

The Four Points of Balance **By Marlene and Bob Neufeld**

We've been studying David Schnarch's book "Desire and Intimacy" (2009). While we don't agree with all of his points; reading this book has expanded our understanding of how intimacy can be maintained in long-term relationships.

One of the keys is preserving one's emotional balance with respect to our partners. As Schnarch says, "These abilities control more than your sexual desire. They determine how *all* desires in life play out. ... they control interactions with your children, parents, friends, and co-workers." Schnarch, *Desire and Intimacy*, p. 72.

Here are Schnarch's four points of balance and our thoughts on how we implement them:

1. "Solid Flexible Self™ - the ability to be clear about who you are and what you're about, especially when your partner pressures you to adapt and conform." We frequently offer clients the choice between seeing themselves as a victim and seeing themselves as people of true creative power. If you want to know more about this, please read our article "Shift From Seeing Yourself as a Victim..."
2. "Quiet Mind-Calm Heart™ - being able to calm yourself down, soothe your own hurts, and regulate your own anxieties." In our work we talk about self-soothing and/or changing your state. Einstein taught that we can't solve a problem from the state in which it occurs; we need to change our state and see it from a different perspective. We recommend a number of changing your state activities that involve breath, movement and loving yourself. We also invite people to use creativity to loosen the grip that the situation has on them. To read more about this, please read our article "How to Take Yourself Lightly."
3. "Grounded Responding™ - the ability to stay calm and not overreact, rather than creating distance or running away when your partner gets anxious or upset." In our work we explore with clients, their *ability to respond* rather than get defensive, judgmental, blaming, critical or withdraw. For more about this please see our article "Shift from Blame to Healthy Responsibility."
4. "Meaningful Endurance™ - being able to step up and face the issues that bedevil you and your relationship, and the ability to tolerate discomfort for the sake of growth." In our work we explore with clients their openness to learning. For more about this concept, see our article "Be Open to Learning."

All four of these points of balance are helpful in getting off the drama triangle, and stepping into Presence with your partner.

As we studied this book, we realized that we have been using these ideas to take full healthy responsibility and not take each other's thoughts, feelings and actions personally. For example, last week Marlene said to Bob, "I need some time to myself." Bob had been anticipating a time of closeness. Bob's solid flexible self allowed him to recognize that something was happening that could destabilize our relationship; however, he was able to hold on to his view of himself as a good person and his view of Marlene as a good person. He didn't have to like what was going on, but to recognize that Marlene was taking care of her self. Both Marlene and Bob then took time to calm themselves and self-soothe. Marlene got open to learning and recognized she was having an Upper Limit. A half hour later, when Marlene was ready to re-connect with Bob he was available. He hadn't let what she was doing pull him into victim or blame.

Schnarch has a number of case examples in his book. In one he says, "When you confront yourself, your partner can no longer control you through your shortcomings. You have to do four things: confront yourself and heed your own counsel, soothe your own heart, emotionally unhook from your partner, and stand up and face the music. These are your Four points of Balance." Schnarch, p 149.

Marlene & Bob Neufeld practice body-centered Coaching and Psychotherapy. They are a couple who help couples learn life-changing skills and create closer, more loving relationships with one another. All articles referred to are on the website: www.marleneandbob.com/articles.htm. For more information call 613-594-9248 or www.marleneandbob.com.