

MEDICAL SEXOLOGY

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12.5 The Energies of Interaction: A Formulation of Alignment Principles for Optimal Relating

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We have found that the greatest problem affecting the health and well-being of people today is a lack of satisfying human contact and that widespread marital failure is

a symptom of this problem. Our experience in working with relationships indicates that this has to do with the way people communicate, and also with the lack of sexual satisfaction that so many people live with, knowingly or unknowingly.

In this chapter we wish to offer a vision of optimal relating, and to specify principles of interaction that foster such contact. Our documentation is based upon ten years of work with couples on issues of compatibility. The objective of the work was the development of human potential in relationships. In this work basic principles of interaction were formulated, and a model for relating was established that indicates a state of alignment. By alignment, we refer to a synthesis and balancing of the physical, emotional, and mental factors in relating. Principles of alignment were established for communication and sexual relating.

The program which resulted in this documentation involved a two-year group process for couples. This included weekly sessions for therapeutic work, and monthly seminars for supportive discussion between couples concerning the sexual involvement in their relationship. Our therapeutic approach was influenced by the writings of Dr. Wilhelm Reich (1961, 1962),^{1,2} and concerned the development of sensory abilities that contribute to communication. The sexual orientation which was formulated in our practice originated from personal perception of sensation and energy in sex. In the program implemented, communication and sex were considered interdependent factors in the emotional growth of a couple. The alignment processes for communication and sexual relating were complementary aspects of the process for involvement in relationships.

COMMUNICATION ALIGNMENT

To understand communication alignment it is important to perceive the energies of interaction as a tangible force. It is necessary to focus attention on subtle factors of relating that affect people continuously, although not in a way that one can easily detect. This pertains to feelings, attitudes, and energies that are often subliminal to awareness. In this chapter we shall attempt to make these subtle forces of interaction visible and to make the principles by which they function evident.

Figures 1 through 5 are a series of photographs which visibly demonstrate the emotional changes in an individual during a forty-minute therapeutic episode. The sequence shows a progression from a defensive state toward greater vulnerability; from tension and withholding to spontaneity. The concluding photograph portrays the state of openness and confidence that characterizes alignment.

Figures 6 through 11 are a series of photographs which demonstrate a transition from contactlessness caused by communication mannerisms to a state of alignment with contact and presence. The episode shows a progression toward assertiveness.

The attempt to interact in a state of alignment requires that all communicative faculties work in a coordinated circuitry. This includes eye contact, voice resonance, physical gesture, posture, hearing receptivity, and vocabulary effectiveness.

In alignment each of these facets of communication is balanced to optimal function in terms of dynamic and receptive capabilities. The balancing of sensory and cognitive abilities is dependent upon emotional elasticity—an equilibrium of assertiveness and vulnerability within an individual. This implies the ability to be decisive, without being rigid or dogmatic; the ability to be receptive and flexible, without becoming submissive or passive.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

Figures 1 through 5 Series demonstrates progression to a state of alignment, achieved through greater vulnerability.



Figure 6

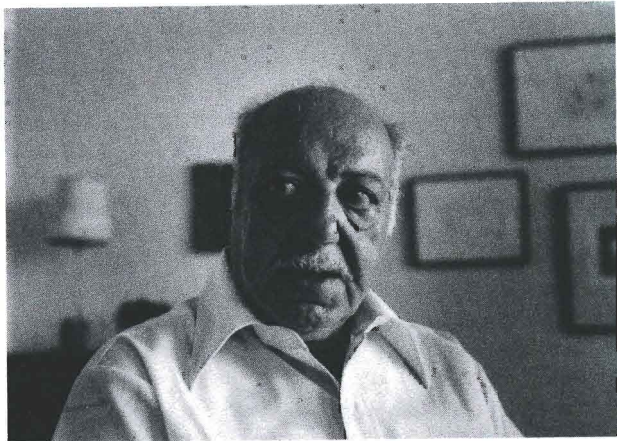


Figure 7



Figure 8

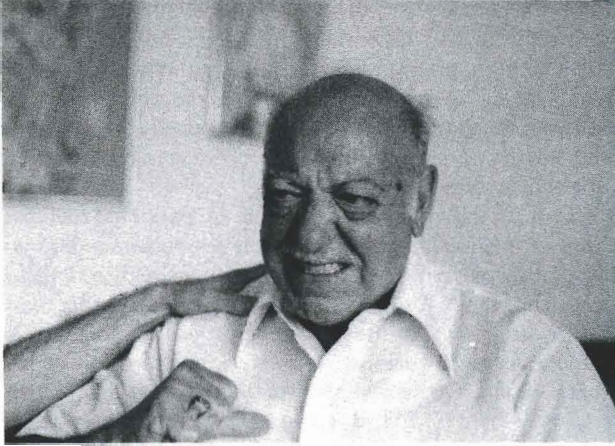


Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11

Figures 6 through 11 Series demonstrates progression to a state of alignment, attained by increased assertiveness.

Communication becomes a process for emotional evolvment when principles of alignment are critically applied to normal life experiencing. Emotional changes are brought about as a result of coping directly with personal issues whether they involve important or seemingly trivial matters. This requires the awareness to distinguish emotionally charged issues in relating, and a willingness to deal with all matters affecting one's sense of self-worth and respect for others. Hence communication alignment is not an exercise, it is a life process.

It can be difficult for individuals to determine an emotional risk that is relevant for growth. There is a normal inclination to avoid the fearfulness and excitation of a relevant risk, and to direct one's energy in exactly the opposite direction from what would lead to an emotional catharsis, for instance, to become sullen rather than express anger. Contact in relating is broken by attitudes that compromise feelings and convictions, for example, by competitiveness, by being manipulative, or by avoiding confrontation. The inclination to break contact in emotionally charged situations is expressed through defensive mannerisms—by defusing, disconnecting, or reversing the faculties of communication. Examples are: by looking away, or assuming a blank stare at a critical moment; by swallowing one's voice rather than projecting it; by the use of unnecessarily complex verbiage; by deflecting feeling with humor.

In Figure 8 the person's eyes are protruding, conveying neither personal presence, nor awareness of others. He is speaking loud and fast, and not hearing. He is complaining in a victimized manner, unaware of his effect on others. In this instance, the direction away from alignment can be seen as a tense, overextended state.

During the session, the instruction in alignment countered certain habitual tendencies (Figures 9 through 11). Narrowing and focusing his eyes had the effect of giving him a greater self-containment. By softening his voice and speaking slowly he became more alert and receptive to the reactions of others. By making a personally meaningful statement, in combination with an assertive gesture and eye focus, he achieves the state of equilibrium that characterizes alignment. In this state he realizes a sense of potency and effectiveness.

Although the particular personality adaptations necessary to attain alignment may differ for each individual, the human quality that characterizes the state of alignment is universal.

SEXUAL ALIGNMENT

The attempt to make sex a communication resulted in the understanding and formulation of sexual alignment. Sexual alignment involves a fundamental positioning and motion which instigates a link-up between the body, mind, and emotions in sexual expression. The physical gesture, the emotional feeling, and the mental attitude merge into proper relationship for intimate relating. This allows the body to become a vehicle for the expression of love and commitment in sex.

Initially, the physical aspect of this sexual orientation was presented to couples as a positioning for optimal mutual stimulation. As this concept was refined through the research of individual couples who attempted the orientation, a precise genital contact was defined. Finally, a form of interdependent motion was discovered which helped merge the response of partners.

Positioning

The drawing in Figure 12 illustrates the basic position of sexual alignment. The man is depicted lying fully on the woman. The man's weight is inhibiting only if partners become tense and rigid, or relax to the point of flaccidity.



Figure 12 Basic position of sexual alignment.

The documentation of physical alignment has revealed certain principles of kinetic function which govern the body in sex. For the spine to have the mobility that is essential in sexual movement, the limbs must remain relatively inactive. Movement originates from the spine and is directed through the pelvis, without use of the limbs; any attempt at leverage by pulling with the arms, pushing with the legs, supporting of the torso on elbow, etc., stiffens the spine and impedes subtle genital sensation.

An essential kinetic interaction between the male and female genitals is possible only when the spine is fully mobile and able to focus activity downward through the pelvis. Transition from the caressing of foreplay to a focus on genital movement is necessary. Continuous activity or tension in the upper part of the body inhibits articulated genital interaction and disrupts the build-up of the orgasmic charge.

Genital Contact

Incomplete Genital Contact Sexual positions generally used, for example as in Figure 13, are characterized by fragmented genital contact. Most often the man's pelvis is positioned well under the woman; he moves his penis with a scooping gesture into the vagina, losing or never making contact with the clitoris.



Figure 13 Incomplete genital contact.

Complete Genital Contact In alignment (Figure 14) the man is lying higher up on the woman than in positions generally assumed. The front base of his penis is lying into the woman's mons veneris, pressing against her clitoris. This position allows constant full genital contact: penis touching clitoris and inside vagina. This simultaneous contact completes a circuitry essential to the building of a full orgasmic charge.



Figure 14 Complete genital contact.

Sexual Stimulus The diagrams in Figure 15 depict two contrasting forms of sexual stimulus. The drawing on the left represents generally practiced friction. The penis slides in and out of the vagina without clitoral contact. The drawing on the right represents pressure stimulus from tension maintained between the penis and clitoris, as characterized in the genital contact of alignment.

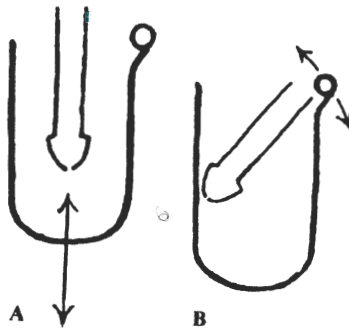


Figure 15 Contrasting forms of sexual stimulus. **Left** shows generally practiced friction. **Right** shows genital contact of alignment.

In alignment the base of the penis and the clitoris form a fulcrum to generate the orgasmic charge. The penis-clitoris connection is maintained through sensitively balanced pressure and counterpressure between partners; this "connection" is moved upward and downward in a gentle lever-like motion, and sustained with an even pace throughout the entire build-up and release. This builds the orgasmic charge to a level that organically evokes the responses of orgasm—without speeding up, resorting to friction, and disrupting the natural unfolding of the response. The transition to involuntary movement is a natural deepening of the movement coordinated in alignment. The bodies join in mutually interconnected reflexive movements which continue unbroken throughout the orgasmic release.

Movement

Interdependent sexual movement requires balanced motion and equal participation; this form of movement is identical for the man and woman. Both move forward and backward the same distance and at the same speed. The leading movement forward and the yielding motion backward are equally "alive"—not alternately active and passive. When the rhythm of this interaction is established, the movement of the two partners is interrelated and their motion is inseparable.

This balanced physical interaction in sex can be simulated only if partners are in rapport; emotional defensiveness cuts receptivity to sensation and limits mobility of the body. This form of sexual exchange requires the same emotional elasticity as good communication. With alternating strokes of sexual movement, the psyche is polarized between dynamic and receptive states. The physical expression in forward motion requires initiative and feelings of assertion. The motion backward with sustained contact is responsive and evokes feelings of vulnerability. The willingness to affect and to be affected are integral in the experience.

The attempt to make sex an equal exchange is a sensitization process which can help uproot primitive traits of dominance and passivity that alienate partners. When partners are not overextended or underextended in their interaction, they are able to relate and also keep a sense of self; they can give and receive simultaneously. This balance has been indicated in a correlation between emotional involvement in relationships, and increased sexual pleasure.

CONCLUSIONS

In the last decade more than 50 couples were involved in the project which led to the documentation of sexual alignment. Almost all of those who participated in the group process were able to establish the interdependent response consistently enough to express familiarity with the experience. Couples reported that this level of interaction was difficult to sustain over prolonged periods. The factors impeding the experience were not interpreted as having a physical basis; they were ascertained as clearly reflecting emotional tensions. The difficulties were attributed to unresolved conflict between partners, resulting in resentment and withholding. Other disruptive factors related to uninspired work orientation, unethical compromising, or demeaning life situation, which affected self-respect or respect for a partner.

Our perspective on relationships has made evident the interplay of sex and communication for psychic equilibrium. A reciprocal momentum is possible. Sensitivity in daily interaction enables couples to enter into sex without manipulative rituals or overdependence upon foreplay techniques for arousal. Sexual relating can isolate partners and be draining, or it can have a synergic effect that rejuvenates the entire psyche. Positive experiencing leads to a sexual regularity that has an inspirational effect on the daily interaction of a couple, and in their activity beyond the relationship.

The principles of alignment indicate a direction in relating that is essential for well-being. At present, health professionals are burdened with unrealistic demands involving symptoms related to indefinable frustration, fatigue, stress, and boredom. Many of these symptoms can be resolved only on a causal level through contact and fulfillment in relating. The refined sensibilities coming to awareness in communication and sex, as

characterized by alignment, reveal a new integrative level in the human potential. Normal life-interaction can be a naturally therapeutic process. The principles of alignment are significant because they enable people to make their relationships fully dynamic.

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