

Psychotherapy Newsletter

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One Oar in the Water

This season of high financial uncertainty and distress can affect relationships in ways that seem worthy of mention. When life as we know it is altered, as it has been for so many lately, it brings up a certain type of distress that can trigger deep, early, young places in us that can elicit a sort of panic and wish to figure out what went wrong and to place blame. Whatever has been circulating around, under the surface, over the years, now takes on new life, new energy, new paranoia, new fear, and finds its way into our most intimate relationships. How did we get here? Why did we make that decision? Why did we spend money this way? Why did we buy that house? Why did we invest in this stock? Things are now viewed and judged in retrospect from our current financial reality.

In a state of extreme anxiety, the 'we' can change to 'you.' Why did you get us into this position? Why do you spend the way you do? Why did you make THAT decision? Why aren't you busy every moment trying to get something

going? When we turn on each other, we remove an oar from the water. Our boat slows down, and we start going in circles. Sometimes, there is even a man overboard.

It seems everything is up for grabs right now. If our financial plans included buying real estate – we can feel stuck. If our investment portfolio included owning stocks – the market can fluctuate from moment to moment. Long-term, stable jobs are not as secure as we thought they were. Pension plans and benefit packages are not necessarily written in stone. Nothing feels certain. Nothing feels secure – the world, our nation, our economy, our job. We can no longer take anything for granted.

So, in the midst of this unrest – how do we find our way? As a couple, how do we move forward? When we turn on each other, we add another distress to the mix. If you are angry with me for my comments, if your defenses are high and I become an unsafe person to be with – our problems escalate and compound. We still have the same

overall problems, but now we are a problem too. We are no longer available to one another for comfort, support, and reassurance.

My challenge in working with others and functioning within my own relationship, is to be curious about what is getting stirred. If we can identify some of the old losses that are being re-circulated, re-ignited, in today's current uncertainty, we can begin to be responsible for our own internal fears and anxieties and remove the projections from our partner. You didn't get us into this, we are in this together. We have the chance to re-work old narratives where someone left us, someone dropped us, someone gave up on us, someone turned on us.

We can take this opportunity to deepen and strengthen our relationship by pulling together – pooling our strengths and gifts and brainstorming in an effort to make wise choices. Two oars in the water – synchronized and rowing together, form a powerful and effective 'crew' team.

This is a season to build character. A season to trim some fat. A season to transform panic into productivity. A season to re-work our tendency toward

arrogance or entitlement. A season to exercise faith. This is good for us, if we allow it to be and not let it come between us. Perhaps it is a season of less shame, because we are all in this together. All of us. Together.



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My practice includes adult individuals, couples, families, and adolescents.