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HOLISTIC + GENERATIVE APPROACHES = CREATIVE + SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

Summer of Love

By Jane Peterson, PhD

Summer is the time of sunshine and outdoor events, including weddings. I passed a magazine stand in the grocery store this month and sure enough, there on the cover, was a smiling bride (no groom, interestingly enough), dressed in the traditional lace and fancy trappings of a traditional American style wedding.

Pop quiz: How many people go through such an elaborate wedding ceremony planning to divorce five years later? The answer is, of course, almost no one. Yet nearly 20% of newly married couples will separate within the first five years of marriage, and nearly 50% will divorce within 20 years.[i] And by the time they divorce, these couples have inflicted a lot of emotional scars on each other, which makes the next marriage more challenging.

These are dismal statistics by any estimation, and having counseled couples over the years, I can tell you that it hurts. I'm reminded of a little poem of Bert Hellinger's (1998, p. 79):

The Lovers

Separate! It seemed so smart and good.

Why are we so shocked now, as if we'd murdered love?

Ah! We know so little of ourselves!

There's a hidden god in us who rules.

Clearly we're missing something in our "me first" culture that is preventing us from forming, and keeping, satisfying long term intimate relationships alive. Having observed couples dynamics through constellations for many years, a primary movement pattern is expressed in the bodies of the representatives over and over. That movement is either a turning towards the partner, or a turning away, which, if repeated over time has predictable consequences.

There are myriad reasons why partners turn away from the person they swore to love, honor and cherish for the rest of their lives. Some of those patterns are inherited through trans-generational traumas of love and loss. For example, the woman who was happily married but insisted on getting a divorce when she reached the age of 35. Why? A loving and loyal daughter, she was blindly following in the footsteps of her mother who, at the age of thirty-five, lost her husband to the war. The therapist's words were telling, "Must a good girl in your family lose her husband at 35?" (Hellinger, 1998, p. 94). One wonders what traumas lurk in Tom Cruise's history as he and Katie Holmes head for divorce. He and each of his three wives divorced when the wife reached the age of 33.



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Constellation work shows us a way to clear these blind loyalties and to free ourselves from entanglements that keep us from making the turn towards our partner to build a strong and successful couples relationship.

No doubt about it, as fiendishly difficult as planning a big wedding is, making a marriage work in this day and age is hard work. The lessons we learned at our mother and father's knees when we were small children also shapes our tendency to turn towards or away from our partner. I recently came across the work of [Stan Taktin, PsyD](#). Tatkin dips into the recent research on Interpersonal Neurobiology, a field pioneered by [Dan Siegel](#) and [Allan Shore](#) that builds on the attachment theory developed by John Bowlby , Mary Ainsworth, and Mary Mains. By exploring how the ranges of secure and insecure attachments that children form with their primary care-givers show up in adult relationships, Tatkin provides the "how to" steps to create a strong and resilient couple's relationship. His recent book, [Wired for Love](#), provides practical ways to strengthen the bond between intimate partners. Combined with the constellation work, these steps can clear the way for a love that lasts.

If this topic interests you, please join us for the upcoming [Creating Lasting Intimate Partnerships Workshop](#) workshop scheduled for August 11th.

[i] <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data.nhsr/nhsr049.pdf#page16>

References & Resources:

Hellinger, B., Weber, G., & Beaumont, H. (1998). *Love's Hidden Symmetry*. Zeig, Tucker & Theisen: Phoenix, AZ.

Tatkin, S. (2012). *Wired for Love*. New Harbinger: Oakland, CA.