

Grace Together and Loyal Love: Marital Renewal Models for Counseling and Ministry

PRESENTERS:

JAMES SELLS AND

JENNIFER RIPLEY

AACC CONFERENCE,

NASHVILLE TN

SEPTEMBER, 2023

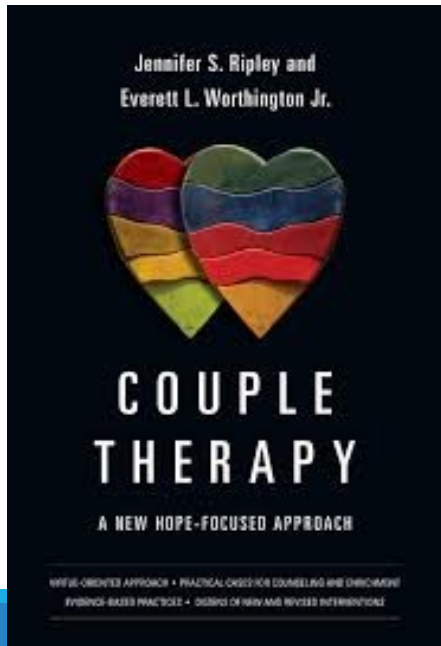
CE Objectives

1. Participants will consider the biological effects of defensive responses on marital conflict reactivity, the Biblical theology of grace—and its effects as the essential “transitional” variable from conflict to restoration.
2. Participants will understand applied concept of grace as a behavioral intervention, teachable, and applied in relational contexts.
3. Participants will observe and rehearse the interventions in an applied workshop for individual counseling, large group engagement and small group community.

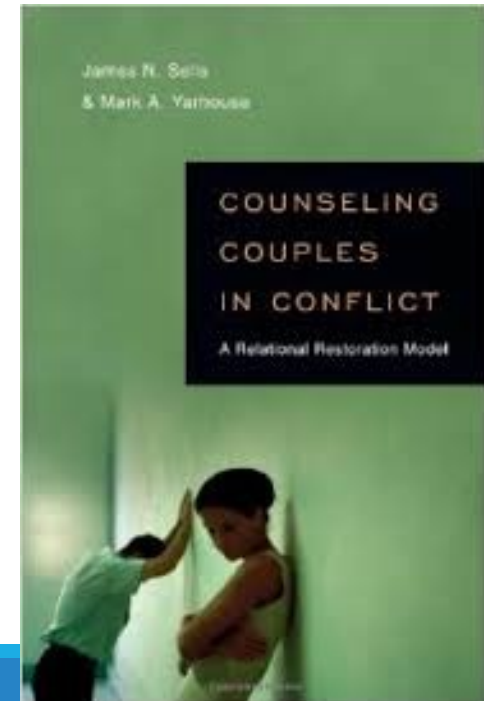
Conflicts of interest: Dr Sells and Dr Ripley have books on grace and hope concepts. We occasionally speak at churches on the concepts for income.

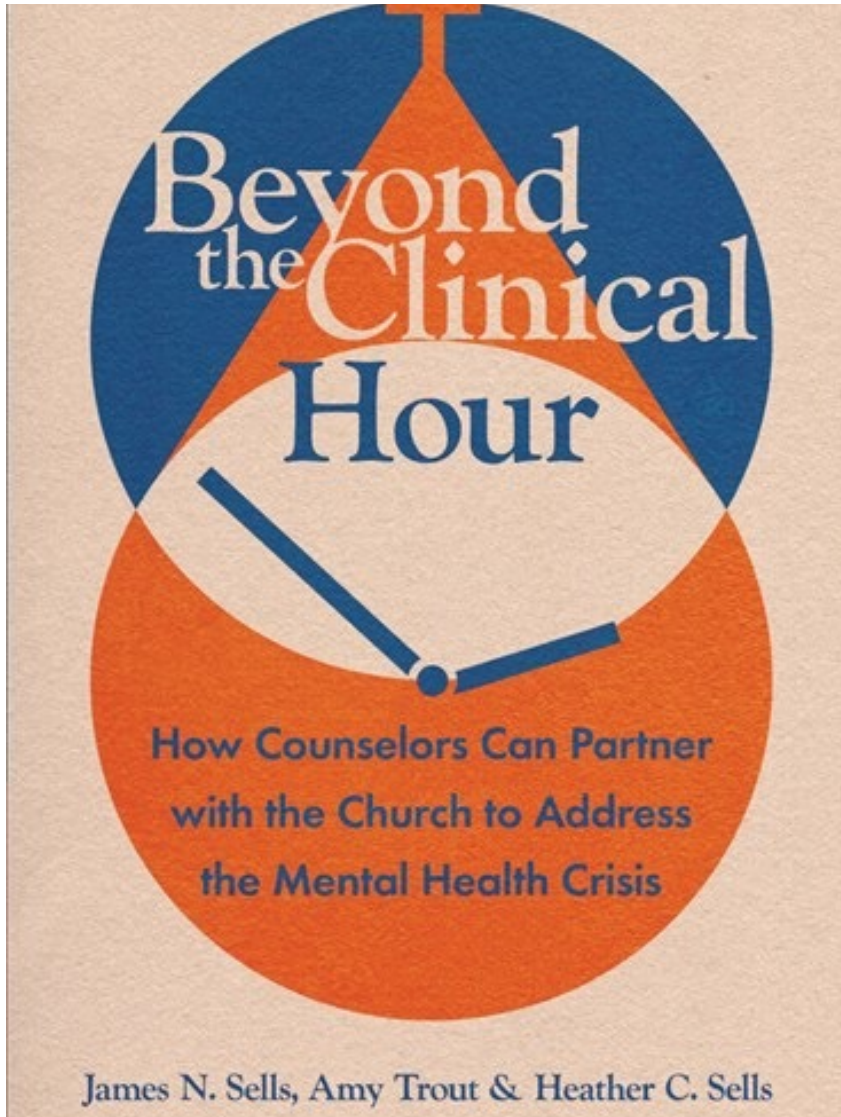


You got chocolate on my peanut butter...
Two great tastes that taste great together...
So, we formed the
CHARIS INSTITUTE



The ideas in this workshop are published in: Sells & Yarhouse *Counseling Couples in Conflict* and Ripley and Worthington *Couple Therapy: A new hope-focused application* published by IVP, both are available at the IVP booth in the convention hall.





Our emerging projects. . .

The global mental health crisis is growing faster than our existing mental health care system can address. To meet the scope of human need, we need new models of care. The good news is that there is an institution uniquely positioned with the resources and the heart to help: the church. . .

Christian Association for Psychological Studies (CAPS) Books explore how Christianity relates to mental health and behavioral sciences including psychology, counseling, social work, and marriage and family therapy in order to equip Christian clinicians to support the well-being of their clients.



Ministering to Families in Crisis: An Essential Guide
Jennifer S. Ripley, James N. Sells, and Diane J. Chandler (Editors).

A word about the Charis Institute...

Join with us in a common mission...

Education

Resourcing university students and clinicians in counseling and psychology globally.

Training

Preparing pastors and lay counselors to care for your church body through the power of psychological literature combined with ministry tools.

Research

Examining and assessing our work to ensure that it is helping families, couples, and ministries to flourish.

Social Transformation

Influencing grassroots initiatives for broad social impact.

We are a community of scholars who conduct social science research into the application of Christian-related themes on marriage and families across cultures and nations. We measure the effect of our education, training and family impact to produce effective ministry.

MARRIAGE MINISTRY

Hold a marriage workshop or small group in your church to enrich marriages!

CHARIS SCHOLARS

A Makerspace to collaborate on church based marriage and family research!

GRACE TOGETHER
MARRIAGE WORKSHOP

LOYAL LOVE

COUNSELOR TRAINING

Earn continuing education credits by attending our trainings on effective marriage ministry!

COUPLES COUNSELING

Refer couples to our Hope Couples Clinic for couples counseling, coaching, and enrichment!

Deliver effective marriage interventions through your church!
charis.regent.edu



What is Charis Institute?

Charis (The Greek word for grace) Institute at Regent University is designed to partner with your ministry to create effective communities of believers supporting healthy Christian marriages. Dr. Sells and Dr. Ripley are Christian psychologists with dozens of publications, several books, and over 50 years of collective experience understanding and helping couples become more like Christ in their relationships.

Upcoming trainings

Tuesday September 26th

11:00 AM Eastern Time on Zoom

[Charis.regent.edu](https://charis.regent.edu)

Or email us at charis@regent.edu for info

In November- CE event on Race-Based Stress in Families is planned.

Free to attend, low-cost for CE



Charis Institute

Vision to Reality: Strategies for Building a Successful Counseling Practice



JOIN US ON TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 26TH AT 11:00 AM EST FOR A ZOOM CONTINUING EDUCATION EVENT WITH GUEST SPEAKER DR. LAURA BOKAR. DR. LAURA BOKAR IS THE CEO/PRESIDENT OF FOX VALLEY INSTITUTE FOR GROWTH AND WELLNESS AND HAS BEEN AN INDIVIDUAL, MARITAL/COUPLE AND FAMILY THERAPIST FOR OVER TWO DECADES. HER APPROACH IS TAILORED TO THE CLIENT'S NEED. AT TIMES IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO SET GOALS AND OTHER TIMES PEOPLE JUST WANT TO BE HEARD. DR. LAURA PROVIDES BOTH APPROACHES, AS WELL AS OTHERS. SHE IS AN OPEN, NON-THREATENING THERAPIST WITH A SENSE OF HUMOR. SHE IS CERTIFIED IN RAPID RESOLUTION THERAPY (RRT), NEUROLINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING (NLP), CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE, PREPARE/ENRICH PRE-MARITAL ASSESSMENT, PRIMARY CARE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND DBT.

Register at: <https://charis.regent.edu/home/online/>



A few words about science

- The underlying concepts are built on basic science
 - How the brain reacts to fear broadcasting
 - How couples tend to attach to each other in healthy and unhealthy way
 - Common defenses against pain in couple relationships
 - How warm, virtuous relationships tend to be built
- How well do Grace and Hope work to improve relationships?
 - Hope focused couple therapy has a 20 year line of research showing improvements through VCU and Regent University researchers
 - Grace has a basic science article demonstrating the concept
 - Grace Together has a church-community intervention article demonstrating improvement



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But we are going to focus on HOW not Why or IF

Researchers don't actually know the mechanism of exactly how Tylenol works in our bodies to alleviate pain. Yes, it blocks pain receptor signals, but the full mechanism isn't clear,

So, they can't tell you why definitively- there are lines of research investigating WHY

We do know that Tylenol does work better than placebo

So now we need to talk about HOW to use Tylenol... I mean Couple interventions that work

How

Couple therapy. Grace concepts. Hope Approach.

Couple Workshops (Grace Together) in counseling practice or church

Couple Small Groups (Grace Together and Loyal Love) in church

<https://charis.regent.edu/>



Couples Counseling and Ministry

*BRINGING PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES IN
COUPLES COUNSELING AND FAMILY CARE TO
EVERY WILLING HOME, HELPER AND HOUSE OF
WORSHIP.*

Sign up for a Marriage Workshop

Reserve your spot at the Grace Together Workshop – offering real solutions to address relationship needs. You'll receive six teaching lessons and six engaging conversations, led by psychologists Dr. Jim Sells and Dr. Jen Ripley, to help couples discover and experience meaningful connections.
For Local Churches | Small Groups | Couples

[Learn More](#)

and behavior research. Co-led by Dr. Jim Sells, Ph.D., and Dr. Jennifer Ripley, Ph.D., directors of the [Charis Institute](#) at Regent University.

Dr. Sells and Dr. Ripley teach about Grace in Marriage. Then a small group of couples like you will meet together on Zoom for group discussions. Groups are led by counselors who are trained at Charis Institute.



GRACE TOGETHER VIDEO CONTENT

- ♥ [Module 1: Welcome and What to Expect \(Click here to watch Module 1\)](#)
- ♥ [Module 2: The Us: Who are We as a Couple and Why are We Here?](#)
- ♥ [Module 3: Pain](#)
- ♥ [Module 4: Pain, Defense, Offense Cycle](#)
- ♥ [Module 5: Grace: The Story of a Healthy Family](#)
- ♥ [Module 6: The Good Marriage](#)

The Grace Together videos are currently on a password-protected webpage which can be found by clicking the button below. If you need the password, please email us at charis@regent.edu.

[Access all Grace Together Videos](#)

Workbook Downloads

[Participant Workbook](#)

[Leader Workbook](#)

[Project Planning Guide](#)

[Online Group Leader Tip Sheet](#)

Build your couples group with the Loyal Love Marriage Small Group

An 8-week program to build up a couples group for your church and point everyone towards following Jesus with loyal love in marriage relationships.

HOW DOES THIS GROUP WORK?

Couples come together in a small group to help each other to grow to be more like Jesus in your marriage relationship. The participant and leaders manuals have all of the information you need to conduct a group.

WHAT ELSE CAN WE DO BETWEEN GROUP MEETINGS?

You can listen to a podcast about that week's theme in the form a discussion between Dr James Sells and Dr Jennifer Ripley, psychologists, co-directors of the Charis Institute and the Hughes professors of Christian integration at Regent University.

You can read good content on the theme of the week. The Charis Institute also collected good ideas focused on the theme of the week. These are weblink that include poems, artwork, devotionals, music, Bible verses and other "artifacts" that can enrich your daily quiet time or bring your closer to the goal of being more like Jesus through your marriage.

Manuals to Download



**LOYAL LOVE
PARTICIPANTS
MANUAL**



**LOYAL LOVE
LEADERS MANUAL**

The plan. . .

Form groups of 3 or 4 with those near you.

This will be your counseling team.

Two of you will be the couple, one the counselor, one the observer.

You will rotate turns demonstrating the steps. . .

Let's start with
HOPE

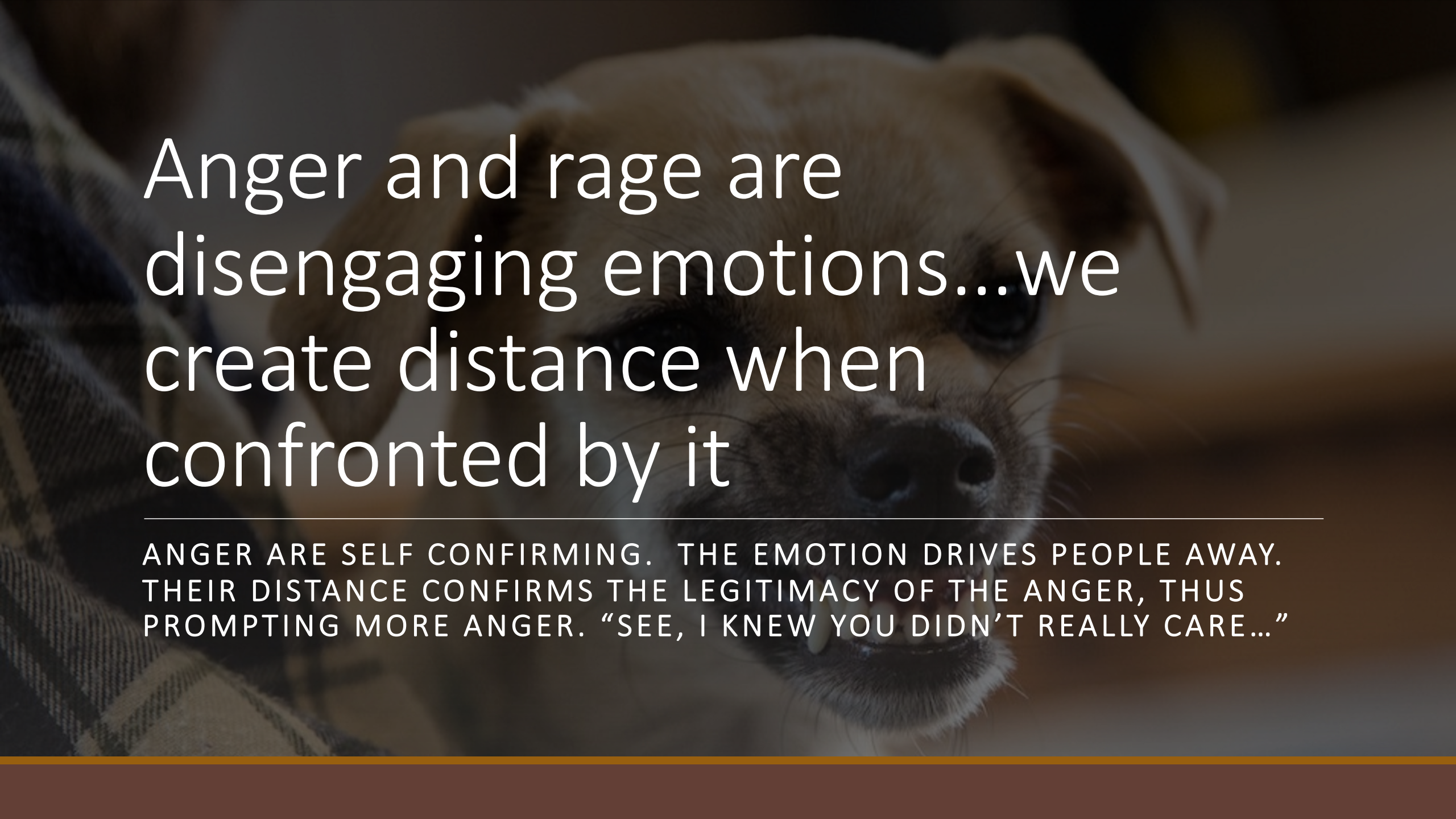
**COUPLES WILL LIKELY SEEK COUNSELING
IN:**

- 1. AN ELEVATED PSYCHOLOGICAL STATE WHERE THEY ARE REACTIVE TO BEHAVIORS WITH THEIR CONFLICT SPOUSE.**
- 2. A DISENGAGED, HOPELESS, DESPAIRING MENTAL FRAME PROMPTED BY CONSISTENT FAILURE TO ALTER RELATIONAL PATTERNS.**

**IN THE ABSENCE OF HOPE INDIVIDUALS
USUALLY INSERT FEAR, ANGER OR
DESPAIR.**



What emotional impulse is created with these two images? How are you inclined to act towards either dog?



Anger and rage are
disengaging emotions...we
create distance when
confronted by it

ANGER ARE SELF CONFIRMING. THE EMOTION DRIVES PEOPLE AWAY. THEIR DISTANCE CONFIRMS THE LEGITIMACY OF THE ANGER, THUS PROMPTING MORE ANGER. "SEE, I KNEW YOU DIDN'T REALLY CARE..."

Couples counseling can't work. . .

When a couple provokes both with anger, rage, resentment, disengagement, blame. . .

And pulls the counselor into the role of referee, rescuer or arbiter.





1. With your Team

Discuss the challenge that you have faced in couples counseling when seeking to create an effective environment for change.



Sadness,
woundedness
and sorrow are
engaging emotions.
We are drawn to
help.
Therefore, We ...

OUR IMPORTANT TASK IS TO
CONVERT ANGER AND WRATH TO
WOUNDEDNESS AND SORROW

Couples
counseling
works . . .

When their
defenses and
emotional reactivity
is controlled,
despair and
frustration is
contained. . .





The counselor starts with

HOPE:

The “Telos” —a desired pursuit, that condition which is desired by both.

The fundamental of hope is usually shared. Couples must have a common goal to initiate successful intervention.

. . .a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect. . . | Peter 3:15



Hope begins with...

Altering the initial purpose of
therapy from

Telling the counselor ALL THAT IS
WRONG WITH THEIR SPOUSE. . .

To identify the common or similar
dream aspiration about life
together.



2. WITH YOUR TEAM: THREE QUESTIONS I MAY USE TO ESTABLISH HOPE. . .

1. As a child or adolescent, imagining your self as married, what did you want, what did you hope?

2. When you considered marriage and projected your life over the next 20, 30, 40, or 50 years. . . What is your dream for your marriage when you look back on it one day?

3. How is marriage part of what you want out of life?

Their “want” and “hope” is the goal for counseling.
Their “want” and “hope” is usually the same.

Four Hopes in Couple's Care: Think S.I.I.S



THE HOPE OF
SECURITY



THE HOPE OF
IDENTITY



THE HOPE OF
INTIMACY



THE HOPE OF
SIGNIFICANCE

Our US Hope

- I wanted to marry my best friend. (Intimacy)
- A house, a picket fence, and a porch. . .and everything that comes with it. (Security)
- I wanted a companion for adventure. (Significance)
- To grow old and see our children thrive (Identity)



3. With your counseling team...
Fill in the circle with the hopes the couple may
have toward life...

Pain

THE IMPEDIMENT TO
THE GOAL. . .

4. WITH YOUR TEAM:

QUESTIONS TO REAL PAIN RESPONSE

What provokes you to emotional reaction?

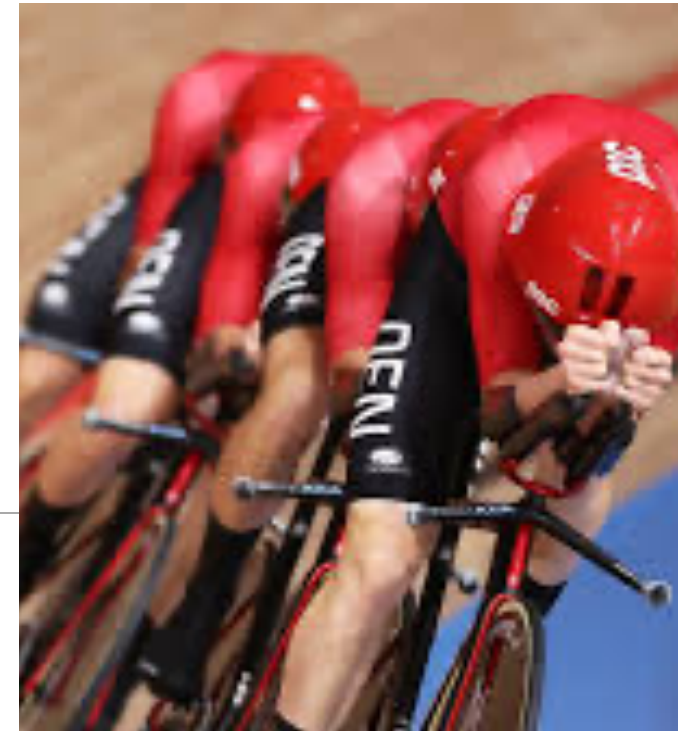
What “pushes your buttons”?

What gets under your skin?

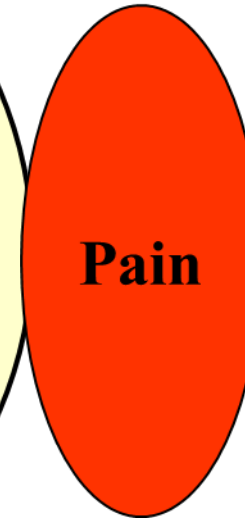
When you have a “bad day”, what makes it bad?

They may make the other person the object of their pain, block this and

stay in the realm of the general.



**Husband/
Partner**



**Wife/
Partner**

NEXT TO THE RED OVALS,
IDENTIFY THE TYPES OF PROVOCATIONS FOR EACH SPOUSE.

The Defense

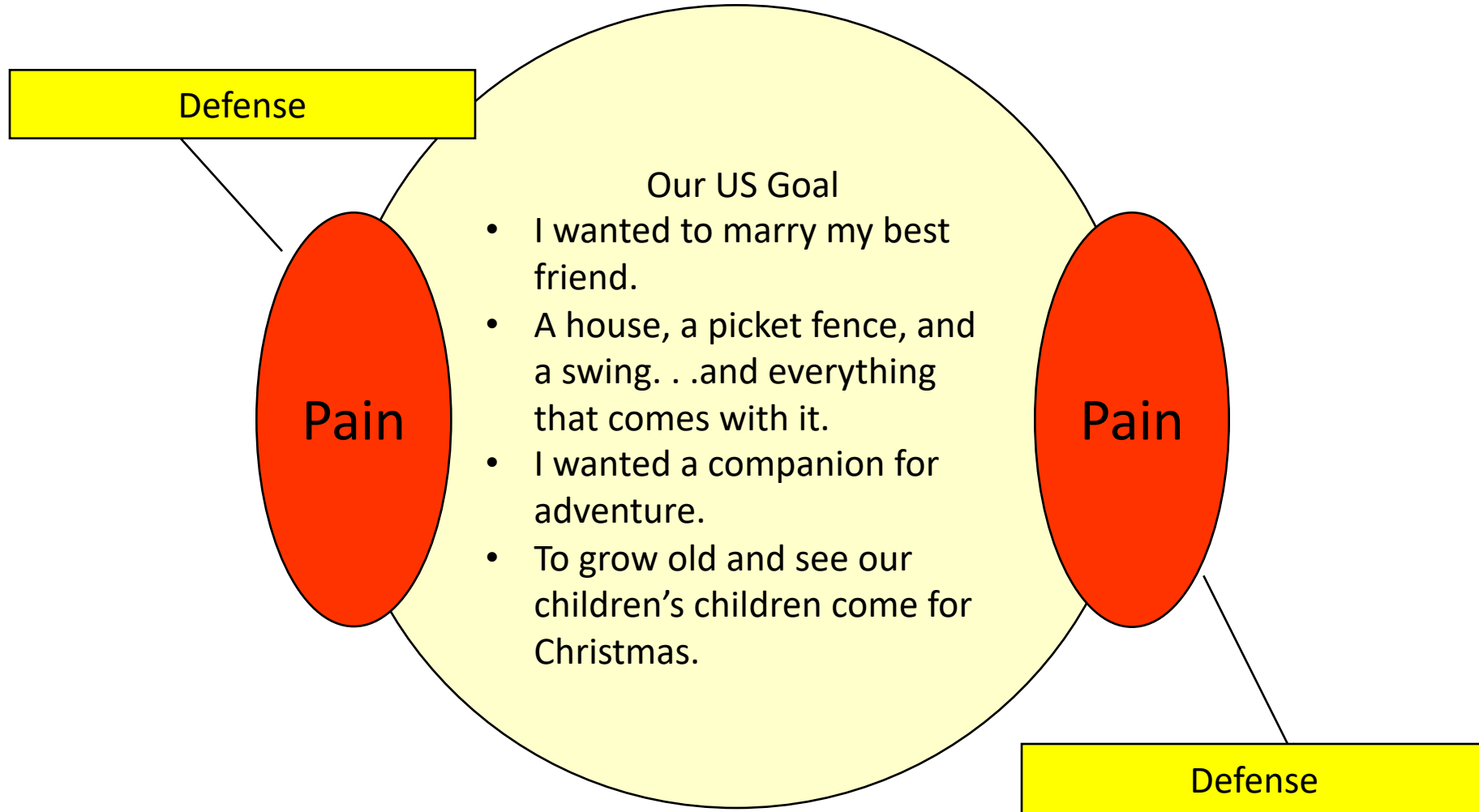
The essential impediments. . .



Pain and Defense

Husband/Partner

Wife/Partner



5. With your team:
What to ask to discover the Defenses. . .

If I were a fly on the wall, and I saw you come home after the bad day you described. . .

What would I see you do to feel better?

In your groups, try this step. . .

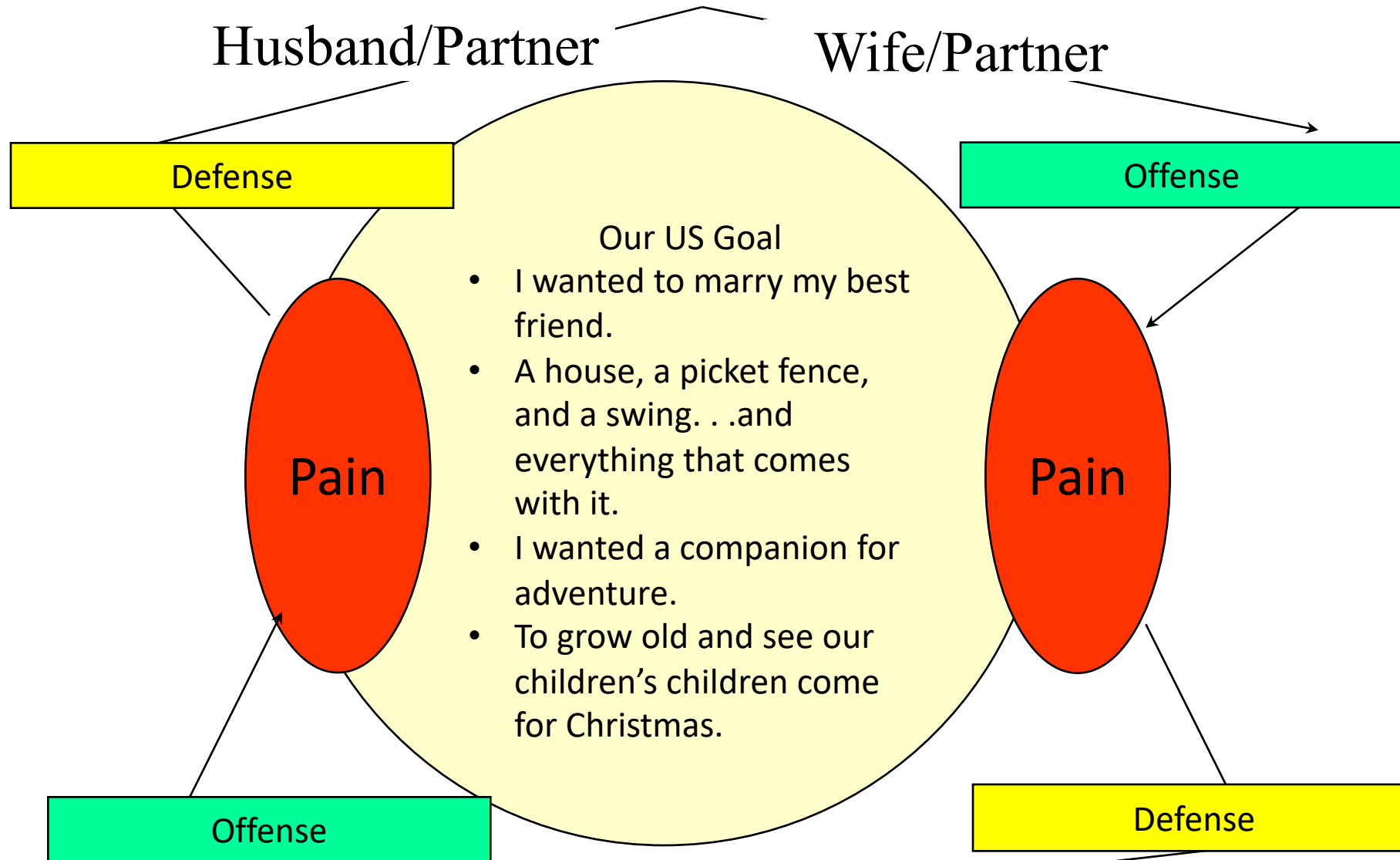


Defensive weapons

Are

OFFENSIVE

Pain, Defense and Injury



6. With your team: What to ask to reveal offensiveness. . .

Do you recall seeing him/her
(State defensive condition)?

**When you experience
_____ , what are you
inclined to feel?**

In your groups, try this step. . .



Altering the
Pattern of
Pain/Defense:

The Gift of Grace



7. With your team: Discovering everyone's Grace experience

Recall from childhood an adult other than a parent or grand parent who showed goodness to you. . .

Did you ever pay back that person?

Now recall a person that you went out of your way to help, just because it was right.

Did you expect to get compensated for your kindness?

You both know the experience of grace—giving and receiving outside of merit.

In your groups, try this step. . .



Effective Counseling Culminates with Creating Virtue

Weekly tasks focusing on skill formation
targeting specific virtues associated with marital beauty.

***Couples are building good (hope) as they seek
to control and redirect their pain and injury
(grace).***

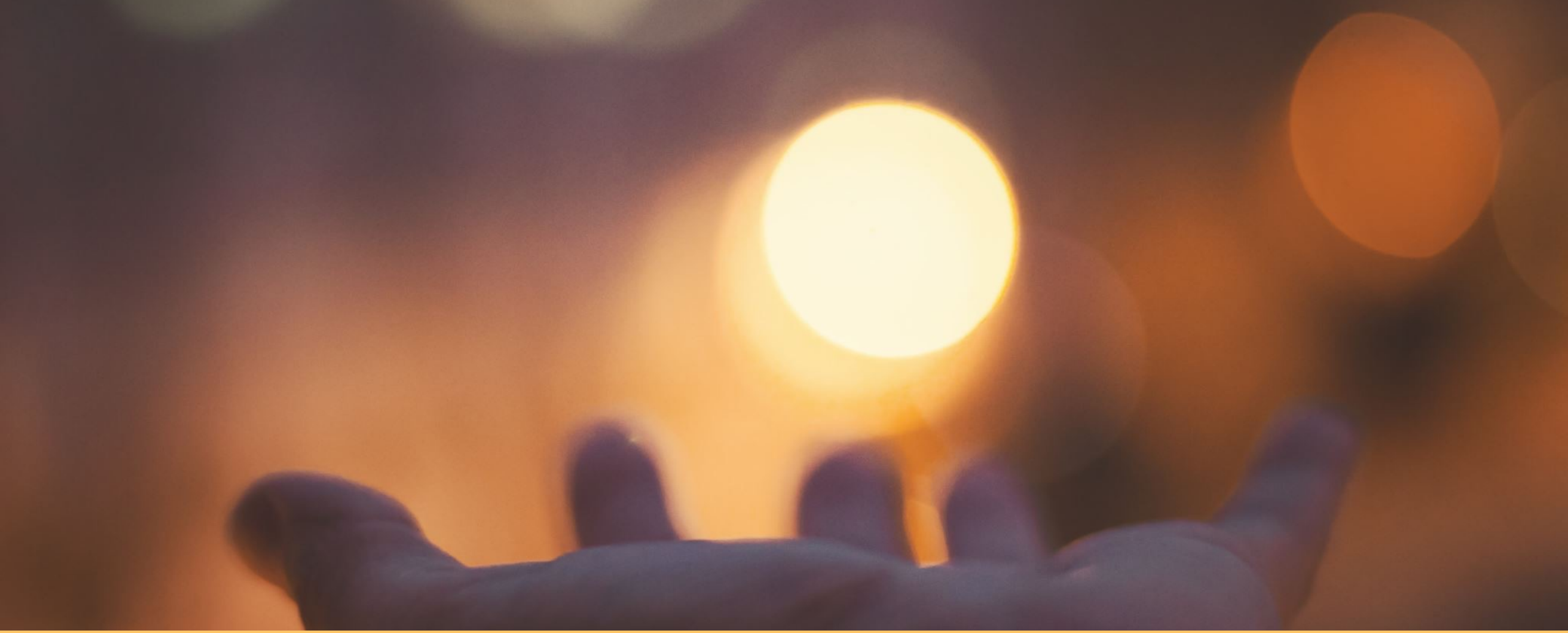


Spiritual Growth with Couples

Growing virtue is growing into a good husband or wife to co-create a good marriage

How do you grow virtues in a person?

Bootstrap pulling and behavioral models don't work long-term and are exhausting



Just be good (perfect)... just be good...collapse



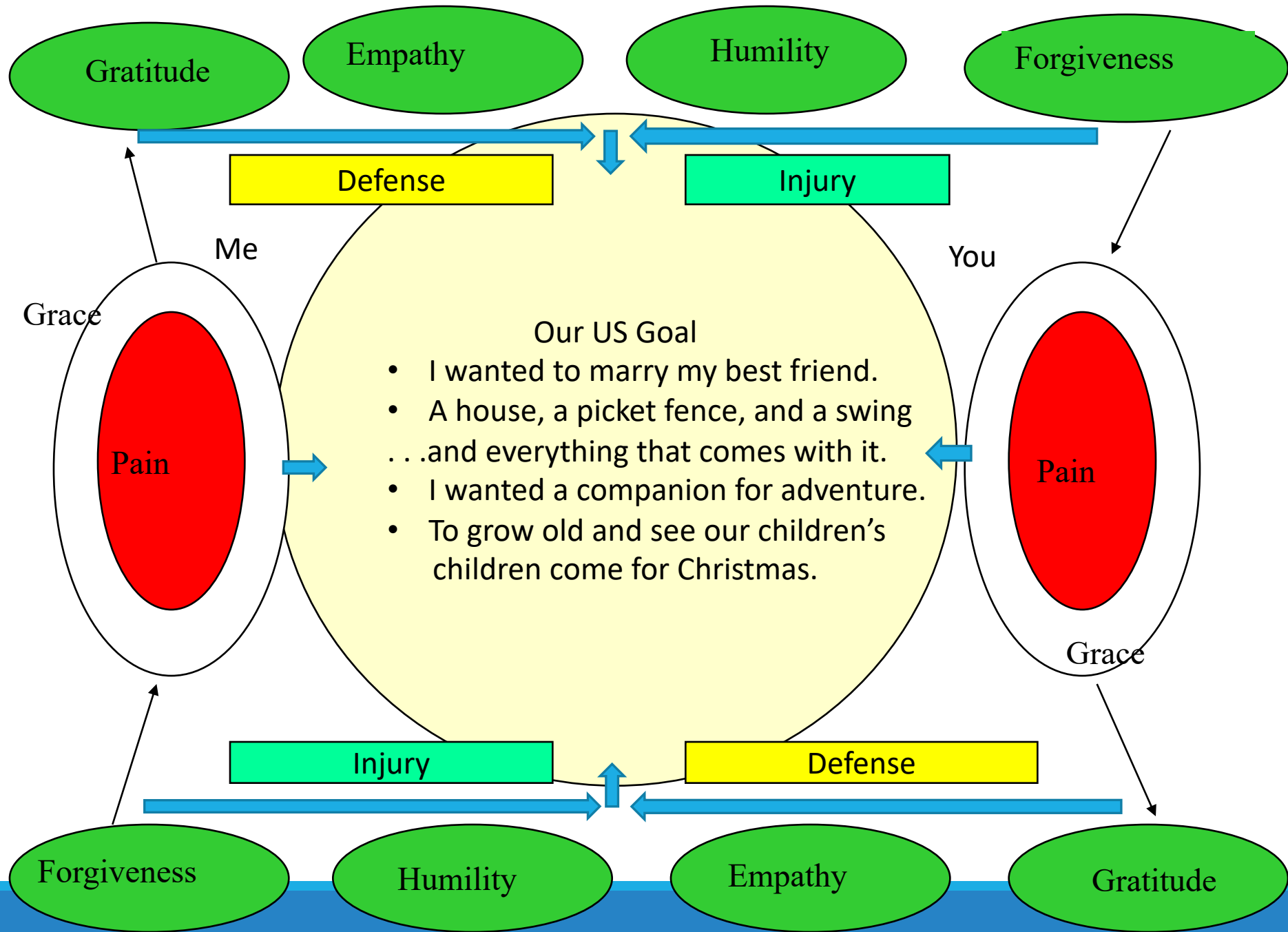
Faith, Work and Love within Grace

Faith- Trust in Partner, Trust in God, Trust in Spiritual Leaders, Trust in Therapist

Work- Build habits

Love- valuing and not devaluing

Grace- flowing from the Holy Spirit, not perfectionism or performance



8. Teams create Compassion/Empathy plan

Useful during seasons of pain. (Charis website blog on Compassion available)

Example:

1. Improve in listening to pain without fixing the problem
2. Spend time remembering similar pain in your own life
3. Imagine your spouse's world — the challenges they are facing, the people and tasks, their struggles and worries, the hopes they have for the day. What is it like place yourself in their shoes? What do you feel? Pray for your spouse's challenges, worries and hopes.



8. Teams create Gratitude skill building

[Charis website blog on Gratitude](#) available

Gratitude tasks and examples:

Each day this week, pick one aspect of your spouse that you are grateful for. Thank your spouse, call attention to that aspect, and be grateful.

Spend some time in prayer thanking God for the blessings in your life.

Start a gratitude journal. Write about three to five things you are especially grateful for.

If you would like to get your children involved, make a gratitude tree as a fun activity.

With your counseling team. . .

Fill in the circle with the hopes the couple may have toward life...



1000 creative ways to extend grace

Many of the couple therapy techniques, concepts and ideas you have learned fit into the grace umbrella. Be creative., Engage them in creating grace extensions



To summarize your Team's accomplishment: You can stay with conflicted, angry “smoking hot” couples by:

1. Through the power of your gracious relationship
2. Creating a desirable goal
3. Altering the focus from Guarded Anger to Empathic Wound
4. Identifying the pattern of pain-defense-offense.
5. Creating a space for Grace as an exit from the Conflict cycle towards healing constructs of goodness.



We are grateful for you!

Contact us

charis@regent.edu

www.charis.regent.edu

AACC attenders receive access to free Workshop and Small Group material if partner with us in program evaluation research