Relationship Science Online

Therapeutic Approaches: Suggestions…

Therapeutic Approach Suggestions

- Davila (2003) **provide a number of suggestions for therapy from an attachment perspective.**
- **Suggestion 1: Conduct an assessment of attachment style**
  - Administer and score the ECR-S (or another reliable and valid self report attachment measure)
- **Suggestion 2: Conceptualise the controlling problem as attachment based:**
  - The conflict interactions that occur, and the way individuals relate to one another (and maintain insecurity and dissatisfaction) are seen as underpinned by issues central to attachment insecurity.
  - Intervention approach and communication with clients is underpinned by an attachment focus.
  - Christensen et al (1995) – IBCT perspective of identifying controlling rather than derivative problems

Therapeutic Approach Suggestions

- **Suggestion 3: Emphasise support skills in addition to communication skills**
  - Shift focus away from conflict resolution (possibly less of a focus on enhancing communication skills) to a focus on the effective seeking and provision of support.
    - *Helping couples become more effective help providers and seekers.*
  - Psychoeducation about the functions of support – general information as well as with an attachment focus.
    - *Esteem and comfort support / secure base and safe haven support (for review see Cutrona, 2012).*
    - *Styles of providing care (sensitive and responsive, controlling, distant, compulsive, Kunce & Shaver, 1994).*
    - *Styles of seeking support (extent to which one expresses or represses needs [Jacobson & Holtzworth-Munroe, 1986, conveys needs in a direct / indirect manner).*
    - *Identify support needs and circumstances under which feel safe to seek support, and what support they want (optimal matching model of social support, Cutrona & Russell, 1990)*

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- **Suggestion 4: Reduce abandonment fears and increase comfort with intimacy**
  - Abandonment fears and discomfort with intimacy are issues tied to chronic marital distress and dissolution.
  - Across various therapies, these issues can be addressed through an experiential/emotional focus in therapy.
  - Encourage the couple to engage in expressive and receptive communication about these issues:
    - *The therapist may need to guide the couple through such communication attempts by helping to reflect/paraphrase each other's position as well as check in with each partner to ensure they accurately decode the partner's communication of the issue at hand and their perceptions and emotions.*
    - *Therapist can act as a role model on how to engage in empathy.*
    - *Therapist can encourage constructive forms of communication and discourage destructive forms such as blame and criticism – can ask the client to re-frame a given comment in a way that removes the attack on the partner.*
    - *As couple becomes more comfortable and consistent in communicating this way, issues of abandonment and intimacy should become less problematic.*
      - *Trust and support is addressed.*
    - *Facilitate each person's awareness of their own and their partner's attachment concerns and then to express them to each other.*



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