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## INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

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### What's To Come

- » The Nature of Intimate Relationships
- » Characteristics of Romantic Relationships
- » Forming and Communicating in Romantic Relationships
- » Communicating in Families
- » Improving Communication in Intimate Relationships

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### The Nature of Intimate Relationships



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## The Nature of Intimate Relationships



- » Intimate relationships require deep commitment
  - Commitment is the desire to stay in a relationship no matter what happens

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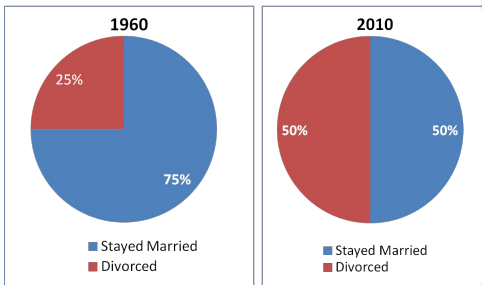
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## The Nature of Intimate Relationships



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## The Nature of Intimate Relationships

- » Intimate relationships require deep commitment
  - Commitment takes several forms
    - » Emotional commitment
    - » Social commitment
    - » Legal commitment
    - » Financial commitment



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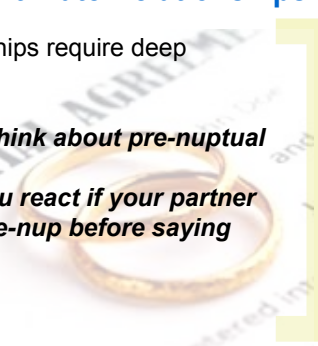
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## The Nature of Intimate Relationships

» Intimate relationships require deep commitment

- *What do you think about pre-nuptial agreements?*
- *How would you react if your partner asked for a pre-nup before saying "I do"?*



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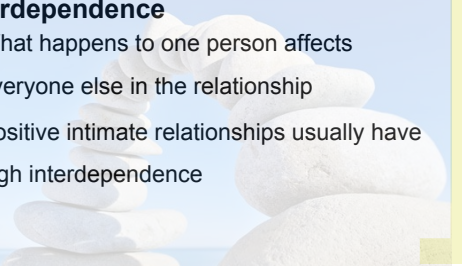
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## The Nature of Intimate Relationships

» Intimate relationships foster **interdependence**

- What happens to one person affects everyone else in the relationship
- Positive intimate relationships usually have high interdependence



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## The Nature of Intimate Relationships

» Intimate relationships require continuous investment

- Investment is the commitment of resources to a relationship
- People in intimate relationships are often aware of how much they invest



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## The Nature of Intimate Relationships

- » Intimate relationships spark dialectical tensions
  - **Dialectical tensions** are conflicts between two important but opposing needs
    - » Autonomy versus connection
    - » Openness versus closedness
    - » Predictability versus novelty
    - » Spontaneity versus planning

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## Characteristics of Romantic Relationships

- » Some romantic relationships emphasize exclusivity
  - **Monogamy** means being in only one romantic relationship at a time and avoiding romantic involvement with others outside the relationship
  - **Infidelity** means having romantic interaction with someone outside of one's "committed" romantic relationship

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## Characteristics of Romantic Relationships

- » Most romantic relationships attempt to emphasize voluntariness
  - Many people expect to choose for themselves whether to be romantically involved, and with whom
  - Some cultures still have "arranged marriages"
  - Even if people enter a romantic relationship voluntarily, they do not always stay in it voluntarily

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## Characteristics of Romantic Relationships



- » Some romantic relationships emphasize love
  - Much of the Western world thinks of romantic relationships as being based on love
  - People sometimes enter romantic relationships for financial stability or power



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## Characteristics of Romantic Relationships

- » Same- and opposite-sex romantic relationships

- Both types of relationships communicate similarly
- Same-sex romantic relationships are not legally recognized in most of the world



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## Acceptance is Growing for Same-Sex Marriages



June 24, 2011, Governor Andrew Cuomo signs into law the Marriage Equality Act

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## Characteristics of Romantic Relationships



- » Expectations for romantic relationships vary around the world
  - Expectations for exclusiveness
  - Expectations for voluntariness
  - Expectations for love
  - Expectations for sexuality

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## Forming and Communicating in Romantic Relationships

- » Communications Scholar Mark Knapp's 5-stage model of relationship development
  - Initiating
  - Experimenting
  - Intensifying
  - Integrating
  - Bonding
- » Stages can vary across cultures and online



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## Forming and Communicating in Romantic Relationships

- » Romantic relationships vary in how they handle conflict
  - Validating couples discuss disagreements openly and cooperatively
  - Volatile couples discuss disagreements openly but competitively
  - Conflict-avoiding couples discuss disagreements covertly rather than openly (ie. passive-aggressive)
  - Hostile couples have frequent, intense conflict

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## Forming and Communicating in Romantic Relationships

- » Romantic relationships vary in how they handle privacy

### Communication Privacy Management Theory

~ Sandra Petronio, communications scientist

- » Partners in a couple jointly own the information about their relationship
- » We form and manage privacy boundaries

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## Forming and Communicating in Romantic Relationships

- » Romantic relationships vary in how they handle emotional communication
  - Happy partners share more positive emotion and less negative emotion than do unhappy partners
  - Unhappy partners are more likely than happy partners to reciprocate expressions of negative emotion

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## Forming and Communicating in Romantic Relationships

- » Romantic relationships vary in how they handle emotional communication
  - Happy partners share more positive emotion and less negative emotion than do unhappy partners
  - Unhappy partners are more likely than happy partners to reciprocate expressions of negative emotion

***"I hate you." "I hate you, too"***

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## Forming and Communicating in Romantic Relationships



- » Romantic relationships vary in how they handle instrumental communication
  - Day-to-day tasks require completion
  - The way in which partners divide everyday tasks often reflects the balance of power in their relationship

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## Forming and Communicating in Romantic Relationships

- » Knapp's five-stage model of relationship dissolution
  - Differentiating
  - Circumscribing
  - Stagnating
  - Avoiding
  - Terminating



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## Communicating in Families

- » What makes a family?
  - Genetic ties
  - Legal obligations
  - Role behaviors



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## Communicating in Families



- » Families come in various types
  - Family of origin
  - Family of procreation
  - Nuclear family
  - Blended family
  - Single-parent family

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## Communicating in Families

- » Families enact roles
  - Family roles are the functions people serve in the family system
  - Four roles commonly emerge during conflict
    - » Blamer
    - » Placater
    - » Computer
    - » Distracter



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## Communicating in Families

- » Families enact rituals
  - Family rituals are repetitive activities that have special meaning for a family
  - Some family rituals are “imported” from families into blended families



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## Communicating in Families

- » Families tell stories
  - Family stories give families a sense of their history, their expectations, and their connections
  - Family web pages often embody a family's stories



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## Communicating in Families

- » Families share secrets
  - Some families have secrets they intentionally keep hidden from others
  - Secrets can also be kept within families



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## Improving Communication in Intimate Relationships

- » Emphasize excitement and positivity
  - Sharing common, enjoyable activities increases relationship satisfaction
  - Using confirming messages emphasizes positivity



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## Improving Communication in Intimate Relationships

- » Handle conflict constructively
  - Four conflict behaviors are especially destructive
    - » Criticism
    - » Contempt
    - » Defensiveness
    - » Stonewalling



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## Improving Communication in Intimate Relationships

- » Have realistic expectations
  - It's rare that one person — even a spouse — can meet all of your social and emotional needs
  - Remember that the important people in your life are important for different reasons



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## For Review

- » What makes some relationships intimate?
- » How do we form, maintain, and dissolve romantic relationships?
- » What makes a family, and how do we communicate in families?

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