



Understand Your Relationship's Bonding Patterns and unlock the clues to improving your relationship

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Note: Drs. Hal and Sidra Stone are the originators of the Voice Dialogue method and the concept of Bonding Patterns. Their website is -- www.voicedialogue.org.

INTRODUCTION

In every relationship, there is an ever-changing dynamic that you and your partner experience whenever you relate to each other. Each particular way you create this dynamic is fueled by the energy of the various parts (inner selves) within each of you.

A bonding pattern between you and your partner happens every time your inner selves are automatically relating to each other without awareness. The seeds of this habit-driven process are first sown in childhood.

IMPRINTING FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

The psychological imprint that fuels a bonding pattern dates back to your birth. From the moment you were born you were in need of nurturing. The bond you formed with your primary caregiver (or lack there of) is strongly imprinted into your psyche as a parent/child relationship. These early life experiences formed a psychological blueprint that has stayed with you and contributes to the automatic nature of your bonding patterns with your partner.

INSTINCTS FOR GIVING & RECEIVING NURTURANCE

In addition to the imprinting from your early life story, you were born with psychological instincts (also known as Archetypes) for giving and receiving nurturance and love that have been part of the human collective story for thousands of years.

EACH PARTNER VACILLATES BETWEEN POWER & VULNERABILITY

You and your partner's relational imprinting and instinctual patterning get carried forward into your relationship. You each vacillate between feeling a sense of power (in the imprinted role of the parent) and feeling powerless and vulnerable (in the imprinted role of the child). While interacting, you take turns sharing these two different roles; one is the parent while one is the child and then vice a versa.

IT'S NORMAL AND NATURAL

Bonding patterns can be found in all of your relationships because this vacillation between power and vulnerability is constantly happening within everyone. This is normal and natural and common to every relationship.

BOTH PARTNERS BUY INTO THE SAME ASSUMPTION

There are two types of bonding patterns, positive and negative, and the same assumption underlies both types. That assumption is that each person can expect to get their vulnerable needs met by the other person's caregiver. By doing this, each partner is trying to recreate the nurturing bond (or to finally get to have a longed for nurturing bond) that was part of (or wished for in) their early imprinting experience.

POSITIVE BONDING PATTERN

In a Positive Bonding Pattern, you unconsciously let your vulnerable needs be taken care of by the other person, rather than by your own self-care. "I'm taking care of you, and you're taking care of me." It is named "positive" because we associate it with feeling good – peaceful and predictable. If all goes well, you minimize differences and maximize agreements. Unfortunately, this is a hard pattern to sustain, especially when one person gets stressed, sick, busy or depressed and is not as available to stay positively bonded.

VULNERABILITY TRIGGERS THE SWITCH

When the back and forth sharing of the parent caregiver role is not possible, and yet the habit has been established that you don't self-care your own vulnerability, then the uncared-for vulnerability of both partners can get triggered and the couple falls into a Negative Bonding Pattern.

NEGATIVE BONDING PATTERN

In a Negative Bonding Pattern, your unconscious vulnerability is not being taken care of at all, by you or by the other person, and so it triggers the shift from a positive bonding to a negative bonding. "Neither of us is being taken care of by the other and we're angry about that because we've come to yearn for or expect it." It is named "negative" because we associate it with feeling bad – separate and in conflict. This is often what is happening when we have a fight with someone. It can make us feel destabilized and insecure.

DISOWNED SELVES FUEL A BONDING PATTERN

Once triggered, what fuels these bonding patterns and keeps them in place for indefinite periods of time are the polarized inner selves that each person carries and the underlying assumption that the care-giving of one's vulnerable needs is the responsibility of the other person.

CONCLUSION

Voice Dialogue is a wonderful way to know your own inner selves and also come to know the selves that live within your partner. In addition, it will give you a chance to discover and reclaim your disowned selves and to take responsibility for your own vulnerable needs. This will free your relationship to be more vital and alive, since each partner will be more self-sufficient in knowing and managing their own inner self system and in care-giving their own needs.