The Diamond Model:
For Assessment, Treatment, and Prevention of Depression and Other Emotional Disorders

Triggers:
- Grief
- Conflict
- Transition
- Lack of Interpersonal Skills

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- Abuse
- Loss
- Disappointment
The Diamond Model:
Identifying and Stopping “The Distress Cycle”

The Diamond is a comprehensive way of looking at depression and other emotional disorders. It first identifies triggers and contributors to emotional distress; then identifies practical solutions to resolve each of these factors, and to prevent further episodes of such distress. The Diamond is useful, then, for three basic functions in intervening with problem emotions:

1) Assessment (Identifying the blend of factors creating and maintaining the distress)
2) Treatment (Guiding recovery and rehabilitation of each of these factors)
3) Prevention (Preventing future episodes of emotional distress by attention to these factors)

The points of the Diamond represent the four factors that create and maintain the distress cycle:

1) Relationships – Emotional distress tends to be triggered by one or more situations in the individual’s life – most often in the context of relationships. Such relationship triggers may include:
   - Grief – Losing a significant other, through death, divorce, separation, disability, etc.
   - Conflict – Either with a significant other (most often one’s spouse), or within oneself.
   - Transition – Even positive changes (graduation, retirement, etc.) can trigger distress.
   - Lack of Interpersonal Skills – Interferes, over and over, with effective relationships.
   - Abuse – Sexual, physical, verbal, or emotional – all very potent triggers for distress.
   - Loss – Losing something you valued – an opportunity, a treasured possession, etc.
   - Disappointment – Reality falling short of cherished hopes and expectations.

2) Thoughts – How a person interprets the trigger experience/s determines how long and in what way it will affect them. Negative thoughts and beliefs about the experience can produce enduring negative effects, prolonging the painful impact of the trigger – sometimes even for years or decades.

3) Behavior – Beliefs are inevitably expressed in behavior; and negative thoughts provoke negative behavior that inevitably expand the scope of the original distress, and make it worse.

4) Spirituality – Negative thoughts and behavior create negative spiritual impact – loss of meaning; loss of trust in God; isolating from God and others; religious inactivity; spiritual self-doubt, etc.

5) Relationships – The distress cycle ends where it began – in relationships. Now, however, the pain of the trigger experience, negative thoughts and behavior, and spiritual disruption create relationship effects that obstruct effective relationships – most often, through the distressed individual turning against or turning away from others. If uninterrupted, the distress cycle then continues and deepens – in that individual, and often in family members and others impacted by the “relationship effects.”

To stop the distress cycle, each factor must be carefully attended to. Trigger experiences must be identified and resolved. Negative thoughts and behaviors must be identified and replaced with healthier alternatives. Spirituality and relationships must be healed. These modifications occur through three steps of change:

1) Identify (a problem situation, trigger, thought, behavior, etc.)
2) Replace (with a healthier alternative)
3) Assimilate (until the healthier habit becomes natural and comfortable). This “IRA” process, dealing with one element after another over the process of time, contributes to step-by-step, sustainable improvement.

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