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Creating a Confluence: An Interview With Susan Johnson and John Gottman

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In 2003, The Family Journal interviewed Dr. Susan Johnson (Jencius, 2003) and Dr. John Gottman (Jencius & Duba, 2003) in individual interviews. This interview is with Drs. Johnson and Gottman together in an attempt to capture the confluence of their mutual influence. Sue Johnson is a professor of psychology and psychiatry at Ottawa University and director of the Ottawa Couple and Family Institute. She is one of the originators and the main proponent of emotionally focused couples therapy (EFT). John Gottman is co-founder of the Gottman Institute, director of the Relationship Research Institute, and emeritus professor of psychology at the University of Washington. Both have done extensive research in the areas of couple relationships, and each maintains an active research and training schedule. This interview took place in November 2003 in Seattle, Washington. For more information about the works of Johnson and Gottman, visit their Web sites at www.eft.ca and www.gottman.com.

Keywords: Susan Johnson; emotionally focused therapy; couples counseling; John Gottman

Young: The two of you have commented on each other’s work in articles and even in some interviews. So I wonder how you came across each other’s work.

Gottman: I can’t even remember. It was 20 years ago, I think. It must be more than 20 years ago.

Johnson: [laughing] Well, the first article on EFT (emotionally focused couples therapy) came out in the outcome studies in 1985. I remember your—wasn’t it 1979—your marital interaction [book]?

Gottman: Yes, it was 1979.

Johnson: I had your marital interaction book all marked up with green and red pen. With things like absorbing negative affect, everything leads in, nothing leads out. I have all of that underlined, so I remember your work way back then. And I thought it was fantastic. And what I loved about it was that it stayed close to the data. It stayed close to the reality, to the real reality. It wasn’t labeling with all kinds of huge abstract labels that didn’t make much sense to me. It wasn’t going into all these theories. It was staying close. It was saying: This is what happens; this is what this picture looks like. I just found it such a relief. Here is someone looking at it and helping me see it.

Gottman: We were drawn more and more into the study of emotion over time. And after that book came out [Gottman, 1979], Paul Eckman and I corresponded. And Paul Eckman basically said, “You really don’t understand emotion. Nice book, but you really don’t know what you are doing.” He convinced me that I didn’t. I didn’t know how to read faces. He introduced me to Claude Sheer. I learned how to read voices better. It was back to the drawing board because the first approach I took to intervention had big intervention effects but huge relapse effects. Howard Markman stayed with that intervention. I decided it was all wrong and that we hadn’t understood emotion very well. Bob Livingston and I then collaborated and started looking
at physiology. So when I discovered Sue’s work, emotionally focused marital therapy, I just thought, “This is it.” This is really what is missing in cognitive-behavioral therapy and behavioral marital therapy. It’s all so intellectual. It really isn’t looking at what is going on at a level of depth that really matters. Although I was really excited by all the general system theorists, none of their stuff panned out in research. Everything was propelling us, like going down stream in a kayak, toward looking at emotion more and more deeply. And that is just what Sue and Les (Greenberg) were doing with emotionally focused therapy. I just knew it was the right approach.

**Young:** John, can you expand on that? How has Sue’s work in emotionally focused therapy influenced the work that you are doing?

**Gottman:** The influence has been huge because I think they really taught us how to look at process in the moment, just as we were doing in the laboratory, but to look at it in therapy. To look at how very primitive people’s emotions are when they are in an intimate relationship that is not working. How desperate they are. And what they taught was where to go. How to create a structure that not only liberated emotion but gave it a direction. And that built something, constructed something, which was this reframing of an attachment bond that had really failed, and a new chance for connection, an emotional connection. It was so consistent with everything that I was seeing in the laboratory. Through the important life transitions, like transition to parenthood, retirement, and midlife, all those transitions. It was so fundamental and primitive. It was very powerful. And it was exactly what we needed in marital therapy, an understanding of what was so basic and so human about the failure of relationships and what people were striving for.

**Young:** Sue, when you began the interview, you mentioned John’s book back in 1979. If I have my dates correct, you would have still been a doctoral student.

**Johnson:** No, I wasn’t even a doctoral student. I was just doing family therapy and seeing couples occasionally and struggling to understand emotion. No, actually that’s not true, it came out in 1979; by the time I read that book, I was a doctoral student and I was struggling with couples and how to understand couples. The trouble was everything with affect...well, people basically said, “Don’t even touch it.” “It’s a mess, so don’t touch it, it’s dangerous.” I think Neil Jacobson in 1979 said, “Well, of course we all know it’s important, but we don’t know what to do with it, so don’t bother...don’t touch it.” I just couldn’t do that, and I felt that it was so encouraging to read John’s stuff where he says this is important and maybe we’re not quite sure how to work with it, but you do have to look at it—to look at all the patterns and to just say that the secret to understanding all of this is to get closer to the data and to look at the data and to look at the patterns and to look at what people do and to listen to people, rather than go off into all these theories of collusion or lack of differentiation. I just found it so liberating. And, in a sense, that is what we did. Where EFT came from was we sat and stared at tapes of couples again and again and again, until I started to get it and started to understand. I mean, all of John’s works looking at the patterns people get stuck in and what leads to divorce, and saying that we have to pay attention to emotion and we have to pay attention to these patterns of interaction. In all the work he has done, basically what he has done is put marital therapy, couple’s therapy, given it a whole scientific reality and a scientific basis. That just didn’t happen before. It’s like we can sit around forever and throw abstract concepts at each other and decide that this is what is wrong with couples and throw abstract concepts back at them. And it was never going anywhere.

**Gottman:** Like reciprocated anger was a good example. The behavioral marital therapists were saying that reciprocated anger is really a problem that needs to be treated. And in fact, when you actually look at the sequences of interaction, anger is just as likely to be reciprocated in a happy relationship as it is in an unhappy relationship. There is no significant difference. That’s not what it is. It’s not about reciprocated anger. It’s about escalation or emotional disengagement, and it’s about not making that emotional connection, not building that friendship, that intimacy. So intuition is just misleading without real empirical data. And that’s the great thing about attachment theory because it was really pointing us at how emotions really needed to be explored and investigated. Not just in terms of liberating emotions or letting it all hang out but in terms of making a connection, building trust, building security, being there for one another, engaging one another, in very small moments, but in very powerful moments.

**Johnson:** See, it’s fascinating because what I talked about was what is wonderful and fascinating and intoxicating is that John is this incredible researcher. He is this mathematician. And math was never my thing; I do it if I have to, but... And I came through watching couples and being totally fascinated and then getting caught up in John Bowlby. It is almost like we are coming from these different directions, but there is this incredible confluence in this field—people writing about emotion, John writing about these patterns that matter. Yes, people get angry, but that’s not the point. Don’t get stuck on that dead end; it’s these patterns. You know, John talking about patterns and how people emotionally engage and disengage. All the research that is coming now from adult attachment researchers, and us doing outcomes on EFT. It’s all going in the same direction. When we first did the first study on EFT, we did not expect to get what we got. I remember telling this colleague that I really respected from the school of social work what we were going to do, which was going to compare this control with this funny stuff that we thought we knew how to do then but did not know what to call it. And to do this problem-solving training and
Johnson: I’ve always respected John like crazy, and I would always say that this is what is happening in the field, and isn’t this wonderful. Because we sort of got EFT together by instinct and by watching couples, and our theories helped us, right. But when we first put EFT together, adult attachment was not the way it is now, it was in its infancy. And so I always admired John like mad, but I didn’t know him and there was this conflict in the field between EFT and behavioral approaches, and Neil Jacobsen and I would sort of fight about that. All I knew about John was that I loved his books and I loved all that he was doing, but he was Neil Jacobsen’s buddy.

Gottman: Yeah, Neil Jacobsen and I were very good friends. But we didn’t agree with each other very much about therapy.

Johnson: So really, I can’t remember when we actually started to talk more, but I think our work has... well, to give you an example, I got more and more into adult attachment. Adult attachment has become more and more formulated and clear. It has much more research on it. And John’s research, like he has just done this thing where he has said that soothing responses are incredibly important. So it feels like our work has come from different directions and has come closer and closer together. And I started standing up and saying, “OK, the first thing that I am going to do in my workshops is to talk about John Gottman’s research. This is what John Gottman says about relationships, and this is what we see.” Then one day someone said to me, “You know, John Gottman talks about you in his presentations.” [Both laughing.] I said, “He does?” And I said, “Oh, really!” And somehow, I can’t remember how we met.

Gottman: We met in a hotel lobby, I think.
Johnson: Yes!
Gottman: That’s right, in California.
Johnson: Yes, that’s right. And I said, “Oh, hi, I’m Sue Johnson.” And you said, “Oh, hi.” And we only had a few minutes. I can’t remember. We basically just connected a little bit, and that sort of started up a little dialogue. But let me tell you what I do think. The field of relationships is so huge. I think there is so much to understand, and it is so important. I think we should collaborate more, and I think actually it’s quite unusual in this field that actually people get together and appreciate and support each other. They can have their differences, but they use each other’s work to help and to grow. I think that’s the way it should be. My perception is that one of the things that has kept the field back is that it usually isn’t that way. People compete; they get stuck in very small, little, narrow places. They see other people as rivals. We try to pull each other down instead of helping each other and growing each other.

Gottman: I read someone saying one time that theoretical models are like toothbrushes. Everyone has one, but no one wants to use anybody else’s. [Both laugh.] And I think that really is a shame because most of the con-

then compare it with our intervention. And what I remember is that he fell off his chair laughing. I remember the restaurant. I remember everything about it. He fell off his chair and he said, “Sue, you are out of your mind. First of all, that will kill you. What do you think you are going to get? You have just written this manual, forget it. What are you going to do? You don’t have many therapists so you are only doing eight sessions, it will never work. You won’t get anything. It will be a big wash out.” And he was laughing, laughing, laughing. So the first time we got all the results and I put them all through the computer, and we got the results that we did, I thought, “Well, that can’t be right, that can’t be right.” I went back and did it all again, I crunched that data three times; I had a fabulous guy who helped me, who was the most wonderful mathematician I’ve ever had. I said, “I think we’ve got this, but it’s impossible, we couldn’t have got this.” Because what we basically got was both treatments were better than controls, and EFT was better on all measures. And I crunched it three times because I never expected that. I thought, “Oh, if we’ve got something here, it will be as good as CBT because, after all, this other stuff is already established,” and we were still feeling our way. But when we got that result, I started to really believe. It confirmed all my deepest beliefs that emotions are powerful, and one of the most powerful things you can do is look at how it defines relationships and use it to create change. And it just started off in the last 20 years. I could have done lots of things; I wasn’t necessarily going to do this. But those results were just so mind-boggling.

Gottman: Well, you know that behavior marital therapy only works with young couples—it doesn’t work with couples who have been together awhile and with couples in middle age.
Johnson: Is that right?
Gottman: Yeah, and your stuff works with couples in middle age because it has the kind of depth. The young couples who are fighting all the time, it is helpful to have some structure, and behavior marital therapy gives them some way of negotiating conflict and coming to some agreements and having some love days and some caring days. And it gives something, and the behaviors change and the negotiation does do something. But it doesn’t have any depth to it. So, as couples have been together longer, it doesn’t really have any effect. Emotionally focused therapy does. So it is really getting closer to the meaning.
Johnson: Are you getting what you need?
Young: I am. One thing that strikes me just as I hear the two of you talk is that you seem to have such a relationship with each other. To have two leaders in the field of working with couples that have this type of relationship. I wonder if you could talk about it. Please talk about your relationship and what it is like working with each other.
Gottman: It’s a very young relationship really.

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ceptually really are so close together. There is so much more that we don’t know than what we do know. There is really a need for integration, especially for clinicians. They don’t need to hear people fighting with each other over trivial points. They need to hear what they can do to really help people, they need direction, and they need to understand. Being open-minded is very important.

Young: And to me that has been fascinating as a student and a beginning clinician, studying both of your works independently and then more recently seeing in the literature the two of you quoting each other or both of you being quoted by others in the same work. And seeing that there are these similarities and now seeing the two of you working closer together and building off each other, instead of competing.

Johnson: Well, the point about it is that some of that is our personality, but some of it is that there really is a real confluence. I can remember sitting and reading John’s stuff and saying, “At last, at last there is somebody who does all this incredible research and who is saying emotion is really important and you have to deal with it. And these patterns of interactions are really important because that is what we focused on in EFT. We learned to do that. But I thought, thank God, there is somebody who actually has this database and who is saying “These are the things that matter, these are things that predict where the relationship goes.” And it was a huge relief because I remember standing up at conferences thinking I am out of mind, we should have never called this emotionally focused therapy. Like, I would get killed.

Gottman: Because it is the cognitive neuroscience revolution now in psychology. There is an anti-emotion bias.

Johnson: Yes, there is a huge anti-emotion bias. For you to come out and say “We have to deal with emotion, it is the most important thing.” I mean, I can’t remember how many times I quoted that in the first few years, because otherwise I would get killed.

Gottman: Right, and the cardiovascular system, the heart, is really the best predictor of what is happening in a relationship in the research that I’ve done. It’s really about the heart, literally about the heart. And it’s also about emotion and how it affects people’s bodies. So both of us are really looking at the body and what it tells us and using that in therapy as well.

Young: The last area that I want to cover is in reading about and studying both of you, realizing that each of you taped couples as a way to begin learning and working with them. And from that, each of you has gone from what I would say was a good idea and developed a theory. What was that process like? Because I think there are a lot of people out there with great ideas, but that’s all they are. What was your process like to take your good idea and develop it into a theory?

Johnson: I don’t know if I developed anything into a theory. I think what I did was look at what couples do and read John’s work to have deeper understanding of what couples do, the dance couples do. I already had a theoretical lens, which was Rogerian, which said that you don’t pathologize people, you listen to them. You listen to them and you follow their emotion and their experience. And you help them formulate and structure it and you grow it, and they will grow, too. I already had that. I think what happened was that the work on adult attachment just became more and more relevant and helped me see what I was already seeing and make sense of it. I would read an article by John, and I would look at a tape of a couple, and I’d go, “Oh, yes, look at that there.” Then I’d go read an article by Jeff Simpson at the University of Texas saying “Avoiders don’t avoid all the time, they avoid exactly when they or someone else is vulnerable.” And I can see it on the tape, and then I’d read something about stonewalling in John’s research. And suddenly it would all start to come together, and I would say, “Yes, this is what happens here. This is what is happening here in this relationship because he’s shutting her out, and she’s going crazy because he’s shutting her out. And it’s not because she’s borderline or has no skills or any of these things.” Everything starts to come together into making more and more sense of what I was seeing. I think, also, the process studies we’ve done in EFT, where we look not just at the process of how people get stuck and what they do in relationships but started looking at how people shift and how they change.

Gottman: What makes people change. What are these critical moments. And that gave birth to the theory.

Johnson: Yes. A lot of it was implicit in people like Rogers. But in what we are developing now in EFT is saying, This is what we know. What we know is that this is where people start out, and we understand where people start out so much better because of all this research. And this is what we see in therapy, and what we can predict is that there are these key moments. And these things happen in these key moments, and if the therapist does certain things, then things change. The interesting thing about this is that therapists have been saying for years is that we don’t care about research because basically the research doesn’t tell us how to see the problem clearly and what actually to do in the session. And I think you can’t start out there, you can’t just say “Oh well, I’ll just sit and look at the process.” You’ve got to say: What am I seeing and how do I understand it? What is the problem, and what focus will I take? What is a key event? Where am I trying to go? We’re saying that place you are supposed to go is toward a secure bond. Not just to have people be a bit more skilled in their interactions. Well, then you know where you’re going, you know the journey. Then you start to be able to say these processes are what really matter. This is what is going to transform the relationship. You can study them, and therapists say, “What do I have to do?” If you want people to change, you have to create these key events. “And what do I do with them?” And we are starting to be able to say that what you do
with them is to heighten affect, and this is how you do it, and this is why you do it, and when you do it right, this is what happens. We are starting to build a field that really has the clinician at the center of it, where the research actually is relevant because it speaks to the clinician directly. I think that is something that has been missing, so lots of clinicians have said, “Pooh on you researchers, pooh on you where you sit and write your articles. Because we are here with these people in this room and you are not relevant to us.” And I think that’s changing a whole bunch. And I think John started that by saying look at what you’re seeing. You’re seeing the four horsemen, and this is what you see. And look at this, and this is what matters. This is what predicts divorce, and this is what you’ve got to change.

Gottman: Well, looking at healthy relationships is something that clinicians don’t get to do very much. So they have a fantasy about what a great relationship is like. When you actually study real relationships that work well, the fantasies aren’t true. And real relationships have perpetual problems to deal with. For example, differences that they cope with that they don’t solve. Most relationship problems don’t get solved, they get coped with. That’s really something that Andy Christensen has come to also in his therapy. Looking at the masters and the disasters is very important in knowing really what you should focus on in therapy and what kinds of goals to have and when to stop therapy. When is it that you are done? Are you done when the relationship is a great relationship, or what is that? What does that look like? If you haven’t studied everyday relationships and built a psychology of everyday relationships by studying people when they are just eating dinner or just hanging out together or watching television or trying to build intimacy in everyday life, because there has been so much focus on conflict and the resolution of conflict. The theory that I came to really emerged from looking in our apartment lab at what people are like when they are hanging out. And realizing that these very small moments of emotional connection have a big implication for whether people have a sense of humor when they’re disagreeing or can be affectionate when they’re disagreeing or empathic when they’re disagreeing. Some people can, and why is it that they can? It’s not social skills; it’s really about having access to what’s in the repertoire. How do you get access to what’s in the repertoire? You’ve got to feel safe. You can’t have a high level of physiological arousal. We’re back to attachment security. For us, it was continuing to really build a description. Bob Livingston and I were really doing that in a lot of ways. Partly through looking at a lot of contexts, looking at physiology, showing people their videotapes and finding out what they’re thinking during those moments, what their philosophy of relationships were. For me, not only was I propelled toward affect, and the importance of attachment and emotional engagement, but also toward an existential view. The therapy that I’ve come out with is very existential. It really says that, for example, what’s happening in gridlock conflict that makes it impossible for people to cope with their conflict is that they haven’t really talked about the underlying concepts that are very core to each person’s sense of self, their dreams, and their life dreams. And how the relationship is really ignoring those dreams and not facilitating them. Once they start talking on that level, that existential level, then they are talking at essentially the same level that Sue’s working at and Les is working at with emotionally focused therapy. They are talking about very primitive things, very basic things like freedom, love, and being cared for, and exploration, and meaning, and purpose, and legacy, and who my family is, and what I want to give to my kids, and all those kinds of things. That is where I was propelled, theoretically toward an existential view. A lot of that came from collaborating with my wife because she was the clinician. It was necessary not only to predict but to understand, which is what Sue has talked about, which is the third leg of scientific endeavor. Not just prediction but understanding. That’s really important for clinicians to understand what they are doing, why they are doing it, and where they are going. Theory really has been missing in this field. One of the things I’ve tried to do in the last 10 years is to build a mathematical basis for a theory of understanding relationships. That is part of what we are doing, which I haven’t figured out yet a way to explain to people. But we are trying to do that. It is very much taking emotion and putting it on a mathematical basis and talking a lot about emotional attractors and where people are drawn toward in their interactions and trying to understand how to change that, how they influence one another.

Johnson: See, I think that is an interesting link between us. Because when I read your book and you use a slightly different language. But when I read your book and you are talking about helping couples sit down and talk about who they are and what their dreams are, that is loaded with affect. It is slightly different language, but in a way it is on the same existential level as when I say to couples, “You want to know that you are going to be there for each other in these key moments and that you are not going to be alone. And you want to be able to tell your wife that I want you to be there for me when I’m facing this huge thing of deciding do I matter if I’m retired, or what kind of father do I want to be, or what is the meaning of my life. When I start looking down that dark, narrow corridor, I need to know that you are standing shoulder to shoulder with me.” Well, that attachment is the same stuff, it’s about existential choices. It’s really focusing on a different level of partnership, rather than where we got caught years and years ago.

Gottman: Negotiating agreements.

Johnson: “I’ll be a good negotiator, and I’ll use this sequence to say this to you, and you use that sequence back to me, then we agree about what car to buy.” This is a whole different feeling. But sometimes we get...
caught up in all the content. People say that people fight about money. They don’t really; they always fight about what kind of relationship they are going to have and who they are going to be as people and the quality of the relationship. That’s all they fight about.

Gottman: And what’s their stance toward evil? What’s their stance toward charity and toward justice in the world? These larger ideas and meanings, people really live there. Their emotions are really about struggling for some sense of meaning. For me, a lot of it is really about bringing Viktor Frankl into the marital arena. I think Bowlby is very important, but Viktor Frankl has things to say that we still have not understood. Viktor Frankl really disagreed with Abraham Maslow and his hierarchy of needs. He saw in concentration camps when people were starving, and they were facing death in every instant, they did not turn into animals who were just groveling for food. They became philosophers and they wrote plays and symphonies and they helped each other and they created community. They reached heights of sense of meaning and purpose. This is a very different view of what a person is, of what our species is capable of, and I think we need to bring that into the marital arena and realize that that’s a lot of what people live. Sort of trying to make sense of this journey, and they are doing it together. They’re building; every relationship is a new culture that has never existed before. They are defining meaning. They’re leaving a legacy for their children.

Johnson: On that note, one of the things that happened recently is that I feel like we get caught in all this thing about respecting diversity and I think we must respect diversity because it is very important. But sometimes I feel like it is important to note that your diversity, if that’s all you’ve got, is overwhelming. You have to recognize, too, that there are universals. What John’s talking about is that there is an existential reality to life that is universal. What is that beautiful phrase? “The wind blows in the face of the modernist and postmodernist, and it stings both their eyes.” I can’t remember who said that, but I thought it was very good. I think that part of this is, what John is saying is that creating meaningful long-term partnerships has an existential level to it. What goes across cultures? Well, things like emotion. There are only so many of them. There’s only so many ways to deal with them. You have different languages for them, but there really are only so many ways to deal with them. Things like human connection and attachment, our needs for closeness with a few significant others, they go across cultures, across this planet.

Gottman: And there’s not a relationship in any culture that works without respect. Different cultures communicate respect in different ways. Arranged marriages, all kinds of relationships don’t work, families don’t work without respect. And I think that is universal. It is as important as love, I think. The sense that there is admiration, there is a relationship with that emotion, with admiration, with pride. Not only how did your partner comfort you when you were crying, but how did they show you they were proud of you?

Johnson: Yes, how did you see your value reflected in their eyes?

Young: I can see that by putting your minds together, you could probably go on and on because you have so much knowledge and experience, but I want to be respectful of your time. I wonder if you have some final comments for those beginning clinicians. Words of advice for them, words of encouragement for them. What you would like them to focus on and to do.

Johnson: I have something. There is a beautiful quote that I use sometimes at the end of my workshops by David Mace, and he made it a long time ago. What he basically said was that in the evolution of human beings, the real secret is not technological achievement. The real secret is that we learn how to have relationships with each other. Not just between countries but that we learn how to make the creation of solid, loving, creative partnerships between family members and between couples—that we learn how to do that. That will do more for human evolution than any technological achievement. I believe that. So what I hope young clinicians know is that we have just started on this journey. It’s going to be incredibly exciting. We’ve only just begun. And that they are incredibly important, and we need their creativity and we need their enthusiasm. We just need for them to do their work and to believe in their work and to just go for it. We are learning about relationships, and we are learning how to make them, and that is going to make such a huge difference.

Gottman: The one thing I would say to young therapists who are looking around to see what is useful and what is valuable is that they should have a skeptical eye. They should demand from people who make claims to see their data. To really see evidence and to look for at least a randomized clinical trial that shows that they put their money where their mouth is. And they’ve taken the risk. That is the thing about Sue Johnson. She hasn’t just gone around doing workshops. She’s done randomized clinical trials where she can really fail. She’s learning from these results to make EFT better and better and better all the time. There are all kinds of people out there who are making claims that they know everything and that they have a theory that is going to work well. Young people should say, “Great, thank you. Those are interesting ideas. Where’s your data that shows it’s effective? Did you have random assignment to control group and experimental group? Were the observers blind to what condition the couples or families were in? Were there hard measures as opposed to just customer satisfaction?”

Johnson: Was there any research at all?

Gottman: Was there any research at all? What was the basis of it? Exactly.

Johnson: Because this field, a lot of it has had no research at all.
Gottman: That’s our only hope for research for progress, I think, for people to actually do the research in which they work. We do this in our clinic; we talk about treatment failures. We say, “We’re all failing with the same kinds of cases. What’s going on with these people? How can we make our interventions better?” To honestly confront failure is the only way we are going to really move forward over time.

Johnson: Right, and that is against the culture of our area. Our area has been full of charismatic experts who stand up and say, “This is just the way it is. I don’t fail at all. I help everybody, all the time in everything. And all you have to do is be like me.” I think that takes us down the wrong path.

Gottman: I have another thing to say to young people. Beware of people who never say, “I don’t know.” People who think they have the answers for everything. People on television who are these supposed experts, like Dr. Phil, they . . .

Johnson: They make it up as they go.

Gottman: Yeah, they can never say, “I don’t know.” People ask me questions all the time, and I say, “I just don’t know the answer to that.” Two years ago people were asking me how I treat extramarital affairs. I said, “I don’t know. There hasn’t been one study on it.” Now John Balcom has done a study. Now Andy Christensen has done a study, and we have data. Sherly Glass has published her book, God rest her soul. And we know a lot more about extramarital affairs. But we know it through research. There are 13 books on how to treat extramarital affairs, but none of them are based on research. But now, in the last 2 years, we know that there is hope and that there is a way to do it. There is an approach. That there is a posttraumatic stress disorder that happens in the betrayed person in heterosexual relationships that needs to be treated. We know about walls and windows and reversing walls and windows, thanks to Shirley Glass. So be aware of people who say they know everything.

Young: Thanks. Thanks to both of you.

REFERENCES


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