

**Reciprocal Mutually Reinforcing Defense Systems: Living on Different Planets and Believing that Your Planet is the Good One**

**Guidelines for Gender Process, Awareness, and Transformation**

**By Herb Goldberg, Ph.D.**

1. The heterosexual relationship is the microcosm in which we can clearly see our gender process in operation.
2. You cannot see your gender process because it's embedded. Whatever you assume is true about yourself is probably wrong or distorted, and therefore, irrelevant. You are not the ultimate judge as to whether you are caring, loving, open, and giving, or selfish and controlling. It's your impact and effect that is the truth about you as you strive to understand and eventually alter your being and your experience.
3. In choosing a partner, ask yourself if you would want that person for a close friend if there was no ownership, romance, or sex. Are you interested in being in the other person's world?
4. Once you are attracted to someone and become involved, anything that happens afterward you've created. There are no victims in love relationships, only the illusion of such. Whatever hurts or troubles you in a relationship, assume that you've had an equal share in creating it and you have equal power to alter and improve it.
5. Don't be with someone if you don't trust their feedback. You can't see your process, only the other person can. Therefore, assume that when you're told how you're experienced and what your impact is, that it is accurate. The other person is your mirror; don't attack the mirror if you don't like what you see.
6. In relationships, intentions don't count. What you intend is not what is significant; it is how you are experienced by the other person and what your impact is that counts.
7. Hallmarks of distorted gender process are the masculine pursuit of TRUTH "out there" and life seen as made up of a quest for answers, and the feminine pursuit of deep intimacy, love, and connectedness. Those are defensive, bottomless, fantasy-ridden quests.
8. Regarding the polarization of your man-woman relationship, the acid test is:
  - a) The extent to which the man pays attention to the woman based on her sexual attraction.
  - b) The extent to which the woman finds the man attractive based on his power, status, and success symbols.

- c) The history of your relationships demonstrates how you perceive the opposite sex. How many of those you've been involved with would you get involved with again today, and who from your past remains a good friend? If the answer is none, or close to none, past relationships have been based on the other partner's function, and you objectified them to satisfy your needs at the time.
  - d) The preoccupation and obsession with deep love and deep truth are the hallmarks of gender polarization.
9. Before we try to "fix" anything, we all need to get the picture properly in focus to see the dilemma and ourselves clearly. Women have been severely damaged by their internalization, while men have been severely damaged by their externalization. Those are the starting points. Where we go from there is a mutually supportive, inch by inch journey.
  10. The economy is driven largely by polarization. Therefore, we can't escape it at this point; you can't stop the world and get off. There are no concrete "how-to's," there is only the quest to de-polarize, or soften the defenses of externalization and internalization.
  11. To observe and ultimately soften their own gender process, men need to become aware of the extent to which they depend on what they do, namely career and activity-wise, to define themselves. Women need to become aware of the extent to which they depend on their appearance and their romantic lives to define themselves.
  12. Becoming aware of your own gender process is never pleasant. A woman who sees herself as being loving and giving, or a man who sees himself as being right, making good decisions, or being successful of course don't want to discover that that is not enough, nor even true. Both are at least somewhat deluded by their own defensive process.
  13. Change in gender process is a matter of reducing defensiveness and rigidity, not attitude change or gestures or even external behavior. The latter can make things worse because behavior tends to become crazymaking in that it sends out double messages. Assume we all begin at a polarized starting point, therefore, externalized people need to internalize and internalized people need to externalize.
  14. To eliminate polarization in a relationship you need to arrive at a state where there is an equal desire to engage the other and where there isn't one partner who always wants to distance while the other is continually reaching out for more contact.

15. Gender process doesn't have an on or off switch. It's not either/or, it's by shades of grey and degrees that changes are made.
16. The hallmarks of a new male-female relationship are the absence of guilt and blame, of victims and oppressors, as well as the absence of looking at the relationship in terms of who's more loving, who's more selfish, etc.
17. Changing your gender process is always threatening because it's your identity and what you believe works for you. So naturally, you'll resist and deny. Be gentle with yourself as you try and absorb new awareness.

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