

Psychodynamic Aspects of Marital Therapy
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The first problem in the development of the self is the separation from the mother. The ideal separation process calls for sufficient internalized security, and the freedom to move away and discover oneself.

Too much mothering deprives the child of a sense of self, leading to accommodation or flight.

Too little nurturance leads to insecurity and self-doubt, and may give rise to neediness, or to radical self-sufficiency as a defense.

The father is a critical factor, giving the child someone else to bond with. For a male child, this is a once and forever shift away from the mother bond to the world of men. On the other hand, the female child has to move toward Dad, and then move back to where she is closer to mom, but with a positive bond with her father.

The distanced father and overly involved mother paves the way for an unresolved mother bond.

In a man with this problem, you will see someone who is closer to his mother, tends to experience his importance in how well he can please his mate (or mother), but who lacks a certain manliness necessary to forge his own path. His anger toward his mother/mate is unconscious.

Also, the distanced father is likely to be a very negative internalized force, which causes the son to react to all things like his father, thus depriving him of his own masculinity.

The male child deprived of a father's influence, may be moody and hyper-reactive, and unclear about sexual identity. His "shell" will be soft.

If a mother is dependent on her son, and takes him into her confidence, he will be "empowered" by this role, but emasculated, as well, because he will never be able to be her partner. If she is actively dependent and then actively rejecting, this will awaken deep rage in the son, which could lead to the abuse of women later.

The words, "It's not about you" will be a message that a mother-complex male will need to hear over and over in your work with him.

The son must see through the closeness to the mother, and reject it as a substitute for 1) an honest relationship with his father, and 2) the cementing of a private self away from his mother's scrutiny. The father may be bad, but any relationship with the father is likely to be corrective of the over-strong mother bond.

To whatever extent a mother deserts a child (physically or emotionally), the child is likely to have deep needs for reassurance and affection, but may hide these desires with an aura of radical self-sufficiency -- especially men.

In a woman, who lacks a positive father example, she is likely to seem adrift, and without direction and vision. She is also likely to be "co-depedent" in the choice of partners, that is, choosing someone who "needs her," a fix-er-upper who is likely to remain forever unable to love her, just like dad.

Her mother is likely to depend on her for support, in spite of her efforts to be her own person. Ultimately, she needs to leave her mom to deal with her own sense of loneliness and lack of partnership, and she needs to forge a relationship with her father on adult-adult terms, as a partial antidote to the original childhood deficiency. "Find your voice" and "Take care of yourself" are messages that will recur throughout your therapy with such a client.