

STC-Module 4: Rebalancing after separation - get into healthy adult mode (by Eckhard Roediger)

After module 3, the couple should have managed to learn how to interrupt the cycle and separate into two different rooms. The next task is going to be getting back into a state of emotional balance. Mode cycles usually lead to disconnection from each other. Stopping a fight and going into different rooms usually helps to cool emotions down and allows the partners to reconnect with their need for attachment.

Therapist: *"After you separated into two rooms please remember what we talked about and think of our two core needs. You might also take a look at the MCC and ask yourself, which need got out of sight during the clash? Try to get in touch with it again. Try to "stand on both legs" and search balance again. Standing and walking works best making use of both our legs. Looking at the scene from an outsider perspective could be helpful. Or you might ask yourself what I would say if I were there. Which leg is coming to short? And if you try to stand on both legs... what are you actually wishing for?"*

Identifying the active and the blocked child mode

It is important to distinguish between *anxious protectors* and *angry protectors*. The active emotion of an anxious protector is fear or sadness, maybe helplessness. They are in touch with their vulnerable child mode. The blocked child mode is the angry child side and the need for assertiveness or respect and safety. Thus this need has to be activated and strengthened. The angry protector is a passive-aggressive version of a dominant mode and thus standing on the assertiveness leg. The blocked side is the vulnerable side and the need for attachment. So they have to soften up again and shift to the attachment side (like the dominant). Finally, there are only two types of clients and two roads to take to re-balance the situation.

In-session work supporting rebalancing

You can support re-balancing in the sessions in the following way: Once the cycle unfolds in the session, you stop it, go into the standing-up observer position all three looking down on the chairs. You label the coping mode, the active emotion adding this chair and add the chair for the blocked need. Then you ask the couple to close their eyes (still in the observer position): *"Ok, we analyzed the mode cycle. For a better connection with Tom Betty needs to tip over more to the blue leg. To support this shift, I ask you to bring up an image of the "best day" you can imagine happening with Tom in the upcoming week. How do you want Tom to behave? What shall he do or not do?.....How does that make you feel in your body now? [Eventually offer the polar options of the modalities]. Ok, and what are you willing to offer him in return to encourage him acting this way?"* According to the steps of implementation in Module 10 the active client first addresses him- or herself to the therapist, than in direct speech from top down to the empty chair (with eyes open) and finally – after sitting down on the chairs again – to the face of the partner. In one session we usually only have time to work on the side of one client. Then we work with the other client in the following session in exactly the same way.

Well functioning couples with sufficient healthy adult modes might be able to get in touch and express a balanced wish to the partner in a functional way after re-connecting again. Others might just manage to continue every-day life in a cooled down way. If one or both partners have difficulties

to get balanced you can use the chair dialogues from module 5 and 7 or the imagery exercises in module 6 and 8.

Possible Homework assignment: Ask the couple to get aware, which leg they are on – especially in the timeout situation. Then try to bring up a positive image of the relationship and try to reconnect with the partner based in these warmer feelings. Togetherness is built on the blue leg!