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## Dangerous Love

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# Objectives

**At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:**

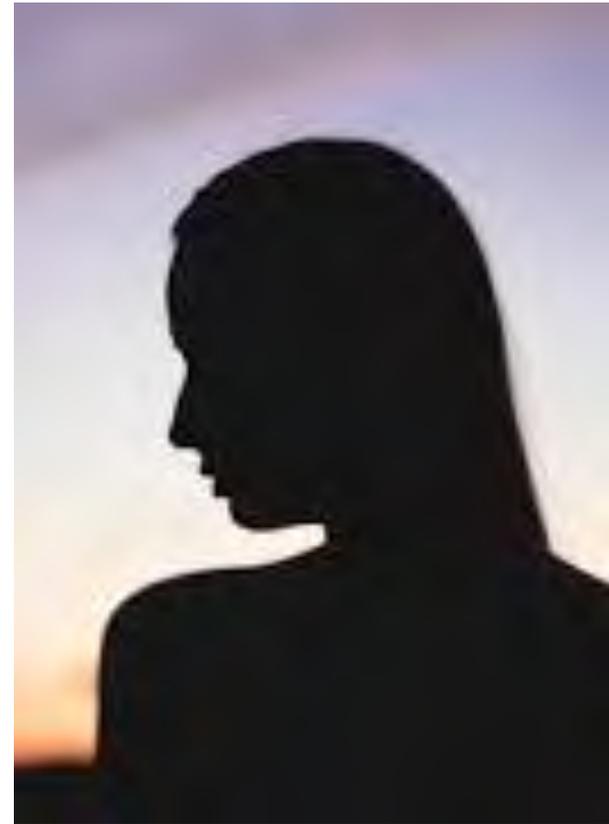
1. Describe theories concerning the possible reasons for attraction to those who may have unhealthy traits.
2. Outline the dynamics that can occur in clients presenting with the “Dark Triad” personality traits (a combination of narcissism, psychopathology, and Machiavellianism), including in conjunction with the presence of sexual addiction.
3. Review the impact of parenting and attachment styles on future psychopathology in adults.
4. Describe processes involved within a partnership when one person displays the Dark Triad features and sexual addiction.
5. Apply therapeutic interventions in assisting individuals and couples experiencing these difficulties.

# Clinicians want to know...

Is my client suffering from sexual addiction and/or is there something darker I may be missing?

Why are my clients attracted to people who are unhealthy for them?

Why do they stay in harmful relationships?



# Sex Addiction?

## But it is not in the DSM.

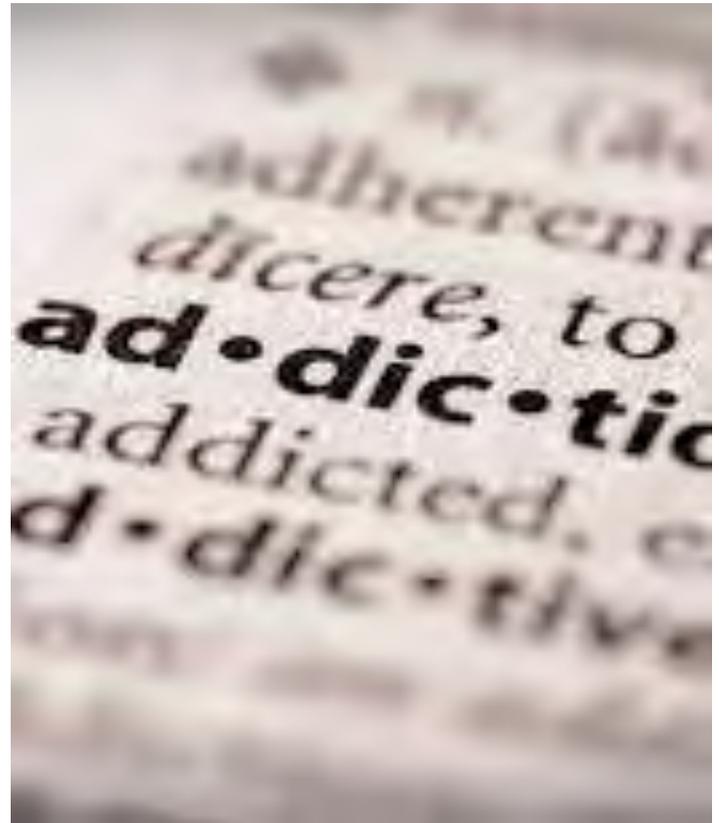


- ❖ Until the current Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fifth edition (DSM-5) the term addiction did not appear in any version of the American Psychiatric Association's manual.
- ❖ Addiction is now included as a category and, the description contains both substance use disorders and **non-substance use** disorders.

Harvard Health Blog

# What is addiction?

- ❖ Is it physical or psychological?
- ❖ Is it a disease? If so does it involve the body or brain?
- ❖ Is it secondary to a personality flaw or lack of morality?
- ❖ Is it due to a lack of spirituality?



According to the  
**American Society  
of Addiction Medicine**

- ❖ Addiction is a primary, chronic, disease of the brain reward, motivation, memory, and related circuitry.
- ❖ Dysfunction of these circuits lead to characteristic biological, psychological, social, and spiritual manifestations.
- ❖ This is reflected in an individual pathologically pursuing reward and/or relief by substance use **and other behaviors.** (my emphasis)

(ASAM website)

# ASAM Definition

continued:

- ❖ Addiction is characterized by an inability to consistently abstain, impairment in **behavior control**, craving, diminished recognition of significant problems with one's **behaviors** and **interpersonal relationships** and a dysfunctional emotional response.
- ❖ Like other chronic diseases, addiction often involves cycles of relapse and remission.
- ❖ Without treatment or involvement in recovery activities, addiction is progressive and can result in disability or premature death.

ASAM Website



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# Addiction

## ASAM 9/15/19 addition to definition

Addiction is treatable, chronic medical disease involving complex interactions among brain circuits, genetics, the environment, and an individual's life experiences. People with addiction use substances or engage in **behaviors** that become compulsive and often continue despite harmful consequences. Prevention efforts and treatment approaches for addiction are generally as successful as those for other chronic diseases.



# Consensus is growing.

Addiction is a relationship between an individual and an object or **activity**.



- ❖ It is about the complex struggle between acting on impulse and resisting that impulse.



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- ❖ Addiction experts are beginning to move away from the notion that there are multiple addictions, each tied to a particular substance or activity.
- ❖ New thinking and new models suggest there is one addiction that is associated with multiple expressions that can include drugs or **drug-free activities**.

Harvard Health Blog

# American Foundation for Addiction Research

Before COVID-19, Addiction has been one of the single greatest public health crises facing our country.

We are losing a whole generation to addiction.

Addiction is the greatest source of crime, violence, shattered relationships, and broken bodies.



AFAR

# Prevalence of Addiction (AFAR)

## Worldwide:

140 million to alcohol

208 million to other drugs

## In the US alone:

30 million to food

***24 million to sex***

6 million to gambling



# Sex Addiction Defined

- ❖ Any sexually-related compulsive behavior which interferes with normal living and causes severe stress on family, friends, loved ones, and one's work environment.



- ❖ Inability to stop these behaviors on one's own.

Sexhelp.com

# PATHOS

- ❖ Do you often find yourself preoccupied with sexual thoughts? (Preoccupied)
- ❖ Do you hide some of your sexual behavior from others? (Ashamed)
- ❖ Have you ever sought help for sexual behavior you did not like? (Treatment)
- ❖ Has anyone been hurt emotionally because of your sexual behavior? (Hurt others)
- ❖ Do you feel controlled by your sexual desire? (Out of control)
- ❖ When you have sex, do you feel depressed afterwards? (Sad)

# There is more going on here.



- ❖ The sex is out of control but this client or client's loved one may have something else going on that alarms you as well.
- ❖ Perhaps there is a pattern of this individual getting into one unhealthy relationship after another.

# Why some men and women are attracted to dangerous people

- ❖ For men: short term mating evolutionarily adaptive (Bush and Schmitt, 1993)
- ❖ For Women: Good genes trade off for lack of commitment

(Gangestad, 1993)



# Women attracted to dangerous men

- ❖ High value assigned to facial and body attractiveness
- ❖ Desire for protection
- ❖ Willingness to overlook potential costs
  - ❖ Pregnancy
  - ❖ STD's
  - ❖ Violence

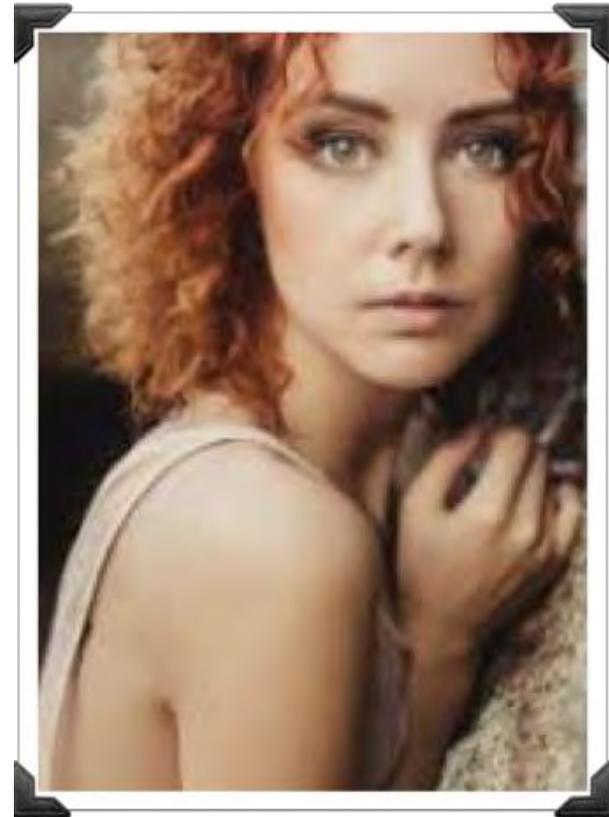


(Van Dongen, & Gangestad 2011)

# Men attracted to dangerous women

- ❖ Predisposed for casual sex
- ❖ Desire for shallow relationships only
- ❖ Less commitment = fewer parental obligations = more potential offspring

(Van Dongen, & Gangestad 2011)



# The Dark Triad

The underlying psychology of a predator:

“A combination of personality traits, that if developed when one is young enough, often predisposes them to develop the kind of behaviors all too often seen in people in positions of power in our society today.”

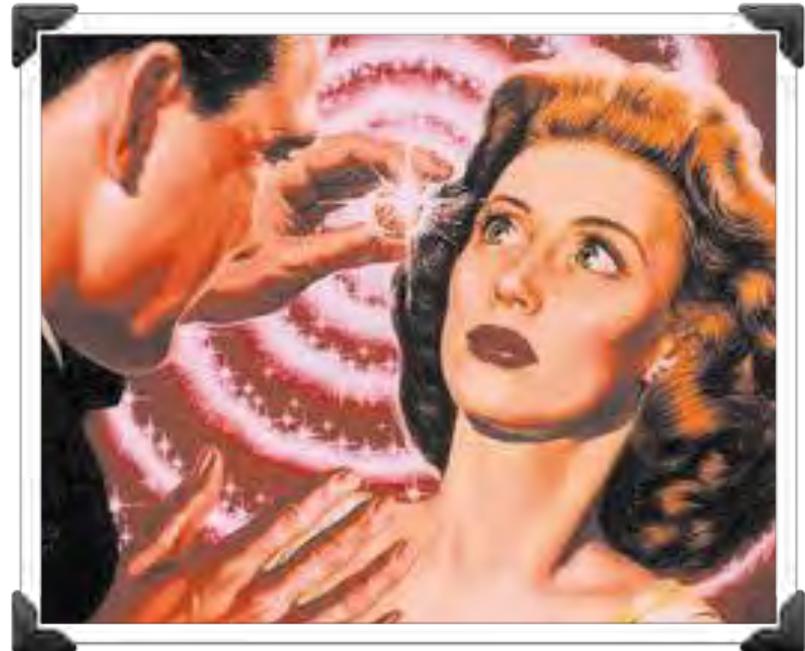
Mauka, 2018



# The Dark Triad

The foundation of a host of undesirable behaviors including:

- Aggressiveness,
- Sexual opportunism,
- Uncontrolled impulsivity,
- Psychopathy and
- Predatory behavior in general.

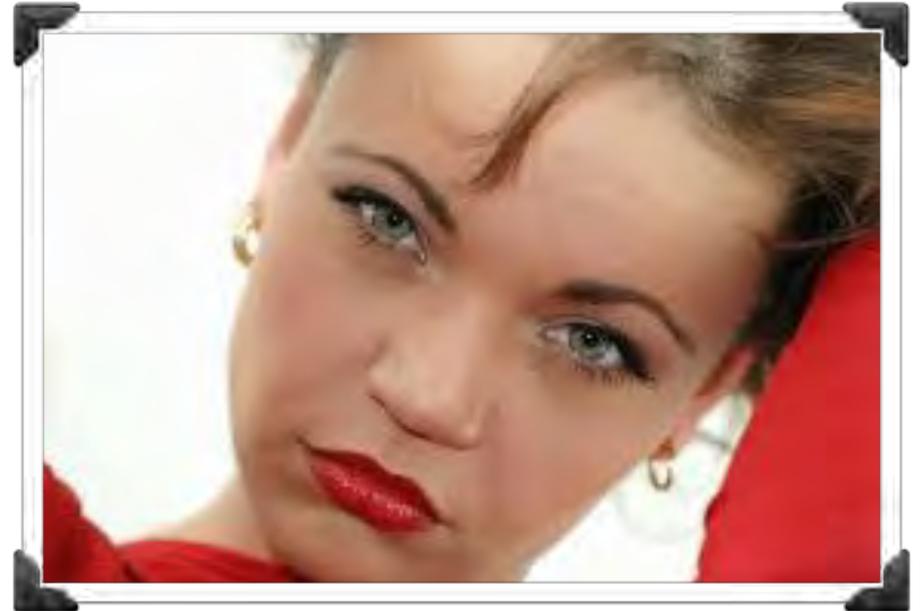


Mauka, 2018

# What do these dangerous folks look like?

## The Dark Triad

- ❖ Narcissism
- ❖ Psychopathy
- ❖ Machiavellianism



# Narcissism

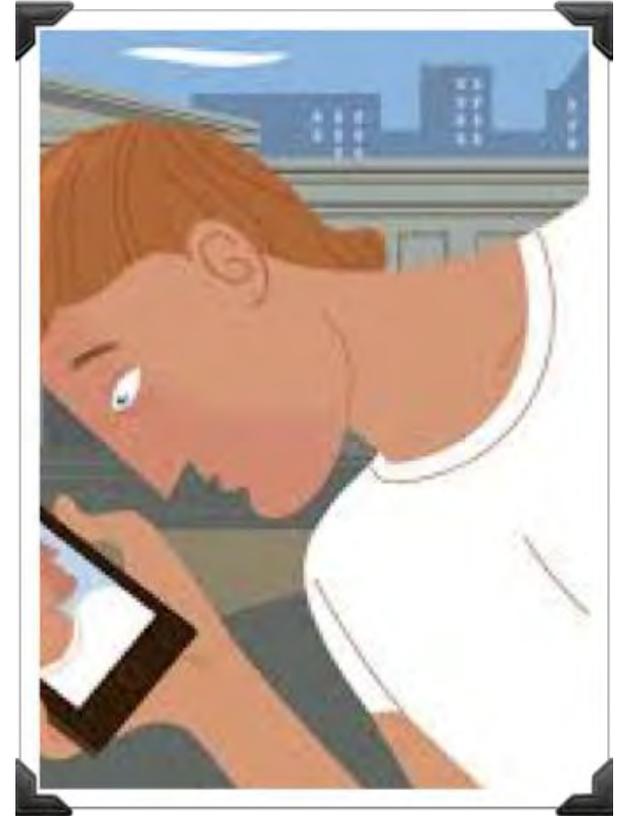
**This person truly believes they are superior to everybody else simply because they are who they are and they exist.**

- ❖ God complex
- ❖ Infinite self-regard is coping mechanism
- ❖ Deeply fractured sense of Self
- ❖ History of sexual abuse.
- ❖ Consumed with self "love"
- ❖ No ability to empathize with another's pain



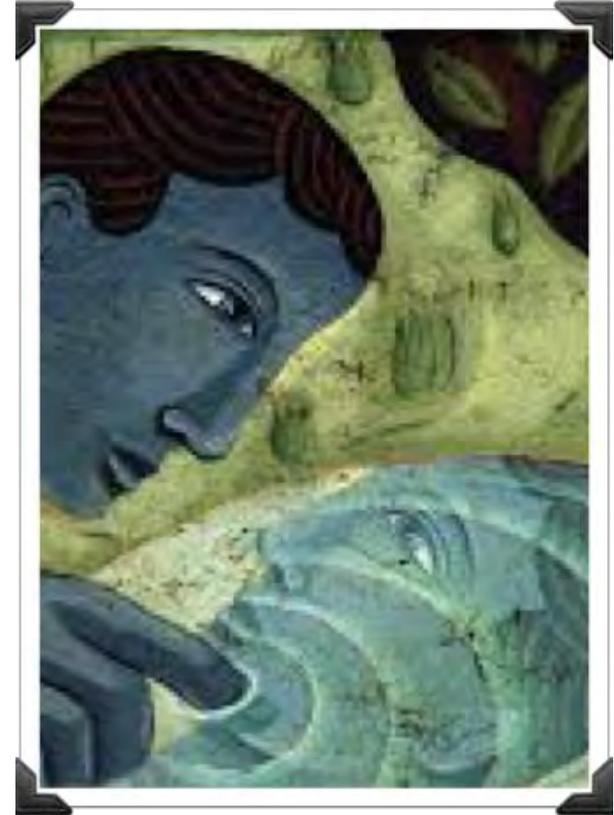
# Narcissism, cont.

- ❖ Dominance
- ❖ Sense of entitlement
- ❖ Grandiose self-view (Raskin & Terry, 1988)
- ❖ Greater in men than women (Foster, Campbell, & Twenge, 2003)
- ❖ Ability to compete with own sex
- ❖ Repels mate shortly after intercourse (Van Dongen, & Gangestad 2011)



# Narcissism, cont.

- ❖ Easy to begin new relationships
- ❖ Perceive multiple opportunities available to them
- ❖ Less likely to remain monogamous  
(Campbell, Foster, Finkel, 2002)
- ❖ Have more illegitimate children  
(Rowe, 1995)
- ❖ Groom and advertise wealth and resource provision  
(Campbell and Foster, 2002)



# Psychopathy

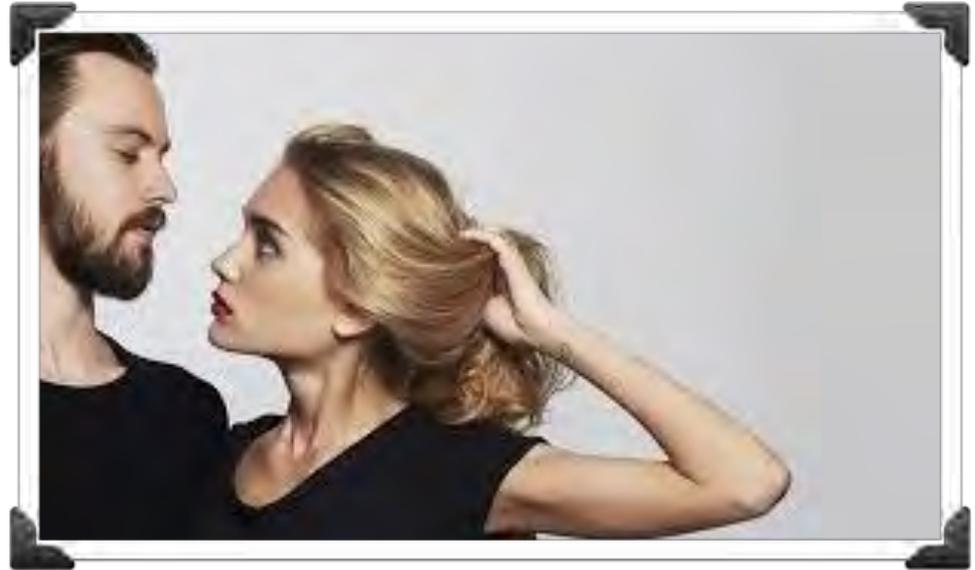
**How your brain connects your behavioral choices to your sense of guilt/remorse.**

- ❖ No aversion for immoral or harmful behavior
- ❖ Feel no empathy, guilt or remorse
- ❖ The result of being abused so horribly that they cannot interact with others in a normal way.



# Psychopathy, cont.

- ❖ Callousness
- ❖ Lack of empathy
- ❖ Erratic behavior
- ❖ Moral deficit
- ❖ Antisocial (Rules don't apply to me.)



# Psychopathy, cont.



- ❖ Interpersonal hostility
- ❖ Superficial charm
- ❖ Deceit
- ❖ Sexually exploitative

# Niccolò di Bernardo dei Machiavelli

Italian diplomat, politician, philosopher, humanist, and writer of the Renaissance.

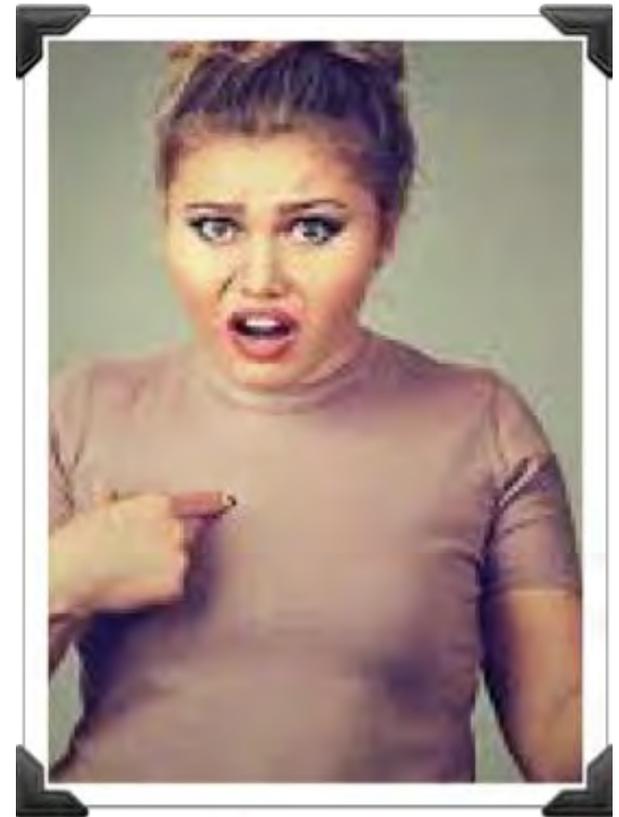
- ❖ Brought cynicism into politics
- ❖ Made evil recommendations to leaders
- ❖ Wrote The Prince
- ❖ “The offenses one does to a man should be such that one does not fear revenge for it.”
- ❖ “Never attempt to wield force what can be won by deception.”



# Machiavellianism

**The tendency for someone to see all social paradigms and scenarios as games of strategy that require meticulous maneuvering.**

- ❖ See life as a game of poker or chess
- ❖ Always gaming for a win.
- ❖ Manipulative
- ❖ Intelligent
- ❖ Make mental moves way ahead of their perceived competition.
- ❖ Can not relate to others.



# Machiavillianism

Machiavellianism is the art of duplicity which forms the core intellectual component of the dark triad.

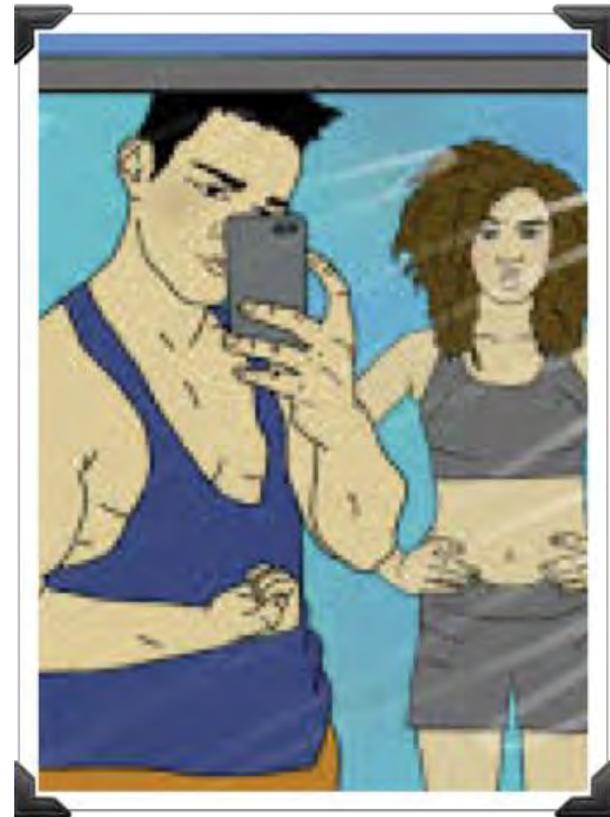


- ❖ Deceitful
- ❖ Insincere
- ❖ Extraverted
- ❖ Manipulative
- ❖ Coercive
- ❖ Opportunistic

# Dark Triad

(Narcissism, Psychopathy, Machiavillianism)

- ❖ May represent male adaptation for short-term mating
- ❖ Most studies depend on self-report
- ❖ Strong association with Big 5 traits

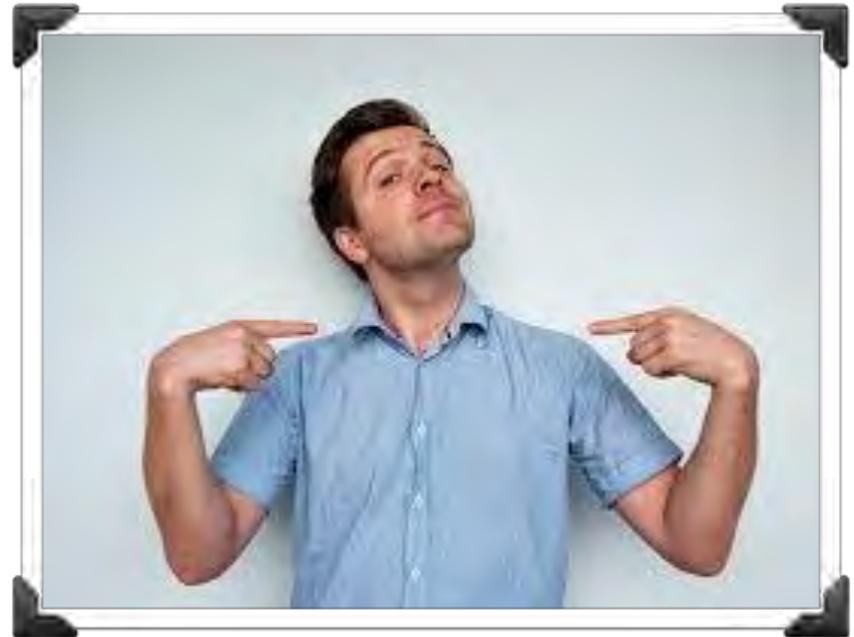


# The Dark Triad Survey

1. I tend to manipulate others to get my way.
2. I tend to lack remorse.
3. I tend to want others to admire me.
4. I tend to be unconcerned with the morality of my actions.
5. I have used deceit or lied to get my way.
6. I tend to be callous or insensitive.
7. I have used flattery to get my way.
8. I tend to seek prestige or status.
9. I tend to be cynical.
10. I tend to exploit others toward my own end.
11. I tend to expect special favors from others.
12. I want others to pay attention to me.

# Big 5 Personality Factors

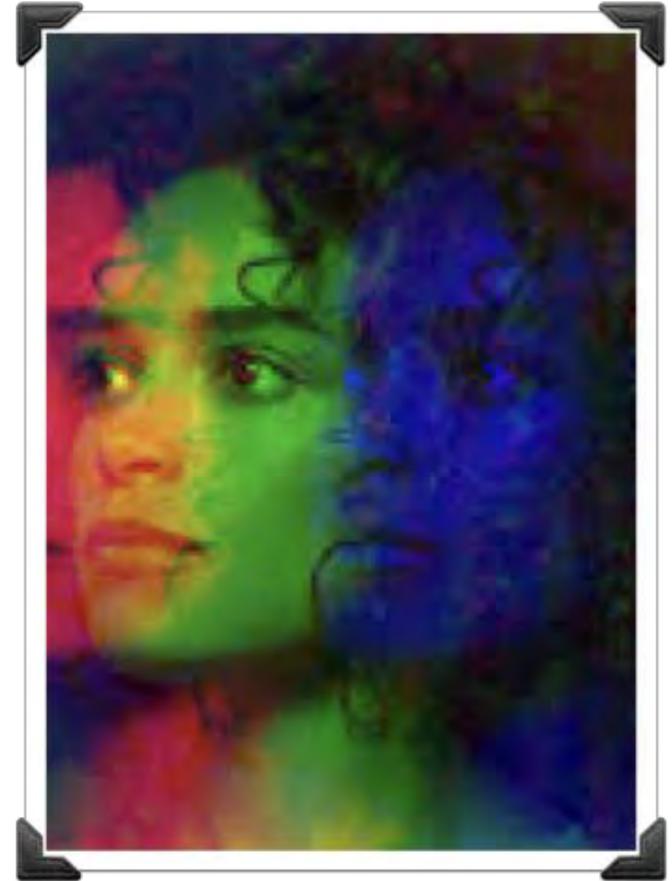
- ❖ Extraversion
- ❖ Agreeableness
- ❖ Openness
- ❖ Conscientiousness
- ❖ Neuroticism



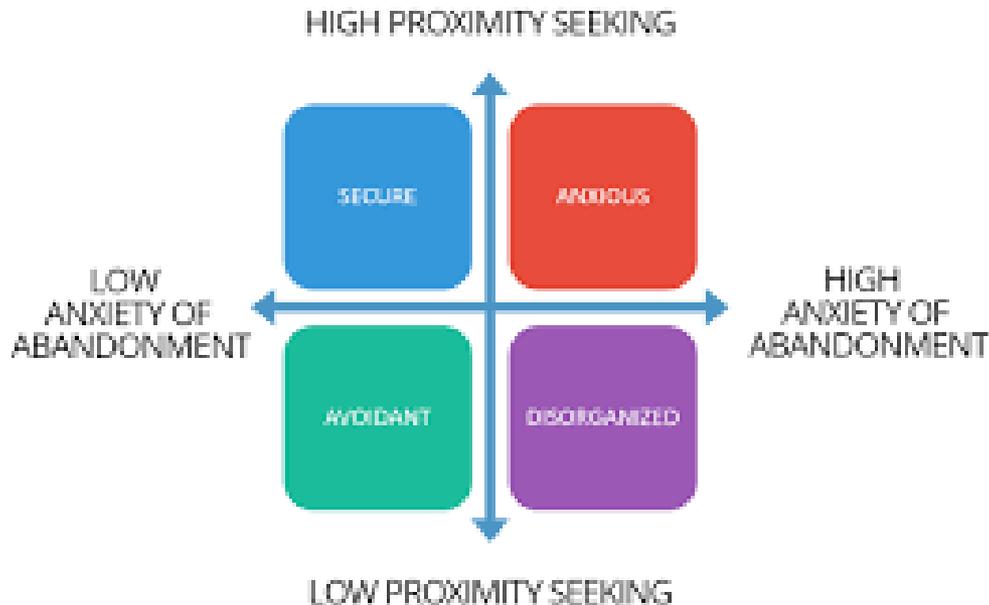
# Big 5 Traits of Dark Triad

- low agreeableness,
- high aggression,
- high impulsivity,
- low emotional intelligence,
- potentially low neuroticism  
(moody, anxious, angry, jealous)

(Stead, 2012)



# Attachment Styles



- Secure
- Anxious-preoccupied
- Dismissive-avoidant
- Fearful-disorganized

# Insecure-Anxious Attachment Style in Children



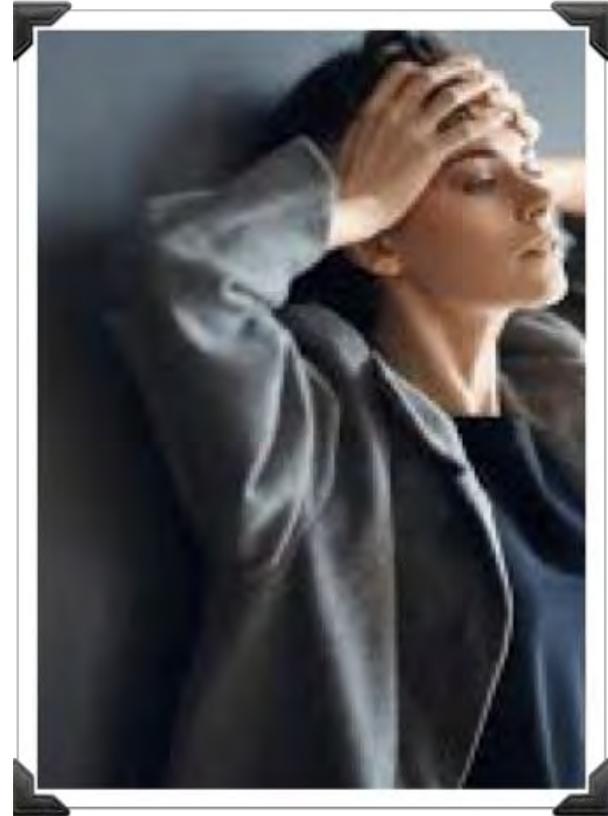
❖ **This model indicates that poor parenting practices and childhood trauma:**

- increase the expression of anxious attachment
- decreases children's self-control.

❖ **Anxious attachment and low self-control influence the expression of the Dark Triad.**

# Insecure-Anxious Attachment Style in Adults

- ❖ Usually disinterested in someone available with a secure style.
- ❖ Usually attract someone who is avoidant.
- ❖ Anxiety can be enlivening and familiar, or
- ❖ Anxiety can be uncomfortable and makes them even more anxious



# The Dark Triad Personality: Attractiveness to Women

- ❖ First study to ask women rather than depend on men's self-report; high DT men always report more sexual prowess than controls.
- ❖ 128 undergraduate women rated fictional men designed to reflect dark triad characteristics as well a control group.
- ❖ Physical attributes were constant in order to test the DT personality traits and attractiveness.



(Carter, et, al, 2013)

# The Dark Triad Personality: Attractiveness to Women, cont



These 12 DT traits were described to the women as the “dirty dozen traits”:

- A. A **desire for** (1)attention, (2)admiration, (3)favors, and (4)prestige
- B. The (5)manipulation, (6)exploitation, (7)deceit, and (8)flattery of others
- C. A **lack of** (9)remorse, (10) morality concerns, or (11) sensitivity
- D. (12) Cynicism

Carter,et,al, 2013

# The Dark Triad Personality: Attractiveness to Women, cont

- ❖ Women rated the high DT characters as more attractive.
- ❖ Attractiveness not correlated to the big 5 personality traits

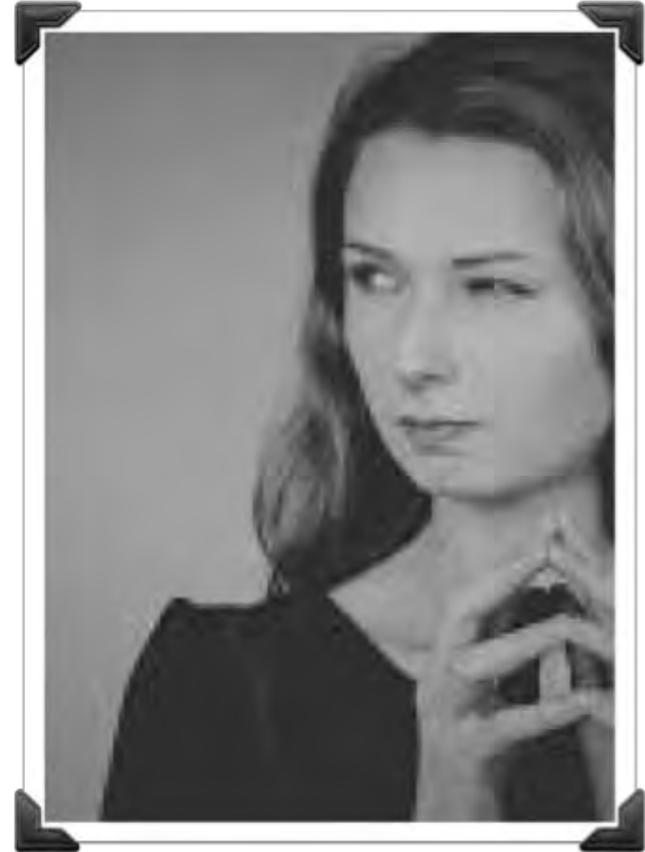
(Carter, et.al, 2013)



# The Dangerous Woman

- ❖ Much fewer than men
- ❖ Viewed as nonthreatening
- ❖ Behaviors minimized
- ❖ Held less responsible
- ❖ Criminal behavior unexpected

(Honey, 2017)



# The Dangerous Woman, cont.

- ❖ Same exploitive, antisocial behavior as men
- ❖ Compete successfully for mates, resources and power
- ❖ Underestimated ability to deceive and harm others



# Adverse Childhood Experiences Study



- ❖ The CDC-Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study is one of the largest investigations of childhood abuse and neglect and later-life health and well-being.
- ❖ The original ACE Study was conducted at Kaiser Permanente from 1995 to 1997 with two waves of data collection.
- ❖ Over 17,000 Health Maintenance Organization members from Southern California receiving physical exams completed confidential surveys regarding their childhood experiences and current health status and behaviors.
- ❖ The CDC continues ongoing surveillance of ACEs by assessing the medical status of the study participants via periodic updates of morbidity and mortality data.

# Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

**Ten categories of adverse childhood experiences were studied:**

## **A. Neglect**

**1. Physical**

**2. Emotional**





# Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

## Household Dysfunction

- ❖ **6. Mental illness**
- ❖ **7. Incarcerated relative**
- ❖ **8. Mother treated violently**
- ❖ **9. Substance abuse**
- ❖ **10. Divorce**



# Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

**One of the most important effective environmental factors in shaping personality disorders is childhood abuse experiences.**



Counselors and therapists must *consider the symptoms* of these variables and *design appropriate programs* based on them to prevent shaping dark triad traits of personality.

(Badbreah, 2015)

# Adverse Childhood Experiences Related Related to the occurrence of the Dark Triad



- Being raised in a low SES environment,
- experiencing trauma,
- being the child of poor parenting styles,
- An anxious or avoidant attachment style
- low self-control

Badbreah, 2015



# Adverse Childhood Experiences

## ❖ **Neglect abuse:**

- Positive significant relationship with narcissism
- Negative significant relationship with psychopathy and Machiavellism

## ❖ **Physical abuse:**

- Negative relationship with narcissism
- Positive relationship with psychopathy
- Positive relationship with Machiavellinism

## ❖ **Sexual abuse:**

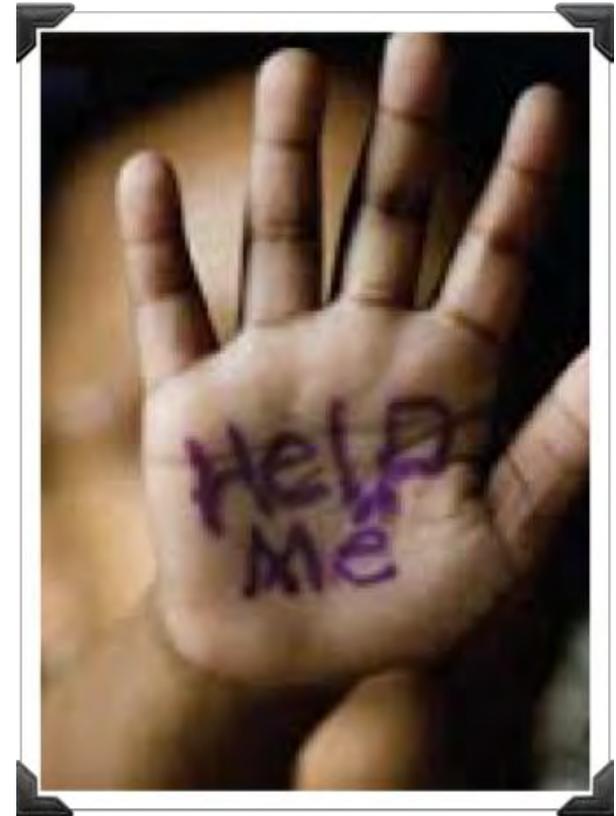
- Negative relationship with narcissism

(Badbreah, 2015)

# Adverse Childhood Experiences

## ❖ **Sex offenders have experienced in childhood:**

- 3 times more sexual abuse
- 13 times more verbal abuse
- 4 times more emotional neglect, broken homes



(Levenson, 2016)

# Adverse Childhood Experiences

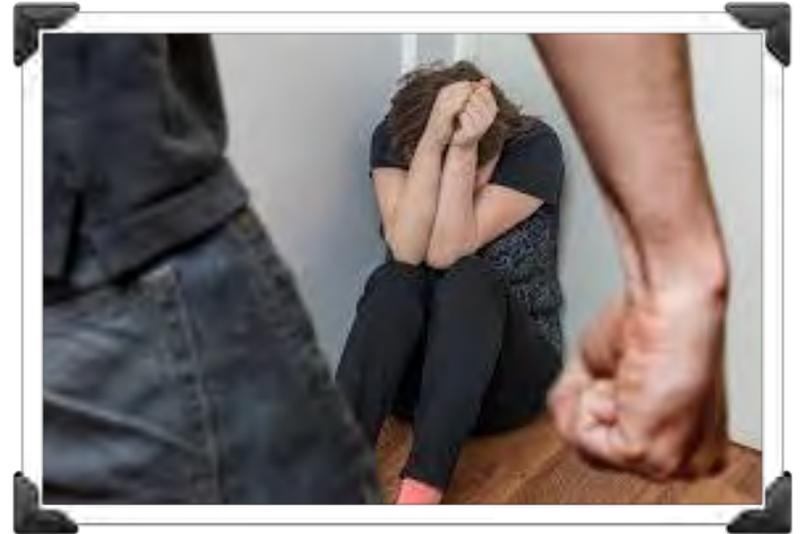


- ❖ Maltreatment co-occur with other household disfunction in a disordered social environment
- ❖ Higher ACE scores correlate with sexually offending behavior.
- ❖ Need for better *trauma-informed* interventions that respond to the clinical needs of sex offender clients.

(Levenson, 2016)

# Partner Violence

- ❖ Happens in relationships of all sexual orientations but most research on heterosexuals.
- ❖ 1 in 3 women has been a victim of physical sexual violence by an intimate partner at some point in her lifetime.
- ❖ To cope with partner violence, some women engage in smoking, drinking, drug use, and unsafe sex.
- ❖ Death by heart disease, stroke, cancer, and HIV/AIDS.



# Intimate Partner Homicide



- ❖ Average of 20 women a year *per state* are killed by a partner or former partner. That is about 1000 people in the US each year,
- ❖ Most have a history of physical and emotional abuse and violence.
- ❖ In 2011, 82.6% of women who were killed, their assailant was someone they knew
- ❖ Of women over 18, 79.2% were killed by a current partner and 14.3% by a former partner. (93.5%)

( FBI, 2015)



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# Motives Behind Partner Murders

1. Anger expresses in a pattern of escalating rage, abuse, and violence
2. Fear of abandonment and loss (insecure attachment)
3. Sexual jealousy
4. Assailant is suicidal

(Dietz, 2019)



# Counseling the Dark Triad Client

## Often undiagnosed



- ❖ Difficulty admitting fault (can do no wrong)
- ❖ Blames the partner or circumstances for problems
- ❖ Gaslighting (denies partner's reality)
- ❖ Dishonest
- ❖ Lacks empathy for partner

# Counseling the Partner

- ❖ Often suffers low self-esteem
- ❖ Desires emotional connection, feels pushed away
- ❖ Feels uncared for
- ❖ Feels and (sometimes) acts crazy
- ❖ Desperate to be acknowledged, validated



# Counseling the Couple

- ❖ Usually only one partner is DT. (When two DT's marry, they seldom come in for counseling.)
- ❖ Need for strong, experienced therapist
- ❖ Only after extensive individual counseling
- ❖ Group counseling?



# Counseling the Couple



- ❖ Internal motivation
- ❖ Expression of empathy
- ❖ Validation skills
- ❖ Communication (listening, talking)
- ❖ Self Care

# Intrinsic Motivation



- ❖ Most research done in schools and in the workplace
- ❖ Help individual consider the benefits of intrinsic rewards through assignments and talk therapy
- ❖ Practice art of open-mindedness
- ❖ Foster ownership of responsibility
- ❖ Goal setting

(Locke, 2002)



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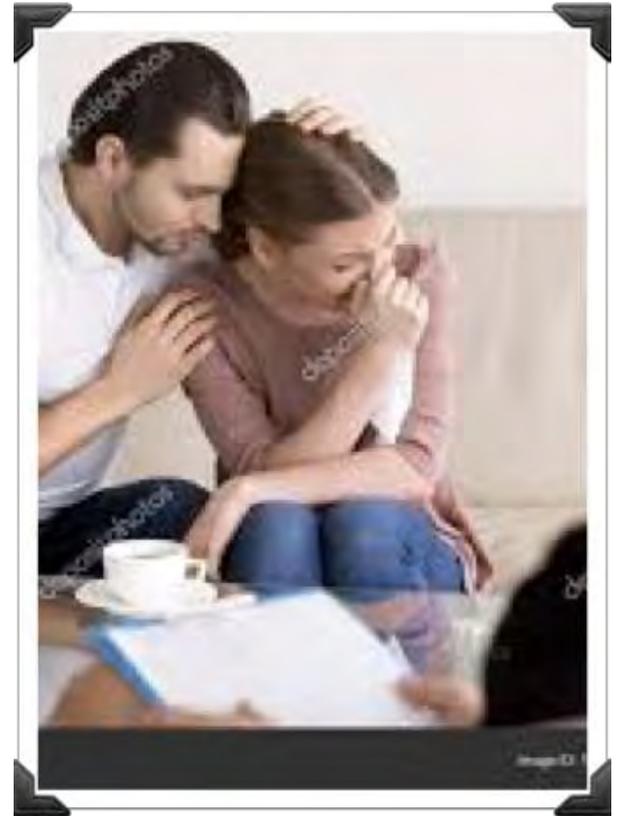
# Expression of Empathy

- ❖ Encourage empathy for self/inner child
- ❖ Have client take the ACE test
- ❖ Provide examples of times client has shown empathy (pets, children)
- ❖ Point out expressions on partner's face, body language
- ❖ Role play: how would like others to respond to you in similar situations



# Validation Skills

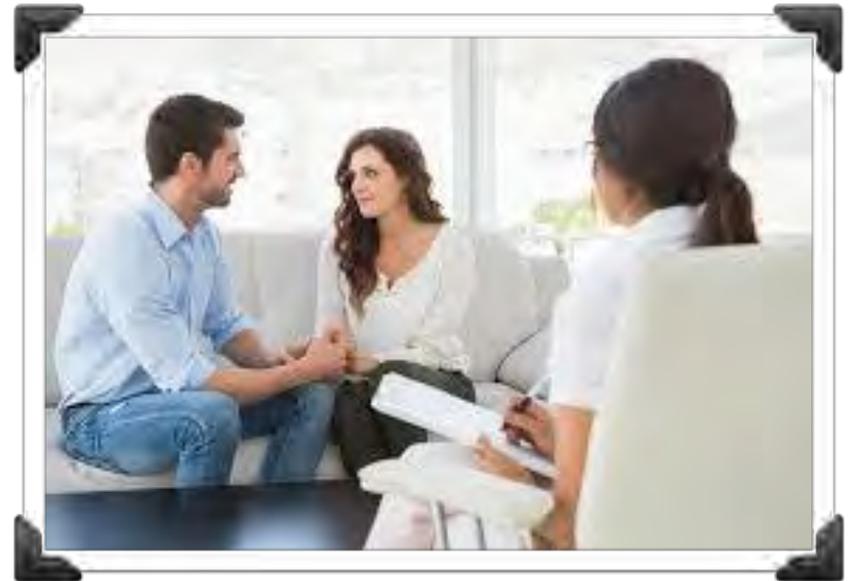
- ❖ Give the client words to use
- ❖ Have client think about times they felt validated
- ❖ Have client remember times they felt invalidated
- ❖ What does client wish had been said or done?



# Communication

## (Listening and Talking Skills)

- ❖ Speaker uses few and simple sentences.
- ❖ Listener repeats what was heard.
- ❖ Speaker repeats or rewords what was said
- ❖ Above is repeated until speaker feels heard





## Feedback Loop

- ❖ What I heard you say, what I noticed
- ❖ What I thought, made up about it
- ❖ What I felt about it (fear, loneliness, anger, hope, etc.)

# Role Play Speaking and Listening Skills



# Ethical Considerations

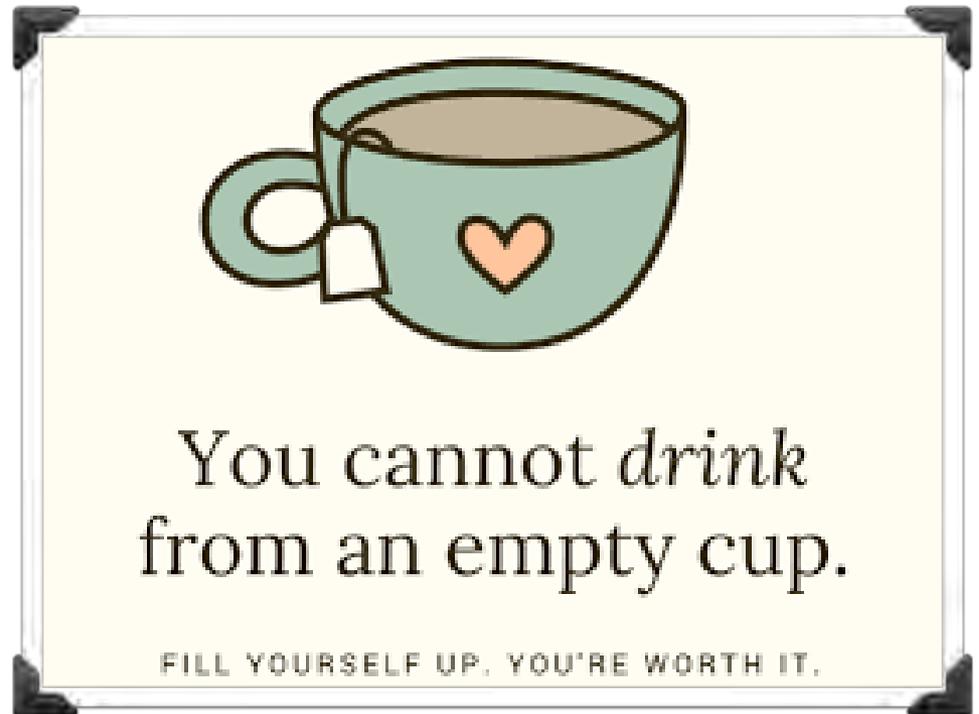


- ❖ Am I qualified?
- ❖ Seeking Consultation
- ❖ Should the partners do couple's work?
- ❖ Group work?
- ❖ Offenders and victims together?

# Self Care

## Finding balance:

- ❖ Work/play
- ❖ Family/time to self
- ❖ Exercise
- ❖ Diet
- ❖ Rest/sleep
- ❖ Hobbies



This applies to all of us in the caring field as well!

Self-Care is a  
priority and necessity  
- not a luxury -  
in the work that we do.

- ❖ Seek Consultation

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