

Creating Emotionally Affirming Experiences: What You Say and How You Say It

Andrew P. Daire, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Counselor Education
Executive Director, UCF Marriage and Family Research Institute

An Emotionally Affirming Experience

- Evokes positive emotion
- Strengthens and deepens feelings
- Creates connection to thoughts, feelings and behaviors
- Varied stimuli:
 - Images
 - Memories
- **Connecting with another human being in a positive and nurturing manner (most powerful!)**

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Your Own Relationships

- How do you create emotionally affirming experiences in your own relationships?
 - ...with your children?
 - ...with your spouse or partner?
- **What do you say in your relationships and how do you say it?**

Challenges in Counseling

- Focus on evoking emotion
 - Negative and positive emotions are evoked
- Couples counseling
 - Is the couple ready for a week in between sessions with negative emotions stirred?
 - Will they come back?

Why Discuss Relationship Interventions?

- Conference theme: HIV/AIDS Counselling: Trends and Challenges
 - Hopefully the answer is obvious
 - Many believe strengthening relationships is a key “trend and challenge” in HIV/AIDS counselling.

Relationship Education

- Recent proliferation of research and practice
- MRE – Marriage and Relationship Education is a relatively new approach that is based on the premise that couples can learn to build and sustain healthy relationships and marriages.
- Couples learn to increase the use of behaviors known to make marriages succeed and decrease those associated with marital distress and divorce.
- A valuable intervention to teach yourself and couples how to create emotionally affirming experiences in their relationships.

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Relationship Education cont.

- Based on years of research that distinguishes skills in successful and unsuccessful relationships, with effective conflict resolution being a significant one.
- Other skills include communication, managing conflict, working as a team.
- Classes vary from hours to semester long courses with most being 8-20 hours.

Creating Emotionally Affirming Experiences

- Relationship education is a strength-based and brief intervention
- Brief couples counselling is a strength-based and brief intervention
- Connecting and Confiding – Key skills that can be used across varied interventions

Connecting and Confiding

(P.A.I.R.S. – Practical Application of Intimate Relationship Skills)

■ CONNECTING

- Power of Permission
- Leveling Position
- Appreciations

■ CONFIDING

- Daily Temperature Reading (DTR)
- Talking Tips

What do you say? And, how do you say it?

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CONNECTING

- Power of Permission
 - Demonstrates value and sets the stage
- Leveling Position
 - Demonstrates connection
 - Physical touch (**dopamine and oxytocin**)
- Appreciations
 - In relationships, it takes seven positives to counter one negative (Gottman).
 - Essential in connecting and confiding

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CONFIDING

- Daily Temperature Readings (DTR)
 - Connect: ask permission first and then get into the leveling position
 - Be specific
- Talking Tips
 - Connect: ask permission first and then get into the leveling position
 - Be specific
 - Listener repeats after each stage without commentary or critique

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A Poor Foundation...

- Leaks
 - Allowing negative or harmful elements in
- Unsightly cracks
 - Your home looks less attractive and other homes look more attractive.
- Structural instability
 - Home feels unsafe and will be more vulnerable, even to the normal storms that occur.

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How is the Foundation of Your Relationship?

- ...with your spouse? ...your children?
...between your clients?
- Do you create emotionally affirming experiences in those relationships?

**What do you say and how do you say
it?**

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Thank You

Dr. Andrew P. Daire
adaire@mail.ucf.edu

Yahoo! Messenger is 'andrewdaire'

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