

Relational Intimacy Model for Couple Therapy

*A Roadmap to Healthy and Fulfilling Relationships for all Couples**

LUC A. DUMOUCHEL, M.A.

“Our partners fail us only to the extent that we allow them to do so.” LAD



This model is about overcoming
control, competition, lack of responsibility, manipulation,
hurt, insecurity, confusion and unhappiness.

It is also about achieving
empowerment, collaboration, responsibility, ownership, healing,
security, growth, love, connection, clarity, happiness and in the end, fulfilling intimacy.

** Buyer beware: A relationship will pick up any unresolved business from one's past – (em)brace yourself for the journey of a lifetime!*



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I. RELATIONAL MATRIX - A SYNTHESIS [genesis of injury and direction for therapy]

Relational Skills Roadmap	[Relational childhood injuries / traumas and lack of healthy modeling / nurturing skills] ▼	[Safe / nurturing upbringing and healthy modeling / nurturing skills] ▼	[Relational childhood injuries / traumas and lack of healthy modeling / nurturing skills] ▼
A) Relational Imprint (Childhood influence)	Incomplete attachment + Pain-filled + Void Result: Mistrust, Co-Dependence, Self-Doubt ▼	Sufficient: Trust, Autonomy, Confidence Relational childhood nurturance ▼	Incomplete attachment + Pain-filled + Void Result: Mistrust, Counter-Dependence, Self-Doubt ▼
B) Relational Footprint (Long-lasting Impact)	Fear of abandonment (fear of being let down by other) and base for ▼ Co-Dependency	Stable Relational Base and Secure Attachment ▼ Inter-Dependency	Fear of intrusion or rejection (fear of being controlled) and base for ▼ Counter-Dependency
C) Relational Blue Print (Relational Outcome)	Ineffective, non-collaborative system Victim / hurt / out of control / controlling / loneliness ▼	Effective, collaborative, intimate system Empathy / caring / centeredness / connectedness ▼	Ineffective, non-collaborative system Apathy / hurt / out of control / controlling / loneliness ▼
D) Relational Re-Imprinting (Therapeutic process)	▶ ▶ ▶ More effective, collaborative, intimate system Empathy / caring / centeredness / connectedness	▼ Effective, collaborative, intimate system (= loving relationship) Empathy / caring / centeredness / connectedness	◀ ◀ ◀ More effective, collaborative, intimate system Empathy / caring / centeredness / connectedness

II. RELATIONAL STANCES

General Attributes	Co-Dependency	Inter-Dependency	Counter-Dependency
A) Centeredness	■ - - - - Alter-Centric - - - - ▶ (/)	■ - - - - ▶ « Centered » ◀ - - - - ■ (I)	■ - - - - Self-Centric - - - - ▶ (/)
B) Time-line Focus	Past: What should have been! (negative/missing)	Present: What is. (neutral / positive)	Future: What could be? (projection / missing)
C) Preferred MO <small>(modus operandi)</small>	Emotional (@ expense of rational)	Rational + Emotional (Balanced)	Rational (@ expense of emotional)
D) Main Coping Strategies	Preoccupation / Togetherness / Clinginess Amplification (exaggeration) Retro-projection...	Grounded Connected Centered	Avoidance / Separateness / Isolation Reduction (dismissiveness) Projection...
E) Communication	Focussed on other, unclear, unclean, biased	Clear, clean, open communication	Focussed on self, incomplete, unclean, lacking
F) Anxiety Reduction Mode	Over-emotional / lack of emotional processing (often @ expense of self, other and relationship)	Self-soothing & healthy communication (respectful of self, other and relationship)	Withdrawal / Avoidance / Over-rational (often @ expense of self, other and relationship)

III. RELATIONAL SKILLS ** AXIS

** All are necessary in order to engage fully in a fulfilling mutual relationship.

III. RELATIONAL SKILLS ** AXIS			
A. Relational Chemistry (Socio-physiologically based)			
1) Physical Attraction	Very strong (or weak) attraction to other →	Mutual attraction	← Very strong (or weak) attraction to other
2) Passion (hormones)	Increase (or absence) of passion levels →	Shared passion and excitement levels	← Increase (or absence) of passion levels
3) Common interests	Collusion with <i>other's</i> interests and tastes →	Shared common interests	← Collusion with <i>other's</i> interests and tastes
4) Double-Bind Chemistry	Complementing CLV, Schemas or Transfers →	N / A	← Complementing CLV, Schemas or Transfers
B. Relational Autonomy (Intellectual Skills)			
1) Locus of Control	External: Others control my life or decisions →	Internal: I control my own life / events.	← External: Others control my life or decisions
2) Existential Positioning	≠ OK: I'm (<i>not</i>) OK, You're (<i>not</i>) OK →	OK: I'm OK, You're OK	← ≠ OK: I'm (<i>not</i>) OK, You're (<i>not</i>) OK
3) Ego State/Schema Modes	Child / Victim (or Persecutory) Stance → Compliant Surrenderer / Overcompensator →	Healthy Adult Stance	← Critical Parent /Persecutory (or Victim) Stance ← Detached Protector
4) Directedness	Other-Direct.: Excessive focus on <i>other</i> →	Inter-Direct.: Focus on self <i>and</i> relationship	← Other-Direct.: Excessive focus on <i>self</i>
5) Relational Object Constancy	Inconsistent: Forgets the love from <i>other</i> →	Constant: Feels ongoing connection w <i>other</i>	← Inconsistent: Forgets the love from <i>other</i>
C. Emotional Autonomy (Emotional Skills)			
1) Regulation of Affect	Disregulated: «Expansive» affect →	Regulated / Balanced Affect	← Disregulated: «Retractive» affect
2) Soothing	Inability to self-soothe or soothe other →	Ability to self-soothe and soothe other	← Inability to self-soothe or soothe other
3) Grieving / Acceptance	Inability to accept loss / Δ, let go & reconcile →	Ability to accept loss / Δ, let go & reconcile	← Inability to accept loss / Δ, let go & reconcile
D. Relational Intimacy (Inter-Dependency Skills)			
1) Empathy	Over-empathizes at own & <i>other's</i> expense →	Balanced / Adequate Empathy	← Under-empathizes at <i>other's</i> & own expense
2) Identification of Needs	Unidentified / Unclear / Disavowed Needs →	Identified, Clear and Avowed Needs	← Unidentified / Unclear / Disavowed Needs
3) Expression of Needs	Unhealthy - Passive: inhibition, manipulation → & Ineffective - Hostile: complaint, criticism, attack...	Healthy: Offer of, and Request for support (on ongoing basis and during conflict)	← Unhealthy - Passive: inhibition, manipulation... & Ineffective - Hostile: dismissal, withdrawal, attack
4) Collaboration of Needs	Competition - You versus Me: Game on! →	Shared leadership and Collaboration	← Competition: Me versus You: Game on!
5) Relenting / Reconciliation	Inability to do relational reparative work →	Ability to relent and repair relationship	← Inability to do relational reparative work
E. Commitment (Bonding / Cementing Skills)			
1) Optimism / Hope	Pessimistic: "Things just won't improve!" →	Optimistic: We'll overcome our difficulties	← Pessimistic: "Things just won't improve"
2) Re-Engagement	Difficulty / Inability to fully re-commit to relation. →	Ongoing re-commitment to the relationship	← Difficulty / Inability to fully re-commit to relation.

Source / Bibliography: Dr. Eric Berne (Transactional Analysis), Dr. John Bowlby and Dr. Mary Ainsworth (Attachment Theory), Dr. Erik H. Erikson (Psychosocial Stages of Development), Dr. Martha Stark (*Modes of Therapeutic Action*), Dr. Robert J. Steinberg (A Triangular Theory of Love, Psychological Review, Vol 93(2), Apr 1986, 119-135.), Fr Yvon St-Arnaud (Core Life Value Theory), Dr. Barry Weinhold & Dr. Janae B. Weinhold (*Flight From Intimacy & Breaking Free of Co-dependency Trap*), Dr. Jeffrey Young (Schema Therapy).

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Relational Intimacy Model for Couple Therapy – A Summary

II. RELATIONAL STANCES			
	Co-Dependency ■ - - - - Alter-Centric - - - - ▶	Inter-Dependency ■ - - - - ▶ « Centered » ◀ - - - - ■	Counter-Dependency ■ - - - - Self-Centric - - - - ▶
	/	TT	/
III. AXIS (RELATIONAL SKILLS)	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">Therapeutic Objectives</div> </div>		
A. Relational Chemistry (Socio-physiologically based)			
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1) Optimism / Hope	Pessimistic: "Things just won't improve!" →	Optimistic: We'll overcome our difficulties	← Pessimistic: "Things just won't improve."
2) Re-Engagement	Difficulty / Inability to fully "re-commit" to rel. →	Ongoing re-commitment to the relationship	← Difficulty / Inability to fully "re-commit" to rel.
▲	▲	▲	▲
I. AXE: RELATIONAL MATRIX Childhood influence	Relational childhood injuries / traumas and lack of healthy modeling / nurturing skills	Safe / nurturing upbringing and healthy modeling / nurturing skills	Relational childhood injuries / traumas and lack of healthy modeling / nurturing skills