

ENMESHMENT REVISITED!

Don't smother each other. No one can grow in the shade....John Bradshaw

WHAT TO KNOW!

- ❖ The concept of enmeshment was introduced by Salvador Minuchin to describe relationships where individuals have no personal boundaries or sense of autonomy
- ❖ Enmeshed individuals do not know where they begin or where they end
- ❖ Enmeshment will result in overinvolvement in each other's lives so that people will not become independent and responsible for themselves
- ❖ Enmeshed individuals depend on each other to make them feel good, whole, and safe
- ❖ Enmeshment is not true love but the loss of identity, freedom, and self worth
- ❖ Typical descriptions of enmeshed people include: "joined at the hip", "momma's boy", "they finish each other's sentences", and "they can't live without each other"
- ❖ "You complete me" or "I can't go on without you" are common enmeshment sayings
- ❖ Enmeshed behaviors include: smothering a person with too much caring and attention, talking for others, telling others what to think and how to feel, and rescuing another person and solving their problems
- ❖ Enmeshment often comes from family patterns that are passed down, from a genuine need to protect which becomes a pattern, or reacting to growing up in a cold, disengaged family
- ❖ Enmeshed people look to their partner to fix them, to solve their problems, and to make them happy
- ❖ Enmeshed people will often text or call their partner many times a day and need to know where they are at all times and who they are with
- ❖ In enmeshed families, everyone knows everyone else's business and triangulation among family members often occurs
- ❖ As in codependence, in enmeshed relationships, there is a great fear of abandonment as that would be similar to losing part of oneself or one's identity
- ❖ Although they may look similar, enmeshed families are different from healthy families where children are respected and have a clear sense of their own identity
- ❖ In enmeshed families, boundaries are completely blurred between parents and children so that the children become extensions of the parents and the parents make up for the disappointments in their own lives through their children
- ❖ Enmeshed parents try to be friends with their children or hover over them to rescue and protect them but actually deny them the opportunity to develop their own strengths
- ❖ Enmeshment can lead to shame which often leads to depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, addictions, gambling, and violent behaviors within the family

WHAT TO DO!

- ❖ Recognize that you may be in an enmeshed relationship if you don't have a sense of your own identity, your thoughts/ feelings depend upon others, you are frequently rescuing others, and you need to ask permission to make your own decisions
- ❖ Take responsibility for yourself and give yourself permission to establish your own identity and let others do the same for themselves
- ❖ Start setting boundaries by deciding how you feel and what you want to do
- ❖ Develop your own identity by making alone time, finding your own friends, pursuing activities independently, and refraining from rescuing others
- ❖ Seek professional help with a therapist to learn to set appropriate boundaries, develop your own sense of identity, and increase your self-esteem

WE CAN HELP!

Call us at **954 755-2885** or email us at [**DrKimmel@KimmelPsychology.com**](mailto:DrKimmel@KimmelPsychology.com)

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