sexual Offences
- Book: Landscapes of the Heart, the working world of a sex and relationship therapist

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- Please mute yourself when the slides are showing
- If you want to ask a question please use the 'raise your hand' function as I won't see everyone

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An affair
is the only commandment
in the bible that is mentioned twice.

Once for having it, and
once for thinking about it.

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We Don't All See This The Same Way

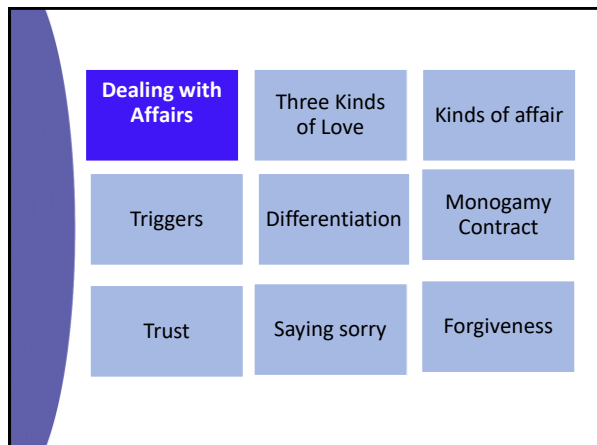
- Be aware that some client groups will see non consensual non monogamy in a totally different light, for example
- Different sexual orientations
- Gender
- Polyamorous relationships
- People who are neurodivergent
- Different religions
- Different cultural perspectives etc.
- I'm looking from a mainly euro-centric view today

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Be Aware:

- For some of you this might be quite close to home
- My research shows that therapists are more likely to have affairs than the general public!!

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Prevalence Of Affairs

- 34% of men and 24% of women will have an affair during their "marriage",
- Today isn't just about marriage, it is about any committed relationship
- I have done some research of more than 200 counsellors and psychotherapists.
- **Prevalence of affairs in counsellors is 51%**
- 1/3 said affair improved relationship; 2/3 said relationship failed

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Love Comes In Three Flavours

- Lust (sexual attraction)
- Romantic love and
- Long-term attachment

These are separate phenomena, with their own emotional & motivational systems and accompanying chemical processes

- These phenomena enable
 - mating,
 - pair-bonding and
 - parenting

Helen Fisher Rutgers University

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Loving More Than One At A Time

- They are independent so these three systems can work simultaneously
- Can feel deep **attachment** for long-term partner
- feel **romantic love** for someone else
- feel **lust** in situations unrelated to either partner
- It's possible to love more than one person at a time
- Which can lead to jealousy, adultery and divorce
- Or to the possibilities of polyamory
- Or enhanced communication skills and conflict resolution skills ("The Ethical Slut")

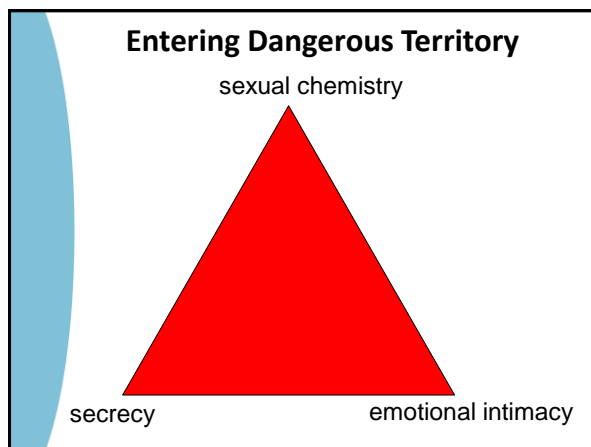
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Stages Leading To An Affair

- Talking (cup of coffee syndrome)
- Secret and clandestine
- Dating – see more of each other, do things together, fantasise, long for each other, obsess
- Conflict in the primary relationship
- Cross the thin line that leads to sexual relationship and affair

Pam Gerhardt

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Is Extra Marital Sex A Problem?

It may not be a problem for everyone

- polyamory,
- polygamy
- swinging,
- multiple partners

•With agreement in advance there is integrity

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Likely Negative Effects Of An Affair

- Decreased attention on marital partner
- Issues within marriage are more likely to be avoided rather than dealt with
- Sexual encounters with spouse may decrease
- Time and energy that might have gone into marriage may go into affair instead
- Hard to sustain love for spouse when needs met elsewhere
- Can drive an invisible wedge, but the person having the affair may not notice
- Feeling of betrayal if/when affair discovered
- The children get affected (hearing rows etc)

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Therapist's Job

- Deal with current affair, and the aftermath of it
- In the aftermath both people are in crisis - systemic view
- Therapist role is to contain them, slow things down
- Be neutral and create a safe non-judging space
- Help couple decide what want (stay together or separate). During therapy ask for a commitment
- We can't take pain away but can give the pain a meaning
- Diminish likelihood of future affairs
- Avoid allocating villain status to one of them
- Remind couple an affair can be a catalyst to growth
- Help to integrate the affair into the story of the marriage
- Explode myths: e.g. romantic love will last forever
- We may have to deal with OUR anxiety

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Reduce The Discomfort? No! Master The Anxiety

- Couples grow by mastering anxiety, uncertainty
- Grow by taking the unacceptable and growing to accommodate it, cannot be comfortable first
- Uncertainty is what drives relationships forward: you nudge each other to grow

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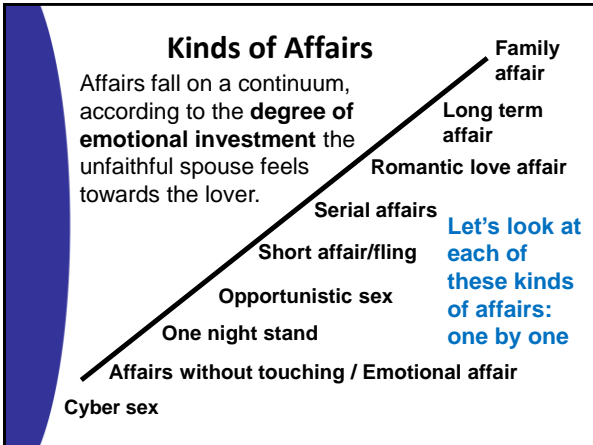
An Affair Can Change The Power Balance

- Can be a about empowerment
- In an affair we get validated by another
 - self esteem is boosted
 - gives a feeling of confidence and power
- Because of emotional fusion, there is an unspoken belief that the affair is a negative reflection on the resolute spouse
- "The husband who marries his mistress creates a vacancy "

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- Person who has an affair has higher status
- Other feels low self esteem, & like they have no choices
- Especially if they as they get older
- When they come for therapy, this can shift to shame and self righteousness
- Sets the scene for power and control fights
- The therapist needs to acknowledge this power imbalance

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Cyber Sex 1

- Online affairs can again can be serial, fling, romantic or long term
- Cyber sex: accessible, affordable, anonymous
- Cheap
- No meeting place: so won't be seen
- Feels intimate
- Time is altered – it can feel more intense on internet: can make quick contacts (short emails) that deepen the relationship
- Honesty....people shock themselves at how much they disclose, but are they honest
- Feels safe, but you don't know

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Cyber Sex 2

- **Though cyber - it is an affair**
 - typing words of endearment
 - sharing innermost feelings
 - speaking sexually
 - obsessing about each other when not on line
 - bringing each other to orgasm
 - keeping secrets
 - it is a virtual affair
- **Based on our projections, often more fantasy than reality**

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Affairs Without Touching

- Can be on the internet or telephone or facebook etc
- Emotional infidelity often precedes physical infidelity
- If hidden it drives a wedge in the relationship between husband and wife (or uncovers it ?)
- Marital problems and intimate information is shared with someone who has no vested interest in saving your marriage
- So it's often threatening & toxic to primary relationship

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One Night Stands & The Opportunistic Affair & Fling

- Lack emotional investment
- One night or a few months
- Often don't escalate because although they've enjoyed it they don't want to jeopardise what have at home
- With all (undisclosed) affairs, there is of course a risk of STI's

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Serial Affairs

- No significant emotional investment in affair
- No commitment to the vow of fidelity
- Purpose can be to keep distance
- Avoids intimacy of marriage whilst appearing to pursue intimacy in the affair, but it's pseudo intimacy
- Thus the affair becomes a strategic buffer in marriage and vice versa
- Sometimes compulsive sexuality
- Some are philanderers – not sexually compulsive but take the opportunities
- Even though each one is not serious, a lot over the course of a marriage can be very damaging

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Romantic Love Affair

- High degree of emotional investment
- Can begin as a meaningless fling
- The longer it goes on more serious it is
- Feel have to end affair or divorce and be together. Charles and Camilla.
- But subsequent marriages can survive and become monogamous

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Long Term Affairs

- Very emotionally invested
- Lasts years or the whole marriage
- Sometimes they're more married to the lover than the wife/husband
- Wife may not know or may know
 - looks away and pretends not to see
 - can be religious reasons
- Can come out after death - second bank account and husband has been supporting someone else

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Family Affair

- Where the affair is with a member of the family, or extended family
- For example
 - Dad has affair with his son's girlfriend/boyfriend
 - Mother has affair with brother in law
 - Daughter has affair with step-father
- I saw a man who's father had an affair with client's ex-girlfriend. Father and Ex had a child, which was my clients half sister
- Inevitably this is a huge betrayal

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Remember This in December 2013

Obama doing a selfie with the Danish Prime Minister

And David Cameron got in on the act

They only showed one picture on the news

This is the whole story

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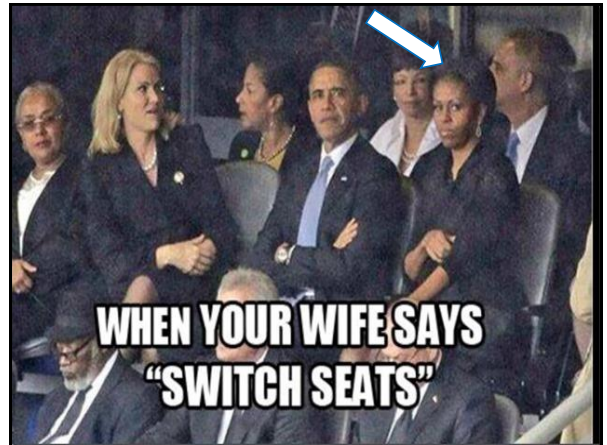
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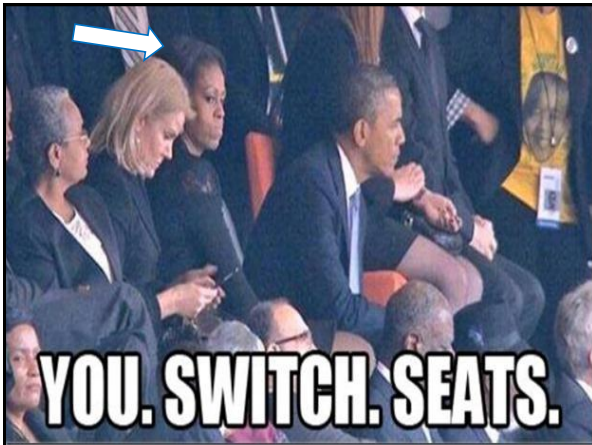
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Why Affairs Happen

Often not for better sex,
or because something wrong
with marriage

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Triggers

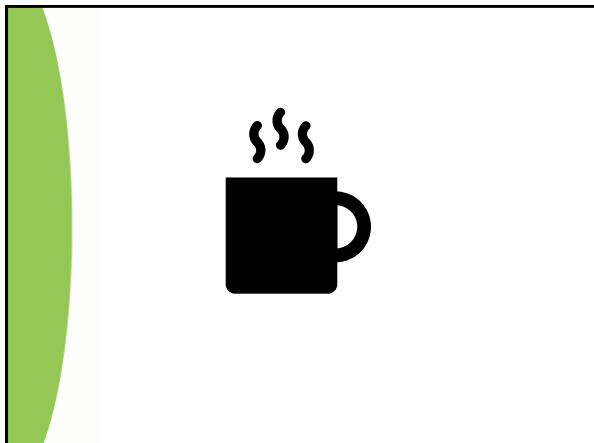
- Different cultural expectations
- Deficit in their childhood – unfulfilled longings
- Unresolved ‘family of origin’ trauma
- Inability to self regulate - use others to regulate
- Difficulty with communication
- Transitional anxiety
- Unrealistic ideas about marriage and love
- Boredom or to beat back sense of deadness
- The unavailable spouse: invisible divorce
- Lack of sexual desire
- Affair with a purpose – eg revenge or anger
- People change – no longer shared values or interests
- Coolidge Effect

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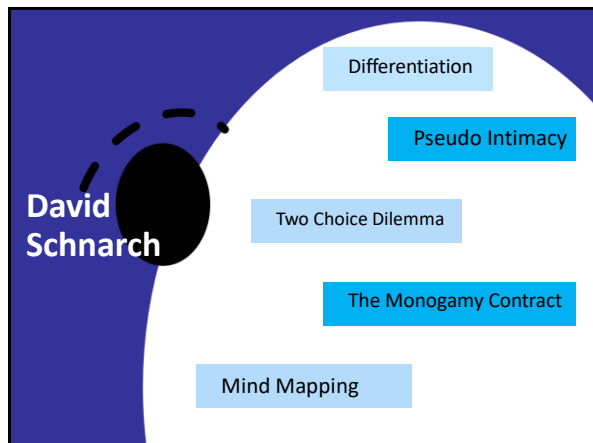
Coolidge Effect

- We get a weaker and weaker dopamine surge from the same partner
- But with a new partner we get a strong dopamine surge again
- The Coolidge Effect - search for novelty
- Designed to spread our genes
- Instead focus clients on pair bonding behaviour
- Effects of orgasm are in system for up to 14 days

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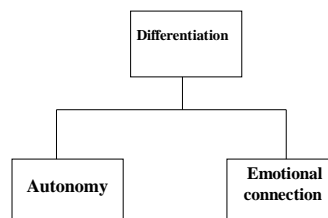
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Schnarch: Differentiation

- Differentiation is your ability to maintain your sense of self when you are emotionally and/or physically close to others, especially as they become increasingly important to you
- Schnarch thinks differentiation is a key factor in determining whether an affair will happen at all
- He says most people never reach a significant level of differentiation
- "Issues of selfhood control sexual desire as much as, and probably more than lust, romantic love and affection"

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Think Of Differentiation As A Higher Order Process Of Balancing Both Connection And Autonomy



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Schnarch: Four Points of Balance How To 'Do' Differentiation

- maintain a clear sense of self whilst close to (or far away from) the people who are important to you
- soothe your own anxieties and calm your own fears
- non reactive to partners reactivity
- willing to tolerate discomfort for growth

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Schnarch: Fusion & Pseudo-Intimacy

- The perception is that lack of intimacy triggers affairs
- Fusion is common, it is a pseudo intimacy
- Fusion actually **causes** secondary relationships
- In order for real intimacy, we need to be self validated
- Fusion = other validated. i.e you depend on the other for your emotional balance
- Your sense of self depends on them
 - Edit self to fit in with partners' limitations
 - Selective self disclosure
 - Resent other
- Intimacy = tolerating anxiety = maintain clearly defined identity while disclosing core aspect of self
- Stop being reactive & limiting self due to fear of other

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Schnarch: An affair Taking It Personally

- Client: *"how could you do this to me"* NB This is other validated intimacy
- Ask:
- *What do you think was done to you?*
- *Why do you think they wanted to do it to you?*
- *Can you let your partners behaviour be a reflection on **them**, you weren't even there?*
- If think your spouse had an affair to hurt you, *Why gratify them by showing them you're hurt?*
- Aim: lead towards differentiation, so that person who had affair thinks: *What have I done to me!*

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Schnarch: Self-Validated Intimacy

- Is where I say stuff that I think you may not like
- But I speak my truth, *despite your response*
- That leads to intimacy
- To tolerate intimacy means to tolerate anxiety
- Intimacy
 - requires a boundary between two people
 - does not develop through agreement, validation and feigned closeness
 - develops through conflict, self validation, and unilateral disclosure

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Schnarch: Living By Limitations?

- Often in a relationship we struggle to determine whose limitations we're going to live by
- Instead let's attempt to go beyond both sets of limitations
- Rather than saying *love me and now live within my limitations*
- Say *I love you and I'm willing to stretch*
- Builds respect
- As therapists, let's work with the highest common denominator in the relationship

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**Schnarch : Most people
never reach a level of
differentiation where
fidelity reflects
strength
rather than
fear**

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Schnarch: Two Choice Dilemma

We want 2 choices where we only get one
We want sexual gregariousness for us and monogamy for our spouse

So some try to cheat

Marriage for some people means manipulating the system to deprive the partner of their choice - so A gets 2 choices & the partner B gets none

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Examples: 2 Choice Dilemmas

- You want to grow **but** you want to avoid the inherent anxiety that creates
- You want partner to be more open **but** you don't like hearing things you disagree with
- You want more sex **but** you want to decide when where and how
- Want partner who'll think for himself **but** want to tell him when/how to do it

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The Undifferentiated Persons Wants Are Often Asymmetrical

- "Fuse with me, but don't ask me to fuse with you"
- "I want you to want me, but I don't want to want you"
- **To be differentiated: your partners needs have to be to be as important as your own.....**
- **But not more important**

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Typical Monogamy Contract

- In couples with a low level of differentiation i.e. emotional fusion, this might be their contract:
 - Communal body. A can have sex with B any time A wants it, on demand, in return for staying faithful
 - Fear not desire. e.g. A says *I'll give up screwing around* with the motivation of depriving B from screwing around **but** in 5 years A says *you owe me, because it is your fault I haven't screwed anyone else. I gave it up for you* = emotional fusion

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- At low level differentiation
 - monogamy creates monopoly
 - monopolies function by controlling availability
- Whereas in a free system...
 - commitment to oneself becomes a matter of integrity
- You still face the existential crisis of only having finite options - you can't have sex with everyone you want
- Which is easier if choosing monogamy is not same as choosing sexual martyrdom

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Raising Differentiation Creates Spontaneous Shift

- I want to be in a monogamous relationship
 - *If I have an affair then I can't be in a monogamous relationship*
 - *I recognise I'm vulnerable, if you have an affair then I'm not in a monogamous relationship, but I can't control that*
 - *I won't tell you not to have an affair, that is an attempt to control you, and anyway it's more likely to push you into it*
 - *I'm choosing not to have an affair...you don't owe me for it. I'm not doing it for you, I'm doing it for me*
 - *But I ask that if you do decide to have one, you tell me 1st*
 - *I'm not going to tell you not to have an affair...you decide. Just let me know. And if it changes, then let me know*

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The Monogamy Contract When You Are 'Differentiated'

- We are in a free system
- My commitment to be monogamous
 - is a commitment to myself and not to you
 - is my choice
 - is a matter of my own integrity

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If The Monogamy Contract Is With Myself

- Changing the focus - so that monogamy is a contract with oneself - means that the whole nature of the relationship changes
- It's an alternative to the common lifelong impulse control & partner control struggles
- A multi systemic paradigm shift occurs
- Monogamy is no longer based on exchange and reciprocity
- The shift is spontaneous

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How To Do Differentiation

- Let partner be themselves, don't control them
- Know & respect your own & partner's differences, needs, beliefs, interests & values
- Be assertive
- Don't withdraw or over accommodate
- Hold onto your self, be yourself, stay grounded
- Soothe yourself, quiet mind, calm heart
- Don't react to their reactivity, solid flexibility
- Be prepared to develop and learn to tolerate the discomfort (and rows) this will bring – this is meaningful endurance

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Differentiation In Action What You Might Say

- 1 *I am not having an affair I'm not going to start an affair*
- 2 **But** *I am not putting up with the sex that we have*
- 3 *I am not going to leave this relationship and I want to get to you and I'm not talking about rape either*
- 4 **But** *I want good sex, and I mean now!*
- 5 *How are we going to resolve this, or move this forward? What are you willing to do to help this situation?*

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With Increasing Differentiation

- All dynamics in relationship shift
- Monogamy no longer based on exchange and reciprocity
- It results from a unilateral commitment to oneself
- No longer feel controlled by spouse
- Spouse is no longer an extension of self
- Increases the intimacy, eroticism, mystery and novelty that you can handle
- Gain a grudging respect

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Differentiation Is

- The ability to shift from limbic reactions (panic) to neocortical functioning
- From a limbic desire, of hunger or emotional reaction, to a neocortical model of desire, freely chosen
- Most of us don't want to be wanted because our partner is horny
- The limbic system says *anybody will do*
- Neocortical functioning is the part that chooses

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Differentiation:

- Ability to keep neocortex going when you are nervous
- Determines the level of anxiety you can handle before you regress and become like a child
- Ability to dampen your reflexive emotionality
- And dampen your responses to the responses of others, i.e. Ability to modulate your tension and frustrations
- Tolerate pain for growth

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In a differentiated approach
the responsibility is to oneself

as opposed to

a fused relationship

where the responsibility is to your partner

*"What you have been doing
you've been doing to you,
not to me"*

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**Operating From Your Best
What You Bring to Relationships**

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>π</p> <p>CLEAR SENSE OF SELF</p> <p>SOLID FLEXIBILITY</p> <p>A stable sense of your own worth</p> <p><i>Hold onto yourself</i></p> | <p>HANDLE YOUR OWN ANXIETIES AND FEARS</p> <p>QUIET ATTENTION</p> <p>Soothe your emotional bruises</p> <p><i>Quiet your mind Calm your heart</i></p> |
| <p>NON REACTIVE TO YOUR PARTNERS REACTIVITY</p> <p>GROUNDING RESPONSE</p> <p>Modulating your reactions</p> <p><i>Self Confront</i></p> | <p>TOLERATE DISCOMFORT FOR GROWTH</p> <p>MEANINGFUL ENDURANCE</p> <p>Bounce back after defeat</p> <p><i>Staying Engaged</i></p> |

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Based on the work of Murray Bowen & David Scharch

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Breakout Rooms for Discussion

- Take a photo of the previous slide
- Have a discussion around David Schnarch’s work and differentiation?
- What examples of emotional fusion or differentiation do you have in your clients, your family, yourself?
- How have these ideas impacted you?
- What else feels important to say?

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Affair: Reveal It or Hide It?

Some say the lies cause even more pain than the actual discovery of the affair

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Bert Hellinger: Supporting Love 1

- “When one person feels guilty and confesses some misdeeds, for example, an affair, the partner is forced to carry the consequences
- It’s a way of pushing the consequences onto the other person
- This so-called openness damages a relationship
- Secrets ought to be kept”

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Bert Hellinger: Supporting Love 2

- “The appropriate solution is for the guilty person to put things back into order and carry the consequences of his or her actions alone
- That doesn't burden the other person
- If you want to make up for your actions, you can do something good secretly, without any confession
- That may work out much better than confessing first and causing a big explosion”

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What We Need After An Affair

- Truth to replace deceit (how many truths)
- Thinking to replace emotional reactivity
- Awareness to replace disregard
- Understanding to replace accusations
- Rebuild a grudging respect

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Trust

- Straight after an affair may not be the best time to talk about trust
- In low levels of differentiation trust = dependency
- One person already proven untrustworthy
- Encouraging trust fuels fusion, and vulnerability
- *I can never trust you again:*
the hidden message is ...*Prove me otherwise.*
Help me believe that I can trust you more than I trust myself
- Therapist says: *Don't trust now-decide later on. Give it 10 years*
- We don't *have to* trust to be able to live with them

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Rebuilding Trust

- It will be a long time before the resolute spouse can trust again
- The other spouse wants to trust that he won't be reminded of his betrayal for the rest of your lives
- Can feel over-controlled and smothered
- Honestly answer questions & even anticipate them
- Develop a no lies policy
- Share everything, passwords, phone, emails
- Be 100% transparent

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Trust is formed not during easy times but in defining moments of difficulty and stress when our loyalties our priorities and our commitment come into question

When you can create trust in these moments your relationship will grow and flourish

When these moments come and you fail to increase trust you will have difficulty making progress

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Saying Sorry

- Sincere
- Take responsibility for your behaviour
- Admit it was your fault
- Show contrition and remorse
- Express feelings of guilt, shame, humiliation
- Be empathic to the suffering of your partner
 - Appreciate their pain, suffering, disappointment, fears, the effect it had,
- Include a promise to never do it again
- Accept partner may not be ready to accept apology

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Saying Sorry 2

- Keep saying it, again and again
- Telling them that they are over reacting won't help
- *I'm sorry* is not enough, because it stops short of admitting fault.
- e.g. *I feel guilty. I feel shame. I feel humiliated. I am sad. This is the worst thing I've ever done. I really regret this.*

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Nine Steps to Forgiveness

1. Know how you feel about what happened. Articulate it, tell a trusted couple of people
2. Commit to do what you have to, to feel better. Forgiveness is for you, not for anyone else
3. Forgiveness may not be reconciliation with the person that hurt you, or condoning of their action.

What you are after is to find peace. The "peace and understanding" that come from:-

- blaming that which has hurt you less
- taking the experience less personally &
- changing your grievance story

Fred Luskin

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4. Get the right perspective
Recognise that your primary distress is coming from the hurt feelings, thoughts and physical upset you are suffering now, not what offended you or hurt you in the past
Forgiveness helps to heal those hurt feelings
5. At the moment you feel upset practice a simple stress management technique to soothe your body's flight or fight response
6. Give up expecting things from other people, or your life that they do not choose to give you
Recognise the "unenforceable rules" you have for how you or other people must behave
Remind yourself that you can hope for health, love, peace and prosperity and work hard to get them

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7. Instead of mentally replaying your hurt, seek out new ways to get what you want
8. Remember that a life well lived is your best revenge
Instead of focusing on your wounded feelings, and thereby giving the person who caused you pain power over you, learn to look for the love, beauty and kindness around you
Forgiveness is about personal power
9. Amend your grievance story to remind you of the heroic choice to forgive.

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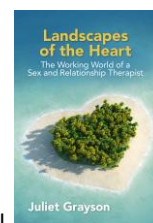
Other Award Winning Trainings by Juliet and her team:

- Certificates
 - Working with Couples
 - Diversity within Contemporary Relationships
 - Working With the Complexities of Trauma
- Writing in the Therapeutic Encounter
- Therapeutic Journaling
- Erotic Transference in the Therapy Room
- Lives of Quiet Desperation: Therapy with Men
- Attachment Informed Couples Therapy
- Pesso Boyden Personal Development Workshops – in person face to face workshops with Juliet Grayson
- Prerecorded Talks including 3 series on Exploring Shame which have proved very popular: jandw.thinkific.com
- All the details are on the resources page for this workshop
- www.therapyandcounselling.co.uk/resources-relate

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Books

- Landscapes of the Heart: Juliet Grayson
- The Ethical Slut: Dossie Eaton
- Mating in Captivity: Esther Perel
- I Love You But I Am Not In Love With You: Marshall
- When He Is Married To Mum: Kenneth Adams
- How To Survive an Affair: Gunzburg
- Supporting Couples: Bert Hellinger
- Passionate Marriage: David Schnarch



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Nearly There!!!

- Feedback online to get the second set of handouts
<https://therapyandcounselling.co.uk/resources-relate/>
- Dates of our other CPD workshops
www.therapyandcounselling.co.uk
- Please tell your colleagues and supervisors or supervisees about these workshops

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In a Hotel Bar

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References

- 1 An estimated 34% of men and 24% of women engage in infidelity. The researchers consulted 82 studies. About 56% of the studies were conducted in the United States, followed by Asia, Africa, Europe, and multiple continents. About 80% involved both men and women. Infidelity was assessed with a variety of instruments and questionnaires. October 2019 <https://www.issm.info/news/sex-health-headlines/researchers-explore-couples-systems-as-key-to-infidelity/>
- Esther Perel: Ted Talk: Rethinking Infidelity – a talk for anyone who has ever loved https://www.ted.com/talks/esther_perel_rethinking_infidelity_a_talk_for_anyone_who_has_ever_loved?language=en
- Hellinger, Bert; Neuhauser, Johannes *Supporting Love: How Love Works in Couple Relationships* : *Bert Hellinger's Work with Couples*. Zeig Tucker & Theisen Publishers, 2001. Hellinger developed the method Family Constellations
- Taken from Rebuilding Honesty: Gunzburg, Frank. This is no longer available, but has been replaced by *Surviving My Affair*: <https://survivingmyaffair.com/>

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