

Issues and Weapons in Couples Counseling



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People you would like to love should generally not be held accountable for what they say if they decide to take it back. This is especially true of things said in anger, when an attack is often represented as a rational argument. If I make a statement and you tell me I am fat, bald, and stupid you may be right, but this is probably not a relevant argument about my statement. Even though an attack does not convince me, it may throw me off track or shut me up, which could give the appearance that you have won something. Attack is a very effective debating tactic, which is why people use it in arguments all the time. Unfortunately, debating tactics like attack or distraction prevent the resolution of actual issues, and they can lead to an endless repetition of the same pointless exchange, which becomes more and more frustrating

over time. Couples can poison their relationships with these pointless loops.

In order to untangle such a deadly embrace it is first necessary to separate the legitimate issues from the forensic weapons, and then to disarm the weapons so that the issues can be resolved. Disarming the weapons often turns out to be the main event, after which the actual issues may be easily resolved. There are two broad categories of weapon that couples can employ: attacks that are essentially serious and those that are fabricated simply for their debating effect. It is the fabricated attack that people should not be held accountable for if they decide to take it back, which they are far more likely to do in my office than they are at home or on the battlefield. Serious attacks are usually awkward attempts to approach legitimate issues that may be too explosive to address directly. The more intimate the relationship the more deadly the weapons that can be fielded, because you know each other so well. These are the issues that really need to be dealt with. Really. Call me.

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