

Work in Progress

Published monthly by Michele Crawford

Work in Progress is an electronic newsletter intended to assist individuals seeking optimum well-being.

www.michelecrawford.ca

www.willowhousewellness.com

E-mail to michelecrawford@dccnet.com

~~~~~

Work in Progress April 2007 Volume II Issue IV

Feature Article: Personal Relating-Styles under Duress: The Thunderstorm/Pursuer and the Turtle/Distancer

~~~~~

Please feel free to forward a copy of Work in Progress (in its entirety) to friends, co-workers, or anyone interested in personal development.

For Subscribe or Unsubscribe instructions, please go to bottom of this ezine.

~~~~~

In this Issue:

~~~~~

- 1) Note from Michele
- 2) Feature Article
- 3) About Michele
- 4) Counselling Services

~~~~~

1) Note from Michele

~~~~~

Dear Reader

Harville Hendrix, described by Oprah as the best couples therapist in the world, (and I don't disagree), uses a wonderful metaphor to explain the different relating-styles of couples when they are under emotional duress. Although this is a metaphor, it is also based on research and evidence.

Hendrix uses the images of a thunderstorm and a turtle. He tells us that thunderstorms will hook up with turtles...not thunderstorms with thunderstorms nor turtles with turtles.

A thunderstorms' relating-style gets very vocal when he or she is emotional and as expected, scare turtles into their shells. This withdrawing can take on many forms. For example, avoidance includes refusing to talk about emotional topics in general; shutting down; pouting; losing him- or herself in TV, children, sports, alcohol, drugs, jobs, projects and on and on.

This of course, infuriates the thunderstorm who wants to talk but now, given that they are being ignored, react with even more emotion. With added thunder aimed their way, the turtle retreats further out of reach and around goes the cycle. This then becomes a pattern in the relationship with the only exception being when the turtle morphs into a snapping turtle.

Sometimes, the turtle is snapping so often, it appears that two thunderstorms are in a relationship. However, you can tell the turtle because they do not have the verbal skills of a thunderstorm to articulate their needs, emotions and differences.

Once individuals recognize which partner is the thunderstorm and which is the turtle, better understanding means a different approach can be taken. Knowing that thundering at a turtle causes a knee-jerk reaction of withdrawing and avoiding, a thunderstorm can learn to coax a turtle out of hiding. By taking this different tactical method, thunderstorms will get better results.

Knowing that withdrawing from what a turtle perceives as thunder only fuels more raging storms, more intensity in a thunderstorm, turtles can learn an improved strategy of staying present, listening and actually responding.

With practice, communication improves over time and before long, gentle rain will fall and roll off the back of the turtle who is learning to enjoy the weather.

~~~~~

## 2) Feature Article: Personal Relating-Styles under Duress: The Thunderstorm/Pursuer and the Turtle/Distancer

~~~~~

For years I have had a hand-out written within the framework of the counselling model I utilize. Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy is a cognitive behavioural model that states beliefs, not events, are

responsible for emotions, behaviour and outcomes, as well as the physiological reactions of the fight or flight or freeze response.

This hand-out outlines the thunderstorm and turtle styles but it names them differently. The thunderstorm is named pursuer and the turtle is called distancer. (I do not have the source of the hand-out.)

Stereotypically, pursuers tend to be female and distancers tend to be male. Of course, there are many exceptions. In the Venus Mars book, Gray got it wrong when he said men all act like turtles/distancers and only women act like thunderstorms/pursuers.

Pursuers:

- React to anxiety by seeking greater togetherness in a relationship
- Place a high value on talking things out and feelings and believe others should do the same
- Feel rejected and take it personally when someone close to them wants more time and space alone or away from the relationship
- Tend to pursue harder and then coldly withdraw when an important person seeks distance
- May negatively label themselves as "too dependent" or "too demanding" in a relationship when they feel rejected
- Tend to criticize their partner as someone who can't handle feelings or tolerate closeness.

Distancers:

- Seek emotional distance or physical space when stress is high
- Consider themselves to be self-reliant and private (more do-it-yourself than help-seekers)
- Have difficulty showing their needy, vulnerable and dependent sides
- Receive such labels as "emotionally unavailable," "withholding," "unable to deal with feelings," from significant others
- Manage anxiety in personal relationships by intensifying work-related projects
- May cut off a relationship entirely when things get intense, rather than hanging in and working it out
- Open up most freely when they are not pushed or pursued.

So the next time you are pondering your communication issues with your partner consider whether you are the thunderstorm or the turtle.

Then, hopefully, your approach can adjust to account for the differences in relating-styles when emotionally distressed.

As the descriptions illustrate, when distancers are not pursued, they tend to re-engage in conversation as soon as they perceive it is safe to do so. When pursuers can count on the distancers being willing to re-connect in the near future, they can relax and wait. Is this not a better plan?

For more information, please contact:
Michele Crawford RCC CCC at
E-mail: michelecrawford@dccnet.com or
Phone: 604-515-9727
Web Site: www.michelecrawford.ca

~~~~~  
3) About Michele  
~~~~~

Michele Crawford is a therapist who assists individuals who are struggling with trauma, anxiety or depression. Her passion for her work remains embedded in being able to connect with you in your suffering, helping you find real solutions no matter how complex the issue may be.

~~~~~  
4) Counselling Services  
~~~~~

Are you prepared to live with more happiness, optimism, confidence, self-worth and hope? If your answer is "yes," then your next step is to contact me for a free 20-minute phone consultation. We can then discuss how I might best help you resolve your problems of Trauma, Depression and Anxiety.

The benefits of counselling with Michele include: significantly reduced stress levels, an optimistic outlook in life, increased confidence and hope.

~~~~~  
**Privacy Policy**  
~~~~~

I want to reassure you that your e-mail address will never be shared or sold to anyone else.

~~~~~

**Pass It Along**

~~~~~

Please feel free to forward a copy of Work in Progress (in its entirety) to friends, co-workers, or anyone interested in personal development. Copyright Michele Crawford 2006 All Rights Reserved.

Michele Crawford RCC CCC
Willow House Wellness Ltd.
Web Site: www.michelecrawford.ca
E-mail: michelecrawford@dccnet.com
Phone: 604-515-9727
Fax: 604-515-9728