



## WEEK 2

Relational maintenance  
within families



# RELATIONAL MAINTENANCE

(Duck, 1994) Relational maintenance involves keeping a relationship:

- 1. in existence
- 2. in a state of connectedness
- 3. in satisfactory condition
- 4. in repair



# MARITAL MAINTENANCE

Stafford & Canary (1991) maintenance strategies:

- Positivity
- Openness
- Assurances
- Social Networks
- Sharing Tasks



# PARENT-CHILD MAINTENANCE

Maintenance demands and behaviors change over the lifespan

The dialectic of autonomy vs. connection permeates the parent-child relationship

The more complicated the family structure (i.e. divorce) the more complicated the maintenance nuances and demands

# SIBLING & STEP-SIBLING MAINTENANCE

The sibling relationship is the longest relationship in most people's lives

Sibling liking varies across families and across the lifespan

General conclusions from sibling research:

- Female siblings use relational maintenance behaviors at a higher rate than males
- More intimate adult siblings use maintenance behaviors more frequently than those in congenial or apathetic relationships
- Use of maintenance efforts in early or middle adulthood depends on the level of psychological closeness
- Maintenance behaviors are used more strategically than routinely.



# MAINTENANCE STRATEGIES

Confirmation

Recognition

Dialogue

Acceptance

Respect



# RITUALS

1. Family celebrations
2. Family traditions
3. Patterned family interactions



# COUPLE RITUALS

## Couple time

- Enjoyable activities
- Togetherness
- Escape episodes

## Idiosyncratic/Symbolic

## Private Codes

## Daily Routines/Tasks

## Intimacy Expressions

## Communication

## Patterns/Habits/Mannerisms

## Spiritual



# RITUALS FUNCTION & CHALLENGES

Many rituals give family members a sense of “where we came from”

Grandparents often establish rituals with their grandchildren in order to reinforce special connections

Blended families have to incorporate “old” and “new” rituals

Bereaved family ritual types (Bryant):

- Integrated families
- Denial families
- Segmented families



# HEALTH RITUALS

Rituals related to health issues can help alleviate stress for the family and the individual inflicted with the illness

Health rituals vary from family to family and culture to culture

What are your family health rituals?



# CELEBRATIONS & CEREMONIALS

Ceremonials – major rites of passage such as weddings, graduations, funerals

Celebrations – Thanksgiving, Fourth of July, etc.

Chronicling – “talk about present events or those of the recent past, in which the communicator updates others by providing information about his or her life”



# NEGATIVE RITUALS

Most ritual research only focuses on the positive

Negative rituals are difficult to identify because people are not likely to self-report the events

# RELATIONAL CURRENCY TYPES

- Positive verbal statements
- Self-disclosure
- Listening
- Facial Expressions
- Sexuality
- Aggression
- Gifts
- Money
- Food
- Favors
- Service
- Staying in touch
- Time
- Access rights



# CONFIRMATION

Confirming responses vs. Rejecting responses

Recognition

Dialogue

Acceptance