

Thank you for joining me for my workshop at the **Psychotherapy Networker Couples Conference 2023**. Here are additional resources to support your clinical work.

What's Included Here...

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Dr. Alexandra H. Solomon

teacher. therapist. author.

Additional Resources

New Book Published by PESI (10.10.23)	<p><i>Love Every Day: 365 Relational Self-Awareness Practices to Help Your Relationship Heal, Grow and Thrive:</i> www.loveeverydaybook.com</p> <p>Order by 10.6.23 and sign up for the pre-order campaign. Receive a free journal and digital readers guide.</p>
E-Course for clinicians	<p>Loving Bravely: Helping Clients Who are Single, Dating, and Single Again</p>
E-Courses for a general audience	<p><i>Intimate Relationships 101: Building Relational and Sexual Self-Awareness</i> <i>Can I Trust You Again? Rebuilding After Betrayal or Deceit</i></p> <p>www.courses.dralexandrasolomon.com 20% discount with code: COUPLECON2023</p>
Weekly Podcast	<p><i>Reimagining Love</i></p> <p>Listen on all major platforms or at www.reimagininglove.com</p>
Join my weekly newsletter	<p>Be the first to know about events and offerings</p> <p>dralexandrasolomon.com/subscribe/</p>
Take the Family of Origin Role Quiz	<p>https://www.dralexandrasolomon.com/rolesquiz</p>

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Additional reading:

Impact of systemic factors on work stress and relationship stress

Chambers, A. (2023). The legacy of racism on Black couples. [Keynote for Ackerman Institute.](#)

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Dr. Alexandra H. Solomon

teacher. therapist. author.

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Martin, W. (2019). *Untrue: Why Nearly Everything We Believe About Women, Lust, and Infidelity Is Wrong and How the New Science Can Set Us Free*. Little, Brown Spark.

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O'Brien, KR, McAbee, S.T., Hebl, M.R., Rodgers, J.R.. (2016). The Impact of Interpersonal Discrimination and Stress on Health and Performance for Early Career STEM Academicians. *Sec. Organizational Psychology*, vol 7

Schramm, D.G., William Harris, V. Marital Quality and Income: An Examination of the Influence of Government Assistance. *J Fam Econ Iss* 32, 437-448 (2011). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10834-010-9212-5>

Trail TE, Goff PA, Bradbury TN, Karney BR. (2012). The costs of racism for marriage: how racial discrimination hurts, and ethnic identity protects, newlywed marriages among Latinos. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 38(4):454-65. doi: 10.1177/0146167211429450.

Wilcox, B., Wang, W. (2017). The Marriage Divide: How and Why Working-Class Families Are More Fragile Today. Retrieved from: <https://ifstudies.org/blog/the-marriage-divide-how-and-why-working-class-families-are-more-fragile-today>

Yarbrough, M., Jones, A., DePhillips, J. (Eds). (2018) *Queer Families and Relationships After Marriage Equality 1st Edition*. Routledge.

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Gathering a Couple's Career Stories

In order to create a case formulation and treatment plan for your couple, you need to understand their individual and relational histories around work/career. Use these questions to guide your assessment.

Ask each partner the following questions

- **Academic history**
 - Tell me about your trajectory (grades completed, graduation, major)?
 - What was school like for you?
 - How were you as a student?
- **Work history**
 - Tell me a bit about your work history (jobs you've had, how long).
 - What are the stories of your job changes (choice vs necessity, what were you moving away from or moving toward)?
- **Present day**
 - How many hours are you working?
 - How much control do you have over your schedule?
 - What is the quality of your relationships with boss(es), employee(s), colleague(s)?
 - In what ways does your work "come home" with you?

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teacher. therapist. author.

- **Questions to determine if it's a job, a career, or a calling** (from Wilding, 2018)
 - What is the most meaningful part of your job?
 - Do you end your work day feeling emotionally satisfied?
 - Would you be in this position if you didn't need the paycheck?
 - Do you want to rise to the top of your chosen career path or are you happy where you are?
- **FOO Legacy**
 - How much, and in what ways, was your family involved in your education and career planning?
 - How much freedom versus direction did they provide?
 - How much support versus criticism have you felt from them?
 - In what ways is your path similar to the path of your attachment figure(s)?
 - In what ways is your path different from the path of your attachment figure(s)?
 - How did their educational and career journeys inform yours? What were you trying to replicate? What were you trying to transcend?

Ask Partners

- As your partner was sharing their history, did you learn anything new? What?
- What did you feel or notice inside of you when they were telling their story?
- What do you think is most important for me to understand about your partner's history and current career? Why?
- What are the differences between your Families of Origin regarding money / socioeconomic status?

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Dr. Alexandra H. Solomon

teacher. therapist. author.

- What are the differences between your Families of Origin regarding education?
- What are the differences between your Families of Origin regarding jobs/careers?
- What is the impact of those differences on your relationship with each other?
- What is each of your work orientations (job vs career vs calling)?

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Is Work Stress Taking a Toll on Your Relationship? [Reimagining Love Episode #55](#)

Relational Self-Awareness Question to Help You Understand Your Work Stress

1. How did the Big People in your family talk about money?
2. How did the Big People talk about people with more money?
3. How did the Big People talk about people with less money?
4. What role did you play in your Family of Origin (listen to [Episode 50](#) for more on this) (The Perfect One, The Easy One, The Struggling One, The Peacemaker, The Helper, or the Rebel)
5. What role do you tend to play at your workplace?
6. What is the relationship between the role you played in your Family of Origin when you were growing up and the role you place today at work? Does your role at work seem to be the same as your role in your Family of Origin? Does it seem to be the opposite?
7. How do you feel as you connect these dots between family dynamics and work dynamics?
8. What might you need to ask for at work that you haven't asked for yet?
9. Complete these sentence stems:
 - What I want my boss to understand about me is...
 - My main frustration with my coworkers is...
 - I get so frustrated at the people who report to me because...

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teacher. therapist. author.

10. Look at your responses to Question #8.

- What is the parallel between your feelings about your boss and how you felt in your relationship with your attachment figures when you were little?
- What is the parallel between how you feel about your coworkers and how you felt in your relationship with your siblings (or cousins or peers) when you were little?
- What does your frustration with your employees/mentees highlight to you about how you feel about people needing you or looking to you? How does that connect to your past?

Strategies

For the Stressed out Partner

1. **Make sure you complete the Stress Cycle.** Check out these [body-based practices](#) from Dr. Emily Nagoski and her sister, Amelia Nagoski.
2. **Get real about your self-care.** How are you doing in terms of movement, nutrition, sleep hygiene, and substance use?
3. **Know what calm feels like so you know what stressed out feels like.**
4. **Be careful of the cards you pull.** Your relationship is going to be stronger if you both have the mindset that: work is work.
5. **Transition from work to home.** Be intentional with that transitional time.

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For the One with the Stressed out Partner

1. If your partner becomes withdrawn, tend to yourself and speak to the distance.

- Extend self-compassion about your hurt feelings.
- Pivot and occupy yourself.
- Address it with your partner at a later time.

2. If your partner needs/wants a lot of emotional processing, be honest about your capacity.

- Although you are a very important resource for your partner (for validation, for processing, for troubleshooting), you are not perfect and your patience is not limitless.
- If you are too maxed out or depleted, you can be truthful and tactful.

3. If your partner becomes irritable, take space.

- Being stressed out does not give someone license to say whatever they want under the guise of being stressed.
- Resist the urge to retaliate or escalate.
- At a separate time, do some problem-solving for how to handle that sequence differently in the future.

4. Explore what their stress triggers inside of you:

- What does your partner's withdrawn or needy or irritable behavior remind you of from your past?
- Making this connection between past and present can help you understand your sensitivity and gives you and your partner the chance to tend to Little You.

Relational Self-Awareness Discussion Questions for You and Your Partner

1. What is that blend of survival and self-expression for you in your relationship to your job? How much overlap is there between those two circles?
2. Tell me something about your work history that I don't already know.
3. What was your first job? What do you remember about it?
4. What do you enjoy about your job? Why?
5. When do you feel most confident and relaxed at work? Why?
6. What do you dislike most about your job? Why?
7. What is your dream job? Why?
8. When do you feel least supported by me with respect to your job? Why?
9. When do you feel most supported by me with respect to your job? Why?

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Tending to “Little You” & Exploring Your Family of Origin (FOO)

[Reimagining Love Episode #50](#)

Your **Original Love Classroom** is the family system that you grew up in, your Family of Origin (FOO). Your Original Love Classroom is where you first witnessed and experienced love, modeled by the people who raised you. As a child, you consciously and subconsciously took note of the behaviors and emotions of the big people around you. In this way, you received messages growing up (some healthy and helpful, others unhealthy and unhelpful) that impact the way you understand and interact with love, and the people you love, today.

Your experiences in your Original Love Classroom become your **Love Template**. Your Love Template lives inside of you as a particular set of expectations, hopes, fears, longings, beliefs that you bring into your intimate relationship based on your early experiences. Your Love Template develops as a blend of two things: (1) Observations you made and (2) experiences you had.

Observations you made include:

- How the Big People talked to each other.
- Differences we saw between how girls were treated and how boys were treated.
- How big emotions were handled.
- How differences of opinion were handled.
- How the Big People touched, or didn't touch, each other.
- Who was allowed to ask for what in what circumstances. Who was not allowed to ask.

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Experiences you had include:

- What you were allowed to ask for... and not allowed to ask for.
- Which feelings of yours were tolerated, celebrated, shut down.
- What you were praised for.
- What you were punished for.
- How you were touched, in what contexts, and how.
- Who you were told you had to be based on your sex and gender.
- Who you were told you could not be or should not be based on your sex and gender.

Family Roles

If you grew up in a family system that was struggling, you were likely cast into a role that was intended to help your family create homeostasis (stability) but which also created limitations on your ability to identify and express your full self. Here's a table that explores some **common roles** that Little People play in their Families of Origin along with the **function** of that role, the **gifts** you may have developed as a result of playing that role, and the challenges or **Growing Edges** that you may have as a result of playing that role. Remember that you can learn much more about all of this in the podcast episode. **(see table on next page).**

You can also take the quiz at dralexandrasolomon.com/rolesquiz to learn more about the role you played in your FOO.

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teacher. therapist. author.

Role	Function	Gift	Challenge / Growing Edge
The Perfect One	Prove that the family is OK	Performance, competence	Expects a lot from others
The Easy One	Reduce stress on Big People	Flexibility, adaptability, independence	Difficulty being vulnerable or asking for help
The Struggling One	Organize the family around a common goal	Self-Advocacy, resilience	Dependent on others, difficulty standing up for oneself
The Peacemaker	Create family unity	Compassion, protection, collaboration	Suppressed anger, difficulty identifying own emotions
The Helper / Confidant / Parentified Child	Empathize with the challenges facing the Big People	Empathy, patience, gentleness	Difficulty with boundaries, needing to be needed
The Rebel	Say what nobody else say, do what nobody else will do	Courage, justice, leadership	Hypervigilance, difficulty connecting because of the need to be different.

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Relational Self-Awareness Questions Related to Family Roles

1. Which role do you most identify with? Why?
2. What is an experience that you recently had that reflects that you are still at risk of playing your Family Role even today? This could be an experience at work, with friends, or with your intimate partner.
3. What is an experience that you recently had that reflects that you have put that original Family Role “into retirement”? In other words, you did not rescue someone even though you grew up as The Helper, or you spoke up for what you needed even though you grew up as The Easy One.
4. If you are in an intimate relationship, what do you want your partner to understand about your Family Role?
5. If you are in an intimate relationship, what could your partner do to help you reduce your risk of falling into your Family Role?