

The Distancer and the Pursuer

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FAMILY therapy has moved ahead rapidly in recent years. Certain theoretical ideas are so clear that they have been subtly incorporated into the general body of knowledge and used universally. Much of the credit for this belongs to Murray Bowen and Philip J. Guerin, Jr. Today, everyone (in this field) will use the three/four generational genogram, and everyone will look for the key triangle or the generational triangles. We all work, in our own way, to get that triangle detriangulated so that people go one-on-one, or try to establish a personal relationship. The importance of these understandings to the general knowledge of the human phenomena cannot be underestimated. The extension of this work in the family to work systems, inner systems, and networks of all kinds offers infinite possibilities.

Once the process is detriangulated we try to have people go one-on-one, to work on the development of a personal relationship. In the process of dealing with every significant twosome in the family, we simultaneously deal with the *insides* of each person. (The inner system of a person is defined in the context of the personal relationship.) It is impossible to define self without the experimental field of the other. This becomes the format for dealing with all emotional problems, but not all problems.

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It is a basic assumption of systems theory that all people want *closeness*. They want to belong somewhere, to fit in, to be cared about, to be accepted, even with their faults. Two people move toward each other, not realizing that closeness must be worked at, and that it is an inconstant state, here and then gone. Such intensity often leads to *fusion* followed by *distance*. One moves toward the other, and the other distances. The closer one gets to loving the other, the greater are his expectations, the desire for completion, the great hope of fulfillment. As closeness increases, fusion become more likely. One tends to become the distancer, and the other the pursuer. In this fashion, the twosome continues to exist but the distance between them remains fixed.

There are few alternatives. If one is to avoid the nothingness inside self, he must pursue to fill self from others. Otherwise he feels that he would die inside. If one is to protect his space from the intrusions of others, he must distance and live with his loneliness.

Personal Pictures

To the pursuer, every minute is an hour of love lost, a day is a year and the loss of a smile can never be replaced. The absent person is either idealized without fault or condemned without plausible explanation. When one hates the distant person, comfort with him and ease of conversation are removed, and are done simply from toleration and hunger. The pursuer is addicted to

