

# Couples Research & Therapy *NEWSLETTER*

The Newsletter of the Couples Research & Therapy ABCT–SIG, Summer 2011

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## Studying Adolescent Romantic Relationships:

Contributions from the Relationship Development Center (RDC),  
Stony Brook University

Joanne Davila, Ph.D. and the RDC Lab

Rachel Hershenberg, Brian Feinstein, Vickie Bhatia, Kaitlyn Gorman

My lab and I are pleased to contribute to the SIG's exploration of the theme of developmental processes in couple relationships. Although we've done a good amount of work on adult romantic relationships, our most recent research focuses on romantic experiences in adolescence, including their development, risk factors for dysfunction, their consequences, and how what happens in them may ultimately put people at risk for dysfunction in adult relationships. Although much research has examined how couples function, relatively little has examined how and why people get involved in their relationships and how they learn to behave in relationships. As we all know, these are important issues because partner choices and experiences in relationships have serious implications for psychological and physical health.

The guiding framework for our work is that enduring vulnerabilities that contribute to relationship problems (e.g., interpersonal styles, emotion regulation abilities, psychological symptoms) can emerge early and can result in maladaptive models of relationships that lead to maladaptive ways of approaching and behaving in relationships. One aspect of our current work, therefore, focuses on risk factors for the development of romantic dysfunction in adolescents.

Romantic interest and experiences in adolescence are normative and highly salient. The same is true for sexual interest and experiences, which, along with their romantic counterparts, emerge following puberty and often demand the adolescent's attention. These experiences provide opportunities for necessary socialization (e.g., learning relationship skills, providing chances to develop and practice self- and emotion-regulation skills) as well as potentially stressful challenges with which adolescents must cope. If early vulnerabilities impair these processes, adolescents may fail to develop skills that will allow for adaptive relationship functioning in the future.

One risk factor we have examined is attachment insecurity in adolescent relationships. We have shown how insecurity is associated with poor adolescent romantic functioning. For instance, insecure adolescents are more likely to feel dysphoric when in a romantic relationship than are their more secure counterparts (Davila et al., 2004). Greater insecurity also is associated with more negative expectations about future relationships, including marriage (Steinberg, Davila, & Fincham, 2006). And late adolescent couples who lack an understanding of secure base functioning in relationships are likely to stay together when they are unhappy in the relationship (Davila, Waters, et al., 2007). Taken together, these data paint a picture in which insecurity serves as an early vulnerability for feeling depressed in romantic relationships, expecting the worst, and yet remaining in unhappy relationships. If these experiences are a predictor of what's to come, then these young people may be at the beginning of a very maladaptive trajectory.

## Letter from the Editors

We are pleased to bring you this edition of the Couples SIG Newsletter. Our apologies to Erika Lawrence and her lab as we inadvertently omitted their update from the Autumn edition. You can find out what they've been up to on page four.

We would like to thank Joanne Davila and her lab for submitting their multifaceted and interesting article. This month we requested article submissions exploring developmental processes in couples relationships. Please read further to learn more about their research on such high impact topics as attachment insecurity, depression, and engagement in romantic and sexual activities in adolescent relationships.

Additionally, we appreciate Jill Rathus' insightful review of Alan Fruzzetti's book, *The High Conflict Couple: A Dialectical Behavior Therapy Guide to Finding Peace, Intimacy, & Validation*.

As always, we invite our fellow Couples SIG members to submit feedback and ideas for article topics for future newsletters. Please contact us directly with your suggestions and to discuss article contributions.

**Best wishes for a simultaneously relaxing and productive summer!**

*Amanda Harp & Ellen Darling*

## **(Adolescent Romantic Relationships, Cont'd)**

In line with some of these findings, we also are particularly interested in depression in adolescent romantic and sexual functioning. I recently published a review of the literature on depression and adolescent romance that sets an agenda for research in the area (Davila, 2008), and my students and I have demonstrated, in a variety of samples, that romantic and sexual experiences in adolescence are associated with depressive symptoms (Davila et al., 2009; Davila et al., 2004; Hershenberg & Davila, 2010; Starr & Davila, 2008; Starr & Davila, 2009; Steinberg & Davila, 2008; Stroud & Davila, 2008; Yoneda & Davila, 2008). This work addresses an important gap in the literature. Depression rates are high among adolescents, and even subclinical symptoms predict episodes in adulthood. Thus, learning more about how and why adolescent romantic and sexual experiences confer risk for depressive symptoms is important. Similarly, learning more about how adolescent depressive symptoms impair romantic and sexual functioning is important. Our work speaks to both directions of association. In a number of data sets, we have shown that engaging in more romantic activities in adolescence (e.g., dating, being in a romantic relationship) is associated with an increase in depressive symptoms over time (e.g., Davila et al., 2009), and that this is particularly true for adolescents who lack the personal or social resources that would help them cope (or who engage in dysfunctional ways of coping) with the challenges of romantic activities (Davila et al., 2004; Starr & Davila, 2009). Our work has also shown that depressive symptoms predict engagement in sexual activities among early adolescents girls (Davila et al., 2009), and that this is particularly true for adolescents who have stressful family circumstances (Davila et al., 2009) or who are avoidant of intimacy (Hershenberg & Davila, 2010), again suggesting that adolescents who lack personal or social coping resources are at greatest risk.

We are particularly interested in the function that engagement in romantic and sexual activities serves for dysphoric adolescent girls. That dysphoric girls tend to engage more frequently in these activities is consistent with the fact that during adolescence both risk for depression (particularly among girls) and reward seeking increase dramatically. Yet these are two experiences that would seem not to go together. They certainly do not in adulthood. In fact, dysphoric/depressed adults tend to withdraw socially and demonstrate reduced interest in sexual activity. So, what accounts for the association between dysphoria and romantic/sexual activity in adolescence, and what makes adolescence different from adulthood? This question highlights the developmental differences that may exist and clearly demonstrates how important it is to pay attention to them, as they may inform how we think about relationships, depression, and their association across the lifespan.

In addition, to our lab's focus on psychopathology, we also are interested in examining positive adaptation in adolescent romantic functioning. In line with this, my students and I published a paper outlining our conception of adolescent romantic competence and we have developed an interview to assess it (Davila, Steinberg, et al., 2008). Whether our definition of competence is unique to adolescent relationships remains to be seen. We have assessed our construct in developmentally sensitive ways, though the key areas of competence also may apply to adult relationships.

We also are interested in what contributes to positive emotional functioning in adolescence, and have shown that greater parent-adolescent attachment security is associated with adolescent girls' ability to convey positive emotions about their mothers when they are interacting with them (Hershenberg, Davila, et al., in press). The ability to experience and express both positive and negative emotions in the context of relationships will continue to be of focus in our lab.

We intend to continue to pursue research on adolescent romantic relationships, with the ultimate goal not only of advancing science, but of helping parents, clinicians, and youth develop effective ways to foster healthy adolescent relationships, which hopefully will lead to healthy adult ones as well.

## Letter from the SIG Co-Presidents

Cameron Gordon<sup>1</sup> & Lee Dixon<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of North Carolina, Wilmington, <sup>2</sup>University of Dayton

Greetings Couples SIG! We hope that you have all had an enjoyable Spring and that you have plans for a restorative summer ahead! We would like to welcome those of you who are new to the Couples SIG and remind everyone to please feel free to contact either of us if you have any concerns or questions you think we may be able to help you address.

Lee Dixon can be reached via phone at 937-229-2160 or through email at [lee.dixon@notes.udayton.edu](mailto:lee.dixon@notes.udayton.edu).

Cameron Gordon can be reached via phone at 910-962-2454 or through email at [gordonc@uncw.edu](mailto:gordonc@uncw.edu).

We would like to thank our officers for their efforts throughout the past year. Student Co-Presidents C.J. Eubanks and Katie Williams-Baucom, Newsletter Co-Editors Ellen Darling and Amanda Harp, and Media Coordinator Patrick Poyner-Del Vento are all working hard to make the SIG a productive and useful professional home for those interested in couples research and therapy. In addition, we would like to welcome Meghan McGinn who was elected as our new Treasurer at the convention in San Francisco last Fall, and extend our sincere gratitude to Kahni Clements who concluded her term as Treasurer last year. You can find contact information for all of the officers (and most SIG members), as well as lots of other useful resources, on the SIG website at: [www.abtcouples.org/](http://www.abtcouples.org/).

The ABCT Convention in San Francisco last November included numerous excellent contributions from our SIG. We would especially like to thank Dr. Ronald Rogge for his outstanding pre-conference presentation on implicit measures of relationship satisfaction. It was a great way to start off the conference and provided some very thought-provoking and innovative approaches to measuring relationship outcomes. There were numerous other fantastic contributions from the SIG throughout the conference. At the same time, we have heard that the SIG would like to increase our representation at ABCT and further strengthen our presence at the conference. One terrific way to do that was to support Erika Lawrence's candidacy for Representative-at-Large. On behalf of the SIG, I would like to extend our thanks to Erika for her willingness to serve in this important role. I hope everyone had a chance to vote for her in April. In addition, the Chair of the Workshop Committee has extended an excellent opportunity to the Couples SIG. We are invited to nominate someone to work closely with the Chair in reviewing and selecting workshops for future conventions. The role typically lasts 3 years as an assistant to the Chair, and then most often results in becoming Chair of the Workshop Committee for another 3 years. So this is a wonderful opportunity for the Couples SIG to increase our representation at ABCT for years to come. The position typically goes to someone who is roughly equivalent to the Associate Professor stage in their career. Please contact Lee Dixon or Cameron Gordon directly if you would like to be nominated for this position.

Finally, we would like to ask for your assistance as we begin to prepare for our convention in Toronto this November. We intend to contact you through the listserv prior to this year's conference to seek nominations for officer positions via email. We hope this will help stimulate everyone to think about ways to get more involved through leadership in the SIG and we want to provide ample opportunity for individuals to nominate themselves or their colleagues. We will also be in touch later this Fall to solicit submissions to the SIG poster exposition held at our annual Cocktail Party as well as for submissions to be considered for the Robert L. Weiss Graduate Student Poster Awards. So please be sure to respond to those emails in the upcoming months.

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact us if there is anything we can do for you. We hope you all have a terrific summer and we look forward to seeing you in Toronto next Fall!

## Lab Updates:

Now that you've recruited your incoming lab members, please start thinking about your updates for the Autumn 2011 Newsletter. We'd love to hear updates from each of you!

### The Couple and Family Development Laboratory

Erika Lawrence, Ph.D., Associate Professor, The University of Iowa Dept. of Psychology

Our current graduate students include Rebecca L. Brock, Amie Langer, Rosaura Orengo, Halley Woodward, and Jeung Eun Yoon. Our former graduate student, Robin A. Barry, is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at UMBC. Our most recent news is that we just moved into brand new lab space in our brand new building! We currently have three major projects going on. For the 1<sup>st</sup> project, funded by the Dept. of Justice Office of Violence against Women, we are developing a new, evidence-based curriculum for the Batterers Education Program for the Iowa Department of Corrections. We are currently piloting the new curriculum, and the preliminary results are extremely promising. We have also begun training program facilitators across the state. If successful, Iowa will be the first state in the country to employ a court-mandated, statewide, standardized, evidence-based program for domestic violent offenders. The DOC, Judicial Branch of Iowa and Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence are all collaborating with us to accomplish this mammoth task. We are excited and honored to be leading such an important project.

In a separate, NIMH-funded study, we are examining how intimate relationship functioning interacts with genetic vulnerabilities and stress to influence psychopathology (depression, anxiety, and alcoholism). Questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and daily diary methods are employed. In a 3<sup>rd</sup>, NIMH-funded study, we have developed a new theoretical model of partner aggression and translated it into a novel group therapy for aggression. We are comparing this 12-week treatment to an active control group to test mechanisms of change as well as long-term outcomes.

### Publications in Press:

- Brock, R.L., Barry, R.A., Lawrence, E., Dey, J., & Rolffs, J. (in press). Internet administration of paper-and-pencil questionnaires used in couple research: Assessing quantitative and qualitative equivalence. *Assessment*.
- Lawrence, E., Barry, R.A., Brock, R.L., Bunde, M., Langer et al. (in press). The Relationship Quality Interview: Evidence of reliability, convergent and divergent validity, and incremental utility. *Psychological Assessment*.

## Letter from the Student Co-Presidents

C.J. Eubanks Fleming<sup>1</sup> & Katie Baucom<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Clark University, <sup>2</sup>University of California, Los Angeles

Another year, another great conference! Both the quantity and quality of the couples' presentations this year were particularly impressive, and it was wonderful to see you all there. As always, our SIG community affords the opportunity to see research and theory in action as well as to socialize and enjoy each other's company.

As many of you know, funding for purely couples based research has become increasingly more difficult to obtain with changes that have occurred over the past few years in major funding institutions such as NIMH. In response to these changes, it is becoming all the more important to a) find broader and more accessible funding sources, and b) press our policymakers to make room for couples research in state and national budgets.

Within the SIG, it seems possible for us to pool our collective resources to make an impact on this issue. First, we'd like to encourage you to get active to get our cause out there! Here is a link to find contact information for your national congresspeople: <http://www.contactingthecongress.org/>. Also, in addition to the two databases that we currently maintain (couples faculty and couples internships), we would like to also create a database that lists potential funding institutions/agencies that have supported both faculty and student couples work. We will poll for this information at our upcoming conference meeting, but feel free to also send along any information at the present time.

We received very helpful feedback about the SIG cocktail party in San Francisco. We are working to find a location that is closer to the hotel and less crowded for the Toronto convention. Please let us know if you have other feedback for us that you think would improve the experience for SIG members.

**Finally, let us remind you of the ways that you can be involved with the SIG!** In addition to our strong overall SIG listserv ([couples-sig@sfu.ca](mailto:couples-sig@sfu.ca)), we have a Couples SIG Facebook group (<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=266082574771>). We also have a student-specific facebook group, (<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=82988514892>), as well as a student Google discussion group (<http://groups.google.com/group/couples-sig-students>). Feel free to email us if you would like to be added or removed from this group. Please join us in the Google discussion group, especially! We use this space for discussing student issues and for advertising student SIG events.

As always, please feel free to email us with any suggestions, questions, or concerns.

Sincerely,  
CJ ([cjfleming@clarku.edu](mailto:cjfleming@clarku.edu)) and Katie ([kwilliams@ucla.edu](mailto:kwilliams@ucla.edu))

## Treasurer's Update

Dear SIG Members,

First and foremost, I'd like to send a HUGE thank you out to Kahni Clements Blackmon who has served as the SIG Treasurer for the last two years! Thanks so much, Kahni, for all of your help organizing and coordinating finances and updating the SIG membership over the past couple years, and for helping me transition into the role of the new SIG Treasurer.

While our Couples SIG network continues to grow each year, the number of dues-paying members has dropped slightly. We currently have 173 members who have paid dues during the last 5 years, of whom 66 are professionals and 107 are students. If you weren't at last year's conference or haven't had the chance to pay your dues, please send a check to Meghan McGinn with ABCT Couples SIG in the memo line to the address below, or pay via paypal.com to [meghanmcginn@gmail.com](mailto:meghanmcginn@gmail.com). Dues are \$25 for professional members and \$5 for students, post-docs, and retired members.

Presently, our SIG balance is \$665.86. Prior to the 2010 conference, our SIG balance was \$495.86. At the conference we paid out \$250.00 for our cocktail party, \$300 for student awards, and \$300 for the pre-conference speaker. We've since collected \$1020 in dues, resulting in our current SIG balance at \$665.86. Thank you for supporting our SIG!

Please do not hesitate to contact me at [meghanmcginn@gmail.com](mailto:meghanmcginn@gmail.com) if you have any questions, recommendations, or updates to your title/affiliation or contact information for our membership list. Looking forward to seeing you all in Toronto!

Best,  
Meghan

Send checks to:  
Meghan McGinn, M.A.  
UCLA Department of Psychology  
1285 Franz Hall  
Los Angeles, CA 90095

## KUDOS!!!

**We'd like to celebrate these special events in the lives of the following Siggers. Congratulations to you!**

\* Barbara Kistenmacher writes, "I just accepted a position as the Executive Director of Hazelden, NYC. Hazelden is one of the premier addictions treatment centers in the country. I will be overseeing two programs: 1) An adult outpatient addictions program with a strong couples and family component; and 2) a brand new Collegiate Recovery House for young adults (18 to 29 years old). The Recovery House (Tribeca Twelve) is part of a partnership with Columbia University. If anyone finds themselves in NYC, I will give them a personal tour!"

\* Richard E. Heyman writes that he will be moving along with Amy Slep and the entire Family Translational Research Group to New York University this summer from SUNY Stonybrook.

\* Kieran Sullivan was promoted to full professor at Santa Clara University!

If you would like to announce an achievement/significant occasion in your career or personal life, please email the co-editors with your news:

[aharp@clarku.edu](mailto:aharp@clarku.edu)

[edarling@clarku.edu](mailto:edarling@clarku.edu)

## Media Coordinator Update

Hi Couples SIG members! I have a couple of important updates regarding an update to the website and our presence on the internet:

### Archive of ABCT Preconference Events Now on the Website!

Some very exciting news: a new section has been added to our website! It contains an archive of past ABCT preconference events and includes slides/handouts from most events dating back to 2007. For future preconference events, the plan is to successively add new slides/handouts for everyone to easily reference. To reach this page, go to <http://www.abctcouples.org/> and click on "Preconference." **A big thanks to Barry McCarthy, Kristi Coop Gordon, and Ron Rogge** for kicking off the beginning of this archive by sharing their slides and handouts. (NOTE: If you presented at a preconference event at any point in the past and would like to include your slides/handouts in this archive, please send them to Patrick Poyner-Del Vento at [admin@abctcouples.org](mailto:admin@abctcouples.org)).

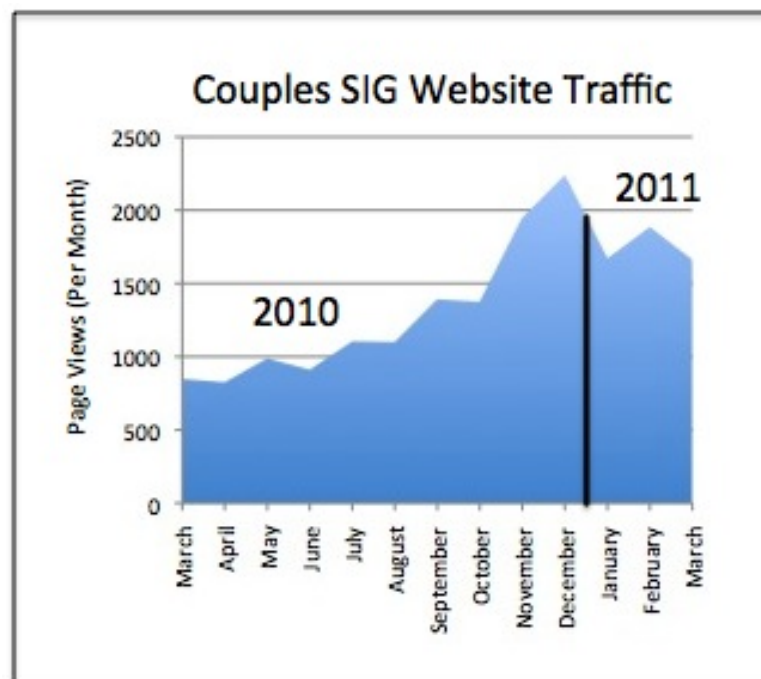
### ABCTCOUPLES.ORG: We're Getting Lots More Visitors!

Our website has rapidly grown over the past year in terms of number of visitors! As you can see from the accompanying graph, the number of page requests has more than doubled from March 2009 to March 2010. Undoubtedly, there are more Couples SIG members navigating the website to look up information, but there has also been an increase in non-SIG members performing Google searches and ultimately click on a link to reach our site. Based on the words they're using in these search engines, these people seem to be looking up research articles on close relationships.

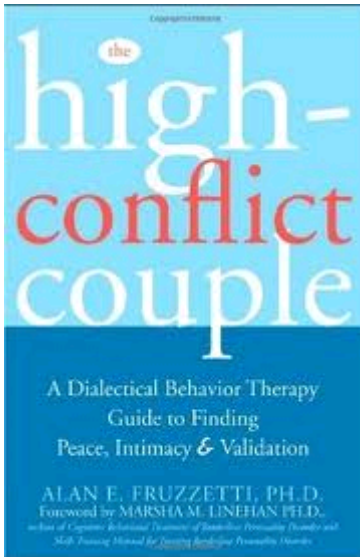
Therefore, in an effort to continue to increase the number of visitors to our site (as well as increase our membership), I'd like to invite all Couples SIG members to visit our website and browse the list of recommended articles and books (go to <http://www.abctcouples.org/>, then click on "Research"). While perusing the list, if you that notice an important article or book is missing (even if it's your own work; don't be modest!), please send the reference and/or PDF file to Patrick Poyner-Del Vento at [admin@abctcouples.org](mailto:admin@abctcouples.org). **A big thanks to Frank Fincham, Dan O'Leary and Rick Heyman** for recently recommending articles to be added.

-Patrick Poyner-Del Vento, M.A.

♦Simon Fraser University



## Restoring Emotionally Volatile Relationships Through Emotion Regulation and Validation: A Review of Fruzzetti's *The High Conflict Couple*.



Fruzzetti, Alan E. (2006) *The High Conflict Couple: A Dialectical Behavior Therapy Guide to Finding Peace, Intimacy, & Validation*, Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, Inc. ISBN 10: 1-57224-450-X; ISBN 13: 978-1-57224-450-4. (177 pages). \$15.95.

By Jill Rathus, Ph.D.

Alan Fruzzetti has written a guide to help distressed couples navigate their way through highly conflictual interactions. *The High Conflict Couple* is aimed particularly at emotionally volatile couples -- those who are sensitive to each other's perceived slights, quick to react and argue, and spike in emotional intensity. This succinct volume is intended for self-help primarily. Yet, its well-detailed rationales, precise directives and illustrative examples make it suitable as a guide for the therapist or even as a treatment manual for research.

Fruzzetti has accrued the training and experience to make him uniquely positioned to render a contribution of this sort. He approaches couple treatment as a synthesis of his two decades as a theorist, empiricist, and clinician in the areas of couple and family interactions, emotion regulation, and Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). In his dedication, he acknowledges his mentors, whose contributions permeate his content. The impact of the first, the late Neil Jacobson, a developer of behavioral couples therapy, is apparent through the book's acknowledgement of traditional behavioral couples interventions, such as shared pleasurable activities, communication, and problem solving. Fruzzetti also embraces elements of Jacobson's (with Christensen) Integrative Behavioral Couples Therapy, including the acceptance strategies of behavioral tolerance and recontextualizing problematic partner behavior. The influence of the second, Marsha Linehan, developer of DBT, informs the established behavioral couples approaches and infuses the content, as reflected in the subtitle. Fruzzetti's approach thus aligns with the third

wave behavior therapies, incorporating mindfulness and acceptance in quelling couple conflict. It is this marriage of DBT with traditional couples treatment that gives *The High Conflict Couple* a unique identity among couples treatment manuals.

Even the title: *The High Conflict Couple*, suggests a novel approach, in that few couples treatment books target a particular subset of distressed couples. While Fruzzetti's book does highlight a particular type of couple, those who work with distressed couples might argue that *most* couples who seek treatment experience highly conflictual interactions. Thus, most readers will find relevance in its description of the development of emotional sensitivity and high emotional reactivity in couples, and its systematic strategies to reverse this process. This emotion-based developmental approach to relationship volatility is of utmost utility for conceptualizing intimate relationship conflict, and Fruzzetti argues compellingly that addressing the interactions that generate emotional over-reactivity constitutes essential work in helping distressed couples. The book's target population notwithstanding, Fruzzetti explains that conflict-avoidant and couples experiencing other styles of distress can benefit from his strategies as well. Fruzzetti applies DBT principles not only to the book's transactional view of relationship discord but also to its principle interventions. The treatment balances acceptance with change strategies, and draws from DBT its emphasis on mindfulness, acceptance, validation, and emotion regulation.

Fruzzetti puts forth a model of conflict escalation based on high emotional reactivity and its expressive-behavioral components, including harsh criticism, judgments, put-downs, nastiness, and intense anger expression. He notes that moderate levels of emotional arousal can be energizing and engaging, and can enhance self-control and performance. Yet, when negative emotional arousal heightens, self-control decreases as individuals shift their attention toward rapid escape from the aversive emotional state. This escape echoes Steve Hays' linking experiential avoidance to a host of maladaptive escape behaviors. In couple interactions, escape from the emotion can lead to impulsively lashing out, escalating the conflict, or otherwise behaving destructively. Caught in this process, partners focus on reducing the building negative tension, losing sight of long-term goals.

Fruzzetti describes a vicious cycle in which one's intensifying emotions lead to negative judgments, interpretations and communication, which in turn incites heightened emotions, negative judgments, and ineffective communications from a partner, and so on, leading to both partners' escalated emotions. Fruzzetti distinguishes between primary and secondary emotions and explains that

to further complicate matters, a partner's focus on the secondary emotion (e.g., anger) often leads to judgments that lead to inaccurate and more negative expressions of emotion to a partner (attacks, blame). In turn, the partner's defensive and counter-attacking responses to the secondary emotion are often ineffective and continue the escalation of an argument.

To bring about *constructive engagement*, or expression of a problem in a manner that enhances intimacy, Fruzzetti proposes practicing mindfulness to one's emotions. In contrast to the whirlwind of escalating negativity, when a primary emotion, such as hurt or disappointment, is identified mindfully, a more loving and accurate expression of the emotion typically results. This communication elicits less reactive and more validating partner reactions. While Gottman and other early behavioral couples' treatment developers included emotional expressiveness training, reflective listening, and validation, theirs was a more scripted version. Fruzzetti believes in the importance of communication, but he rejects a rule-governed approach (e.g., use of "I" statements) in favor of using mindfulness to observe and describe one's primary emotions. He states,

Clearly, both partners must be able to regulate their emotions, and must be aware of their wants, preferences, emotions, opinions, and what they like and don't like. Because their emotions are regulated, they are able to express these things accurately and nonaggressively and are able to listen and respond non-defensively, with empathy and validation." (p. 10)

Fruzzetti not only explicates how emotionally aroused partners can accurately express primary emotions, but devotes three chapters to breaking down the fine points of validation. In chapters on what to validate and why, how to validate, and recovering from invalidation, he not only promotes validation as the means to reduce emotional arousal, but goes beyond previous approaches in detailing the many forms of validation and illustrating contexts in which each will likely work best.

In DBT, the emphasis on validation is balanced with problem solving. In Fruzzetti's approach, the problem-solving process from that in traditional couples therapy is enhanced with application of the DBT behavioral chain analysis. In this process couples identify problem precipitants including thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, and identify problem consequences. Partners then review critical links and consider where different interpretations or

behaviors could have resulted in different outcomes. They then mentally rehearse a newly informed process and outcome for next time.

While written in consumer-accessible language, *The High Conflict Couple* is grounded in research on emotional processes, couple communication, mindfulness, and DBT. Its scientific foundation, explicated in crisp and engaging prose, make it a particularly welcome addition to the "self-help" genre. *The High Conflict Couple* is brief, easy to read, and inviting. Fruzzetti allows readers to access his sophisticated material in a jargon-free, user-friendly manner. He provides several sets of useful exercises for couple to practice following each major teaching point, and offers clear, step-by-step suggestions to reverse destructive patterns. He remains empathic and constructive, normalizes conflict escalation, and never pathologizes even the most emotionally reactive partners; struggling couples will appreciate his respectful and non-judgmental tone.

Overall, this work offers a practical and accessible guide for highly emotionally reactive distressed couples. Fruzzetti cautions that the book is not intended for couples experiencing physical abuse. He appropriately stresses that abusive partners must first seek treatment to gain control over physically aggressive behavior before being able to benefit from the strategies he outlines. In conclusion, with its integration of DBT and traditional behavioral couples treatment, *The High Conflict Couple* offers a fresh and creative approach for couples seeking help with relationship distress. Clinicians seeking novel, scientifically-grounded ideas will greatly appreciate this work as well. Regardless of the readership, Fruzzetti's voice inspires hope, highlighting the good intentions and the normative in partners' emotional reactions. In his warm and gentle manner, he breaks down the complexity of conflict escalations while providing the critical ingredients to soothe and re-regulate even the most emotionally volatile relationships.

Jill H. Rathus, Ph.D., is Professor of Psychology, Long Island University, CW Post Campus in Brookville, NY. She is also Co-Director of Cognitive Behavioral Associates in Great Neck, NY. Her clinical and research interests focus primarily on dialectical behavior therapy, couple distress, cognitive behavioral treatments, adolescent suicidal behavior, and intimate partner violence.



# *HOT off the Press*

## In Press and Recently Published Literature

- Cano, A., Heller, J.B., & Dixon, C.L. (2011). Couple and family psychotherapeutic approaches to pain management. In M. Ebert and R. Kerns (Eds.), *Behavioral and Psychopharmacological Pain Management*, pp. 236-248. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. ISBN-13: 978-0521884341.
- Cui, M., Ueno, K., Fincham, F.D., Donnellan, M. B., & Wickrama, K.A.S. (in press). The association between romantic relationships and externalizing problems in adolescence and emerging adulthood. *Personal Relationships*.
- Fincham, F.D., Ajayi, C & Beach, S.R.H. (in press). Spirituality and marital satisfaction in African American couples. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*.
- Hadjistavropoulos, T., Craig, K.D., Duck, S., Cano, A., Goubert, L., Jackson, P., Mogil, J., Rainville, P., Sullivan, M., C. de C. Williams, A., Vervoort, T., & Dever Fitzgerald, T. (in press). A biopsychosocial formulation of pain communication. *Psychological Bulletin*.
- Johansen, A.B., Lumley, M., & Cano, A. (in press). Video-based Therapy Preparation Targeting Experiential Acceptance or the Therapeutic Alliance. *Psychotherapy*.
- Karremans, J.C., Regalia, C., Paleari, F.G., Fincham, F.D., Cui, M., Takada, N., Terzino, K., & Cross, S. (in press). Maintaining harmony across the globe: The cross-cultural association between closeness and interpersonal forgiveness. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*.
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