

Ambivalence Of The Self: The Determinant Of Deteriorating Married Relationships

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DOI: 10.47750/pnr.2022.13.509.995

Abstract

Ambivalence is a type of psychological imbalance in every human mind that causes deterioration of married relationships in fictional as well as in our real life. The term ambivalence is originally a psychological term, taken from the German word *Ambivalenz*, propounded in 1910 by the Swiss psychologist Eugen Bleuler. The term Self-ambivalence was first used by Guidano and Liotti in 1983 to introduce a concept which elaborates that an individual may not have the stable and concrete sense of himself. Literally, ambivalence is a condition of uncertainty having synchronous clashing responses, convictions, or sentiments towards a few articles. In this research, ambivalence represents a multidimensional model of cognitive, affective, behavioural and social conflicts found in inter-personal relationships. It is human tendency to split their experience into polarities, such as good/bad or right/wrong and emotions such as affection/antipathy, happiness/sorrow etc. This paper investigates the principle factors responsible for ambivalent attitude causing a married relationship breakdown from the psychoanalytical perspective of Abraham Maslow and Scott Barry Kaufman. It can be said that people usually deal with the opposites of their experience even in the state of unconsciousness. Each partner will develop behaviours around this conflict trying to pull their partner closer, or push them away. Each partner is communicating a specific role in the contention over being in the relationship or out of it, however basically the two partners are making the ambivalent strain between them by being identified with one end of the polarity.

This paper also highlights on finding the ways to move beyond the ambivalence so as to develop friendly relationships husband and wife for a longer time. This research concludes that ambivalent psychology of an individual that makes him/her to get separated from his/her life partner.

Keywords: Ambivalence, relationship, married, conflict, self, psychoanalytical.

Introduction

Intimate long-lasting relation of husband-wife is the key factor for propelling the human race and civilisation, but in recent times, the alarming divorce rate throughout the world has propelled everyone to take this concern seriously and find the root causes of such deteriorating relationship and also to look for the immediate solutions. A healthy relationship is also the key factor of happiness in one's life. Many divorces reach to court for legal resolution, however many remains uncounted which doesn't reach to court and resolved mutually. Such divorces are not recorded in any of the research. The number of divorces granted in the UK in 1961 was 27,000. This doubled to 56,000 by 1969 and doubled to 125,000 divorces by 1972. The number in 2002 was 160,000. In America, every 13 seconds there is one divorce that is equal to 277 divorces per hour, 6,646 divorces per day, 46,523 divorces per week and 2,419,196 divorces per year. Every country is suffering of this relationship crisis. The deteriorating relationship of husband-wife day-by-day is a serious matter of concern to investigate its paramount causes through the psychoanalytical perspective and look for modulations for sustaining such relationships long-lasting.

Though men and women are part of the same species, they are not the same in everything. There are similarities between men and women, but there are differences as well. The insights provided by John Gray in *Men, Women and Relationships: Making Peace with the Opposite Sex* seems to be useful in understanding the nature of both man and woman, "Men generally assume that once a woman is fulfilled, she should stay that way. Once he has proven his love, she should know it forever, . . . From the male point of view, this attitude makes perfect sense. Women find this attitude hard to accept. It is just plain inconsistent with their internal reality" (214). Gray further emphasised that, "A woman needs to be reassured that she is special, worthy, understandable, and lovable. Men also need to be reassured, but they get that encouragement mainly through their work. Women, however, primarily need assurance through their relationships" (214). In the relationship between man and women; love, faith, and mutual understanding are the basic pillars. The problem arises among these relationships when these pillars are shaken. Though the man-woman relationship in the modern context has undergone a great change, there is a great barrier between these two genders. Concentrating on sexual orientation that makes one to perceive how social standards concerning male and female roles influence the elements of association within both the sexes, and how it does affect the man-woman relationship. By doling out differential jobs to both genders, sexual orientation standards compel the two sexes yet in various ways, making clashing desires and practices in them. Compared to a man, a woman suffers more as the former is in the status of dominating and consequently, the latter is suppressed.

In interpersonal relationships, ambivalence arises where there is a coexistence of conflicting feelings and desires for the other person, creating an ambiguity about being in the relationship. It is our instinct to separate our experience into polarities, such as love / hate, joy / sadness, good / bad or right / wrong, and feelings. We might argue that, even though it is unconscious, we are constantly dealing with the opposite of our reality. When we get closer to our loved ones and feel bound to them, the likelihood of separation shapes our experience. There is a "no" in the context reminding our decision any time we say "yes".

If I wholeheartedly say "yes" to something, I can sense the yes in every cell of my being. No, "albeit fleetingly, has been considered and dismissed, and my" yeah "has the consistency of certainty." If my urge to say "no" interferes with my "yes," it will be said with reluctance and uncertainty, and a residual awkward feeling that forces me to hold back; I will not completely agree to the "yes." Because not only does my perception describe the opposite polarity, but my experience will also be affected by the degree to which I have absorbed it into my consciousness. When we are caught in two polarities, and unable to balance them, ambivalence may be assumed to exist.

Ambivalence and Conflict

At times, both partnerships involve conflicting desires; this is the existence of conflict. How spouses deal with tension between them can influence the degree to which both ends of the polarity are conscious or concealed. In addition, the capacity to settle conflict will also be measured by how often each person agrees with one end of the polarity. For starters, if I associate with being kind and cannot accept the fact that I can be unkind, my psyche's unkind elements can become unconscious and sap energy from my desire to be kind. In my acts of goodwill, and in all probability, project 'unkindness' on my partner, I will not be completely present or sincere. We cannot be completely present by being rigidly associated with one end of a polarity and blocking consciousness of the intolerable component. If both individuals in a relationship are identifying their nature in this way, then what they create between them will also be an inability to tolerate certain experiences and make resolving conflict difficult.

A Chronic Pattern of Ambivalence

If the essence of ambivalence is the inability to resolve an internal conflict that leads to a lack of presence, confusion is a common way of expressing it. In all partnerships, ambivalence and uncertainty can be transient states, as we take time to address conflicting or new evidence. However, uncertainty may become a defensive posture that prevents one from being completely present, as ambivalence becomes a chronic reaction to the environment. Our feeling of helplessness is reinforced by habitually voicing uncertainty over what we want or need. "I don't know" doesn't give us a sense of mastery of our world, nor does it give anything for our partner to go on with. This helplessness is compounded by the reluctance of either spouse

to step on in the partnership, either to leave or to move closer. By inhibiting deeper interaction, this recurrent trend becomes a concern in marriages.

In partnerships where one partner is identified as uncommitted and the other as wanting commitment, a persistent trend of ambivalence usually creates a dynamic. In an effort to draw their partner together, or drive them apart, each partner may establish patterns around this tension. Every partner expresses a clear role in the disagreement of being in or out of the relationship, but by being associated with one end of the polarity, all spouses ultimately establish an ambivalent dynamic between them. In other words, if we were to simplify this to a clear yes and no, "yes, I want more with you" and "no, I don't want more with you" would be the two ends of a polarity. Partners are defined as either yes or no, and a stalemate is formed between them. From this, we can conclude that both parties have not overcome their own internal ambivalence, so none of them can devote themselves to being in or out of the relationship, and neither of them is completely involved with the other in this dynamic. The other would always show more enthusiasm for the relationship as one pulls on, and the 'certainty' displayed by the dedicated partner is a desire to hold on in response to the larger pulling away from the other.

Ambivalence occurs in a state of anxiety that may develop because of one partner's indifference with other; like differences in choice of food, ill-habits of the partner, ill-behaviours of the partner, extra-marital affairs of the partner. Heshmati, Sarideh and others gave an example in their article entitled "What does it mean to feel loved: Cultural consensus and individual differences in felt love," as:

Consider the following situation: Your partner tells you how much he/she cares about you and forms a habit of texting or calling you frequently during the day, asking where you are and what you are doing. This makes you feel warm and loved inside. However, another person might conceivably experience the same behaviors from their significant other but might not experience felt love but rather feel controlled, even violated. (215)

The gradual increase of anxiety finally becomes an anxiety disorder, what Psychologist Karen Horney called neurosis. Horney, in her book *Self-Analysis*, has given ten neurotic needs that act as driving forces in neurosis. They are:

- (i) The neurotic need for affection and approval
- (ii) The neurotic need for a partner who will take over one's life
- (iii) The neurotic need to restrict one's life within narrow borders
- (iv) The neurotic need for power
 - (a) The neurotic need to control self and others through reason and foresight.
- (v) The neurotic need to believe in the omnipotence of will. The neurotic need to exploit others and by hook or crook get the better of them.
- (vi) The neurotic need for social recognition or prestige
- (vii) The neurotic need for personal admiration
- (viii) The neurotic ambition for personal achievement
- (ix) The neurotic need for self-sufficiency and independence
- (x) The neurotic need for perfection and unassailability. (*Self-Analysis*, Ch. 2)

Although these needs is relevant to every human being but when a partner in a married relationship, is developed with anxiety disorder, s/he becomes obsessive towards these needs. S/he becomes stubborn towards fulfilling these needs. The problems becomes pathetic when s/he becomes ambivalent when s/he feels simultaneous conflicting neurotic needs that puzzles him/her to decide the priority of needs. For example, when the neurotic need for self-sufficiency and independence and neurotic need for power are developed simultaneously, s/he is unable to decide which needs to be fulfilled first. This ambivalent individual develops the tendency to control his/her emotions and responds to his/her partner awkwardly culminating into distrust and unreliability in relationship. Nathalie Meuwly and Joanne Davia in their article "Feeling bad when your partner is away: The role of dysfunctional cognition and affect regulation strategies in insecurely attached individuals", maintain that, "Highly anxious individuals were found to think more negatively about their romantic relationship while imagining a potential relationship threat, which in turn increased their negative affect and negative ratings of the self and their relationship" (22).

Since ambivalence pushes the individual and the partnership in separate directions, there is an environment of confusion and unpredictability that causes instability within the couples. There will be an

atmosphere of imminent doom and the relationship's breakup. At many occasions, couples also split up or attempt to break up. The relationship takes on the qualities of an emotional roller coaster as time goes on, where they alternate between becoming confident and breaking up. It can be very difficult for all spouses, within this setting, to be themselves and to be available to each other. Something that either of them feels could lead the relationship to end will be rejected or maintained when faced with the likelihood that it could end at any moment. This causes isolation, as each partner withholds facets of himself or herself from the other, and thereby raises uncertainty about the prospect of separation. This is becoming a vicious cycle.

The partner who demonstrates involvement usually feels hurt and excluded by the other. In the expectation of raising the willingness of the other person to continue, the perception that they are not good enough for the other to completely commit to them causes a reflex of wanting to satisfy. The spouse who brings more confusion also feels bad that they are unable to give more, and finds it more difficult to communicate their true emotions. Trying to predict how the other will react, and holding back emotions, feelings, or wishes if they fear their partner will respond poorly to them, they begin to dance around each other. In this way, the partnership is increasingly unethical.

Both partners are in a partnership that is not the way they want it to be, so they can't abandon any of them. This is ambivalence's essence. The preoccupation with separation is the root of the anxiety on which the relationship rests, either needing further separation or being fearful of separation from the other. This problem means that in the partnership, each person does not rest; it is not a place of refuge and protection but a place of deprivation. It is short-lived, but there could be moments when both partners may have fun and feel linked, since both partners have an inherent dissatisfaction that is not overcome. This inherent fear and deprivation takes up a lot of time and resources to cope with.

In the words of Abraham Maslow, five categories of human needs dictates an individual's behaviour, viz. physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, esteem and finally the self-actualization needs. The partners are sometimes in the state of ambivalence because they are unable to decide what are exactly their physiological needs. Sometimes an individual becomes confused because s/he regards sexuality as one of the physiological needs and they try to satisfy the third need mentioned by Maslow i.e. love and belonging needs as physiological need. When sex becomes the physiological need of a partner he remains failed to reach to the third need of love in the hierarchy of needs given by Maslow. Maslow said that, "A person can only move on to addressing the higher-level needs when their basic needs are adequately fulfilled" (Motivation and Personality). Scott Barry Kaufman, 21st century American psychologist, has invented self-actualization of the 21st century through ground breaking work *Transcend: The New Science of Self-Actualization*. Kaufman's new hierarchy need of 21st century provides a yardstick for identifying the purpose and fulfilment in life- not by striving for money, safety, success or happiness but by becoming the best version of ourselves. So according to Kaufman maintaining of every relationship must have a purpose and a goal which can lead the partners for transcendence.

Moving Beyond Ambivalence

Resolving internal contradictions that keep you from taking action, making decisions, communicating how you feel, and being truly present will be the solution to dealing in a persistent cycle of ambivalence. Relation, relationship, and separation issues are always at the centre of an ambivalent stance. To be truly here is to recognise life's fragility and imperfections, to "go with it" amid the likelihood that in the next moment it could be gone.

We have to understand love; We must be able to teach it, to create it, to predict it, or else we have lost the universe to mistrust and hatred. Abraham Maslow, in his *Motivation and Personality* (1954) said "Love is the only sane and satisfactory answer to the problem of human existence". Humans need not only to belong and interact, but they also need to feel as if they are making a positive effect on other people's lives. A big road to a life of greater well-being, vitality, purpose, and development as a whole is to contain the chances to give love to someone with whom we do not yet have direct communication with or feel a personal bond, irrespective of a way to become more relaxed. Shirley Anne Cameron mentions the views of Claire Nuer, a Holocaust, survivor of terminal cancer, and personal mastery visionary survivor; in her project *Narrative Writing for Adolescent Development* as, "The only way to create love, safety, and acceptance is by giving them." Here is a paradox: if belonging and connection are really requirements of security, then those engaged in high-quality relationships should be love-gratified, no longer have love in their lives, be love-satisfied, no more love should be inspired to feel or express. Maslow observed that while love is discussed in scholarly papers and textbooks, the subject often

focuses on love as a shortcoming: “The love needs as ordinarily studied . . . is a deficit need. It is a hole which has to be filled, an emptiness into which love is poured. . . . Intermediate states of pathology and health follow upon intermediate states of thwarting or satiation.” He acknowledged, though, that we are more inclined to turn our love outward after a certain point of love fulfilment. “needing love” was clearly separated from “unneeding love” by Maslow and referred to the “needing love” as D-love (love of deficiency) and the “unneeding love” as B-love (“love of another person's being”). While, as Maslow noted, D-love can be gratified, the entire concept of pleasure hardly applies to B-love. There is no need to receive love from those who love from a B-love role, except in “steady, small maintenance doses and they may even do without these for periods of time.” Instead of lust, B-love admires, and B-love typically expands rather than disappears instead of seeking fulfilment. As a consequence, since it is naturally desirable, B-love is generally a more satisfying experience (not necessary as a way to any other end). Instead of lust, B-love admires, and B-love typically expands rather than disappears instead of seeking fulfilment. As a consequence, since it is naturally desirable, B-love is generally a more satisfying experience (not necessary as a way to any other end). Wrote Maslow: “B-love is, beyond the shadow of a doubt, a richer, ‘higher,’ more valuable and subjective experience than D-love (which all B-lovers have also previously experienced).” The notion of B-love is analogous to Buddhist meditation teacher Sharon Salzberg's notion of “true love,” which she describes as the inherent potential we each have to love — in daily life. According to Salzberg, love is a gift freely offered, and we all have deep pools of love inside us that we can reach into at any time to deliver even more love in our lives. Erich Fromm, similarly, asserts that “mature love is an aggressive process, not a passive one; an attitude, not a feeling”, in his book *The Art of Loving*. He further adds “The beauty of seeing love as a mentality, or an orientation towards another, is that before behaving lovingly towards them, You don't have to wait until you have a “positive resonance” with another user. This is why I think it is important to separate B-love from the need for attachment. (Chapter 2). When a person matures and the wishes of another become as significant as the needs of one's self, a person gradually shifts the concept of love from “being loved” to “love,” from a state of dependency in which one is rewarded for being loved to a romantic orientation in which the world as a whole can be loved. Fromm writes, “Infantile love follows the principle: ‘I love because I am loved.’ Mature love follows the principle ‘I am loved because I love.’ Immature love says, ‘I love you because I need you.’ Contrast to it mature love says, ‘I need you because I love you.’” A mature framing of love as “need-free love” has exceptional consequences for the wellbeing and development of an individual, as the existential psychotherapist Irvin Yalom observes. People frequently complain of depression in psychotherapy, which they often attribute to being “unloved” and “unlovable.” Yet Yalom states that in the opposite realm, the most effective emotional growth is often done: one's failure to be loving. As Yalom points out, “Love is a mindset rather than a real experience.” More often than not, the problem of not being loved is a problem of not caring.

The secret ego self may be our strongest tool, but it may also be the deadliest enemy of ours. In the one side, in order to accomplish our goals, the inherent human capacity for self-awareness, self-reflection, and self-control is necessary. The self, on the other hand, has an everlasting need to be viewed in a favourable way. In order to disavow blame for any bad result associated with it, the self would do something. In order to see the self in a clearer light as the “ego,” the defensive strategies can be collectively summarised. In the contemporary time, a research programme for “quiet selves” based on the concepts of Buddhist philosophy and humanistic psychology has been developed by social psychologist Heidi Wayment and her colleagues and funded by e-philosophy. “a self-zoo of self-defence mechanisms. In order to see the self in a stronger light as the “ego,” it is easy to collectively sum up the defensive strategies. In recent years, a “quiet self” research programme focused on Buddhist theory and principles of humanistic psychology and supported by observational research in the field of positive psychology has been developed by cognitive psychologist Heidi Wayment and her colleagues. Based on self-awareness, interdependent personality and caring experience, the quiet-ego approach focuses on minimising the needs of oneself and others and encouraging, over time, the growth of oneself and others. Paradoxically, it turns out that in promoting well-being, growth, wellbeing, competitiveness, and a healthy self-esteem, quieting the ego is so much more successful than concentrating solely on self-enhancement. B-loving people are much more likely to represent the following four highly interconnected aspects of the silent ego that both of us can build in ourselves:

Conclusion

The process of being a whole human being is a continual journey of exploration, transparency, and confidence, through which we achieve greater and higher degrees of equilibrium and reconciliation between ourself and the outside world, helping us to become who we really want and becoming more flexible and stable. As we are in a state of transition at all times, we are still in a state of being. There are some basic values that will act as a safe framework for our own personal path to becoming a whole person. : accept our whole self, not just our best self, learn to trust ourself, become aware of our inner conflicts, look out for lopsided development, create the best version of ourself, strive for growth, not happiness and finally harness the power of our dark side. These magical elements have the ability to keep ourselves away from ambivalence and we can splendidly maintain some healthier relationships in our life.

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