

Welcome to

Savannah Family Institute



UNDERCURRENT THERAPY: HEALING THE SECRET WOUNDS OF CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS

with

Scott P. Sells, Ph.D.



**Savannah
Family
Institute**

www.difficult.net

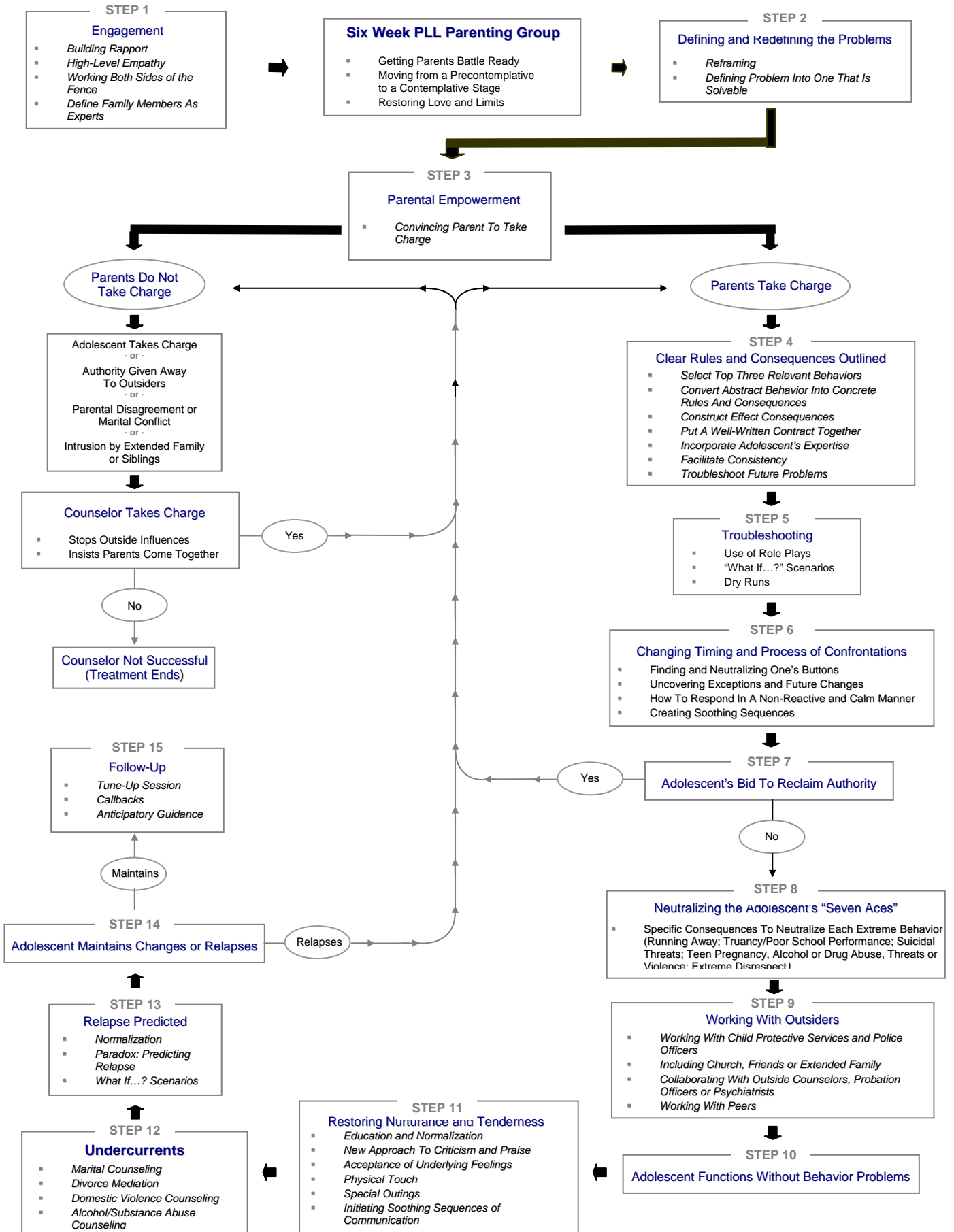
© 2005-2006 Savannah Family Institute. All rights reserved.

With the exceptions noted below, no part of these handouts may be reproduced or transmitted in any form without written permission from Savannah Family Institute.

LIMITED PHOTOCOPY LICENSE

Savannah Family Institute grants to individual participants of this workshop nonassignable permission to reproduce pages of these handouts for personal use in clinical practice and not for resale or redistribution. These materials are intended for use only by qualified mental health professionals. **This license is limited to the individual participant and does not extend to others.** The license does not grant the right to reproduce these materials for other purposes (including but not limited to books, pamphlets, articles, video or audio tapes, handouts or slides for lectures or workshops. Permission to reproduce these materials for these and any other purposes must be obtained in writing from Savannah Family Institute.

PLL 15-Step Family Therapy Model

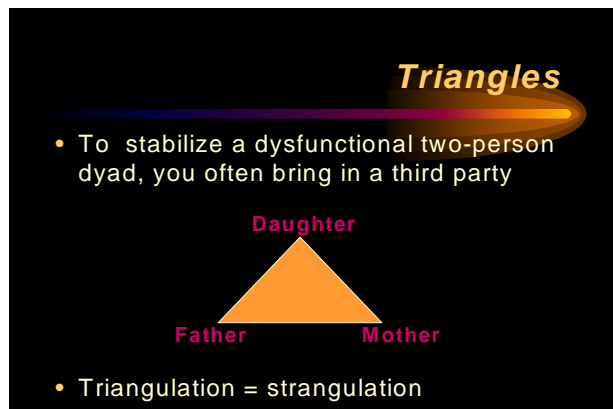


PUSH MODEL

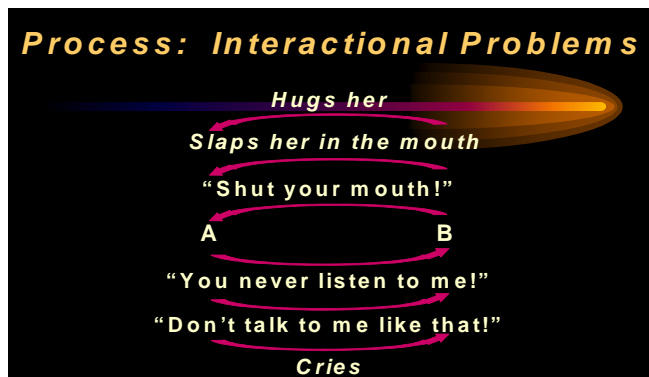
P - Protection or Function of the Symptom – In which of the following areas was your client’s symptom conceived or born? The symptom is born to protect some painful wound and medicate the pain, the result of “stuckness” in a developmental stage, a creative way to solve a problem, or incongruent hierarchy (power and control).

- A Drunk with power = A lack of consistent structure and/or nurturance**
- B Unhealed traumas or wounds (rape, unresolved grief, loss, betrayal, etc.)**
- C Creative way to get an unmet need (get out of homework, get Dad home more)**
- D “Stuckness” at a particular developmental stage in the family life cycle**
- E Biological/chemical imbalance in the brain**

U – Unit - Diagram Out Two Triangles – Draw out the triangle around the symptomatic adolescent and the triangle that involves you the therapist.

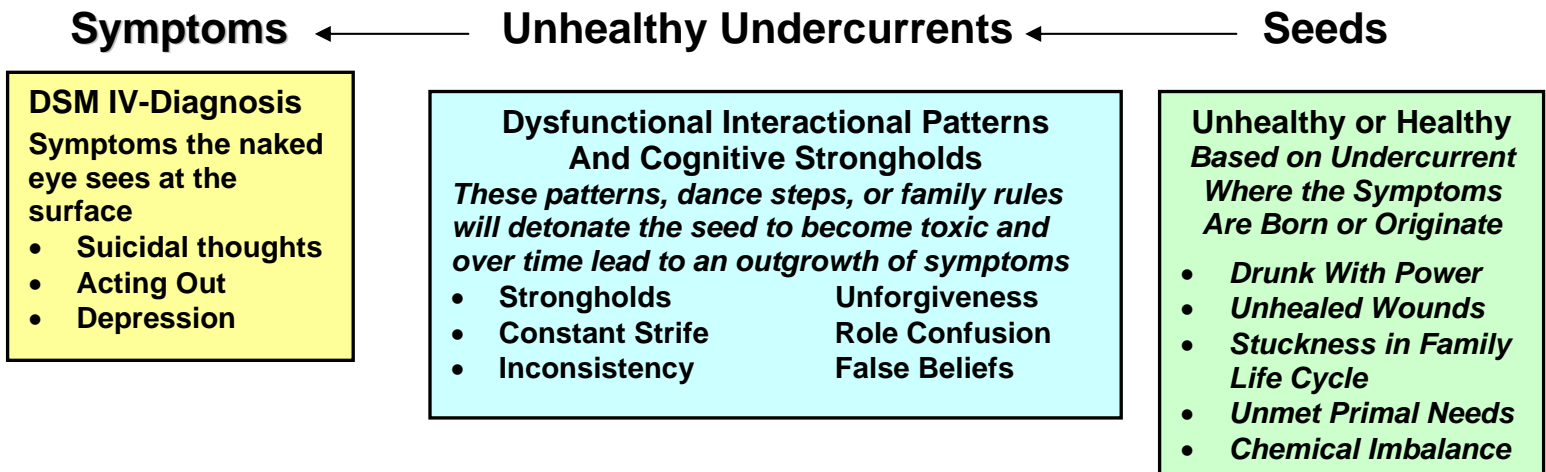


S - Sequences of Dysfunctional Communication Patterns - Draw out the two or three key dysfunctional feedback loops that show how the central figures (parents, teachers, friends, etc) around the symptomatic teenager help him or her act out and misbehave. These are the feedback loops that you must eventually alter to change the teenager’s symptoms.



H – Hierarchy - Draw out incongruous hierarchy. Whoever controls the mood of the household is the one in charge! Draw out boundaries, coalitions, and alliances and then what the hierarchy will look like after you restructure this family by changing the dysfunctional communication patterns

Locating Your Client's Unhealthy Undercurrents



The undercurrent is the root system, or network of veins or arteries that carry an unhealthy blood supply from the toxic seeds. Over time, this septic blood will lead to the growth and development of dysfunctional symptoms, such as depression. If however, the undercurrents are healthy, the blood supply will be healthy and will not produce symptoms, but rather happiness in the person.

For example, after a trauma such as a date rape [the seed] occurs, unhealthy or unhealthy undercurrents can emerge producing two different sets of seed outcomes. In one family, the date rape [seed] sets in motion a series of healthy undercurrents, such as family support, an openness to talk about the rape, and forgiveness towards the rapist. As a result, no symptoms are produced. In fact, the client moves on and becomes stronger from the incident. In turn, these healthy undercurrents (i.e., family support and forgiveness) continue to smother the date rape trauma seed with healthy antibodies to prevent the seed from becoming toxic in the future.

In another family, however, a date rape [seed] can trigger a series of unhealthy undercurrents, such as a no family support, an inability to talk about the incident, and unforgiveness towards the rapist. These unhealthy undercurrents do not allow the trauma [the rape] to heal. Over time, this trauma turns into an unhealed wound, resulting in dysfunctional symptoms, such as depression and anxiety. By the same token, symptoms of depression and anxiety will produce toxic blood that continues to feed the date rape seed and not allow it to heal. This reciprocal poisonous blood flow maintains the client's symptoms and makes it very difficult for the therapist to dislodge.

The common denominator in both families as to whether the seed became poisonous was whether the undercurrent was healthy or unhealthy. These undercurrents were the nutrients and root systems in the soil that turned the seed into health or toxicity.

Area #5: Check the top two dysfunctional undercurrents overall?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Role Confusion – Role Clarity/Correct Hierarchy
(Child is the parent or one parent acts like the child) | <input type="checkbox"/> Depression--- Happiness, Joy, Peace, Not Lonely |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unresolved grief and loss – Resolution/Grief Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Violence or Threats of Violence – Peace, Playfulness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Betrayal or abandonment – Security/Unconditional Love | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Secrets---- Openness/Reveal Secrets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drugs or alcohol abuse - Sobriety & Fill in What’s Missing | <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of Forgiveness and Bitterness---- Forgiveness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual Abuse or Rape --- Healing, Support, Forgiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> Drawn out Medical Illness/Brain Injury- Support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Preoccupation with Death/Suicide- Love, Security, Spirituality | <input type="checkbox"/> Someone Seen as a Patient/Mental Case- Normality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of Intimacy- Creation of Intimacy, Closeness, Security | <input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety ---- Security & Safety |

The Birth of a Stronghold

Strongholds = Lies or false beliefs about ourselves that the enemy and painful experiences have birthed and that we presently believe as truth instead of reality.

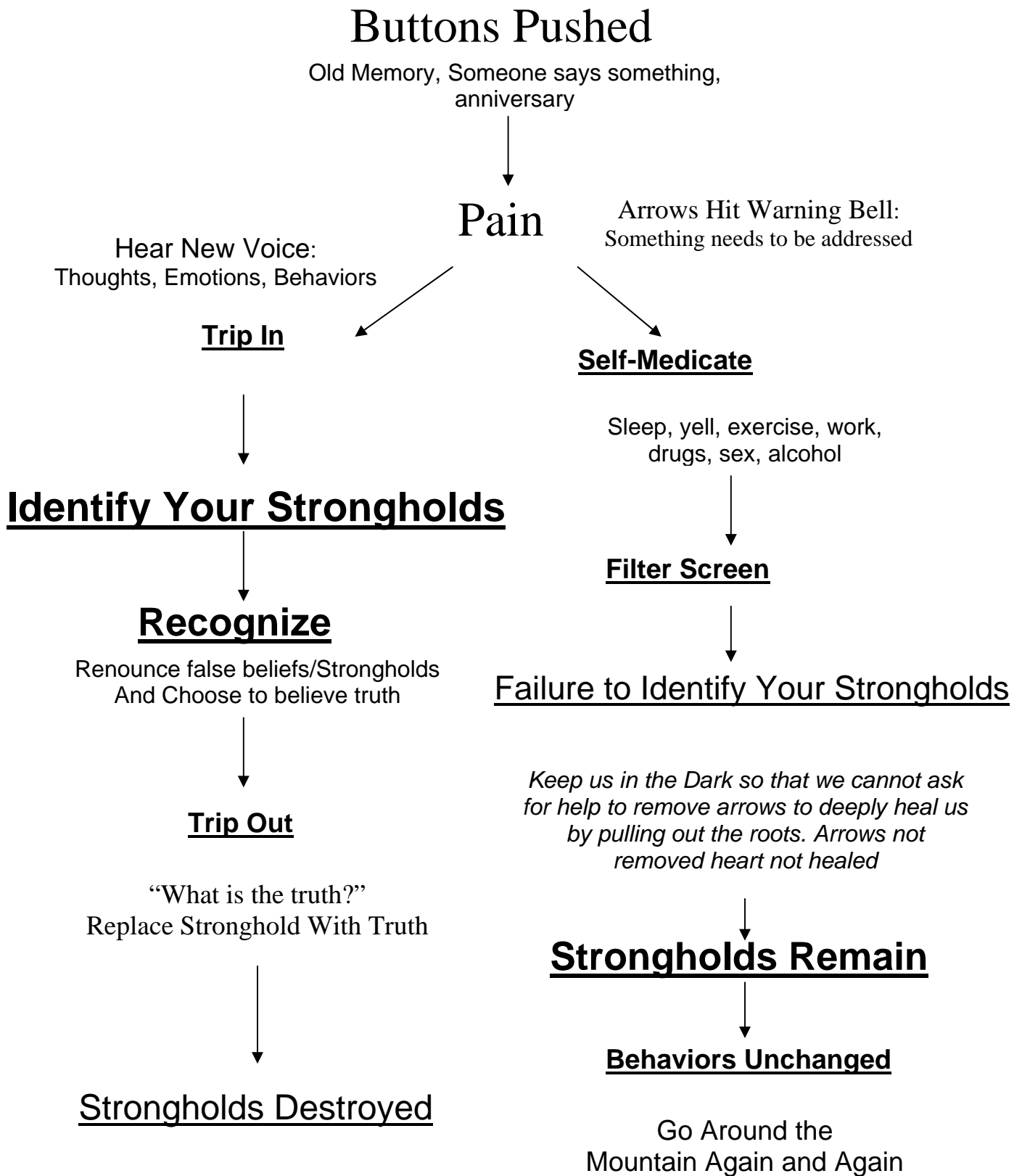
<u>Shame</u>	<u>Performance Trap</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ “I am damaged” ■ “I will never be good enough” ■ “I am worthless” ■ “I am what I am” ■ “I do not deserve to be loved” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ “I must do it all myself, I am alone” ■ “My value and worth depend on what I do and my performance” ■ “I am what I do” ■ “I have to do more and more”
<u>Blame Game</u>	<u>Approval Addiction</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ “Those who fail deserve to be punished or unloved” ■ “I have black and white thinking” ■ “The world is an unsafe place” ■ “I must hurt others before they can hurt me first” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ “I be accepted by others to feel good about myself” ■ “I have to please others at any cost” ■ “I need to rescue others” ■ “I need to be needed”

Sources of Strongholds

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Painful experiences <input type="checkbox"/> Unforgiveness <input type="checkbox"/> Generational <input type="checkbox"/> Proud Nature of Mankind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Issues <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual Unbalance <input type="checkbox"/> My “own” choice <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorance
---	--

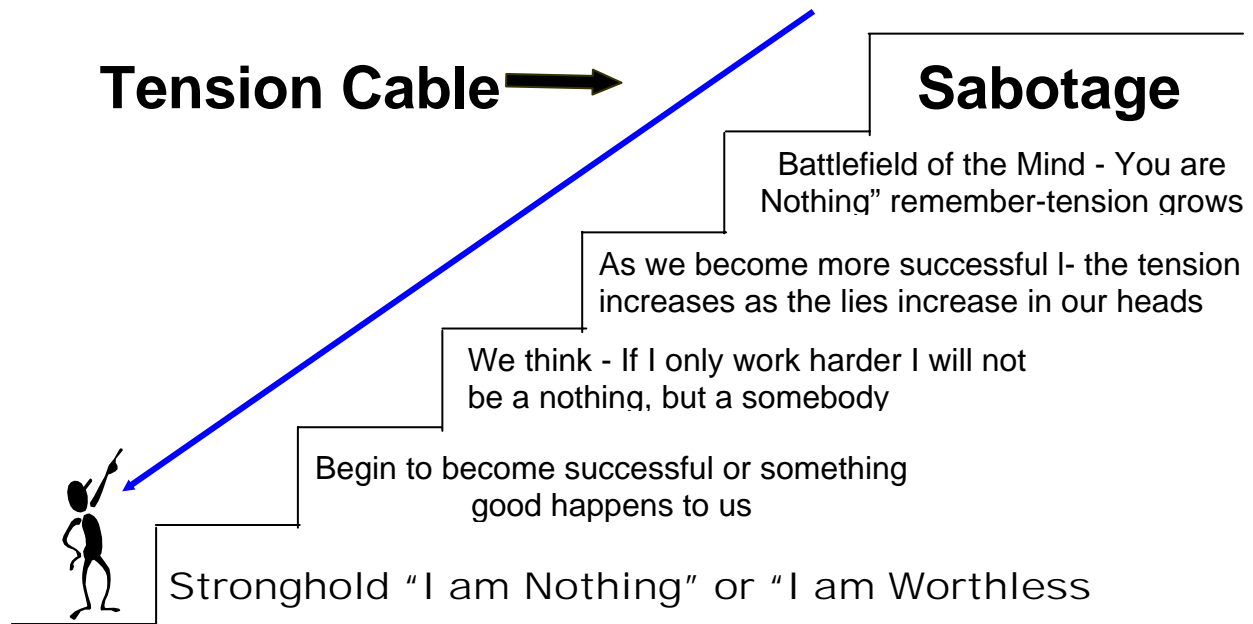
**World's System = Don't Talk-- Don't Feel
--Don't Touch--- Don't Trust**

The Anatomy of a Stronghold



Why We Sabotage Ourselves:

If I have strongholds that say “I am Nothing” or
“I am Worthless”
and embrace that as truth:
Here is what then happens.....



Inside the tension grows more and unbearable the more successful we are as we climb the “success ladder.” The tension keeps growing and growing until we sabotage ourselves and the cable snaps, because the tension is great!

You are then back to “I am nothing” or “I am worthless” and it’s *almost a relief* because it fits with the lie when you were shot full of arrows. Honoring this lie or stronghold instead of who you are -- Wonderful, Deeply loved, Fully pleasing, Totally accepted.

Results in One or Two Things

1. Enter Performance Trap- “If I am just more successful I can overcome this lie and I will be somebody”
2. Enter the Homeless Trap- “I have failed so many times that I believe this lie and stop trying to overcome it. **“I am what I am”**
Why even try to go to work or be successful? I will fail anyway.



The Trip In

Button Being Pushed or Situation:

THOUGHTS (What am I thinking?)	EMOTIONS (What Am I feeling?)	BEHAVIOR
--------------------------------	-------------------------------	----------

DIGGING DEEPER

THOUGHTS 1. Key Words: (What does it mean to me?) 2. What message does it say about who I am? 3. Stronghold Thought: 4. What does the above say about Me and Others? (Distorted view)	EMOTIONS	BEHAVIOR
---	----------	----------

Family Life Cycle Milestone Reference Guide**

<p><u>Independence Stage</u></p> <p>Independence is the most critical stage of the family life cycle. As you enter young adulthood, you begin to separate emotionally from your family. During this stage, you strive to become fully able to support yourself emotionally, physically, socially, and financially. You begin to develop unique qualities and characteristics that define your individual identity.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Milestones for Independence Stage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Support Self - Has the individual adult, couple, or parent demonstrated the ability to independently support themselves financially, emotionally, and physically away from their family or origin? <input type="checkbox"/> Separate Emotionally - Has the individual adult, couple, or parents demonstrated the ability to separate themselves emotionally from their family? In other words, can the person see himself or herself as a separate person in relation to their original family—parents, siblings, and extended family members? Can they develop intimate peer relationships outside the family? <input type="checkbox"/> Intimacy - Does the individual adult, couple, or parents demonstrate the ability to develop and maintain close relationships that can endure hard times and other challenges? Have some of these new values been achieved? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to commit. • Ability to form emotional attachments. • Ability to depend on someone who is not in your family. • Ability to return emotional support in a relationship.
<p><u>Coupling Stage</u></p> <p>After you achieve independence, the next stage in the family life cycle is coupling. You explore your ability to commit to a new family and a new way of life. While being in a committed relationship with someone without the act of marriage does involve a process of adaptation and relationship building, marriage often requires unique skills. When you join families through marriage, you form a new family system. Your family blueprint—your personal ideas, expectations, and values shaped by the relationships and experiences with your original family—combines with your spouse's to form a new family blueprint.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Interdependence- Has the married couple or individual adult in a committed relationship achieved interdependence? The ability to share goals with the other person and occasionally place the needs of another above their own? <i>Before one can achieve interdependence, they must first acquire a high degree of independence.</i> Here are some of the goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to include the spouse in relationships with friends and family members. • Ability to commit to making your marriage work. • Ability to put the needs of another ahead of your own. <input type="checkbox"/> Core Skills - Has the individual adult in a long term committed relationship or the married couple mastered these core skills? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpersonal communication and sexual intimacy. • Problem-solving skills. • Common spiritual and emotional development goals. • The ability to form boundaries in relationships
<p><u>Parenting Stage: Baby Thru Adolescence</u></p> <p>At some point in your marriage, the couple will be faced with the "baby decision," although some couples know going into a marriage that they do not want children. Parenting is one of the most challenging phases of the family life cycle. Children are so time-consuming that skills not learned in previous two stages will be difficult to relearn at this stage. Introducing a child into the family will result in a major change in roles for the couple. Each parent has three distinct and demanding roles: as an individual, a spouse, and a parent. If the couple did not learn compromise and commitment in the coupling stage, they may not possess the skills needed to transition into this stage. Divorce and extramarital affairs frequently occur during the raising of small children when the proper life skills have not been obtained. If the individual enters this stage as a divorced or single parent, they will still need the same core skills and flexibility of roles as a two-parent family. They may or</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Core Skills - Has the individual adult in a long term committed relationship or the married couple mastered these specific skills when young children are introduced into the family? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjusting the marital system to make space for children. • Taking on parenting roles and being in charge. • Realigning relationships with the extended family to include parenting and grandparenting roles. • Shifting parent-child relationships to permit the adolescent to move in and out of the family system. <input type="checkbox"/> Nurtured the Relationship - Has the individual adult in a long term committed relationship been able to take on parenting roles but still nurture their relationship through things like "date nights" time alone, and setting boundaries? <input type="checkbox"/> Flexibility of Roles - Has the individual adult in a long term committed relationship or the married couple been able to demonstrate the ability to move between the roles of individual, spouse, and parent? In other words do they make time for individual growth, time to be a couple, and time to be a parent? If the parent is single, they may not have to make time as a couple, but the time it takes to take on the role of two parents

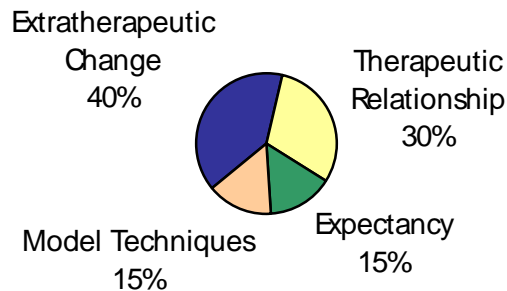
<p>may not have to nurture a long-term relationship but the economic impact and lack of support more than makes up for this gap.</p>	<p>severely and negatively impacts individual growth time.</p>
<p><u>Empty Nest: Launching Adult Children</u></p> <p>The stage of launching adult children begins when the first child leaves home and is completed with the "empty nest." When older children leave home, there are both positive and negative consequences. If the family has mastered many of the significant milestones through the family life cycle, the child will be ready to leave home, equipped to handle life's challenges. Free from the demands of parenting, the couple or single parent will have the opportunity to rekindle either the marriage or career goals. This is a time when health and energy levels may decline. Some people are diagnosed with chronic illnesses. Symptoms of these diseases can limit normal activities and even long-enjoyed pastimes. Health issues related to midlife may begin to occur.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Core Skills - Has the individual adult in a long term committed relationship or the married couple mastered these specific skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refocusing on your marriage without children. • Developing adult relationships with your grown children. • Realigning relationships to include in-laws and grandchildren when your children have begun their own families. <p><input type="checkbox"/> Realign Relationships- Have the parents focused on reprioritizing their life without their children?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate Parent/Child Relationships- Has the parent developed adult relationships with their children, or are they still taking care of them as if they were still a child emotionally and financially? Have the parents accepted new members into the family through their children's marriages or relationships?</p>
<p><u>Retirement or Senior Stage of Life</u></p> <p>This stage begins when the person is totally free from the responsibilities of raising your children or a job and can simply enjoy the fruits of their life's work. Challenges include being a support to other family members, even as the person is still exploring their own interests and activities or focusing on maintaining a marriage. It is common to be caring for elderly parents at this time. Declining physical and mental abilities or changes in financial or social status may also occur. The quality of life at this stage depends upon how well you adjusted to the changes in earlier stages.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Core Skills - Has the individual adult in a long term committed relationship or the married couple mastered these specific skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining own interests and functions, along with those of your spouse, as your body ages. • Exploring new family and social roles. • Providing emotional support for your adult children and extended family members. • Making room in the family system for the wisdom and experience of older adults. • Providing support for the older generation without overfunctioning for them. • Dealing with the loss of a spouse, siblings, and other peers and preparing for your own death. • Reviewing your life and reflecting on all you have learned and experienced during your life cycle.

Toxic Seed	Common Unhealthy Undercurrents	Common Symptoms or DSM IV Diagnosis
<p>Misuse of Power</p>	<p><u>For Adolescents and Children</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role Confusion b/w parents or b/w parent and child - <i>Parents have different parenting styles or philosophies; no clear parenting style for child to follow = Child or adolescent confused. Children act more mature and more in charge of the household than the parents. No one knows who is in charge.</i> • Inconsistent parenting - <i>Overall discipline style or approach changes from day to day or based on how the caregiver/parent happens to feel.</i> • Incongruent hierarchy- <i>Kids in charge or the mood of the household and parents are not. Parents accommodate their lifestyle around their child's moods or behaviors, not the other way around.</i> • Lack of consistent structure - <i>Similar to the inconsistent parenting in terms of an overall discipline approach but includes an emphasis on a lack of concrete rules or consequences. No written contracts, no rewards, and rules and consequences that continually change every day or with great frequency.</i> • Lack of consistent nurturance - <i>A child's misbehavior or misuse of power is as much connected to a lack of structure as a lack of consistent nurturance between parent and child. The parent may "still love their child but no longer like them anymore". Lack of consistent hugs, special outings, or unconditional praise and appreciation.</i> • Enmeshment - <i>There are a lack of boundaries between the parent or couple and the child. The child knows all about the intimate personal life of the parents (how much money they make, their sex life, the intimate details of their anger with a spouse or another person). The parent is also in their child's life and hovers over them day and night.</i> • Disengagement - <i>The boundaries between parent or couple and the child are too thick and ridge. The parent does not notice or sense their child's emotional pain, hurt, or endangerment. The child could be depressed, suicidal, or failing out of school and the parent would not notice.</i> • Constant Conflict between Parent and Child - <i>A home environment of constant arguing, yelling, and strife between parent and child 60% of the time or greater.</i> • Conflict Avoidance and Indirect Communication- <i>A pattern of communication whereby the parent, caregiver, or child avoids resolving any disagreement or refuses to argue, or directly communicate ones feelings. Instead, there is a high degree of passive-aggressive behavior.</i> • Bitterness and Unforgiveness - <i>There is an overall pervasive communication pattern and general feeling between parent and child of unforgiveness or bitterness over a past hurt or trauma (parents drug use, parental abandonment, sexual abuse, etc.)</i> • Lack of a Support Village - <i>Single parents or dual parents who are overwhelmed and isolated from extended family members or friends because of physical distance or a lack of time or effort.</i> • Lack of Collaboration between Systems - <i>Children divide and conquer when systems do not communicate, speak the same voice, or cooperate with one another (parents and schools, parents and grandparents/other extended family members, foster parents and biological parents, etc.)</i> 	<p><u>Common Diagnosis</u> <i>(after ruling out mental retardation, learning, or general medical conditions)</i></p> <p>Oppositional Defiant Disorder Conduct Disorder Alcohol or Substance Abuse Attention Deficit Disorder Anti-Social Behavior Intermittent explosive disorders Selective Mutism</p> <p><u>Common Symptoms</u> <i>(persists for at least 6 consecutive months)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Actively defies or refuses to comply with adult requests or rules <input type="checkbox"/> Deliberately annoys people <input type="checkbox"/> Blames others for mistakes or misbehavior <input type="checkbox"/> Unwilling to compromise, give in, or negotiate with adults or peers <input type="checkbox"/> Persistent testing of limits <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive conduct

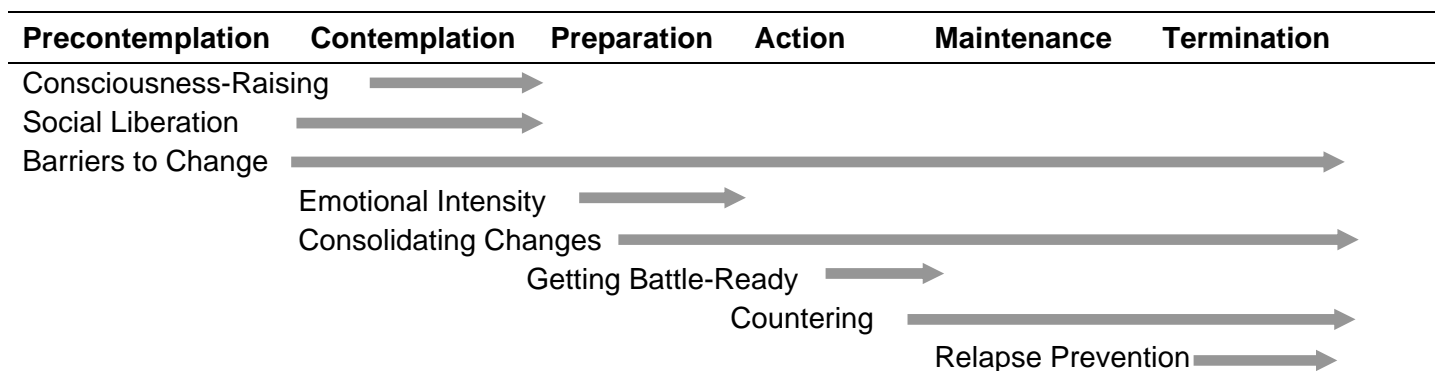
BARRIERS TO CHANGE QUESTIONS

- ✓ What has been most helpful in our meetings together so far?
- ✓ What have I done or said as your counselor that has been most helpful?
- ✓ What has been least helpful in our meetings together so far?
- ✓ What have I done or said as your counselor that has been least helpful?
- ✓ What do we need to do in the future to make these meetings more helpful or productive?

4 Principle Factors that Account for Change

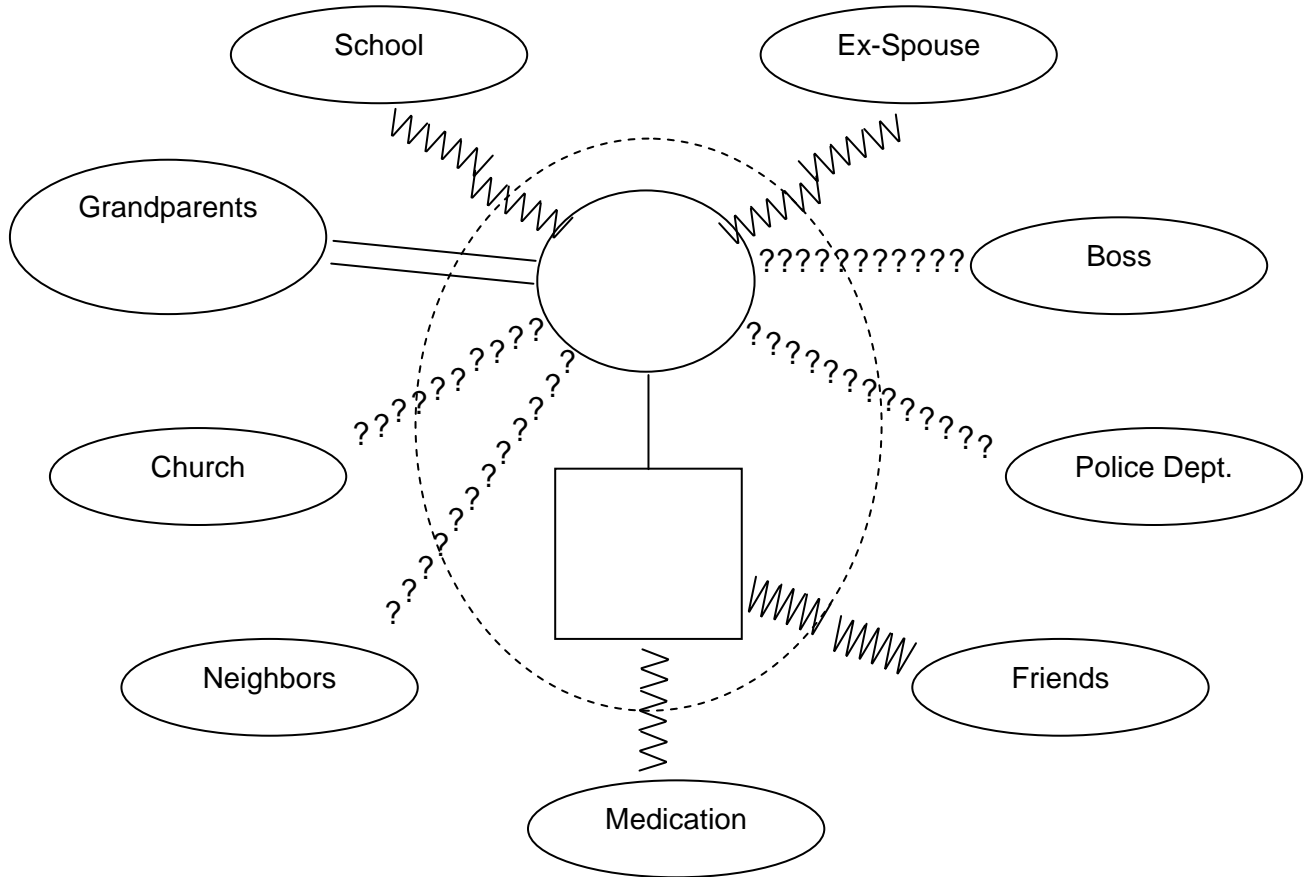


MEET THE CLIENT AT THEIR PARTICULAR STAGE AND MOVE THEM FROM ONE STAGE TO THE NEXT



ECO-MAP

- ==== Supportive and Presently Helping;
- ?????? Potentially Supportive But Not Presently Helping; or
- ~~~~~ Unsupportive and Not Presently Helping



Supportive People or Institutions	Potentially Supportive People or Institutions	Non Supportive People or Institutions
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.