Relationship Science Online

Therapeutic Approaches: Negative Reciprocity

Therapeutic Approaches

- **For negative reciprocity** (Baucom et al., 2010; Epstein & Baucom, 2003)
  - Get partners to become aware of the pattern: discuss with them the nature of their interaction and how the partners influence each other
  - Each person acknowledge his or her role in the interaction
  - Solutions to break the pattern
    1. *Important to not initiate a negative interaction that involves blaming and complaining about the other person in a derogatory or demeaning way.*
    2. *Even if one person does make a critical or hurtful comment, the other individual is not to reciprocate and escalate this process*
  - Speak to each member about his or her responsibility for not initiating or maintaining a negative interaction pattern, no matter how tempting it may be to do so when one is upset with one's partner
  - Obtain the partners' commitment to change this pattern
    - *After obtaining a commitment, it can be helpful to ask each person to address what he or she might do specifically to alter this pattern.*

Therapeutic Approaches

- **For negative reciprocity** (Baucom et al., 2010; Epstein & Baucom, 2003)
  - Recognise that past overlearned negative behaviors don't serve a positive function in this situation
  - Ground rules for communication, dealing with conflict (see Halford, 2011 skills)
  - Working with emotions: scheduling time to engage in cognitively oriented decision making time, and other time for the expression of emotions – coach the client to notice emotions and save them for later
    - *Distress-tolerance approach (Linehan, 1993): the affect is a cue that are dealing with something important, so need to take the time to solve constructively*