

TOP TEN UNDERLYING ISSUES ADDRESSED TO VARYING DEGREES WITH ALL PATIENTS, AT VARIOUS POINTS IN TREATMENT

1) Inner Bully--source of all self-sabotage; sabotage twofold: personal self-worth and significant relationships; the 3 "deserve" messages; connection to having been bullied at some time in your life

2) Betrayal--any significant feeling of letdown, from someone important to you, based on what you believed you had the right to believe they would never do to you

3) "Death of hope"--based on the evidence you have accumulated over time, facing the fact that whatever hope you have held onto that the person with whom you are in a relationship would eventually change, and/or that the relationship would remain in place essentially until the day you would die, is not going to happen; and therefore that hope must die, once and for all, and grieved; all in order to have a chance to have more realistic expectations about the person and/or the relationship

4) Unstated pacts--unstated but powerfully influencing truths underlying significant relationships; truths that are likely to be negative the more obvious the psychological problems involved are

5) Tunnel focus--the tendency under high levels of agitation (inner emotional "churning") to experience either racing/obsessive thinking or it's polar opposite, i.e., "brain freeze"

6) Self-rebellion--a self-sabotaging pattern of behavior in which you consistently "rebel," i.e., do the opposite of what's in your best interest to do in that particular situation

7) Relationship-challenging behaviors--Narcissism (extreme self-centeredness); lack/loss of conscience (essentially a pattern of unprovoked rudeness or meanness); disrespectful attitude

8) Painful, unresolved feelings of: guilt and/or embarrassment and/or failure and/or shame

9) Core fears--rejection or abandonment

10) Healing from trauma

POSTSCRIPT: I encourage my patients to view the number one overall goal of psychotherapy to be the building of courage, to be operationally defined as: anything you are reluctant or hesitant to do, in any context of your life, but you go ahead and make yourself do it anyway, because it's in your best interest to do so