Conflict Resolution and the Intersection with Indigenous People

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Five (5) Stages of Relationships

1) Honeymoon
2) Disillusion
3) Misery
4) Awakening
5) Peace/Calm

Manual pgs 2-7 – 2-13
Honeymoon Stage

- Please take a Trip down Memory Lane with me
- Were you, at one time, looking for that prince or princess?
- Think back to the beginning of that time, the beginning of the relationship, what did you feel and what did you do?
  - Dreams
  - Careful
  - Scary
  - Thoughtful
  - Fun
  - Sex was great
  - Lots of communication
  - Cards and notes
  - Few feelings
  - Special nights out
  - Hopes
  - Manual pg 2-8

Disillusionment Stage

- What happens after some time in the Honeymoon stage?
- Disillusionment sets in...
- This is sometimes referred to as the Familiarization or Adjusting to Reality stage.
- Your endorphins cannot keep producing at the same level as before. You become more relaxed in the relationship, as does your partner.
- You and your partner are human and your flaws are beginning to show. There’s generally enough goodwill left over from the honeymoon stage that you can overlook most flaws.
  - Manual pg 2-9
More Disillusionment

- If the flaws are more serious - such as dishonesty or deceit - the relationship can become confusing and discouraging.
- If you want the relationship to keep evolving, you need to be able to communicate effectively and resolve conflict.
- Sex has become more familiar, and maybe the fun sleepwear has changed to less enticing wear.
- Communication tends to go down. There is less time spent sharing and it is less positive.
- The things that attracted you to the person now detract you from them.
- Arguments over money, friends, priorities, sex, etc., begin to happen with less agreement on how to solve these new differences.

Misery Stage

- This is also called the Power Struggle, Disappointment or Distress stage.
- You become more aware of the differences between you and your partner. Depending on your style of communication, you find yourself avoiding, accommodating, judging, competing and fighting in the conflict. Conflict continues to grow.
- Deep resentments can begin to build in this stage. You see your partner as uncaring, self-centered or untrustworthy.
- People really know they are in the Misery stage when they ask themselves:
  - “Why did I ever get involved with this person in the first place?”
  - “What was I thinking?”
  - “If only I never got involved in the first place!”
  - “Will this ever change?”
  - “Is there no way out?”

Manual pg 2-10
More Misery

- Couples remain in this stage, building resentment and frustration until they either decide to:
  - End the relationship in some manner
  - Avoid the issues and remain in the relationship
  - Seek some means to resolve the conflict in the relationship

- Misery can last for years and years. There are couples (and you might have experienced this or seen others in this stage) remaining in Misery for 10, 20 or 30 years, often citing kids, financial constraints or fear of changing the familiar as reasons for staying together.

- Many couples do not evolve from this stage and decide to end the relationship here.

- However, if a couple can resolve conflicts here, then they move on to the next stage - Awakening.

Awakening Stage

- This is also called the Stability, Friendship or Reconciliation stage.

- Couples who make it this far express feelings of stronger commitment, connection, trust and love.

- You know neither one of you is perfect, but this concept is no longer threatening.

- You are confident in your ability to resolve most of your issues.

- You begin to reestablish your own outside interests (unlike the Honeymoon stage, where you only had eyes for each other).

- There is some danger of boredom with your partner, so you have to work to maintain the connection you made in the Honeymoon stage.

- Most couples are comfortable and content at this stage.

- To help a couple move to this stage, it is vital that they learn how to listen and communicate with each other. Manual pg 2-12
More Awakening

• “Listening with the heart” is a term we use to express the skill of empathy. It involves remaining “present” with the person and hearing all he or she is saying - the deep feelings being expressed, their affect and fears and concerns as they relate to the relationship - without thinking about and trying to develop words you are going to use to respond.

• In this practice of “listening with the heart,” it is also vital to learn from each other, to learn what each needs - not wants, but really needs - to be in relationship with the other. In other words, what are the “basic needs” for that person to feel safe, secure and ready to fully participate in the relationship?

Peace & Calm Stage

• Other names for this stage are Commitment, Acceptance, Transformation or Real Love.

• It is estimated that less than 5% of couples make it to this stage.

• You are with your partner because you have chosen him/her, faults and all, not because you need him or her.

• You and your partner are a team and look out for each other’s best interests.

• At this stage, your relationship becomes a true partnership.

Manual pg 2-12 – 2-13
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A Component of NAADAC's Life-Long Learning Series

Four (4) Types of Agreement

- Financial
- Physical/Spatial
- Emotional/Social
- Spiritual

Financial Agreements

- What do you need to be in financial agreement?
- Who works?
- What amount of money do you need for the household? (Don’t fool yourself: if you are a $75,000-a-year expectation person, and your partner only makes $35,000, then there will be conflict.)
- Is it one joint checking account or two separate checking accounts?
- Is there savings, money for retirement and money for vacation?
- And what about donations? Is tithing something you believe in? (Manual pg 3-15)

A Component of NAADAC’s Life-Long Learning Series
Financial Agreements and Budget

- Do you keep a budget that is agreed to?
- A budget will keep financial arguments down since there is agreement on what the budget will be.
- When considering a new purchase, go to the budget and ask *Does it fit?* It no longer becomes an argument of “you don’t want me to have this”; it becomes a discussion of the budget and whether a purchase fits.
- What about credit cards? Can you use them? How much can you use them? Have you and your partner agreed to internal limits?

Physical/Spatial Agreements

- What are your physical expectations for the sexual relationship, physical exercise, the manner in which you keep up yourself (body, hair, etc.)?
- What type of physical space do you need—a crowded room, a sparse room, a house in the open, a house in the woods or in the city?
- What about physical abuse? What is okay with you? What is not negotiable (such as pushing, shoving, beating, hitting, scratching, etc.)?
- What is physical safety to you and appropriate boundaries in your relationship for all the above areas?
- What about own “body bubble”? How close do you like your partner and how often? Are you a cuddlier or do you prefer to have more space?

Manual pg 3-16
Body Bubble’s

- We all have our own personal “body bubble,” formed as we grew up, that advises us how close we want others to come to us or when we get to the place when we know someone “enough” to allow them closer.

- People who have been physically or sexually abused might have a different experience of closeness.

- It is likely take more time, trust and patience in allowing others to come closer.

- As you build a relationship with a person, it is important to learn his or her body bubble styles and respect them.

Emotional/Social Agreements

- Emotional agreements also take into account those times when the other person is just “off” emotionally.

- We don’t always know the whys of it and just needing a little extra special consideration to get through whatever it is.

- This kind of emotional support goes both ways, for the nature of emotional agreement is reciprocal.

- Part of the discussion on the emotional agreement is to learn your partner’s emotional strengths and weaknesses.

Manual pg 3-17
Emotional/Social Support

- Are there certain situations (times of the year, seasons) that are more difficult emotionally for your partner? This might be related to a loss (death, divorce, accident, etc).

- When does your partner feel he or she needs more support from you? In what type of situations?

- When does your partner want you just to listen, and (possibly) hold them, rub their back or just be “present” with them?

- What do you need from your partner for positive emotional support?

Emotional & Social Agreements (Cont)

- Do you expect unconditional love and support?

- Do you expect understanding and a person to listen to your hurts?

- How is that played out at the end of day, on the weekend, after an argument?

- Do you go to bed on your fight, in anger?

- What do you need there in terms of resolution?
Spiritual Agreements

- Every person comes to this life with a spiritual piece
- How we relate to that spiritual side is dependent on the fabric of our background
- Not everyone identifies their spiritual side
- Yet, everyone goes about trying to fill it in some manner

Spiritual Agreement Support

- What does spirituality mean to you? How do you want to express it?
- How do you want your partner involved?
- Where is your source of strength? How do you express it?
- Do you want to do this together or separately?
- Is there reading, praying or worship that you expect?
- What are your other spiritual expectations?
Completing the “Agreements” Loop

• Once this is done, it helps to write each of these on paper.

• Put them in a dual frame - and in the bedroom - so that when an issue or argument begins to rise, it can be agreed to revisit these agreements and to remind each other to put their needs first, not their wants.

• When a couple makes these types of agreements, after really listening to each other, a peace and calm is achieved.

Completing the “Agreements” Loop (cont)

• There is a sense that they know how to resolve conflict, they know what is expected and they know how they can meet these, specifically, in each of those areas.

• It does not mean that there won’t be future disagreements or that everything will be peaceful and calm.

• The difference is that there is agreement to work and live in peace, understanding and mutual support for each other.
Getting to... Collaboration = Win/Win

- Mutual Benefit
- Mutual Understanding
- Builds Mutual Trust
- Builds Relationship
- IN TO ME SEE
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Counselor’s Tool – NIDA SBIR

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Thanks and Blessings

Many blessings as you move through your life. It is yours to change and influence!

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