

Glossary of Terms

Many of these words are used in very specific ways by the psychologists who have influenced me. This glossary provides a quick reference for the relatively simple way I'm using the terms in this book.

ambivalence—experiencing 'no' and 'yes' at the same time about something or someone.

anxiety—an underlying and pervasive sense of not being safe. The person may or may not know what is contributing to this uneasiness.

attunement—(1) noticing another person's body language, facial expressions, silence, tone of voice, pace of speaking and other blatant or subtle clues that give information about what's going on in their inner world, (2) learning what those clues mean and (3) responding with empathy.

autonomy—ability to exercise control over one's own self in keeping with one's own will; independence. (Erikson)

bids—verbal and non-verbal, direct and indirect, requests for some kind of response from another person. (Gottman)

care—extending oneself to provide for another person's needs, enhance their well-being, or enrich their life. (Erikson)

Challenge Love—actions that help another person develop the potentials of their true self by facilitating growth, accessing resources or overcoming obstacles.

cherish—to act in ways that clearly and directly demonstrate to another person that they have a place in your heart. These actions are especially meaningful and effective in moments when you are actually feeling tender-hearted towards that person.

coach (teach) —use your own knowledge and skills to actively help another person develop them.

cogwheeling—Erikson's term for the fact that the stages of one person's life interact with those of other people in different or the same stages. Like gears meshing together and causing wheels to turn, one person's need to develop certain inner resources hopefully activates the ego strengths in people around them and each contributes positively to the other. This often happens intergenerationally, but it can also happen between peers.

compassion— A feeling of kinship, often temporary, that can arise when we see someone else's

need. This sense of being connected can prompt Nurture Love or Challenge Love toward someone not previously experienced as part of one's self.

competence—the mastery of a skill or a body of knowledge. (Erikson)

confront respectfully—bring up an issue with someone in which you think, feel, perceive or desire differently from them and do it in a manner that communicates they are important to you and matter just as much as you or anyone else.

control talk—written, verbal or non-verbal communication in which the “speaker” intends to bring about compliance with what *they* want. (Millers)

counter-dependence—active efforts to not need someone else. This is often a self-protective over-reaction to having been shamed for needing appropriate help during the early years.

diligence-- (in place of Erikson's “industry”)-- working towards a goal with persistence.

encourage—convey to another person that you believe in them and their ability to endure or succeed.

enduring vulnerability—UCLA psychologist Tom Bradbury's term (popularized by Gottman) for the sensitivities a person brings to adulthood from difficult childhood experiences.

explicit memory system—one of two systems by which the brain encodes experiences via neurological pathways. This story-telling type of memory depends on the hippocampus and begins encoding experiences around age 3 in most children. The episodes we consciously remember tend to be ones that were repeated often or ones where there was a particularly strong emotional charge, either positive or negative, to set them apart from the mundane.

faith—(see hope)

false self—the idea that a child sometimes learns to excessively stifle their autonomy and initiative in order to gain acceptance, feel loved, or avoid punishment. When this happens, the child learns to become an actor and learns to show the world a façade.

fidelity —the ability to stick to values one has thought through and chosen as one's own. It includes the ability to stand by another person who shares your values and to whom you've made a commitment. (Erikson)

fight talk—Body language, tone of voice, facial expression or words which directly and aggressively tries to be in charge and often conveys “there's something wrong with you”. (Millers, Gottman)

flooding— When an experience arouses a person physiologically to the point where blood pressure, heart rate and stress chemicals are so elevated that they can no longer think straight. The ability to listen, concentrate, solve problems creatively, and empathize diminish and even disappear. (Gottman)

generativity— Adding another human being to the world through procreation or adding products or services to the world through the use of one's time, energy, and talents. (Erikson)

hatching—Mahler's term for the phase of child development (around the age of five months) when a baby's brain has matured to the point where they begin to actively process and organize the data coming to them through their five senses. A new degree of alertness is evident in the baby. I use the term to also refer to puberty as an emergence from childhood's relative cocoon as well as to the emergence of starry-eyed lovers out of their romantic cocoon.

hope— Positive anticipation about the future. It is the product of experiencing other people as trustworthy and the environment as predominantly safe and supportive. (Erikson)

identity (self)-- Children naturally and automatically take in and take on certain characteristics of the people who raise them. In addition they consciously model themselves after certain people as they grow up. Thus, the interpersonal environment as well as the physical hardships or opportunities of life circumstances greatly affect how the raw material of a person's genetic make-up takes shape. In adolescence and beyond, the person uses whatever ego resources they have accumulated to sort out how to interact on their own, apart from family, in their society/culture. In various writings, Erikson describes the sense of identity as a sense of well-being, of having sorted out for yourself the values you want to live by, of having a direction and a sense of purpose, of feeling at home with yourself. It's not as much about what you *do for a living* as it is about what kind of person you are.

implicit memory system- one of two systems by which the brain encodes experience via neurological patterns of cells firing. The brain has the ability to learn (remember) patterns without our conscious awareness it is doing so and without our understanding of *how* it happens. Implicit memory begins functioning during an infant's gestation *in utero* and is not dependent on the hippocampus so central later to forming retrievable episodic memories.

individuation — (see separation-individuation)

industry (see diligence)

initiative—pursuit of interests and goals that express one's individuality as a person separate

and different from one's attachment figures. (Note: This is decidedly different from the way Erikson talks about the third stage and its ego strength.)

integrity— When a person approaches the end of life, whether it is in old age or illness brings life to a premature end, they reflect on the life they have lived. They actively evaluate the choices they made, how they've handled the successes and disappointments along the way, and whether it seems to have had meaning and value. If they have developed a reasonable amount of the ego strengths and used them to be generative in the world around them, following values they freely chose to live by, they are likely to conclude that they had a pretty good life—that it held together pretty well. That's a sense of "integrity" about one's life.

interdependence—a comfort level with being independent in some regards, yet relying on other people to meet some of your needs.

intimacy—The experience of knowing and being known by another person. The willingness to actively *reveal* one's inner self to someone else is evidence of trust in the other person and trust in one's own ability to survive if that other person disappoints your hopes.

Matter Meter—A metaphorical image for a person's subjective experience of importance to another person or to people in general

mirror neuron system (MNS)—One of two emotion systems in the limbic brain. In the MNS, neurons in the viewer's brain mimic the same neurons firing in the brain of the person actually engaged in an action or experience. This is the basis of emotional empathy—feeling what the other person feels-- and female brains typically rely heavily on this system when connecting with other people.

mirroring—the idea that when a person looks into your face, they interpret your expression and the look in your eyes as indicators of your thoughts and feelings about them. How you respond to them provides them with information about themselves and their worth. I also use the concept for actively and intentionally giving a person feedback on how you experience them.

mutuality/mutual love—Erikson's description of a relationship in which each person is devoted to the other's well-being as much as to their own. Such devotion motivates each to subordinate their tendencies toward self-centeredness.

narcissism—In the best and most neutral sense of the word, it means natural and healthy self-regard based in recognition that you matter and have value. When self-love goes awry, a person can become excessively self-centered and experience other people primarily or only in light of their relevance to *them*.

negative sentiment override—Robert Weiss's term, shared by Gottman, for what happens

when person A experiences person B as repeatedly acting in ways perceived as negative, typically as selfish. When enough evidence has accumulated to tip the scales in this direction, this conclusion biases A to interpret B's actions and motives negatively even if B's behavior is neutral or even occasionally positive. The negativity absorbs anything positive. When NSO takes hold, many of A's memories of their history together may take on the negative tone and interpretation.

Nurture Love—actions that communicate to another person that you treasure them and meets their most basic human needs in a manner that conveys that same message.

oxytocin—a naturally occurring feel-good chemical in the human brain. It is regarded as “the bonding chemical” in mammals since it plays a major role in developing trust and attachment. Tender skin-to-skin contact and mutual gazing trigger it, making it a key player in courtship bonding as well as in parents bonding with their infants. In women, a lot of it is released by nursing her baby, intimate conversations with other women, intimate unstressful conversations with males, and with orgasm. In males, tender playful contact with their baby releases oxytocin in fathers and strengthens the emotional bond. Males get a surge of pleasurable oxytocin with orgasm and it typically acts as a sedative on them in that circumstance.

pinch message (or pinch)—The Millers' term for the often subtle yet unmistakable physiological reaction when our senses receive data we interpret in such a way that an issue suddenly exists. Life itself introduces pinches: you're late for work and see traffic backed up for an accident. *Pinch*. You walk into the house and smell smoke. *Pinch*. You taste the soup you've made and it's too salty. *Pinch*. The pinches relevant to love are interpersonal ones where one person says or does something unwelcome to the other person. When you don't get something you want (e.g. an expression of love on your anniversary, help with a task you're doing) or you do get something you *don't* want (e.g. a sarcastic remark, a demand that you do this or that) it causes a pinch, signaling an interpersonal issue has arisen for you.

plexiglas—the idea that certain experiences cause us to 'harden our hearts' toward another person or just toward the world in general. Children are born with soft hearts, an openness to a close and trusting relationship with someone who reliably meets their needs. Trust in someone trustworthy keeps a heart soft and reachable, the equivalent to being wrapped only in thin plastic wrap. In contrast, experiencing hurts of various kinds prompts a person to wrap extra layers of protection around their heart (vulnerable self), in order to reveal as little as possible about what's really going on inside. As this self-protection builds up, the person becomes more and more unreachable and untouchable where it really matters. At some point, it functions like a layer of Plexiglas: the person's exterior can be seen, but their interior world can't be touched.

pollinate—Bring to another person an insight into who they are as a person, information which

helps them recognize something new about themselves and potentially turn it into growth of some kind.

practicing—Mahler’s term for the older infant/early toddler’s enthusiastic use of emerging physical and mental abilities for exploring the environment and everything in it. The young child uses the nurturer for reassurance, but is relatively unconcerned about the caregiver’s involvement as try new things.

psychological birth—Mahler’s metaphor capturing her research observation that a secure attachment with a caregiver functions like a womb for a baby’s sense of self as the brain matures. She saw evidence that the seed of selfhood is still gestating during the first years of a child’s life within that attuned relationship and is only ready for healthy “delivery” around age three and a half to four. What was only a metaphor in the 1950’s has been borne out by research on the brain made possible in the 21st century by sophisticated equipment like functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI). An attuned and available nurturer is an essential resource for a baby to learn to regulate their physical and emotional arousal.

purpose—Erikson’s term for the ego strength of having a goal and being capable of pursuing it.

rapprochement— Mahler’s term for the emergence around fifteen months of a toddler’s increased concern about the whereabouts of their attachment figure and desire for that person to be very involved. This return of a need for closeness is coupled with a continuing need for freedom to exercise freedom of movement.

rapprochement crisis-- Mahler’s term for a particularly important and challenging phase of a child’s psychological journey of separating out of a secure attachment from an attuned caregiver. It intensifies around eighteen months and can last well into the third year as the child fluctuates between an intense desire for reunion and a fear of being engulfed by too tight a connection with the attachment figure. The caregiver’s ability to remain steady and available during this time of the child’s ambivalence helps the child continue to crystallize a core around which self-esteem can grow.

regrettable incidents—Gottman’s term for the things that go wrong in all relationships, times we step on each other’s toes or fail to empathize and take the other into account. These incidents can happen just because we’re two different people experiencing a situation differently. They’re more likely to happen when we are in a hurry or tired or have too many irons in the fire.

repairs—Gottman’s term for efforts to restore a relationship to a good footing (Erikson would say to mutuality) after you’ve been responsible for a regrettable incident (see above).

resilience—the ability to bounce back from life’s hard knocks.

search talk—conversation and questions that seek information about another person’s self-awareness concerning an issue. It uses open questions (who, what, where, when, how) concerning the other person’s data, thoughts, feelings, wants or actions.

self (see identity)

separation-individuation—Mahler’s term for the early childhood period from four/five months until thirty/thirty-six months during which a child who is (hopefully) securely attached to a nurturing person achieves a sense of being a separate person, yet still connected with that nurturing and protecting person as the reliable physical and emotional home base from which to continue developing a sense of selfhood. Ideally, the outer-world evidence of physical separateness is complimented by the timely development of internal experiences of ego strengths.

spite talk—The Millers’ term for a person’s communications (through words, facial expressions, tone of voice, body language, action or lack of action) that are resentful, cover hurt, and indirectly resist another person’s perceived effort to control them. The spite talk style is often a counterattack intended to cause a pinch in the recipient.

softened startup --Gottman’s term for a non-accusatory manner of bringing up a topic you want to discuss.

straight talk—respectful communication that reveals information about your own self-awareness concerning an issue : the data you’re reacting to, your thoughts and feelings about it, your wants regarding the situation, actions you’re taken or are considering. The intent is to connect in a positive way and collaborate. (Millers)

support-- words and actions that help someone accomplish something they’ve set out to do. ()

sustain— words and actions that help a person to survive and endure, both physically and emotionally.

teach --see coach

temporal parietal junction (TPJ)—one of two emotion processing systems in the human brain. Brizendine calls this the “analyze and fix it” part of the human brain, seat of cognitive empathy, and male brains tend to use it more than the mirror neuron system. The TPJ keeps a boundary between one’s own and the other person’s emotions, preserving more freedom for analytical thinking.

treasuring —valuing another person so much that you experience them as a part of yourself. Treasuring inevitably begins in tender-heartedness and elevates the importance to you of the other’s well-being. Over time, the experience of physical tenderness itself may

come and go, but acts of devotion give evidence of continuing to experience this expanded self and acts of cherishing are direct interpersonal expressions of it.

trust (basic trust)—Erikson's term for a baby's confident expectation (based on experience) that the caregiver will meet their needs.

turning against—Gottman's term for an obviously negative response to another person's bid for connection of some kind.

turning away—Gottman's term for ignoring another person's bid for connection of some kind.

turning toward—Gottman's term for a positive response to another person's bid for connection of some kind. It can range from minimal acknowledgment to active engagement.

Will – the inner resource of being able to exercise free choice and also self-restraint. (Erikson)

wisdom—the accumulation of knowledge and mature judgment about the issues that really matter in life. It's an ability to see human problems and challenges as part of a larger picture than just the self. (Erikson)