

# *Couples Conference* 2012

Attachment  
Differentiation  
& Neuroscience



In Couples  
Therapy

*April 27<sup>th</sup> - April 29<sup>th</sup>*  
*San Mateo, California*

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# ***Using Positive Experiences To Heal Personal And Relational Wounds***

**Love & Intimacy:  
The Couples Conference  
April 29, 2012**

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The Wellspring Institute for Neuroscience and Contemplative Wisdom

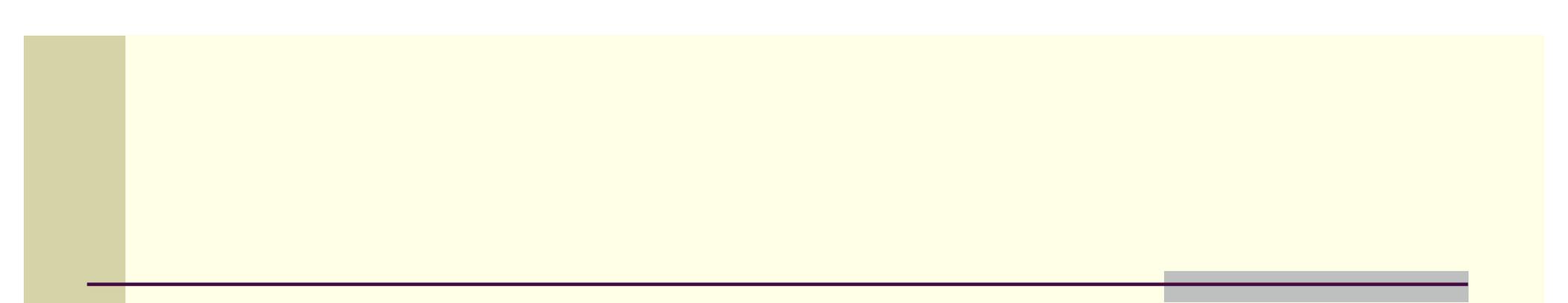
[WiseBrain.org](http://WiseBrain.org) [RickHanson.net](http://RickHanson.net)

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# Topics

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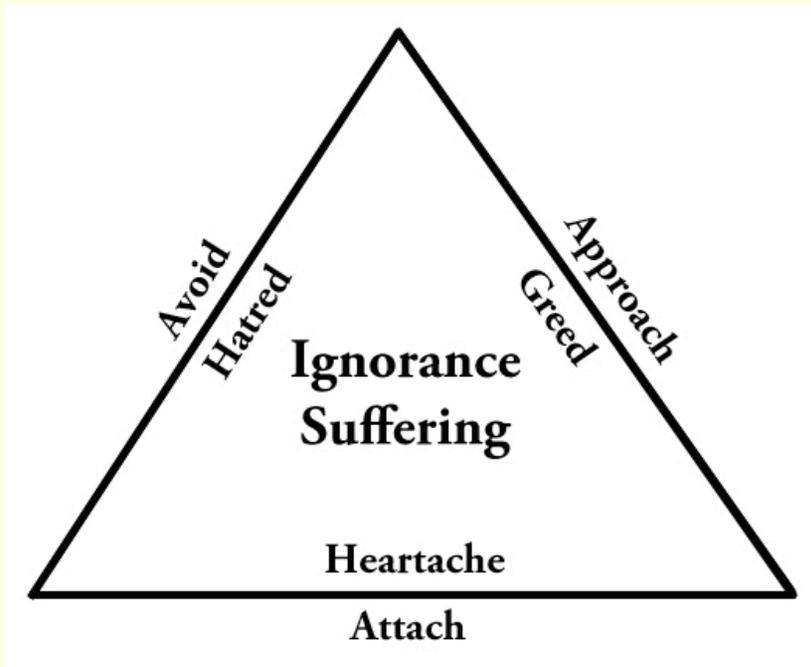
- **Antidote experiences**
- **Clearing old pain**



# **Antidote Experiences**

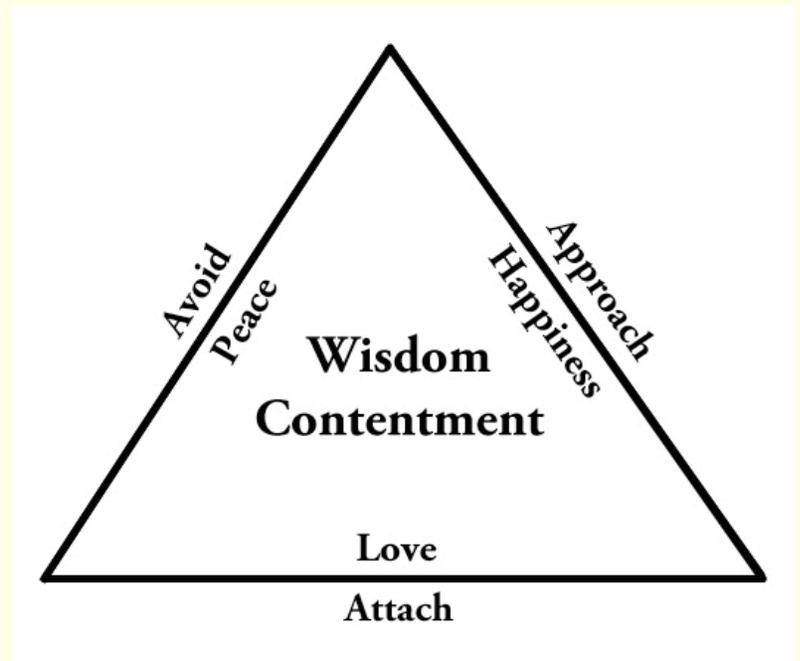
# Choices . . .

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**Reactive Mode**

Or?



**Responsive Mode**

# Psychological Antidotes

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## Avoiding Harms

- Strength, efficacy --> Weakness, helplessness, pessimism
- Safety, security --> Alarm, anxiety
- Compassion for oneself and others --> Resentment, anger

## Attaining Rewards

- Satisfaction, fulfillment --> Frustration, disappointment
- Gladness, gratitude --> Sadness, discontentment, “blues”

## Attaching to Others

- Attunement, inclusion --> Not seen, rejected, left out
- Recognition, acknowledgement --> Inadequacy, shame
- Friendship, love --> Abandonment, feeling unloved or unlovable

# How to Take in the Good

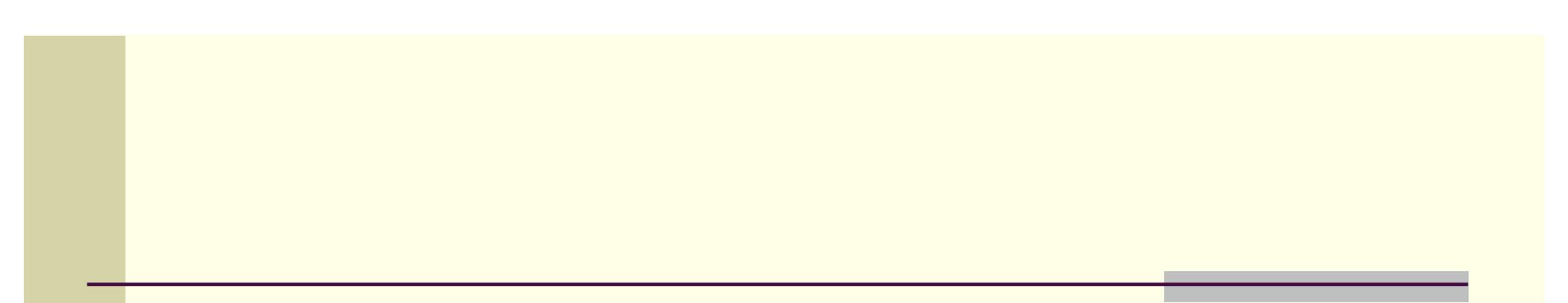
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1. Look for positive **facts**, and let them become positive experiences.
2. Savor the positive experience:
  - Sustain it for 10-20-30 seconds.
  - Feel it in your body and emotions.
  - Intensify it.
3. Sense and intend that the positive experience is soaking into your brain and body - registering deeply in emotional memory.

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**For an individual grappling with relationship issues, what might be a useful antidote experience?**

**For each member of a couple, what might be a useful antidote experience? How could each member promote the other member's antidote experience?**



# Clearing Old Pain

# Using Memory Mechanisms to Help Heal Painful Experiences

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- The machinery of memory:
  - When explicit or implicit memory is reactivated, it is rebuilt from schematic elements, not retrieved *in toto*.
  - When attention moves on, the memory gets reconsolidated.
- The open processes of memory reactivation and reconsolidation create a window of opportunity for shaping your internal world.
- Reactivated material associates with other things in awareness, especially if they are prominent and lasting.
- When memory returns to storage, it takes associations with it.
- You can imbue memory with positive associations.

# The Fourth Step of TIG

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- When you are having a positive experience:
  - Sense the current positive experience sinking down into old pain, and soothing and replacing it.
- When you are having a negative experience:
  - Bring to mind a positive experience that is its antidote.
- In both cases, have the positive experience be big and strong, in the forefront of awareness, while the negative experience is small and in the background.
- You are not resisting negative experiences or getting attached to positive ones. You are being kind to yourself and cultivating positive resources in your mind.

# TIG4 Capabilities, Resources, Skills

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## ■ Capabilities:

- Dividing attention
- Sustaining awareness of the negative material without getting sucked in (and even retraumatized)

## ■ Resources:

- Self-compassion
- Internalized sense of affiliation

## ■ Skills:

- Internalizing “antidotes”
- Accessing “the tip of the root”

# Neuropsychology of TIG4

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- Extinction, through pairing a negative experience with a powerful positive one.
- Reinforces maintaining PFC-H activation and control during A-SNS arousal, so PFC-H is not swamped or hijacked
- Reinforcement of self-directed regulation of negative experiences; enhances sense of efficacy
- Dampens secondary associations to negative material; that reduces negative experiences and behavior, which also reduces vicious cycles
- Reduces defenses around negative material; thus more amenable to therapeutic help, and to insight

# TIG and Trauma

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- General considerations:
  - People vary in their resources and their traumas.
  - Often the major action is with “failed protectors.”
  - Cautions for awareness of internal states, including positive
  - Respect “yellow lights” and the client’s pace.
- The first three steps of TIG are generally safe. Use them to build resources for tackling the trauma directly.
- As indicated, use the fourth step of TIG to address the peripheral features and themes of the trauma.
- Then, with care, use the fourth step to get at the heart of the trauma.

# The Tip of the Root

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- For the fourth step of TIG, try to get at the youngest, most vulnerable layer of painful material.
- The “tip of the root” is commonly in childhood. In general, the brain is most responsive to negative experiences in early childhood.
- Prerequisites
  - Understanding the need to get at younger layers
  - Compassion and support for the inner child
  - Capacity to “presence” young material without flooding

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**For an individual grappling with relationship issues, what's the negative material, what's an antidote experience, and how might you pair them?**

**For each member of a couple, what's the negative material, what's an antidote experience, and how might you pair them?**

# True Nature

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**Peaceful**

**Happy**

**Loving**

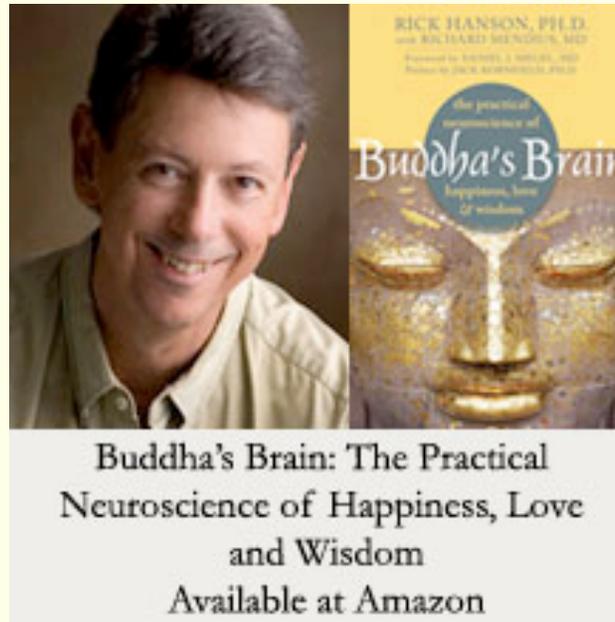
## *Where to Find Rick Hanson Online*

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