

Improving Romantic Relationships

Strategies for Addressing Conflict & Deepening Connection

Stephanie Taylor, PhD
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Disclaimer

What this presentation is **NOT**

Not a training!

Not a substitute for couples therapy

Not to be used in severe cases of
infidelity, substance abuse, or
domestic violence



Agenda

Background

Research

Framework

Principles

Positivity Ratio

Four Horsemen

Conflict

Effective
Communication

Finding
Compromise

Strengthen

Attunement
Conversation

Meaningful
Traditions

Why Gottman?

Common-sense, science-driven approach to couples therapy

- Four decades of longitudinal research
- Over 3,000 couples studied

Analyzed successful versus unsuccessful relationships

- Found strong predictors of success
- Created a therapy based on these predictors

Why Gottman?

Research found two key components of successful relationships

- Positivity Ratio
- The Four Horsemen

Positivity Ratio

In conflict

- Successful relationships = 5:1 positive to negative ratio
- Unsuccessful relationships = 0.8:1 positive to negative ratio

General interactions

- Successful relationship = ~20:1 positive to negative ratio

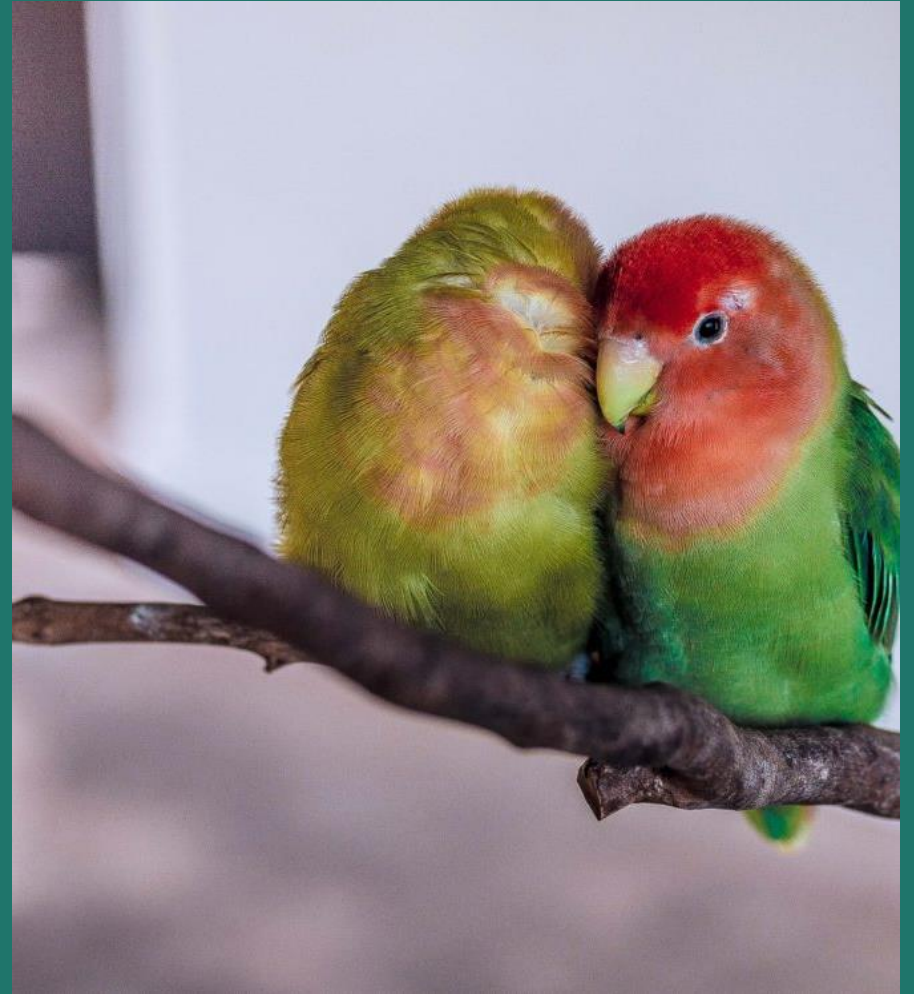


Positivity Ratio

The objective is not to eliminate negativity

Negativity can be a very powerful and productive tool

A relationship without any negativity is an impossible goal



Four Horsemen

Criticism

Complaining that implies your partner is defective



Four Horsemen

Defensiveness

Righteous indignation

Innocent victim



Four Horsemen

Contempt

Criticism from a high horse

Single best predictor of divorce



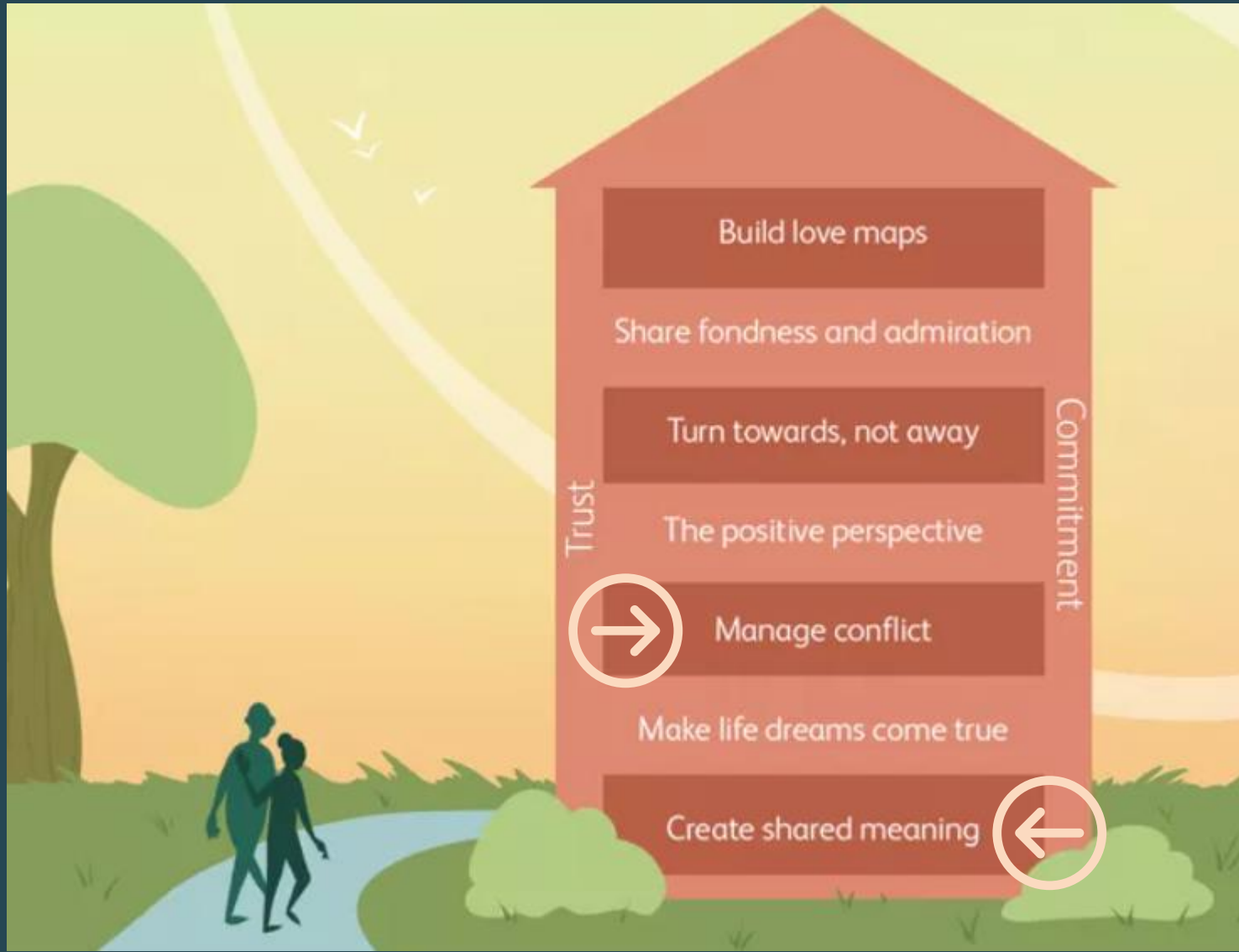
Four Horsemen

Stonewalling

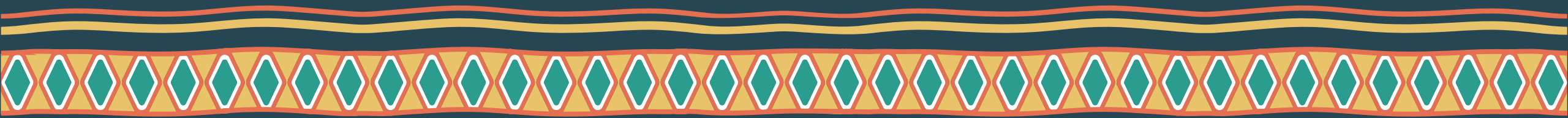
Emotional withdrawal

Flooding





Sound Relationship House Theory



Conflict

& Effective Communication

Assumption of Similarity

Take turns as Speaker and Listener



Conflict & Effective Communication



Speaker Rules:

Talk about your feelings without "you" statements

No four horsemen!

Positive needs only

Conflict & Effective Communication



Listener Rules:

Postpone your agenda

Validate the Speaker

Hear the Speaker's affects and repeat them
until the Speaker is satisfied

Ask questions to understand, not make a point

Conflict

& Compromise



Flexible

Willing to give

Maximal

Inflexible

Core part of
identity

Minimal



Strengthening & Attunement

Listen

**Elicit
Emotion**

Empathize



Strengthening & Attunement

Listen

Reflect back

Empathize

Be an ally

Elicit Emotion

Get into their
emotional world



Strengthening & Creating Traditions

Holidays

**Informal
Events**

Formal Events



Strengthening & Creating Traditions

Dinnertime

Leaving, coming home

Rituals of Passage

Tea Time

Attunement Conversations!

Winddown Routine

Sickness



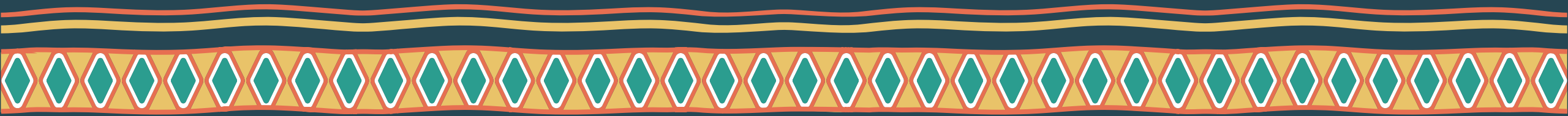


Strengthening & Creating Traditions

1. What is meaning about this for you?
2. When and will we do this?
3. Who will initiate it?
4. What will we do and who will do it?
5. How will it end?
6. How do we better integrate this into our lives?



Thank you!



Resources

Gottman, J., & Silver, N. (1999). The seven principles for making marriage work (p. 7). New York: Crown.

Gottman, J. M., & Silver, N. (2012). What makes love last: How to build trust and avoid betrayal. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Herrin, T.C (2009). The Analysis of an Integrated Model of Therapy Using Structural and Gottman Method Approaches: A Case Study. All Graduate Theses and Dissertations. Paper 368. <http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/etd/368>

The Gottman Institute. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.gottman.com>