Intimate Relationships

Chapter 12
Intimate Relationships

• Intimacy = familiarity; having an emotional connection; knowing and being known
• People who develop successful intimate relationships:
  ✓ Believe in themselves and trust others
  ✓ Are willing to give of themselves
  ✓ Are willing to receive from others
The main thing you bring into a relationship is...  ...YOURSELF.

Our identities are evolving and developing
- Who we are now has much to do with our childhood
  - “Family of Origin”
- Gender roles
- Attachment

A positive, healthy self-concept helps us to love and respect others
- A-, H-, and M-Frame relationships
- Codependent, Independent, or Interdependent
“Friendship improves happiness and abates misery, by the doubling of our joy and the dividing of our grief.”

Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 – 43 BC)
Friendship

- The first relationships outside our family
- Provide opportunities to share ourselves and discover others
- Provide emotional support and a buffer from stress
- Teach us about tolerance, sharing, and trust
- Are like intimate partnerships in many ways, but without the sexual component
Love is the foundation of many relationships

- acceptance
- caring
- commitment
- concern for the other’s well-being
- friendship
- honesty
- interest in the other
- loyalty
- respect
- supportiveness
- trust
- wanting to be with the other
Attraction

- Proximity
- Physical Attractiveness
- Similarity
  - Do “Opposites Attract”?  
  - ...Healthy Partners COMPLEMENT one another
The Course of Love

- Early stages are typically romantic, passionate, idealistic
- The experience of love may
  - Increase levels of dopamine (NT in the brain)
    - Increased feelings of pleasure
    - Arouse the sympathetic nervous system
- Intense passion may subside or continue, intimacy may deepen or be lost... what is to come of the relationship...?
Triangular Theory of Love

- Psychologist, Robert Sternberg
- Love is composed of three parts:

  - Passion
  - Intimacy
  - Commitment
Triangular Theory of Love

- Passion - romance, attraction, sensuality
- Intimacy - feelings of warmth and closeness
- Commitment - willful part of love; cognitive

These three elements can be grown, diminished, or combined in different ways to produce different kinds of love.
Communication

• The key to developing and maintaining any type of intimate relationship

• Nonverbal communication:
  • Touch, eye contact, facial expressions, and proximity
  • Interpreting and sending nonverbal messages
  • Part of the “metamessage”

• Metamessage is the unspoken message in a communication, conveyed by nonverbal behavior and situational factors (how, when, where)
Communication Skills

✓ Self-disclosure = revealing personal information; risk is involved
✓ Listening = spend more time and energy trying to fully understand the other person’s story and less time:
  - judging, evaluating, blaming, advising, analyzing, or controlling.
  - What do you want him/her to KNOW? Vs. What do you want to say to him/her right now?
✓ Feedback = a constructive response to another’s self-disclosure; acknowledging that another’s feelings are valid
# Healthy Vs. Unhealthy Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Being in a HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP means . . .</th>
<th>If you are in an UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIP . . .</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loving and taking care of yourself, before and while in a relationship.</td>
<td>You care for and focus on the other person only and neglect yourself, or you focus only on yourself and neglect the other person.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respecting individuality, embracing differences, and allowing each person to “be themselves.”</td>
<td>You feel pressure to change to meet the other person’s standards, you are afraid to disagree, and your ideas are criticized. Or you pressure the other person to meet your standards and criticize his or her ideas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doing things with friends and family and having activities independent of each other.</td>
<td>One of you has to justify what you do, where you go, and who you see.</td>
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<td>Discussing things, allowing for differences of opinion, and compromising equally.</td>
<td>One of you makes all the decisions and controls everything without listening to the other’s input.</td>
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<td>Expressing and listening to each other’s feelings, needs, and desires.</td>
<td>One of you feels unheard and is unable to communicate what you want.</td>
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<td>Trusting and being honest with yourself and each other.</td>
<td>You lie to each other and find yourself making excuses for the other person.</td>
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<td>Respecting each other’s need for privacy.</td>
<td>You don’t have any personal space and have to share everything with the other person.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharing sexual histories and sexual health status with a partner.</td>
<td>Your partner keeps his or her sexual history a secret or hides a sexually transmitted infection from you, or you do not disclose your history to your partner.</td>
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<td>Practicing safer sex methods.</td>
<td>You feel scared about asking your partner to use protection, or he or she has refused your requests for safer sex. Or you refuse to use safer sex methods after your partner has requested, or you make your partner feel scared.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respecting sexual boundaries and being able to say no to sex.</td>
<td>Your partner has forced you to have sex, or you have had sex when you don’t really want to. Or you have forced or coerced your partner to have sex.</td>
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<td>Resolving conflicts in a rational, peaceful, and mutually agreed-upon way.</td>
<td>One or both of you yells and hits, shoves, or throws things at the other in an argument.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Having room for positive growth and learning more about each other as you develop and mature.</td>
<td>You feel stifled, trapped, and stagnant. You are unable to escape the pressures of the relationship.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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