

A Component of NAADAC's Life-Long Learning Series

**Conflict Resolution in Recovery
Romancing the Brain
NJPN Peer Recovery Summit
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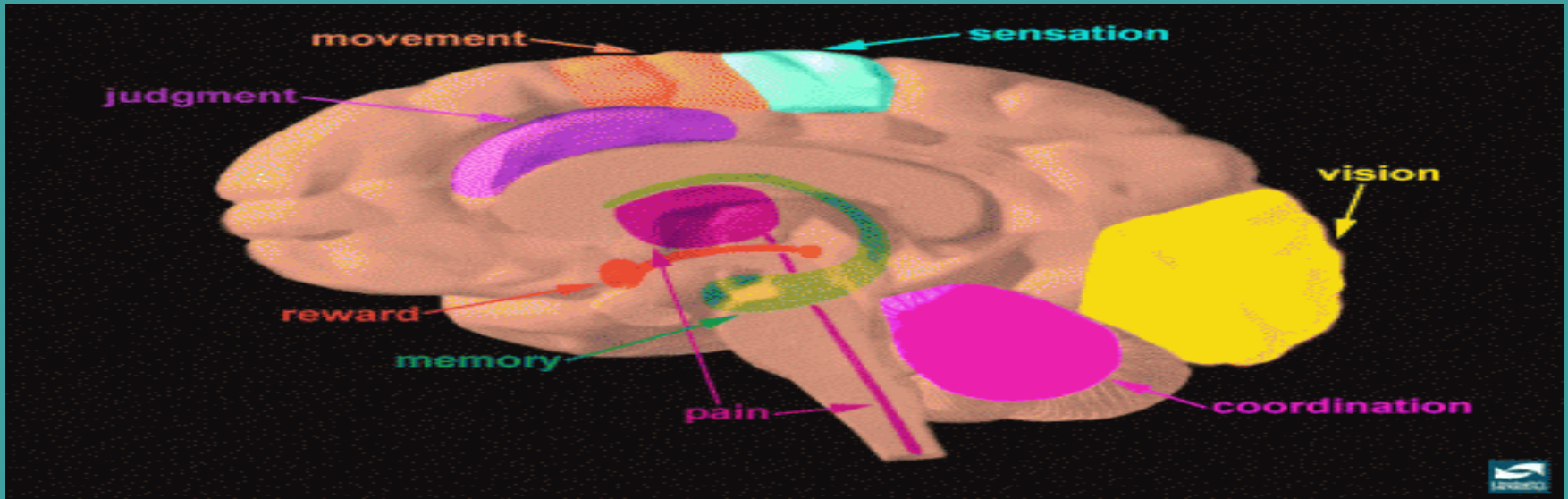
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Your Brain



Your brain governs specific functions. * sensory (blue) * visual (yellow) * reward pathway (orange), * cerebellum (hot pink) for coordination and the hippocampus (green) for memory, thalamus (magenta) which receives information about pain coming from the body (magenta line within the spinal cord), and passes the information up to the cortex. Nerve cells or neurons connect one area to another via pathways to send and integrate information. The distances that neurons extend can be short or long. This pathway is activated when a person receives positive reinforcement for certain behaviors ("reward"). + NIDA 2016



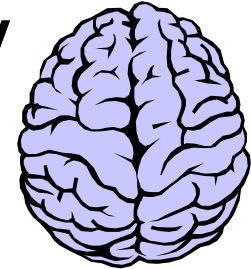
Your Brain Loves....

- **Your own Natural and Organic Rewards:**
- **Food**
- **Water**
- **Sex**
- **Nurturing**



Location of the Limbic System

Your **Limbic System** is located approximately in the center of your brain.



- It is the part of the brain that most people use most often in conflict.
- It is the oldest system of your brain – the Mammalian brain.
- In pre-historic times, it was the largest mass area of your brain.



Understanding the Limbic System

- **Your Limbic system is located approximately in the center of your brain**
- **It is the oldest system of your brain – the mammalian brain**
- **It pre-historic time, it was the largest mass area of your brain**
- **It is the part of the brain that most people use most often in conflict and trauma**
- **It holds your reward pathway**



Recovery Starts in the Brain...or doesn't

BUT!! **LIMBIC**

you better!

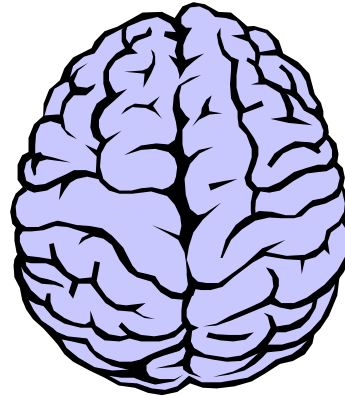
Absolutes

NO

!

EVER
EVER

Should



If you ever...

Never

Fight
Flight

Could

DON'T YOU EVER!

YOU

WONT

How???

Always



Preventing Relapse

- **Science tells us that stress is the biggest trigger for relapse.**
- **Relationships – personal, professional, in community, are the largest groups that stress us out on a day-to-day basis.**
- **What would happen if we learned to “romance” those around us and ourselves?**
- **What would happen if we worked through the trauma of our lives?**
- **What would happen if we learned to live happy and healthy?**



Understanding the Cortex

- It is located in the front part of the brain
- Its functions are decision making, problem solving, creativity, discovery
- It can be trained to be mindful and the mannerisms in which it is said
- It reacts positively to options
- It is like your inside computer
- It helps you to sort, process and store information
- It resonates with choices
- It is the last developed part of the brain and affected by alcohol & drug use



Wellness & Recovery Grows Here...

Cortex



Let Us Find Another...

YES! Often

I believe...

Will you

Consider

I wonder



Stand Still

I would like

Lets Discover

Is it possible

Back-up the Train

Please

Thank you



The Cortex - Discovery

- We learn impulse control
- Maturity and imagination develops
- Decision making – judgment – reasoning
- Creativity and discovery
- Problem solving
- Personal Empowerment
- Conflict & trauma resolution
- Romance develops into maturity and commitment



Is About What I am Going to Say

One helpful skill to learn is the ability to stand still in the moment. In standing still in the moment, you learn to stop or slow down your thoughts and conflict process by asking yourself three questions:

- **Is about what I am going to say (words and phrases) and the way I am going to say it (tone, inflection, and gestures) going to build the relationship up?**
- **Is it going to keep the relationship level?**
- **Is it going to tear the relationship down?**



Being Deliberate

- **Phrases like “Thank you,” “Please,” “I am sorry,” and “I did not intend to ...” give people more power in their lives or diminishes their power?**
- **Words or phrases like the following add what to a conversation?**
 - **I believe**
 - **I wonder**
 - **Let’s discover**
 - **I would like**
 - **Consider**
 - **Often**
- **Consider how this change could effect what you would expect to see in other people (for example; work colleagues, family, and friends).**



Going Limbic on Someone

Expressing anger in an unhealthy manner causes the person doing it:

- to have increased blood pressure
- to have increased heart rate
- to increase the adrenaline level
- to cause a rush to the brain

Example...”going limbic”

- **What was my body experiencing?**
- **Recovery and a rush of endorphins from anger – Do they match?**
- **Anger rushes are destructive to both (all) persons on the receiving end of the anger**



Phrases that “Romance” the Brain



- ❖ Is it possible
- ❖ Have you had an opportunity to
- ❖ I wonder what would happen if
- ❖ Help me understand
- ❖ I’m confused, I thought
- ❖ Is this ok with you
- ❖ I’m curious about
- ❖ Please explain to me



Phrases that “Romance” the Brain

- ❖ **I am sorry**
- ❖ **Is there another way I could (say this, do this, explain this, etc).**
- ❖ **Let us discover, consider, believe**
- ❖ **Often, this is a misunderstood (action, behavior, word, etc.)**





Romancing the Brain into Wellness



- ❖ **My pleasure to...**
- ❖ **Please**
- ❖ **Thank you**
- ❖ **May I have permission**
- ❖ **Please tell me what you mean by this**
- ❖ **When you have a minute, would you please**



Romancing the Brain into Wellness

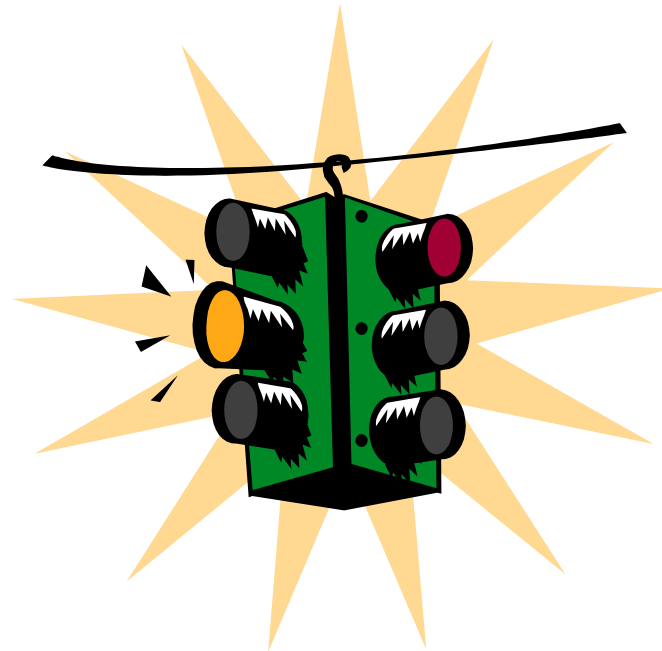
- ❖ **Will you agree to this**
- ❖ **I would like to find a solution, together**
- ❖ **Would you consider**
- ❖ **I would like to assist you**
- ❖ **Your thoughts**
- ❖ **Your Ideas**





Training the Brain

- ❖ **Hear It**
- ❖ **See It**
- ❖ **Say It**
- ❖ **Write It**
- ❖ **Read It**
- ❖ **Repeat It**





Five Styles of Communication

- **Five Styles:**
 - 1) Competing**
 - 2) Avoiding**
 - 3) Compromising**
 - 4) Accommodating**
 - 5) Collaborating**



Competing Style





Competing Style

- The attitude is “I’m going to win; you’re going to lose.”
- There are only two possible outcomes from conflict: winning and losing.
- Winning is associated with status and competence.
- Losing is associated with loss of status, incompetence and weakness.
- Prime importance on personal goals to the virtual exclusion of any concern for the relationship.
- Protection of personal goals is taken as an index of successful combat.
- It’s a dog-eat-dog world.
- Nice guys finish last.
- Method of control: **RESENTMENT**



Avoiding Style



A Component of NAADAC's Life-Long Learning Series

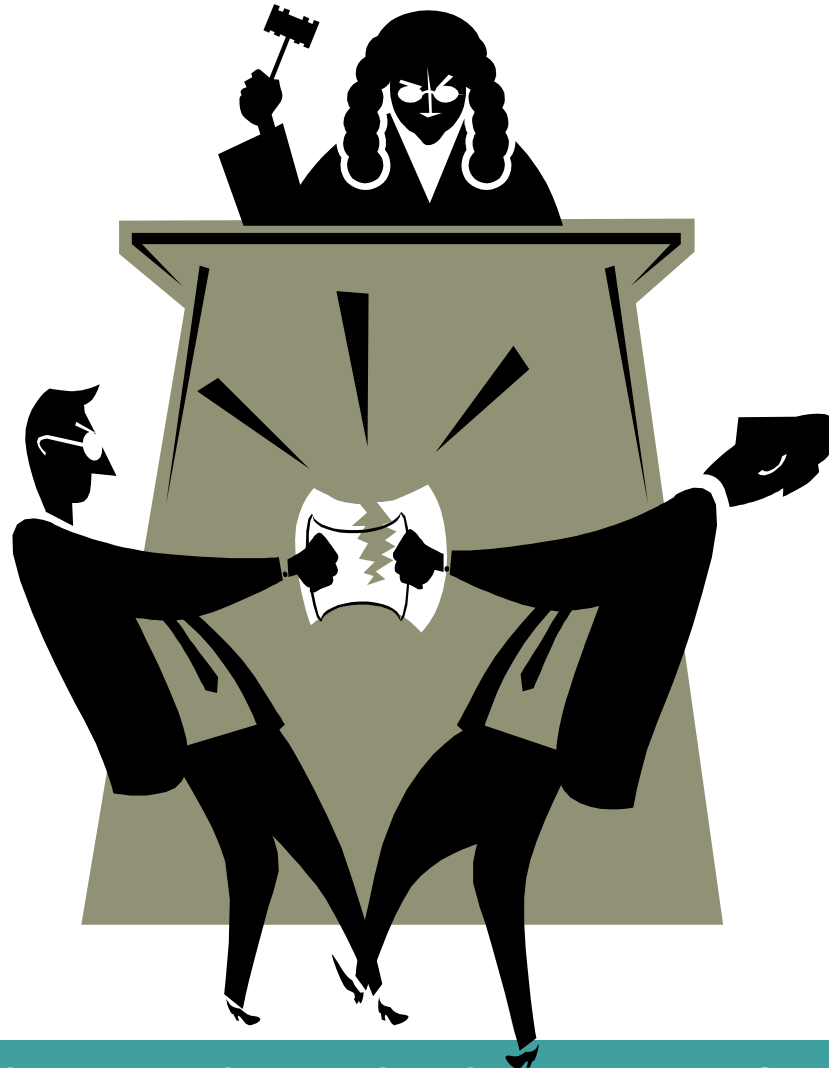


Avoiding Style

- **We are both going to lose, so I'll leave.**
- **There is a feeling of hopelessness.**
- **Avoiding protects the person from the useless and punishing experience of endless struggles that cannot be won.**
- **Rather than suffer, I will leave physically or psychologically.**
- **An Avoider might adopt the role of a detached observer.**
- **Roll with the punches and live to fight again another day.**
- **Getting angry means losing control.**
- **It is unfair to lose control, so leave.**
- **Method of control: WITHDRAWAL**



Compromising Style



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Compromising Style

- **You get half the cookie, and I get half the cookie. We both lose a little and compromise. It's better to get something than nothing.**
- **A secret variation of losing/winning.**
- **Soften the effects of losing by limiting gains of the other person.**
- **Arrive at compromise by somebody playing the “judge.”**
- **Ringing oratory invoking everything from “the democratic process” to “the rules.”**
- **Nobody wins, and nobody loses.**
- **Evokes the attitude that “war is hell.”**
- **Method of control: RULES**



Accommodating Style





Accommodating Style

- **The primary concern for the effect of conflict is on the well-being and durability of relationships.**
- **The assumption is that human relationships are fragile, that they cannot endure the trauma of working through differences.**
- **There is a fear of losing the relationship.**
- **Appease others by ignoring or denying their behavior and avoid conflict by ignoring or denying how you feel about their behavior.**
- **Personal objectives are set aside, and the relationship lends itself to one-sided domination.**
- **There is an attitude of forced, cheerful compliance.**
- **Eventually, the “Mt. St. Helens” effect will play out (“Tic, Tic, Boom!”) or it is like a time bomb (“TIC TOC, TIC TOC ... BOOM!”).**
- **Method of control: GUILT**



Collaborating Style



A Component of NAADAC's Life-Long Learning Series



Collaborating Style

- **This has an altogether different attitude that results in a different behavior.**
- **We can both win.**
- **Importance is attached to the well-being of the members of the relationship and to the relationship simultaneously. The two sets of goals are not seen as mutually exclusive as with other styles.**
- **Conflict is inevitable because we are different from one another. This leads to differences in opinion. The most common reasons for differences are incomplete understanding and commitment to inequality.**
- **A collaborator has a tolerance and acceptance of differences.**
- **You have the right to feel, and so does the other person in the conflict.**



Collaborating Style

- Let's differentiate (and get out of our feelings) and then integrate (and create more closeness ... let's be solution focused).
- The real paradox of control is to **not control!** The real power comes into play when you both allow each other to get out your feelings and then think of the other's perspective to the point of creating more closeness through the understanding and then, through that, you come to a place to problem solve that takes the feelings, points of view, background and perspectives of both parties into play. This is true integration of both parties.
- The paradox of control: **REAL POWER**



Conflict Resolution in Recovery

Five (5) Stages of Relationships



- ❖ Honeymoon
- ❖ Disillusion
- ❖ Misery
- ❖ Awakening
- ❖ Peace/Calm



Honeymoon Stage

- **Please take a Trip down Memory Lane with me**
- **Were you, at one time, looking for that prince or princess?**
- **Think back to the beginning of that time, the beginning of the relationship, what did you feel and what did you do?**
 - **Exciting**
 - **Scary**
 - **Fun**
 - **Lots of communication**
 - **Few feelings**
 - **Hopes**
 - **Dreams**
 - **Careful**
 - **Thoughtful**
 - **Sex was great**
 - **Cards and notes**
 - **Special nights out**



Disillusionment Stage

- **What happens after some time in the Honeymoon stage?**
- **Disillusionment sets in...**
- **This is sometimes referred to as the Familiarization or Adjusting to Reality stage.**
- **Your endorphins cannot keep producing at the same level as before. You become more relaxed in the relationship, as does your partner.**
- **You and your partner are human and your flaws are beginning to show. There's generally enough goodwill left over from the honeymoon stage that you can overlook most flaws.**



More Disillusionment

- **If the flaws are more serious - such as dishonesty or deceit - the relationship can become confusing and discouraging.**
- **If you want the relationship to keep evolving, you need to be able to communicate effectively and resolve conflict.**
- **Sex has become more familiar, and maybe the fun sleepwear has changed to less enticing wear.**
- **Communication tends to go down. There is less time spent sharing and it is less positive**
- **The things that attracted you to the person now detract you from them.**
- **Arguments over money, friends, priorities, sex, etc., begin to happen with less agreement on how to solve these new differences.**



Misery Stage

- **This is also called the Power Struggle, Disappointment, or Distress stage.**
- **You become more aware of the differences between you and your partner. Depending on your style of communication, you find yourself avoiding, accommodating, judging, competing, and fighting in the conflict. Conflict continues to grow.**
- **Deep resentments can begin to build in this stage. You see your partner as uncaring, self-centered, or untrustworthy.**
- **People really know they are in the Misery stage when they ask themselves:**
 - **“Why did I ever get involved with this person in the first place?”**
 - **“What was I thinking?”**
 - **“If only I never got involved in the first place!”**
 - **“Will this ever change?”**
 - **“Is there no way out?”**



More Misery

- **Couples remain in this stage, building resentment and frustration until they either decide to:**
 - End the relationship in some manner
 - Avoid the issues and remain in the relationship
 - Seek some means to resolve the conflict in the relationship
- **Misery can last for years and years. There are couples (and you might have experienced this or seen others in this stage) remaining in Misery for 10, 20 or 30 years, often citing kids, financial constraints or fear of changing the familiar as reasons for staying together.**
- **Many couples do not evolve from this stage and decide to end the relationship here.**
- **However, if a couple can resolve conflicts here, then they move on to the next stage - **Awakening**.**



Awakening Stage

- This is also called the Stability, Friendship, or Reconciliation stage.
- Couples who make it this far express feelings of stronger commitment, connection, trust, and love.
- You know neither one of you is perfect, but this concept is no longer threatening.
- You are confident in your ability to resolve most of your issues.
- You begin to reestablish your own outside interests (unlike the Honeymoon stage, where you only had eyes for each other).
- There is some danger of boredom with your partner, so you have to work to maintain the connection you made in the Honeymoon stage.



More Awakening

- **“Listening with the heart”** is a term we use to express the skill of empathy. It involves remaining “present” with the person and hearing all he or she is saying - the deep feelings being expressed, their affect and fears and concerns as they relate to the relationship - without thinking about and trying to develop words you are going to use to respond.
- In this practice of “listening with the heart,” it is also vital to learn from each other, to learn what each needs - not wants, but really needs - to be in relationship with the other. In other words, what are the “basic needs” for that person to feel safe, secure and ready to fully participate in the relationship?



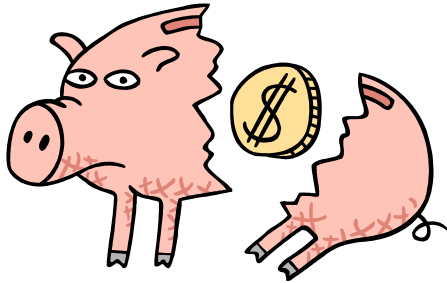
Peace & Calm Stage

- **Other names for this stage are Commitment, Acceptance, Transformation, or Real Love.**
- **It is estimated that less than 15 percent of couples make it to this stage.**
- **You are with your partner because you have *chosen* him or her, faults and all, not because you *need* him or her.**
- **You and your partner are a team and look out for each other's best interests.**
- **At this stage, your relationship becomes a true partnership.**

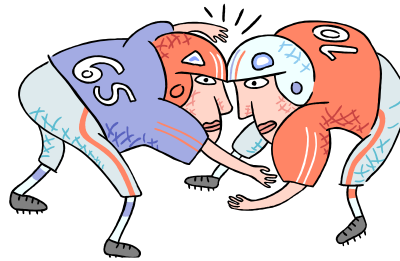


Getting to Peace & Calm

Four (4) Types of Agreement



- **Financial**



- **Physical/Spatial**

- **Emotional/Social**



- **Spiritual**



Financial Agreements

- **What do you need to be in financial agreement?**
- **Who works?**
- **What amount of money do you need for the household? (Don't fool yourself: if you are a \$75,000-a-year expectation person, and your partner only makes \$35,000, then there will be conflict.)**
- **Is it one joint checking account or two separate checking accounts?**
- **Is there savings, money for retirement and money for vacation?**
- **And what about donations? Is tithing something you believe in?**



Physical & Spatial Agreements

What are your physical expectations for the sexual relationship, physical exercise, the manner in which you keep up yourself (body, hair, etc.)?

What type of physical space do you need—a crowded room, a sparse room, a house in the open, a house in the woods or in the city?

What about physical abuse? What is okay with you? What is not negotiable (such as pushing, shoving, beating, hitting, scratching, etc.)?

What is physical safety to you and appropriate boundaries in your relationship for all the above areas?

What about own “body bubble”? How close do you like your partner and how often? Are you a cuddler or do you prefer to have more space?



Emotional & Social Agreements

- **Emotional agreements also take into account those times when the other person is just “off” emotionally**
- **We don’t always know the whys of it and just needing a little extra special consideration to get through whatever it is.**
- **This kind of emotional support goes both ways, for the nature of emotional agreement is reciprocal.**
- **Part of the discussion on the emotional agreement is to learn your partner’s emotional strengths and weaknesses.**



Emotional/Social Support

- **Are there certain situations (times of the year, seasons) that are more difficult emotionally for your partner? This might be related to a loss (death, divorce, accident, etc).**
- **When does your partner feel he or she needs more support from you? In what type of situations?**
- **When does your partner want you just to listen, and (possibly) hold them, rub their back or just be “present” with them?**
- **What do you need from your partner for positive emotional support?**



Emotional & Social Agreements (Cont)

- **Do you expect unconditional love and support?**
- **Do you expect understanding and a person to listen to your hurts?**
- **How is that played out at the end of day, on the weekend, after an argument?**
- **Do you go to bed on your fight, in anger?**
- **What do you need there in terms of resolution?**



Spiritual Agreements

- **Every person comes to this life with a spiritual piece**
- **How we relate to that spiritual side is dependent on the fabric of our background**
- **Not everyone identifies their spiritual side**
- **Yet, everyone goes about trying to fill it in some manner**



Tip 1 – Stand Still in the Moment

- **Reverse of flight or fight (Limbic)**
- **Take your time**
- **Delay a reaction and consider your actions (is about what I am going to say and do...)**
- **Indecision can be your best friend in order to get to mutual problem solving**
- **Third reaction Stand still in the moment**



Tip 2 - Do Not Assume Intent

- **Another version of the “Blame Game”**
- **People within sticking distance**
- **Let go of presumptions or premeditated attacks**
- **Misunderstandings and accidental collisions**
- **Accountability as a “WE” issue – change is the responsibility of both parties**



Check it Out!

- **Information is useful.**
- **Inner agreement not to follow what you “might know”.**
- **Ask for clarification or information.**
- **“Call out” words and behaviors that are hurtful.**
- **Seek out the intention of the other person.**
- **Watch for your own “baggage” getting in the way.**
- **Ask the other person to tell you what they meant by the words or behaviors.**
- **Remember – not to go “limbic”!**



Tip 3 - Dig Deeper into Conflict and Anger

- **Digger deeper into conflict and anger is like being an archaeologist**
- **There is reasonable expectation that there is a some type if treasure below**
- **Our treasure is our “fabric” of our life**
- **“Fabric” is our: culture, race, religion, values, creativity, ideas, past experiences, family’s past experiences, unresolved grief, layers of happiness and love and go on.**



Back Up The Train

- **The more you back up the train – oops, did not mean to say it that way, in that manner with those assumptions and dig deeper...**

The more likely you are to get beyond the surface and get to the issues ...that now can be identified and resolved!

Work not to bring shame/blame/pain back!



Tip 4 - Cultivate Confusion

- **A powerful tool for resolving problems and conflicts**
- **Withhold judgment, guessing and blame**
- **Most likely your first impression in a conflict has a more neutral second impression – if you can just get there!**



Tip 4 - Leading with Confusion

- “I’m confused. How did we get to this place of anger? Let’s find another way.”
- “I am confused. Earlier, did you mean that you wanted to do it this way, and now you are changing your mind and you want it this other way instead?”
- “I am confused. Did we not have an agreement to do such and such?”
- “ “Help me understand how we can move away from this impasse to a place of positive movement.”
- I’m confused. I felt like we were connected and in agreement on this issue before. What has happened since we last spoke about it? Did something change your mind?”



Tip 5 – The Paradox of Control

- **A paradox is a seemingly contradictory statement that may be true.**
- **The paradox of control means the more and harder I try to control you, the less and less of you I am in control of you.**
- **The common denominator of being human = control junkie**
- **We become less of who we are in the process**
- **Emotional manipulations to control others**



Tip 6 - Look to the Misunderstanding

- **People, in general, think they know THE TRUTH with a capital “T”.**
- **If things do not go their way, they feel compelled to interrupt or point out an error in your reasoning**
- **See the world in black or white – no grays or rainbows**
- **In interpersonal communications...there is always – all ways – more than one truth!**



Tip 7 – Having a Blameless Relationship With Yourself

- **A blameless relationship with ourselves begins with peeling the layers of onion.**
- **At our outer layer of exploration we discover that we have to peel further to get to the true meaning.**
- **Examining our self-talk helps us to see directly into our relationship with ourselves.**
- **Recording these conversations may help us see the effects of being raised in our families of origin.**
- **We can learn to cut the invisible apron strings that bind us to old patterns and behaviors.**



Tip 8 – Avoiding Premature Forgiveness

- **The first response of a peacemaker is to shut down in an conflict or disagreement**
- **Or work quickly to smooth it over**
- **Major problem in close or intimate relationships**
- **Act as if the most important thing is to re-establish harmony**
- **Happens at their and the others personal expense**
- **Tick - Tick - Tick - Boom!!!**



Tip 9 Come on Now – Put Your Dukes Down

- **Lead with your transparencies**
- **Take the Tips and use them daily**
- **Remain – hang in there – build your spiritual, emotional, psychological self**
- **Influence the potential change in the relationship by establishing the change in you**
- **No relationship is perfect – we all must work to get to better relationships**
- **It is a life long journey**



Courageous People

- **Courageous people make big efforts to be transparent**
- **Put their dukes down**
- **Create meaningful conversations**
- **Risk their ego for the possibility of creating a new life change – intimacy**
- **Intimacy is broken down to four interconnecting words: In – To – Me - See**



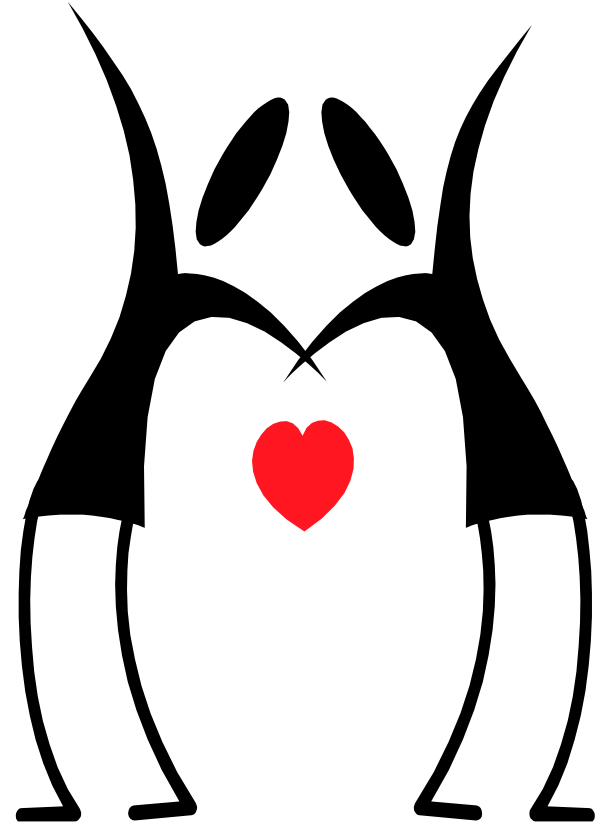
Tip 10 Self-Fulfilling Prophecies

- **What is the Life Script you are living?**
- **Listen to your words and pick it out.**
- **Change the inner dialogue to the positive outcomes you want in your life!**
- **Not to go limbic with yourself.**
- **How could this be played out differently using the tips?**



Getting to... Collaboration = Win/Win

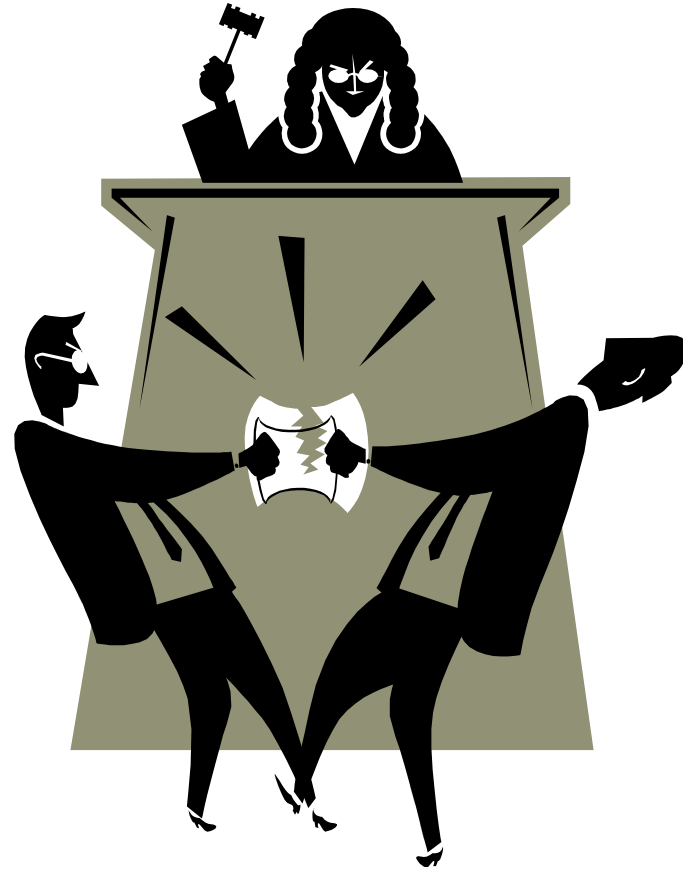
- **Mutual Benefit**
- **Mutual Understanding**
- **Builds Mutual Trust**
- **Builds the Emotional Bank account (for future withdraws without bankruptcy)**





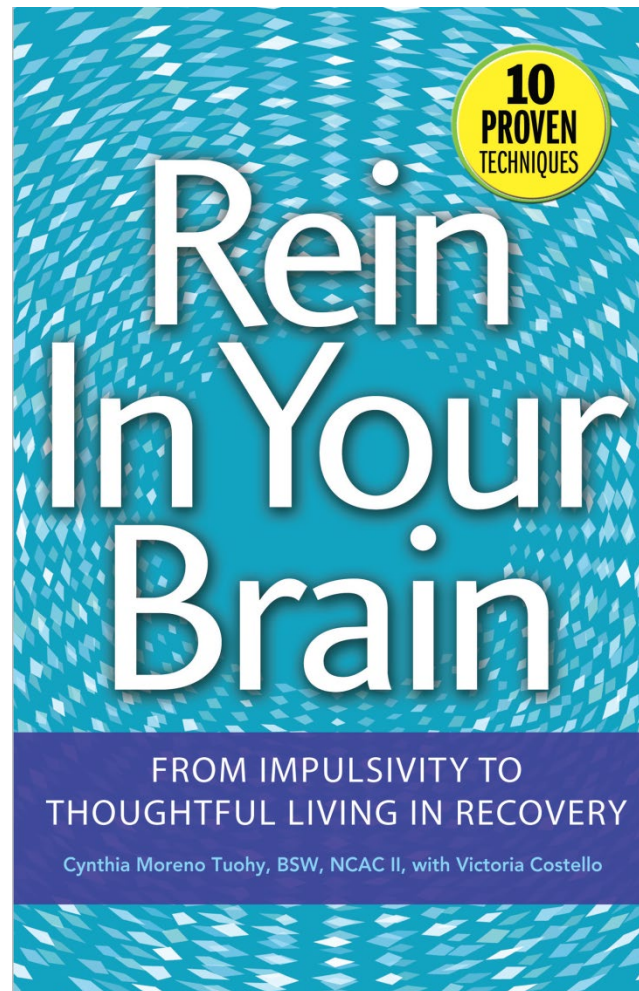
Healing & Nurturing Yourself

- Dance
- Music
- Singing
- Writing
- Sharing
- Laughter
- Praying
- Mediating
- Forgiving





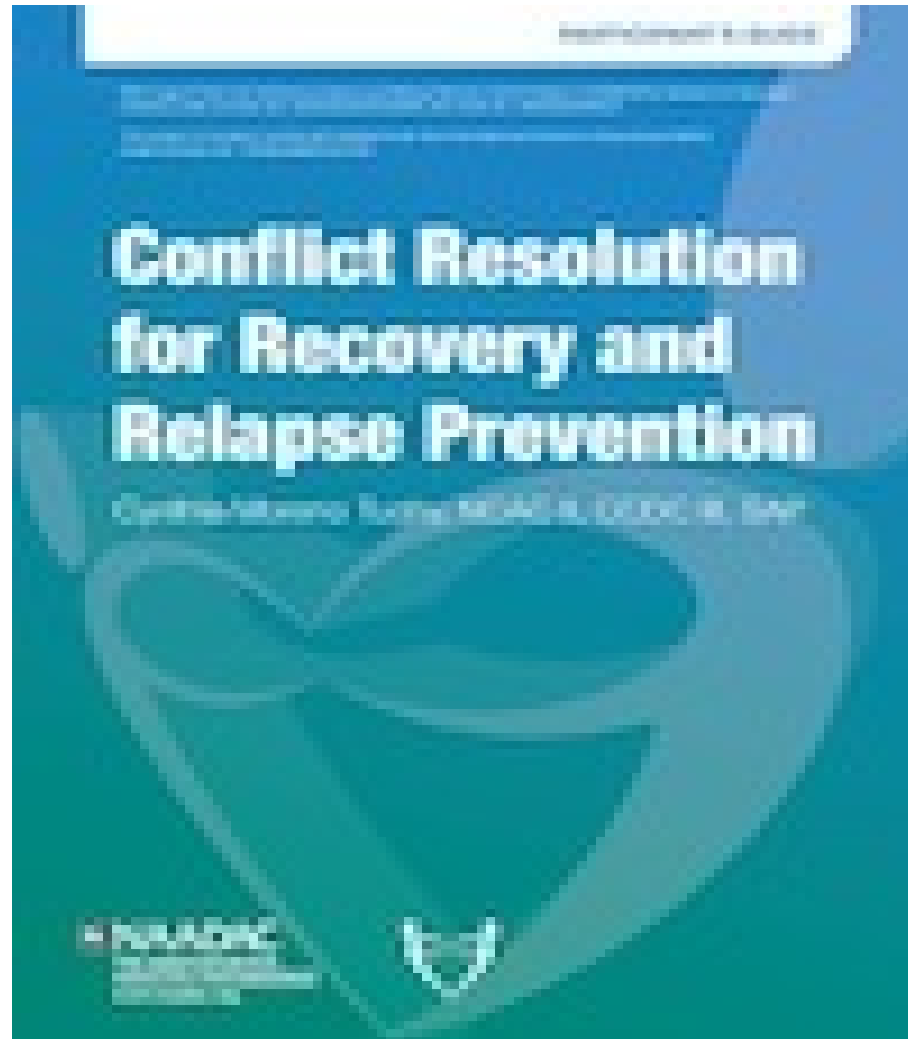
Cyn's Book



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Counselor's Tool – NIDA SBIR



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Thanks and Blessings

Many blessings as you move through your life. It is yours to change and influence!

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