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# Coupled Recovery™

## Connecting Individual and Relational Recovery

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LMFT, CSAT, CCPS-C, CPTT Candidate

# Disclaimer

- I am the owner of Knowlton Counseling, which helped to sponsor my presentation and attendance at this conference
- I am a co-owner of NorthStar Relational Consulting, which helped to sponsor my presentation and attendance at this conference

# What is Coupled Recovery™?

- Uses similarities between the trauma cycle and the addiction cycle to build a foundation for connection and provide a common language for addicts and partners
- Incorporates individual recovery with relational recovery for both addicts and partners (regardless of gender and relational status) while addressing attachment issues and trauma for both
- Connects models from IITAP, APSATS, SASH, AASAT, AASECT, and others
- Meant to be used by those already trained in at least one of the above models

## Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



# 3 Phases of Coupled Recovery™

(Adapted from Gottman and  
Caudill & Drake)

Phase 1

Atone –  
Establishing Truth & Emotional  
Safety



Phase 2

Attune –  
Building Empathy & Connection



Phase 3

Attach –  
Healing Sexuality

# Five Principles of Coupled Recovery™



Education



Honesty



Boundaries



Communication



Connection

# 3 Phases of Coupled Recovery™

(Adapted from Gottman and Caudill & Drake)

**Phase 1: Atone –  
Establishing  
Truth & Safety**

## Steps 1-5

1. Trauma & Addiction
2. Moral Inventory or Disclosure/Amends
3. Accountability
4. Time-Outs
5. Check-ins

**Phase 2: Attune –  
Building Empathy  
& Connection**

## Steps 6-10

6. Emotions, Needs, & Triggers
7. Owning & Processing Your Emotions
8. Sharing Your Emotions
9. Call & Respond
10. Developing & Expressing Empathy

**Phase 3: Attach –  
Healing Sexuality**

## Steps 11-15

11. Defining Healthy Sexuality
12. Owning & Processing Your Sexual Trauma
13. Creating Structure & Redefining Language
14. Self-Exploration
15. Sexual Connection

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## Phase 1:

### Atone – Establishing Truth & Emotional Safety

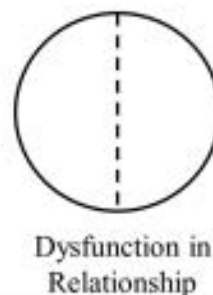
1. Education – Trauma & Addiction Responses
2. Honesty – Moral Inventory or Disclosure/Amends Process
3. Boundaries – Accountability
4. Communication – Time Outs
5. Connection – Check Ins



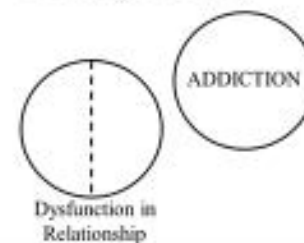
Relationship with  
Abusive Addict



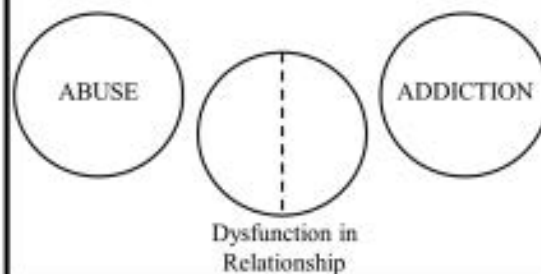
Relationship with No Abuse or  
Addiction



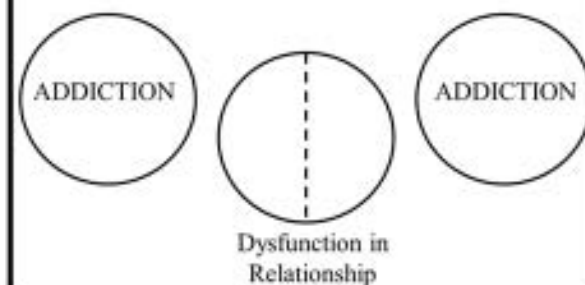
Relationship with One  
Addict (no Abuse)



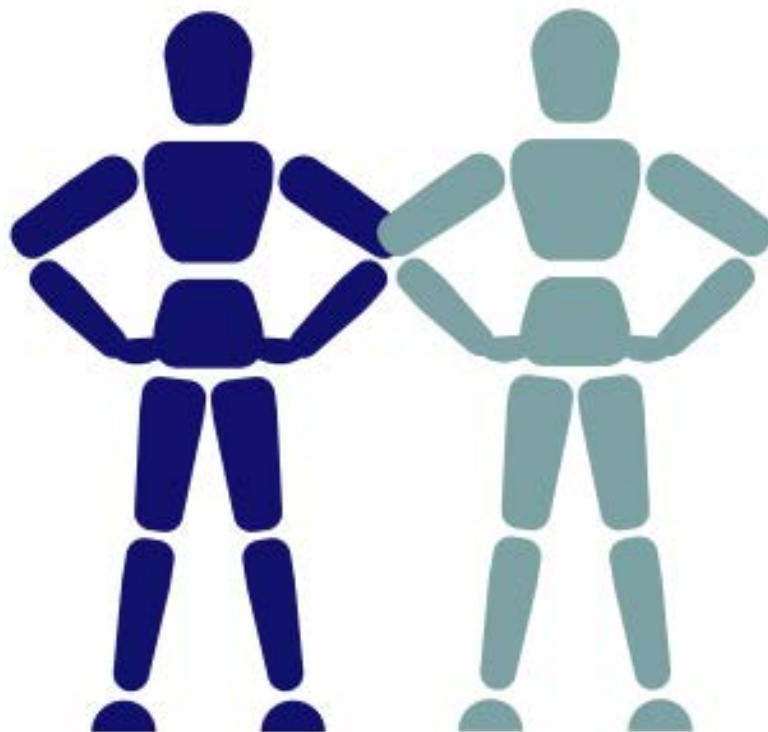
Relationship with One Addict  
and Abusive Partner



Relationship with Two  
Addicts



# Relationship



Person 1

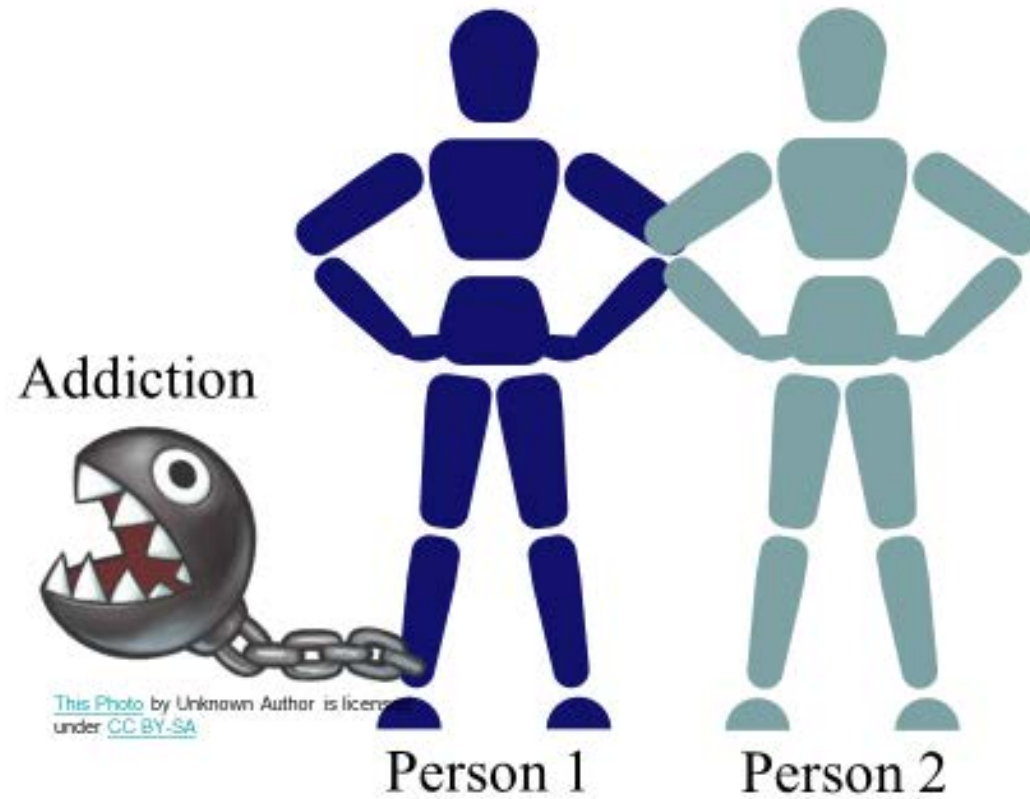
Person 2

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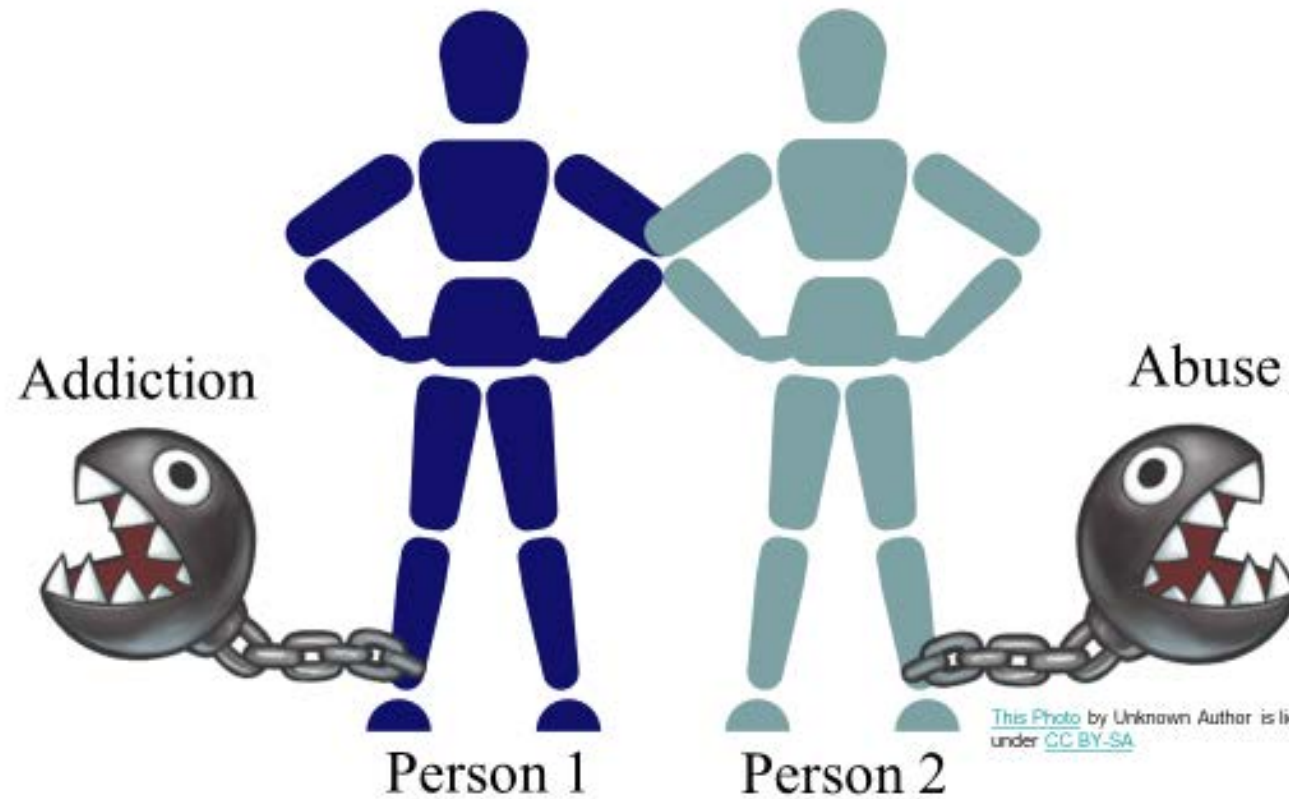
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## Relationship with One Addict



## Relationship with One Addict and Abusive Partner

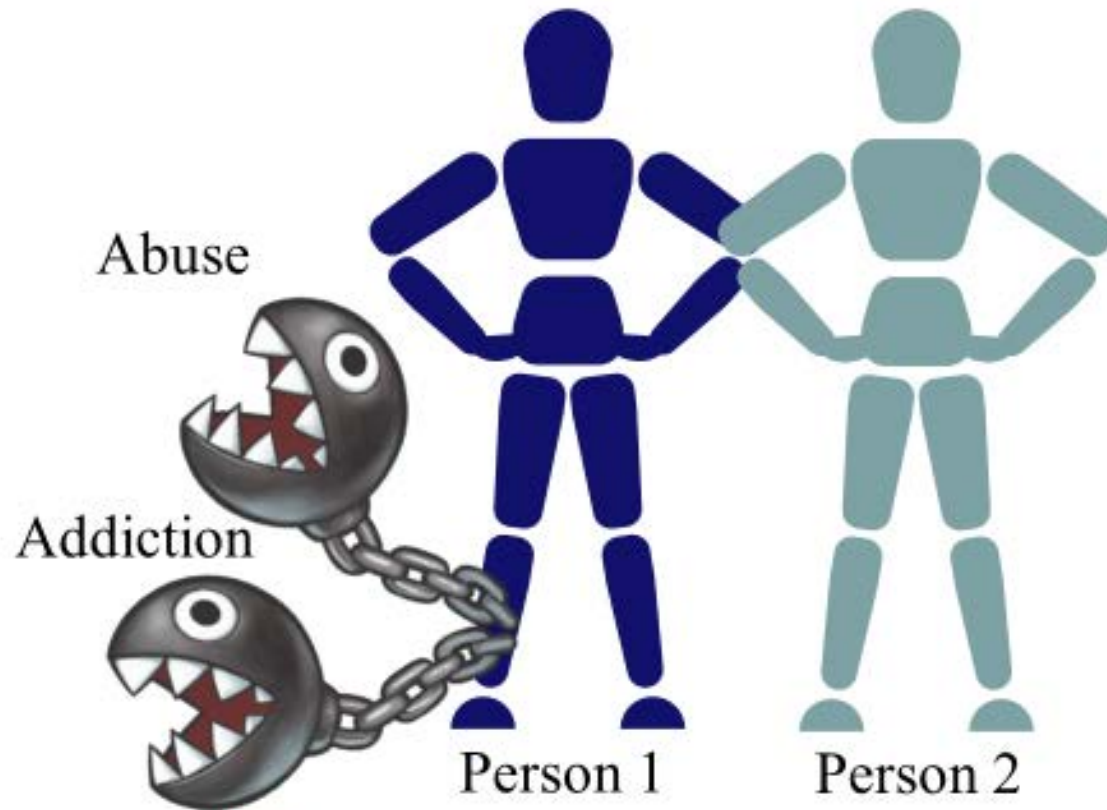


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## Relationship with Abusive Addict



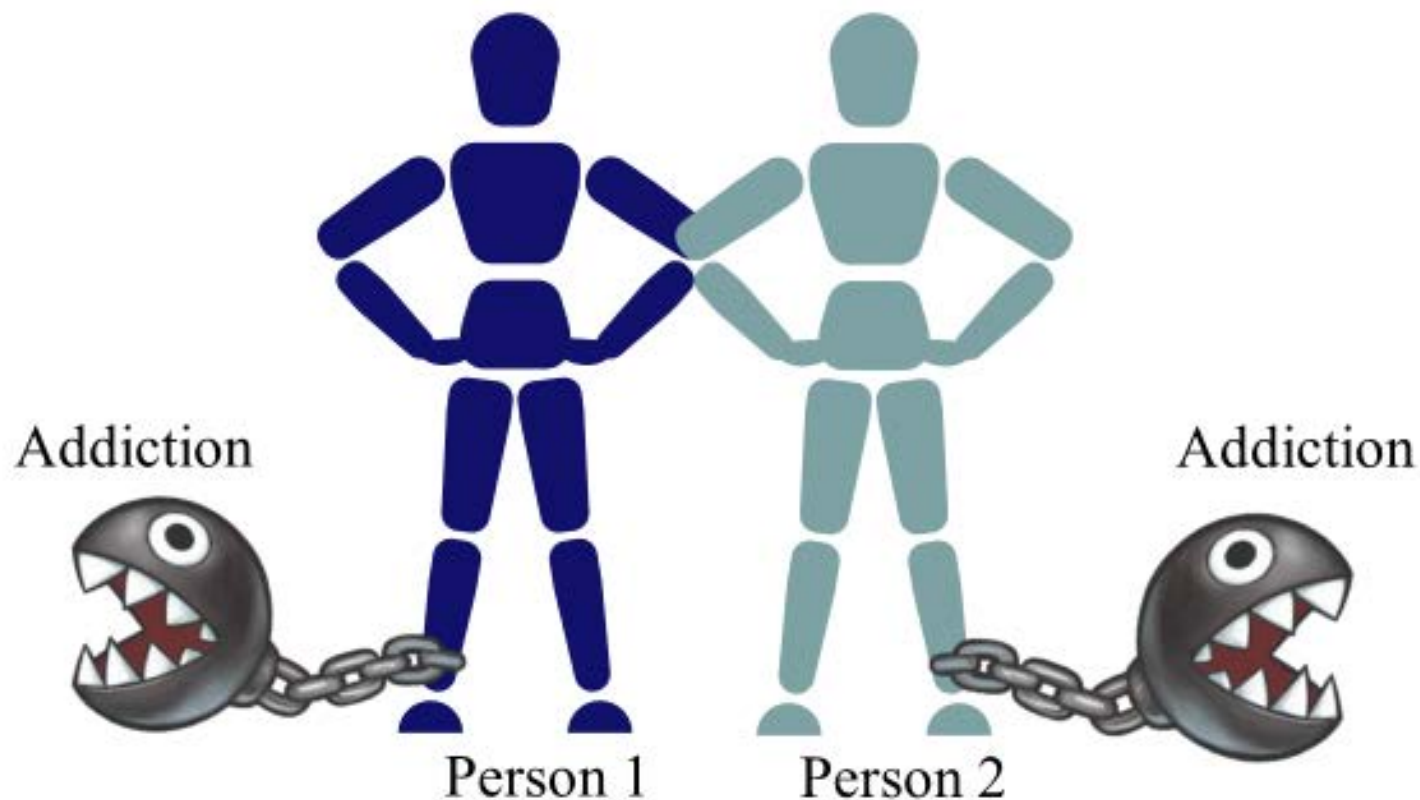
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## Relationship with Two Addicts



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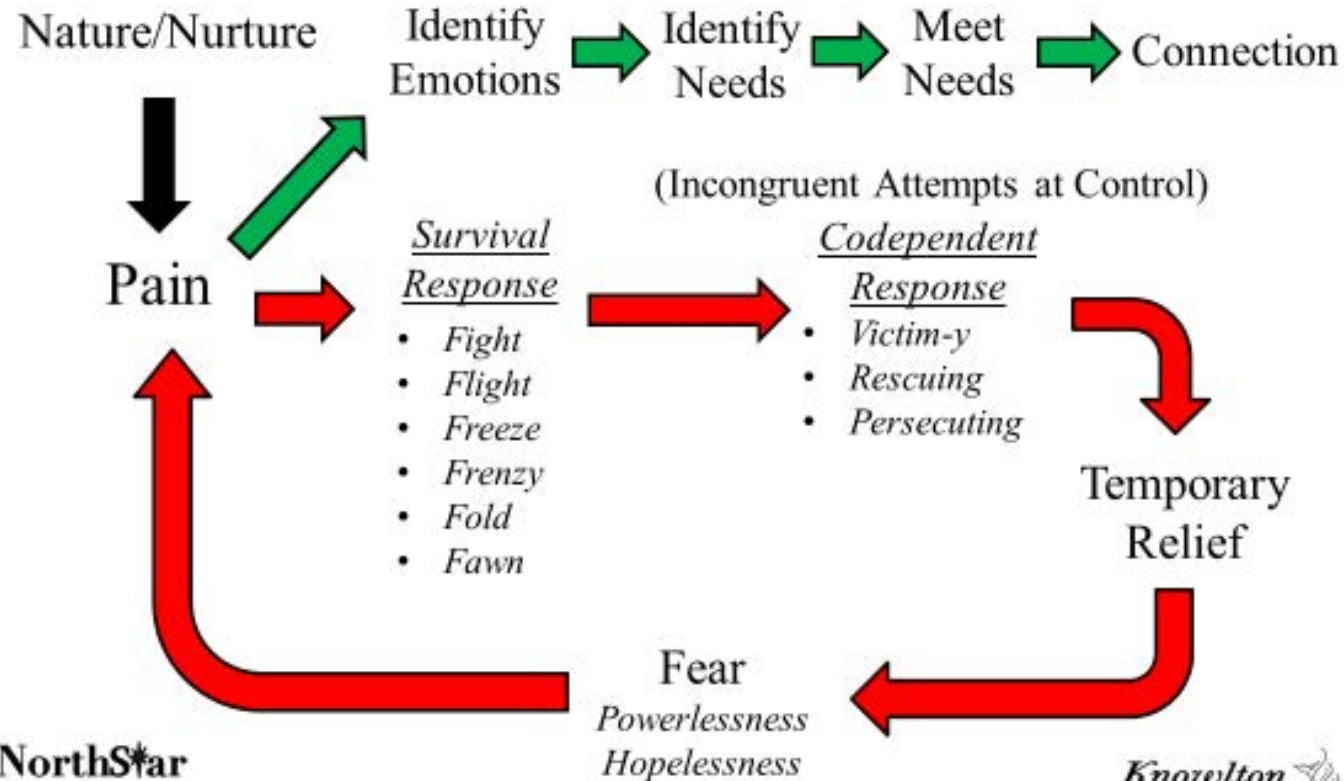
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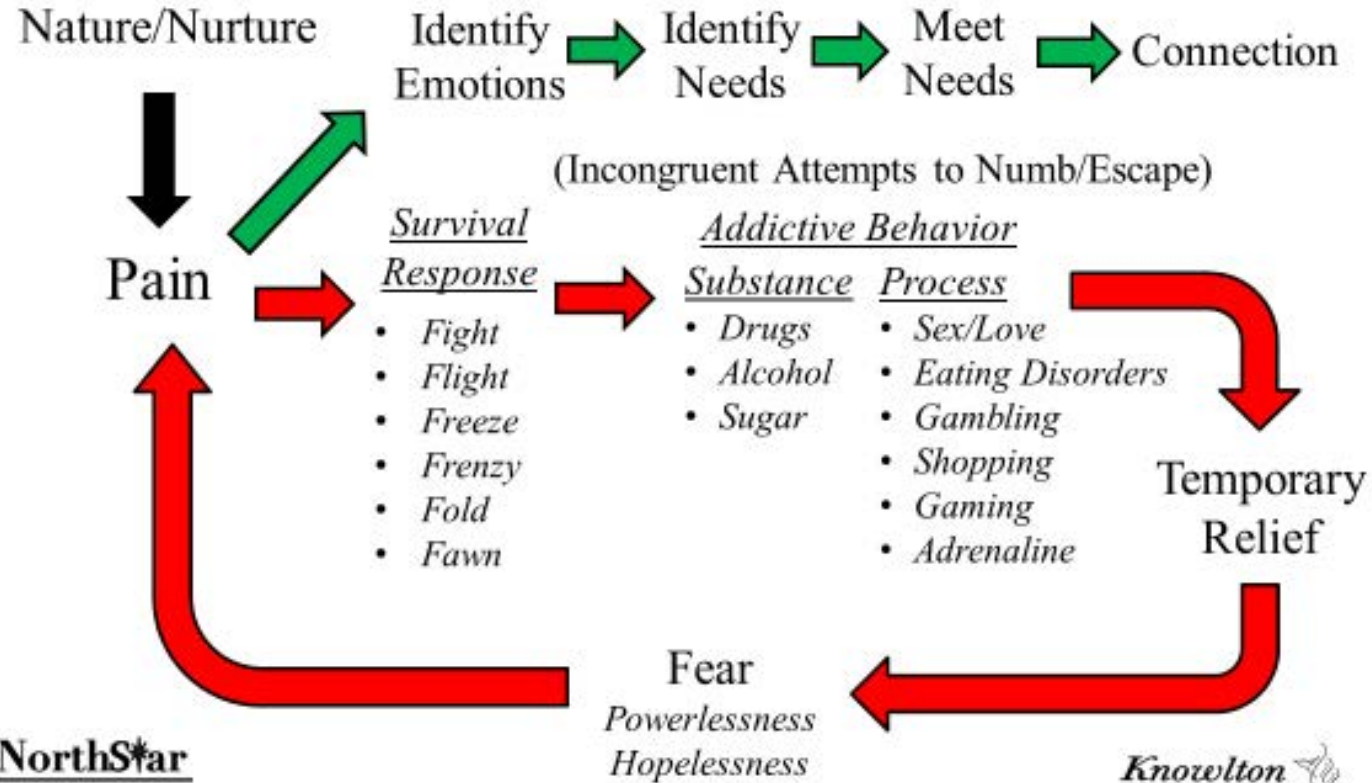
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# Trauma Cycle

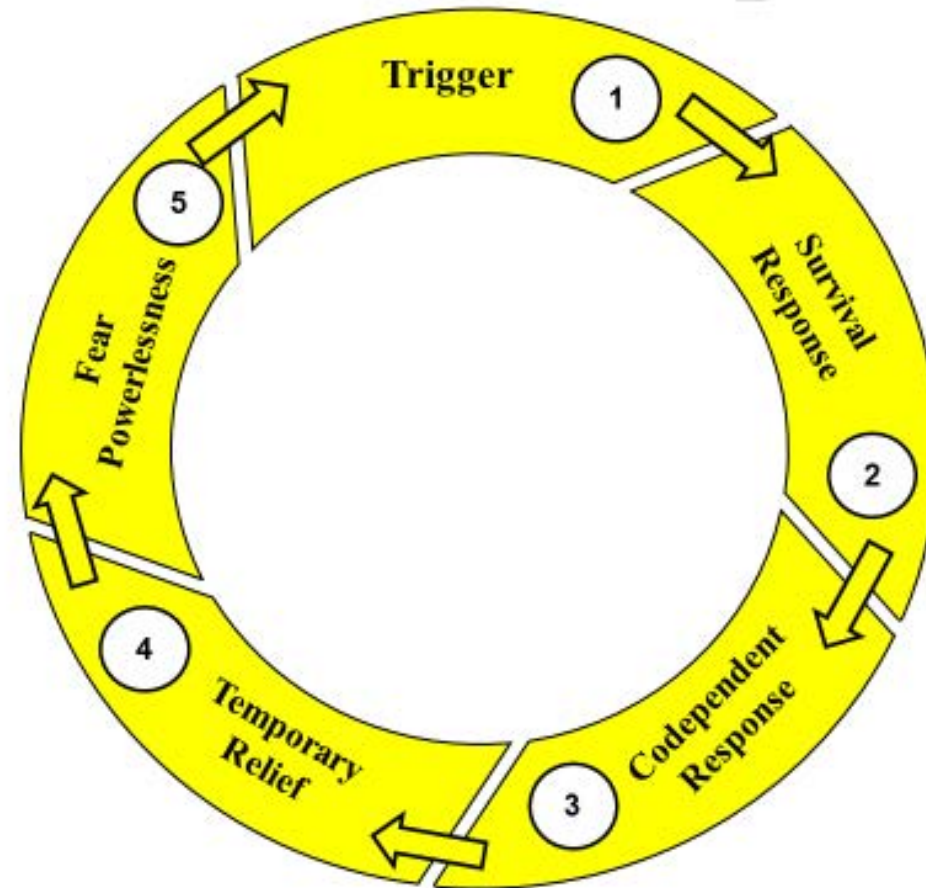


# Addiction Cycle





# Trauma Loop

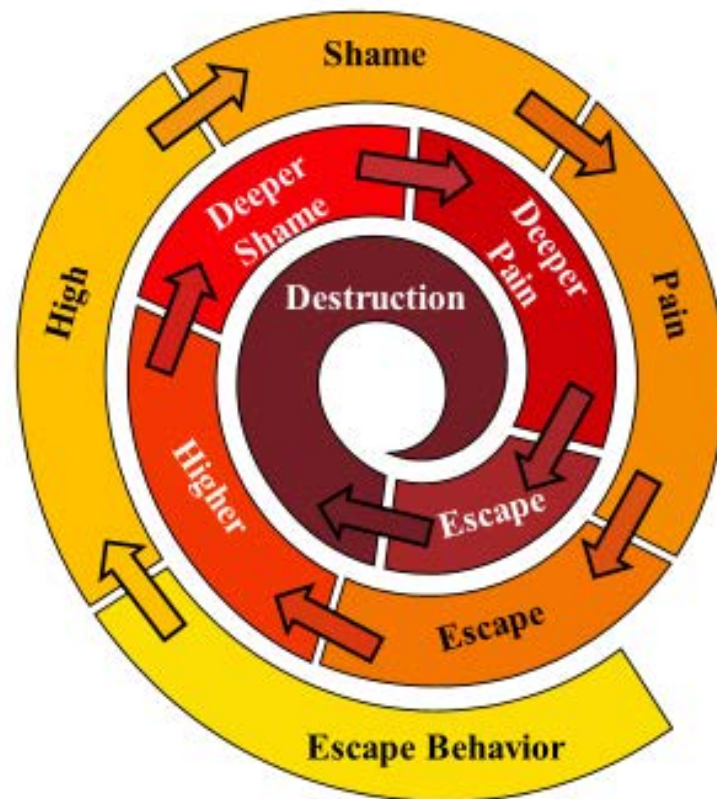


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# Addiction Spiral

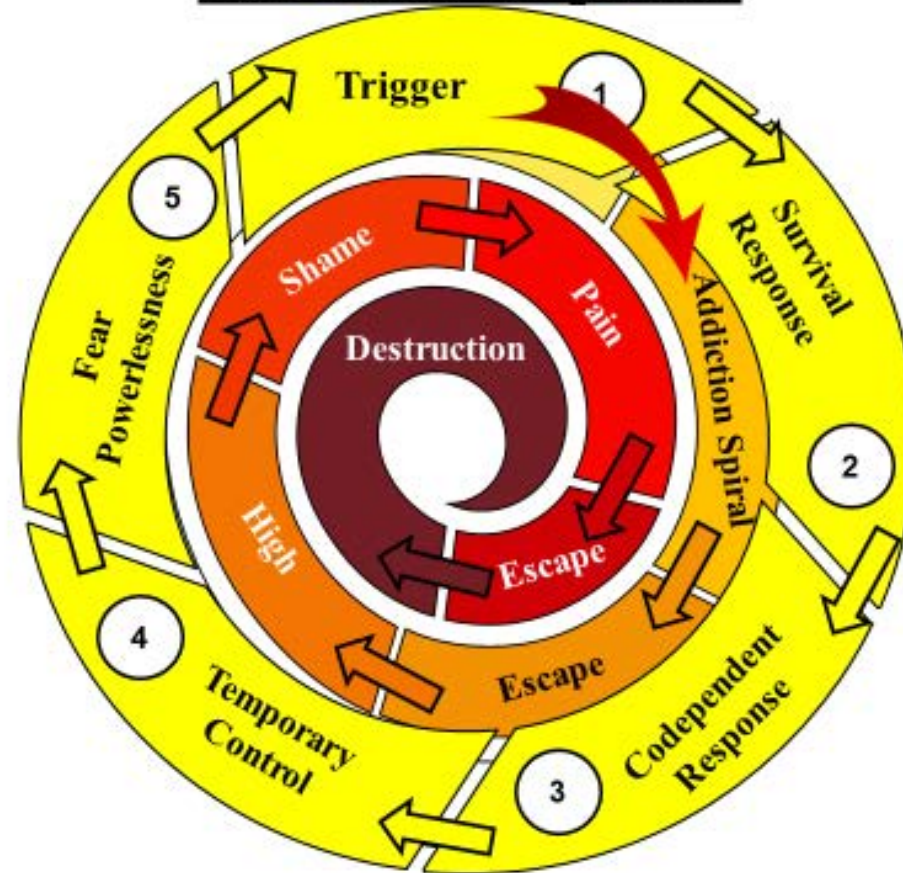


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## Connection Between Trauma and Addiction Responses

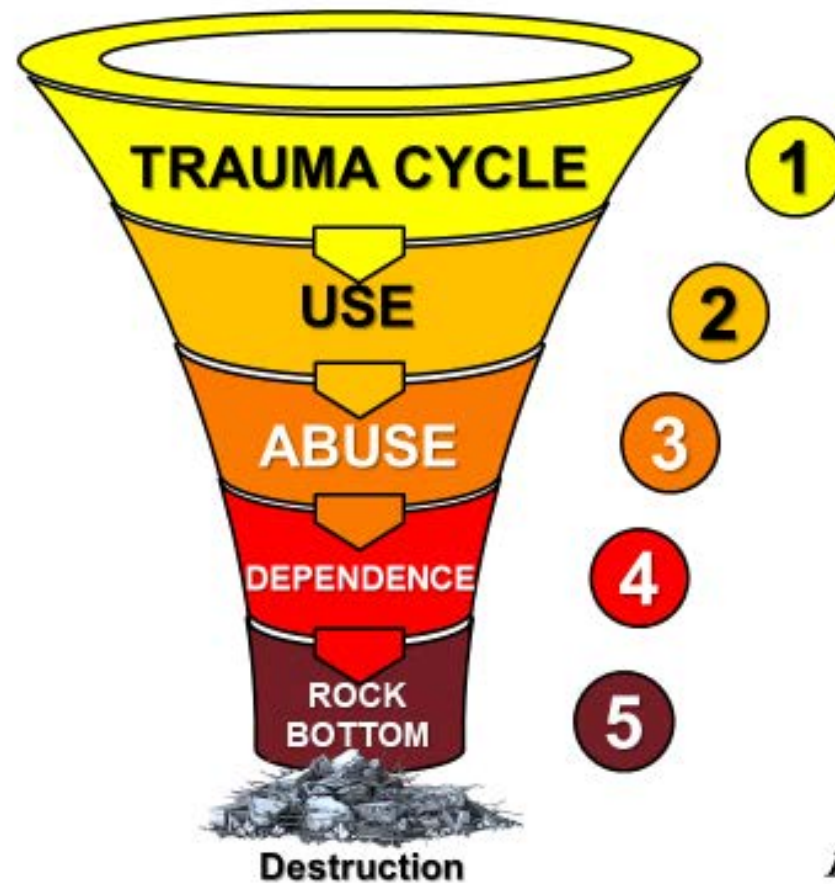


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# Addiction Vortex

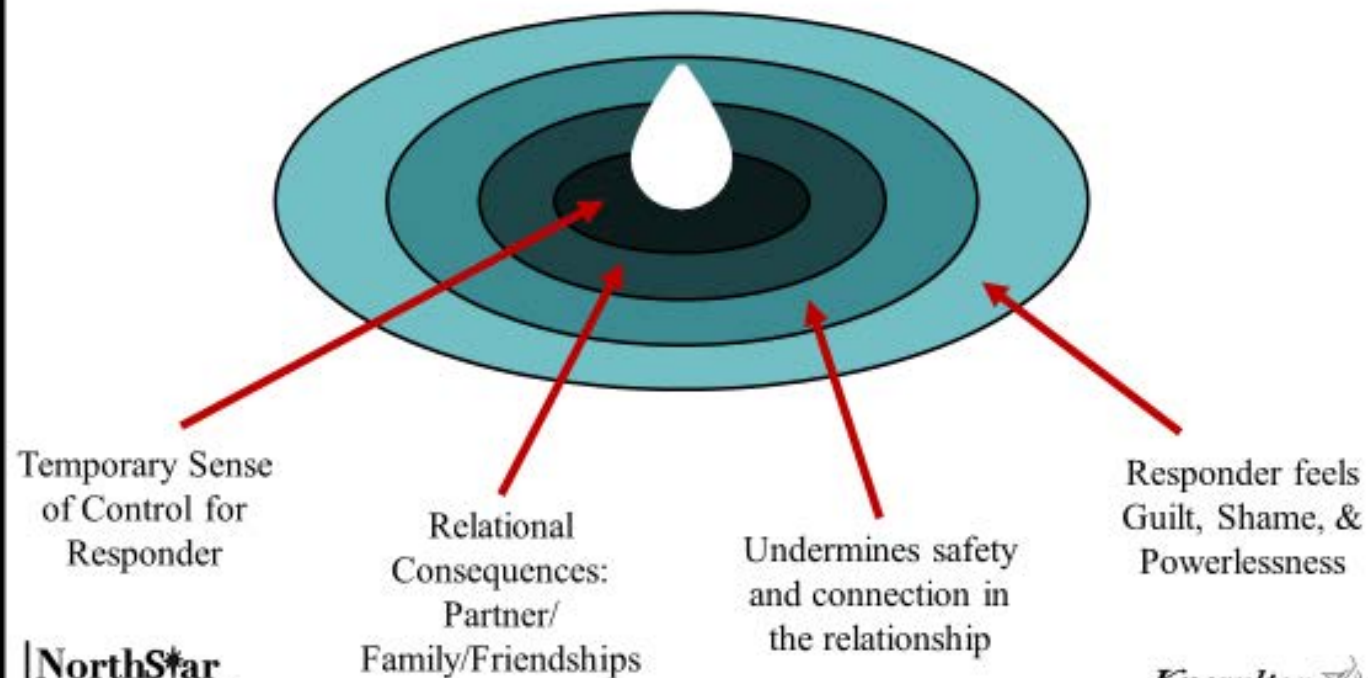


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## Effect of Trauma Responses



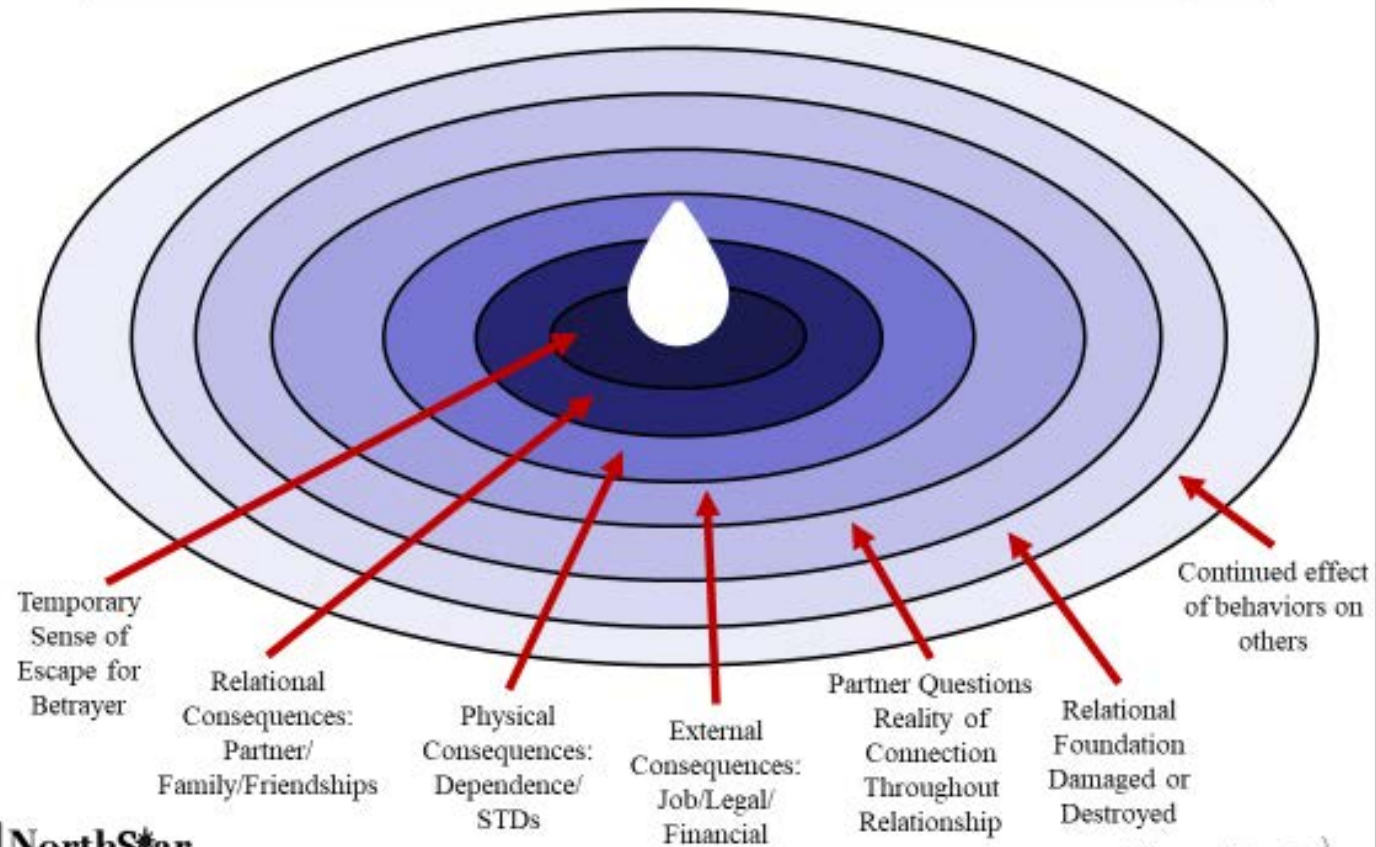
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## Effect of Sexual Addiction & Betrayal



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## Survival Responses



Fight



Flight



Freeze



Frenzy



Fold

Give up and give in



Fawn

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# Dependency Continuum

(Adapted from Pia Mellody)

Needless/Wantless

Antidependence

Interdependence

Codependence

Love Addiction



- Doesn't recognize needs or wants
- Doesn't feel hunger or exhaustion or need for touch
- Dissociated

- Doesn't let anyone in
- Completely self-sufficient (internally focused)
- Knows needs and wants exist, but can't ask for help
- Believes it can only be done right by them

- Self-sufficient
- Connected to self
- Can help others when they really need it
- Can ask for help when needed
- Recognizes the right to say no to even reasonable requests

- Believes worth is based on connection to others
- Happiness, success, and safety depends on others
- Enmeshed

- Believes they are worth less than others
- Believes they need to be in a relationship to exist
- Looks for intensity rather than vulnerability in connection

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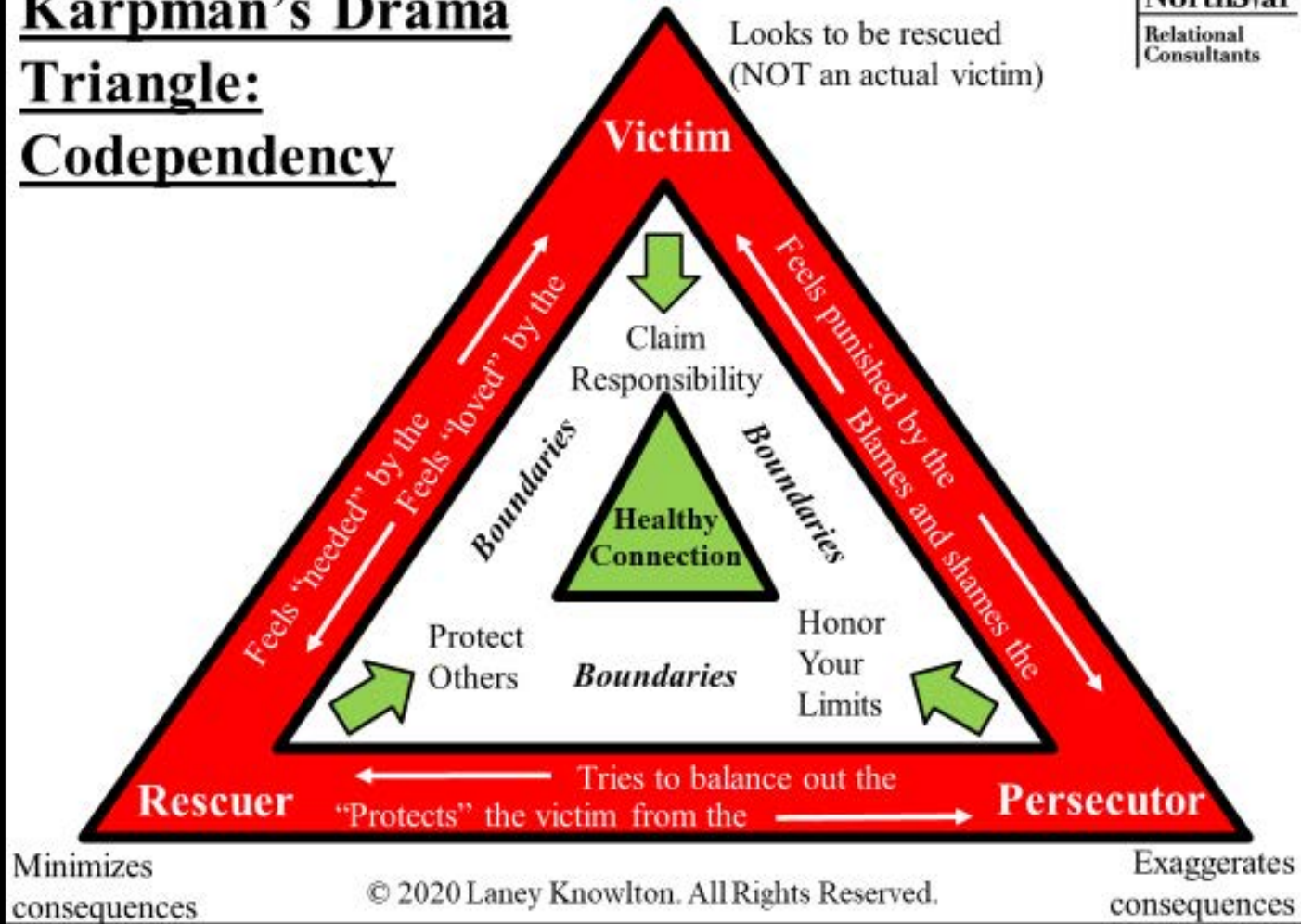
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# Karpman's Drama Triangle: Codependency

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# Moral Inventory

## Blue Book (AA)

- Resentment Inventory
- Fear Inventory
- Sex Inventory

## Intimacy Anorexia The Steps (Doug Weiss)

- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Losses

# Disclosure

## Full Disclosure Process

*Disclosure Letter, Impact Letter,  
& Amends Statement*

- Janice Caudill and Dan Drake's *Full Disclosure Books*
- CSAT Disclosure Model
- Mari Lee's Disclosure Model

Recommended in most situations

May need to be proceeded by an accountability statement when partner's health or safety is compromised

## Accountability Statement

*What, Why, & Impact Letters*

Recommended when partners request an expedited process

- Transfers from other clinicians
- Minimal acting out
- Previous incomplete or inadequate disclosure process

How I protect myself and others



How I maximize connection with myself and others

If you do A, I will do B, until you do C

**Boundaries:  
Protect &  
Connect**

# Communicating Boundaries

(John Townsend)

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1. Love – “I’m having this conversation because I love you and want to be connected to you”

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2. Truth – “I’m not ok with \_\_\_\_\_”

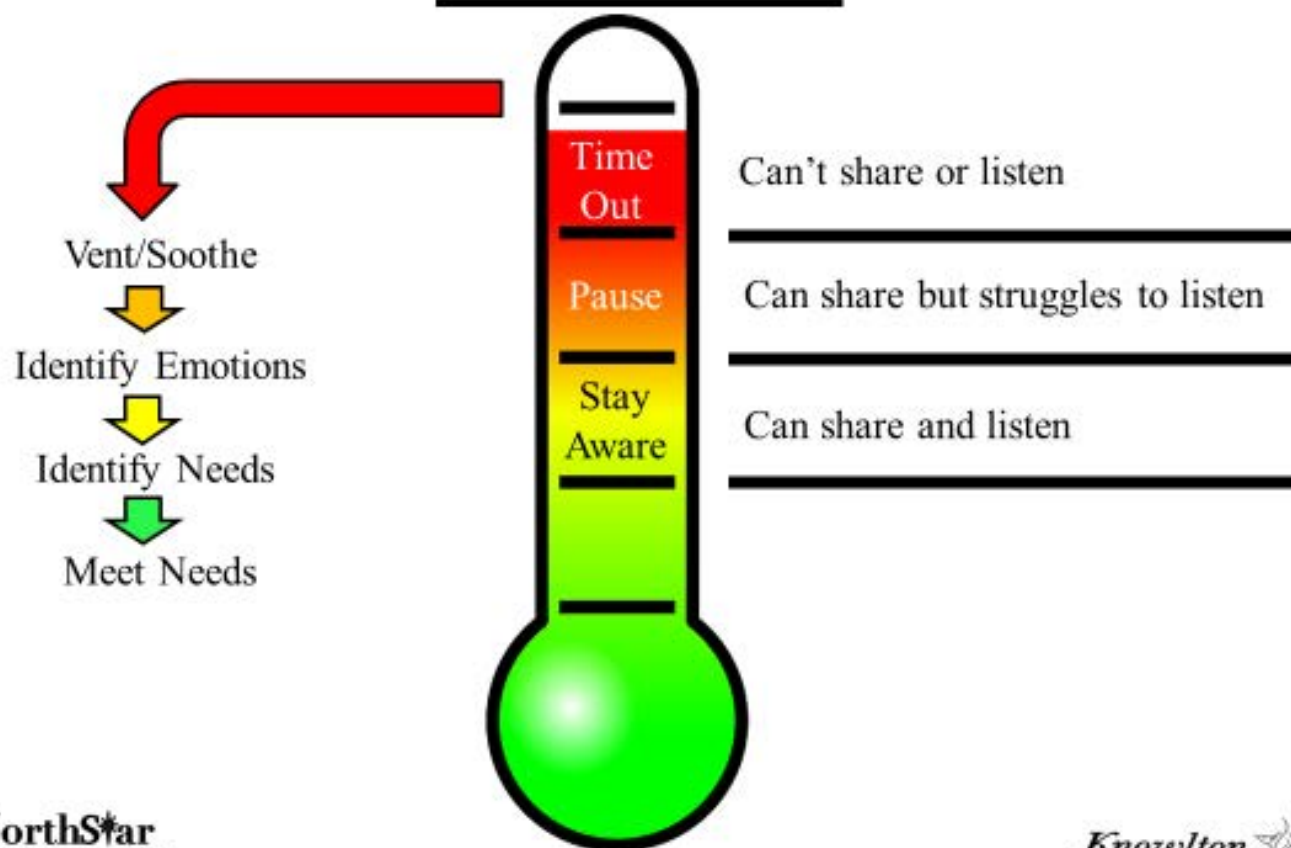
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3. Freedom – “You have the freedom to choose to \_\_\_\_\_”

---

4. Reality – “If you choose to \_\_\_\_\_, then I will \_\_\_\_\_”

# Time Outs



# My Time Out Worksheet

What phrase did I use to call time out?

Vent/Soothe  
What did I do to vent/soothe?

Identify Emotions  
What emotions am I feeling?

Identify Needs  
What are my needs?

Meet Needs  
How can I meet my needs?

Time Out

Pause

Stay

Aware

What made me know that I needed to call a time out?

What triggered me?

How did I know I first started getting triggered?

What do I need to do to reconnect?

# Check-Ins

## Relapse

- Inform about acting out behaviors
- Within 24 hours of acting out or before sex (whichever happens first)
- As needed

## Recovery

- Share steps taken and insights
- Usually weekly
- Scheduled

## Relational

- Share emotions and experiences
- Usually daily
- Scheduled





## Phase 2: Attune – Building Empathy & Connection

1. Education – Emotions, Needs, & Triggers
2. Honesty – Owning & Processing Your Emotions
3. Boundaries – Sharing Your Emotions
4. Communication – Call & Respond
5. Connection – Developing & Expressing Empathy

# Recovery Hill

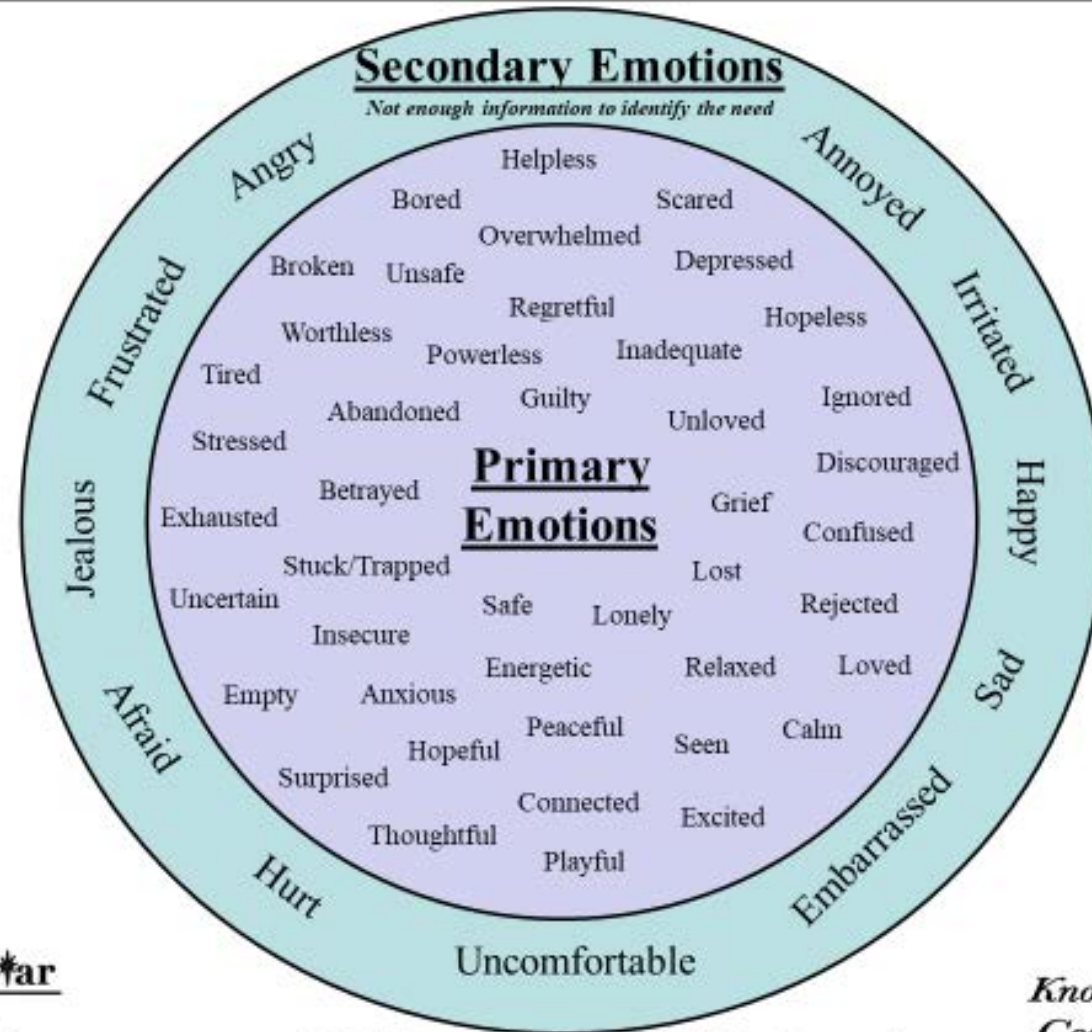
(Adapted from Mark Butler's Recovery Hill)



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# Shame – The Emotional Parasite

Guilt	Inadequacy	Anger
I made a mistake	I can't do this alone	I'm not safe
I need to take steps to repair something	I need additional skills	Something is hurting me or others
I need to change so I won't repeat it	I need help	Something needs to change

## **With Shame**

Guilt	Inadequacy	Anger
I am a mistake	I'm worthless	I'm too much
I'll never be able to fix this	I'm not smart enough	This will never be fixed
I'm broken beyond repair	I'll never be good enough	I'm a monster

## Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs





# Emotional Tank

**Excitement, Creativity,  
Relaxation, Connection**

## Drains

- Painful Emotions
- Lack of sleep
- Triggers
- Hunger
- Anger
- Illness
- Stress



50%  
Connection to Self  
At Least 5 Things

- Meditation
- Exercise
- Music
- Art
- Etc.

50%  
Connection to Others  
At Least 5 People

- Significant other
- Family
- Friends
- Social
- Etc.

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# Communication Styles

## Passive

- Doormat
- Avoid conflict at all costs
- Refuses to address issues
- Ignores needs
- Can't say no
- Codependent victim or rescuer behaviors

## Passive-Aggressive

- Invisible attacks
- Subtle
- Sarcastic
- Deflects and denies responsibility
- Hidden codependent persecutor behaviors

## Assertive

- Confident
- Grounded
- Empowered
- Direct
- Balanced
- Able to admit faults
- Allows others to take responsibility when appropriate

## Aggressive

- Brutally direct
- Deflects and denies responsibility
- Attacks and blames
- Controlling
- Codependent persecutor behaviors

# Hula Hoops

(Adapted from *Hula Hoop Health* by Laaser & Laaser)



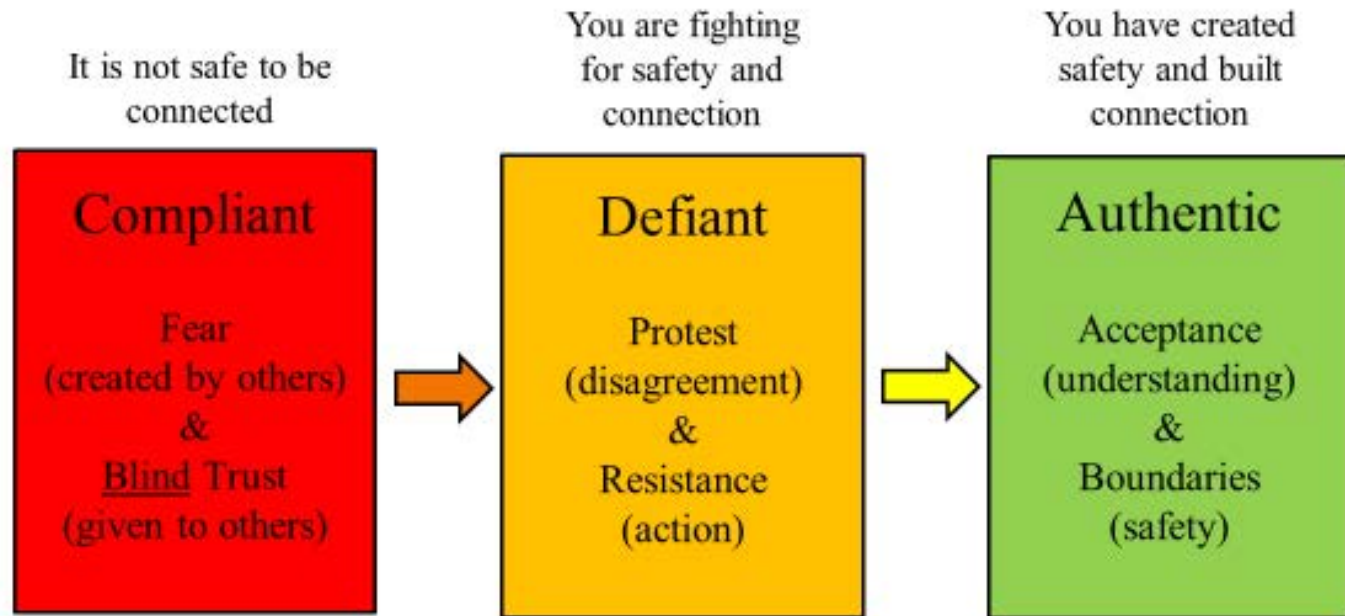
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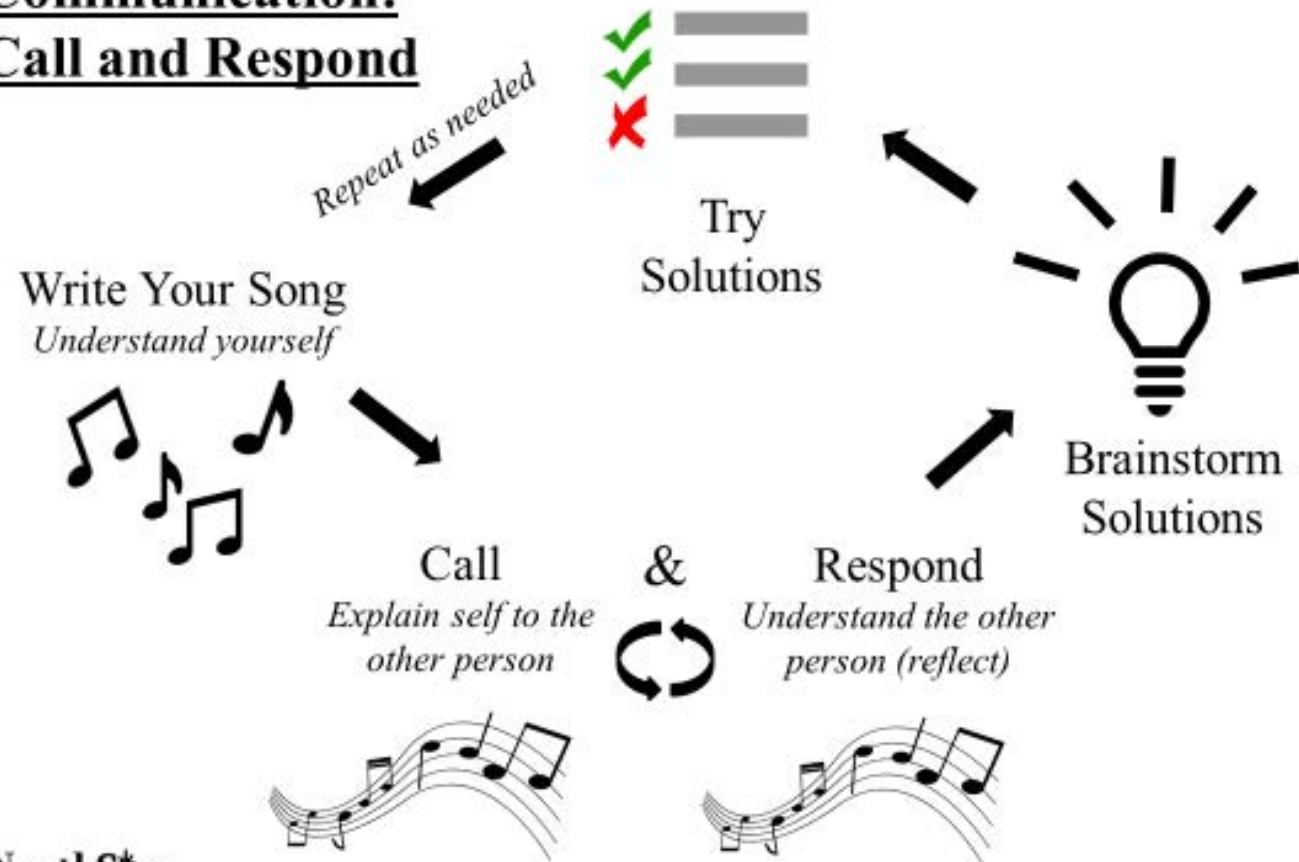
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# Motivational Boxes



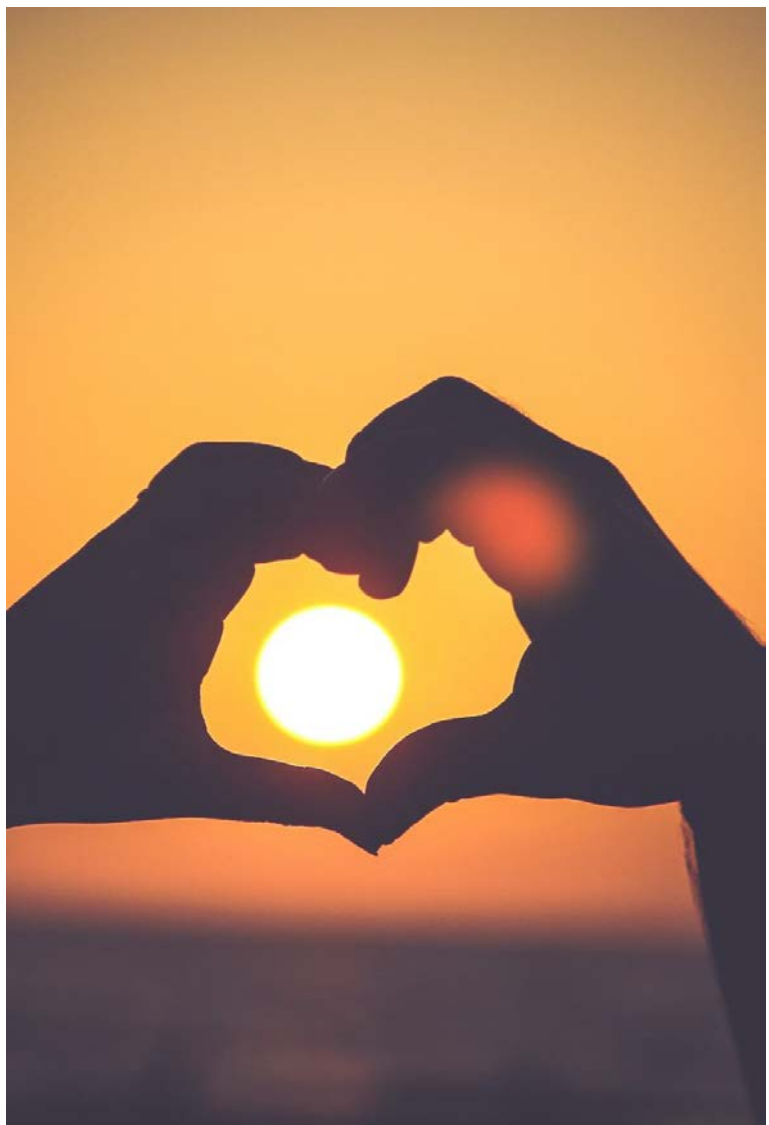
## Communication: Call and Respond



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## Phase 3: Attach – Healing Sexuality


1. Education – Defining Healthy Sexuality
2. Honesty – Owning & Processing Your Sexual Trauma
3. Boundaries – Creating Structure & Redefining Language
4. Communication – Self-Exploration
5. Connection – Sexual Intimacy

# Healthy Sexuality Is...

Connection to yourself and your body

The ability to share that connection with others in ways that allow each person to connect to themselves and to each other within their moral and relational standards when sharing is relationally safe

An individual and relational process that looks different for each person and couple



Each person's body  
belongs to that person

(Emily Nagoski, 2020)

YOU ARE  
NORMAL

“Whatever you’re experiencing in your sexuality . . . is the result of your sexual response mechanism functioning appropriately . . . in an inappropriate world.”  
(Emily Nagoski, 2015, p. 9)

Sex Is  
Often  
Used to  
Meet  
Three  
Different  
Needs

---

Sexual Release

---

Physical Touch

---

Emotional Connection

---

Accelerator – thoughts, feelings, sensory information that sends you messages to “turn on”

Brake – thoughts, feelings, sensory information that sends you messages to “turn off”

Accelerator  
and Brakes  
(Janssen &  
Bancroft, 2007)



**Be aware of the trauma  
they bring into the session –  
the denial of that trauma is  
retraumatizing**

(Jasmine Johnson & King Noire, Drama, Trauma, & Kink, 2021)

Listen to their experience without  
interjecting yourself or your experience

Don't minimize their experience or pain

## Sexual Abuse Includes (but is not limited to):

- Touching you or making you touch yourself or someone else without your consent (note – children do not have the ability to give consent to adults or individuals who are significantly older than they are)
- Making you watch sexual acts
- Making you listen to or read sexual comments (aimed at you or others)
- Exposing you to sexual material without your consent (note – exposing children to sexually explicit material is abuse; they cannot consent)
- Breaching privacy boundaries with or without your knowledge (i.e., watching, photographing, or filming you without your permission, sharing sexual photos of you as a minor or without your permission)
- NOTE – not all child abuse comes from adults or even older children – children can abuse other children

Sexual Abuse in  
Relationships  
Includes (but is not  
limited to):

- Manipulation to participate in sexual activities
- Using threats to force participation in sexual activity
- Not honoring or allowing boundaries, sexually or physically
- Groping or touching without permission
- Refusal to stop sexual interactions (rape)
- Forced sexual interactions (up to and including rape)
- Breaching boundaries with or without the other person's knowledge (i.e., filming sexual interactions without permission, sharing sexual photos with others without permission)

- Connects shame to sexual responses – victims of sexual abuse often “carry” the shame of their abusers (Pia Mellody)
- Shame and guilt over our own physical and emotional responses to our abuse
- Early exposure to sex – our brain can’t make sense of the physical and emotional sensations
- Teaches us that emotional vulnerability is not safe
- Teaches us that the only way to “connect” or feel loved is sex – that we will never be valued or loved as ourselves
- Teaches us that sex is the only thing about us that others want and the only way to get attention – the only way we know how to maintain any type of connection with others
- Teaches us that sex is about control rather than connection (being controlled by or controlling others)

## Effect of Abuse on Sexuality

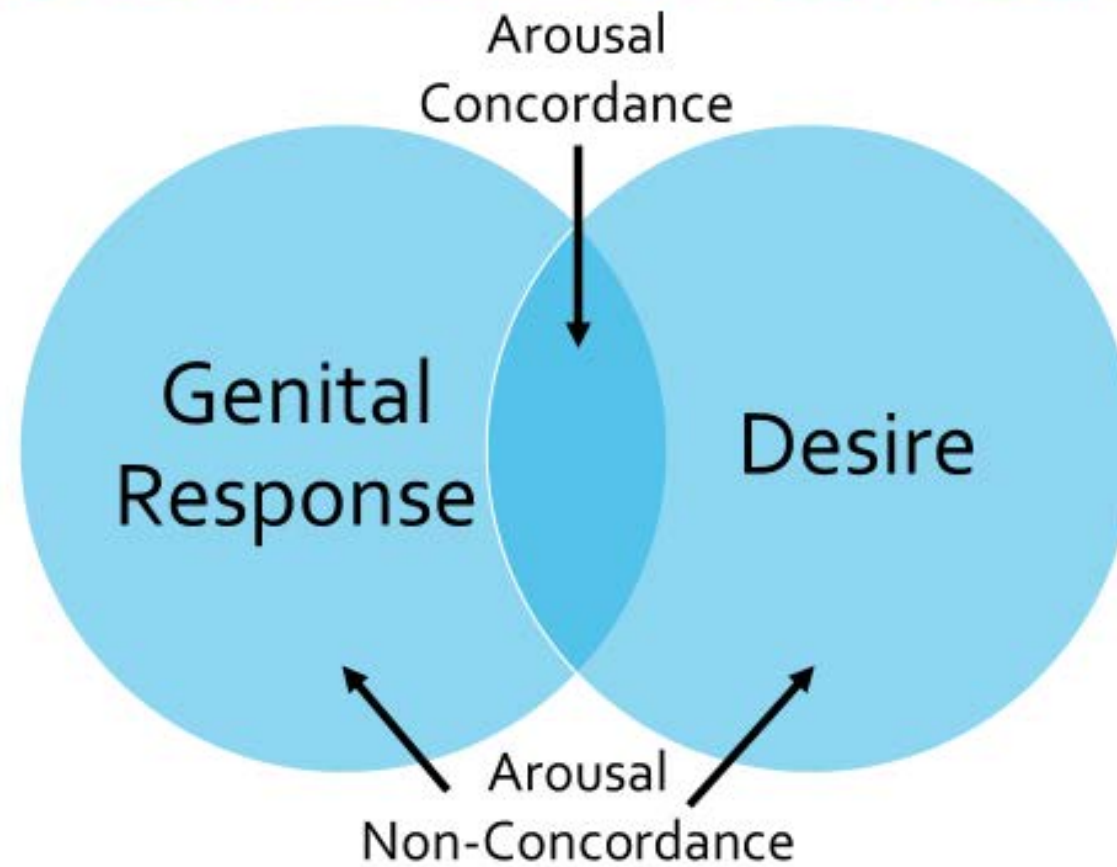
# Effect of Betrayal on Sexuality

- Gaslighting makes betrayed partners question their own sexual reality (whether they know/knew about the betrayal or not) – partners are taught that their view of sexuality is wrong and what they need, like, or want is wrong
- Partners are ignored, mocked, or rejected when their sexual needs or desires are expressed – they are taught that they will never be loved or valued for themselves and will never be good enough
- Partners are blamed for the betrayal - social pressure often state that betrayal is caused by partners not meeting the other person's needs



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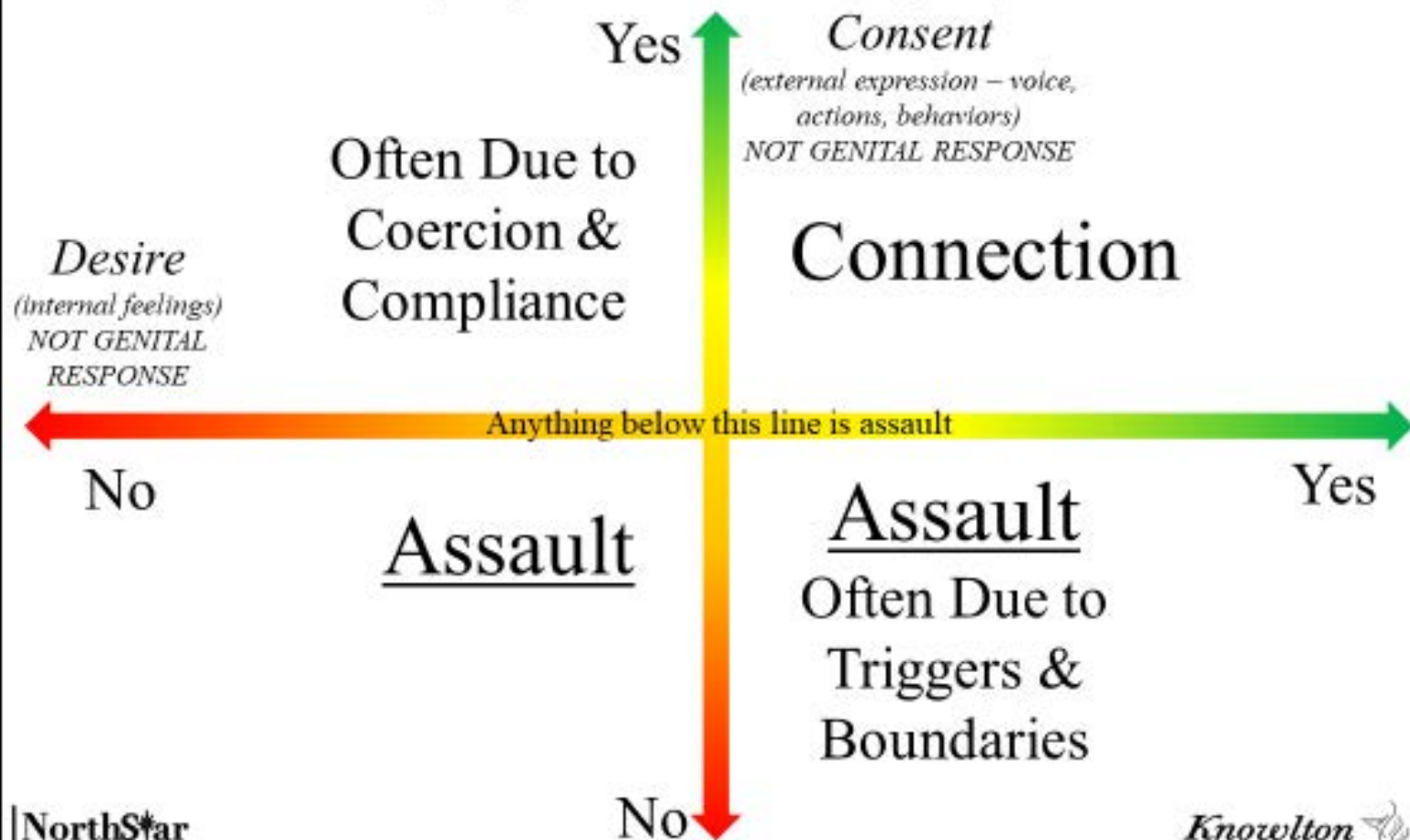
# Arousal Non-Concordance



(Emily Nagoski, 2020)

# Consent Matrix

(Adapted from Dr. Zhana Vrangalova)





# Consent

(Tiana GlittersaurusRex,  
2021)

All parties are aware of risks, benefits, and consequences

No level of coercion

No impaired judgment

Can be revoked AT ANY TIME

Includes empathy for past experiences  
(including intergenerational)

Given freely and enthusiastically (absence of  
“no” is NOT “yes”)

# Owning (Acknowledging and Understanding) the Trauma

- Childhood, adolescence, and primary relationship (all three or any combination)
- Gaslighting
- Manipulation
- Objectification by others and self (particularly related to the addiction)
- Sexual abuse and/or harassment
- Domino effect
- Punishment for boundaries



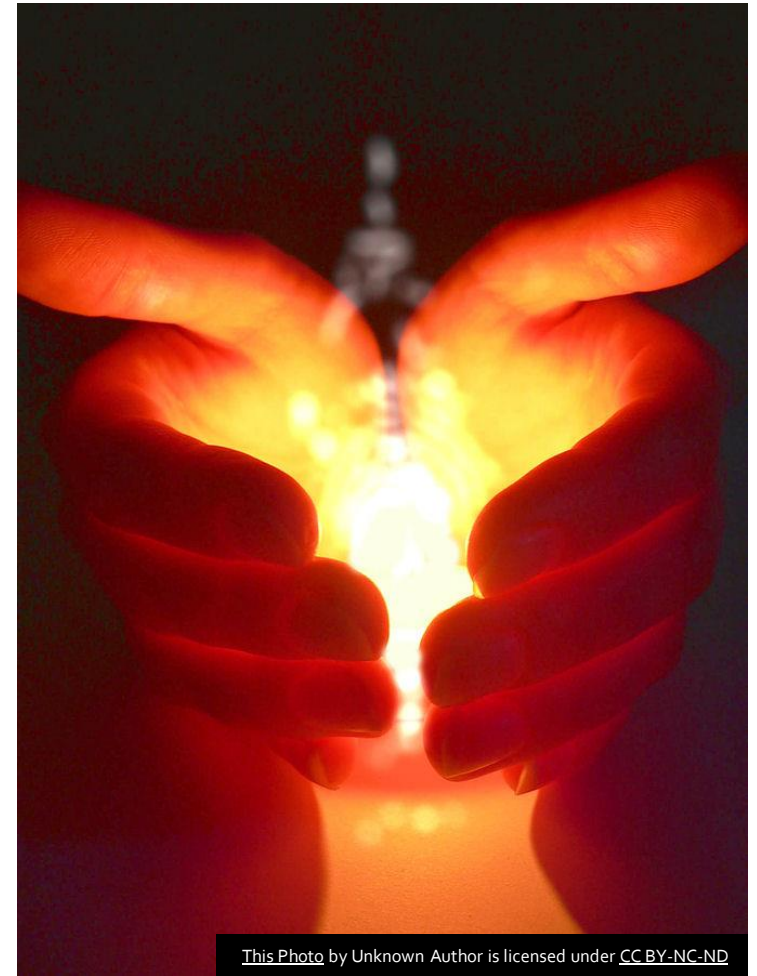
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# Objectification

# Healing the Trauma

- Sexual Trauma Impact Letter
- Sexual Trauma Egg
- Sexual Trauma Timeline
- Trauma Treatment - EMDR, SE, Brainspotting, Psychodrama
- Parts Work (IFS)



# Redefining Language

## Identify

Identify triggers

## Replace

Set boundaries around replacing easily avoidable words (sexual terms, explicit words, triggering language)

## Redefine

Redefine words needed for connection to self and others (break down misperceptions of sexuality – i.e. sex, sexual, sensual, arousal, fantasy, desire, need, want, attraction, passion)



# Self-Image/Body Issues

Accept yourself and  
your body as enough

Confidence and joy  
(Emily Nagoski)

- Confidence – Knowing what's true
- Joy – Loving what's true

Learn to love yourself –  
you are beautiful

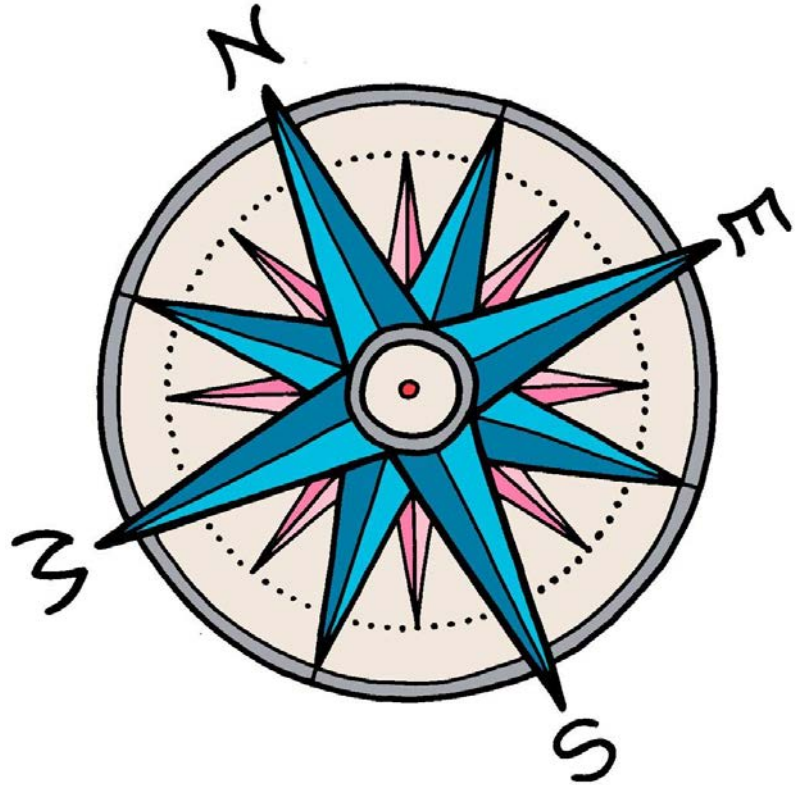


# The Body Is a Protector

(Sheri Keffer—CPTT Mod 1)







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# Self-Exploration

- Self-Exploration DOES NOT MEAN FORCED MASTURBATION
- Taking the steps to get to know your body
- Figure out what is safe for you – boundaries are essential
- Connect to yourself – what feels good to you emotionally and physically

# Safe Sex

(MSTI Class Feedback, 2021)

Each Person is Respected

Each Person is Heard/Seen

Interactions are Equal/Balanced

Each Person has Limits/Boundaries

Interactive Communication

No Judgement (DOES NOT mean automatic compliance)

Trust

Each Person's Vulnerability is Honored

# Sexual Connection

**YOU CAN ALWAYS SAY NO AT ANY POINT  
OF THE PROCESS**

Your emotions  
and needs are  
valid

You have the  
right to have  
boundaries and  
enforce them

Set up Plan B's to  
ensure safety

# **3 Phases of Coupled Recovery™**

(Adapted from Gottman and Caudill & Drake)

**Phase 1: Atone –  
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Truth & Safety**

## **Steps 1-5**

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682-216-6523 (call or text)