

# WHEN IT TAKES TWO FOR ACTING MINDFULLY

Embodied ACT experiential exercises for couples work

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# AIMS FOR THE WORKSHOP

- Brief introduction to this kind of couples work.
- Various experiential exercises: Embodied ACT.
- Some guidelines to create your own.
- Wrap up.

How to intervene in embodied and experiential ways that gently goes to the heart of a couples inflexibility

what do we  
intend to do in  
couples work?

AWARE, OPEN AND  
ACTIVELY ENGANGE

LOVE



Love as valued  
actions



# Behavioral Principles

- When we work with couples the bla bla bla talk gets us feeling stuck and changes there seems imposible because we stay in the same context!
- Peoples behavior is shape by interacting with the environment. We are going to work in a simple form of behavioral shaping by changing the context.

# Functional Contextualism

- Functional contextualism views psychological events as ongoing acts of a whole organism that occur only in their historically and situationally defined contexts. This means that we are going to work from this perspective in couples work.
- The pragmatic truth criterion allows the functional contextualist to avoid the struggle over, for example, the rationality or irrationality of thinking or the right-ness or wrong-ness of an action. Instead, the functional contextualist is only concerned with the workability of what happens.



# RFT applied to couples

- When responding to a stimulus we don't only respond to the formal features of the stimulus but also to features of the stimulus that are arbitrarily and verbally derived.
- Derived verbal learning allows for evaluating, judging, and comparing of oneself based on arbitrary features. In other words, relational framing verbally “creates” features of the partner and oneself that are not based on what can be seen, heard, felt, tasted, or smelled.
- RFT postulates that problems begin when the behavior of one or both partners begins to fall under the control of the stimulus functions of the words (brought about by verbal relations) and no longer fall under the control of direct experiencing. Behavior under such verbal control can become rigid and inflexible at significant cost.

# ACT & RFT

- ACT attempts to move the locus of behavioral control from verbal-relational contingencies to more directly acting ones. By undermining the verbal element of experiencing (i.e., evaluating, judging, comparing what is being experienced), the functions of the experiences themselves are changed.

# ACT

- The ultimate goal of ACT is to help members of a couple become mindful of their cognitive and emotional responses to both their partner and their own behavior in the relationship, clarify values they hold regarding the relationship and commit to acting in ways that are consistent with this valued directions even in the presence of unwanted thoughts and feelings.

A close-up, blurred image of a hand holding a pen, with the text "Psychological and relationship flexibility!" overlaid in the center. The background is a warm, brownish-orange color, and the text is in a large, black, sans-serif font.

Psychological and  
relationship flexibility!

# So we emphasize experiential work

- Witness experience with curiosity.
- Increase abilities via direct learning while discouraging over reliance on verbal learning





# BREATHING TOGETHER

Accepting the difference



# Walking Together

mindful agreement



Giving each other support





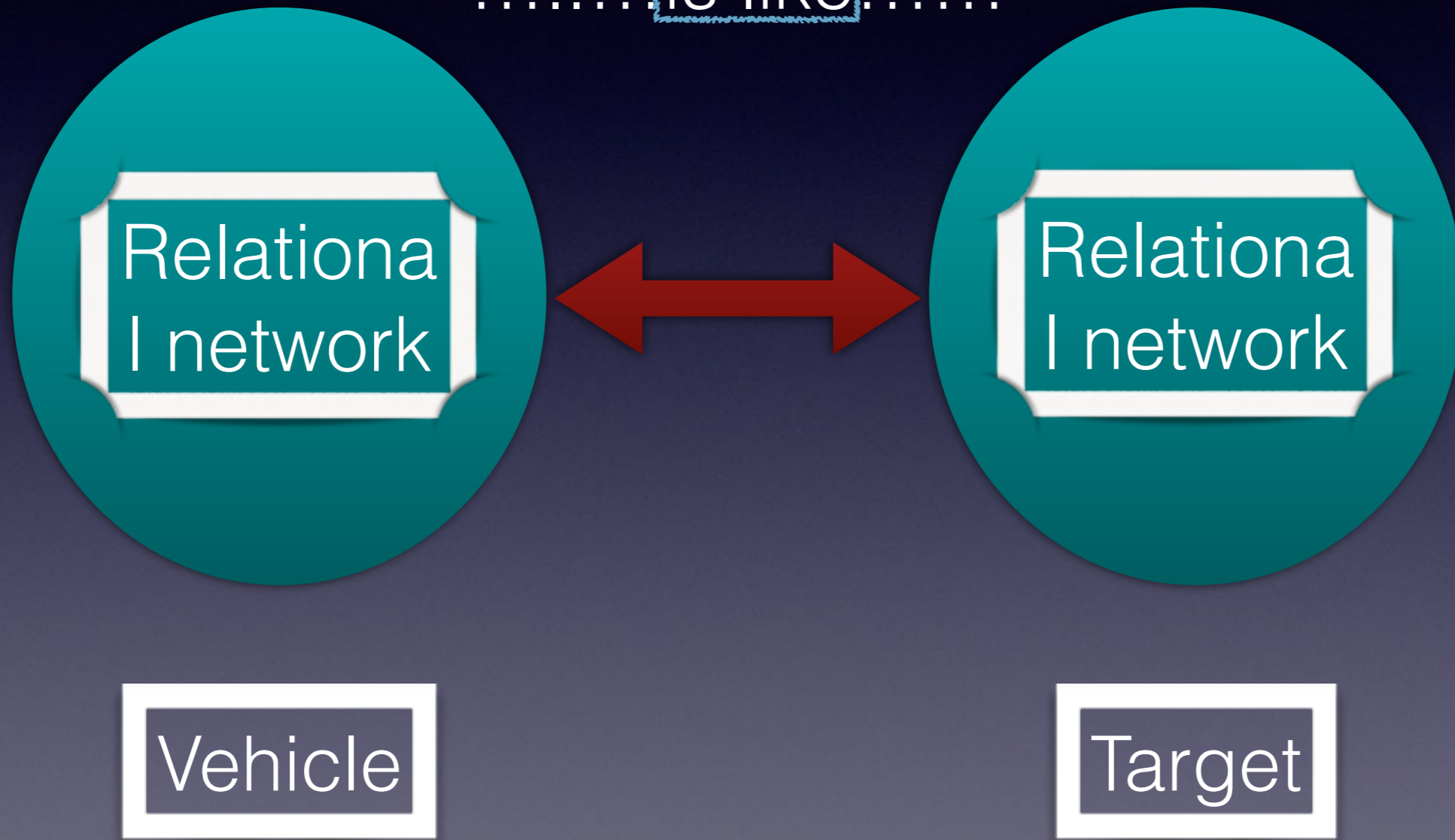
Exploring closeness

Helping couples become more AWARE is an essential element of couples work.

We want to address a more FLEXIBLE behavioral repertoire. Create a context out of problem solving mode of mind that can evoke flexible responding and sensitivity.

Arbitrary Crel for coordination

..... is like .....



“RFT for clinical use:The example of metaphor”JCBS


# HOW TO CREATE YOUR OWN EMBODIED METAPHORS

- Choose an specific aspect of couples situation. The therapist should first determine functionally what the couples specific emotional/behavioral issue is.
- Choose an appropriate embodied vehicle. The vehicle network represents an alternative perspective on the client's situation. The closer the vehicle matches the target relationally (including the transformations of function, etc.), the better the metaphor will be.

- The presentation of the analogous situation specified in the vehicle relative to the target is designed to facilitate or enhance discriminations by the client of certain features that are common to both situations.
- It is through the overarching coordination relation between these two events that the transfer of functions occurs for the client. Through the relation that the metaphor specifies between the two networks, the client will now derive.
- If this is effective (i.e., if the metaphor ‘works’), the clinician should expect to see change in the target behavior or at least greater behavioral flexibility in this regard.

# Conclusions

- This sampling of experiential interventions provides a number of possibilities that can be used where appropriate. Feel free to add to the list from your own creativity and connection with your clients.
- We instigate, model and support psychological flexibility.
- By using the body and present moment experience therapy takes a de-literalize quality: AWARE, OPEN AND ACTIVELY ENGAGE.
- The behaviors that get generalize are the ones that don't get people thinking.

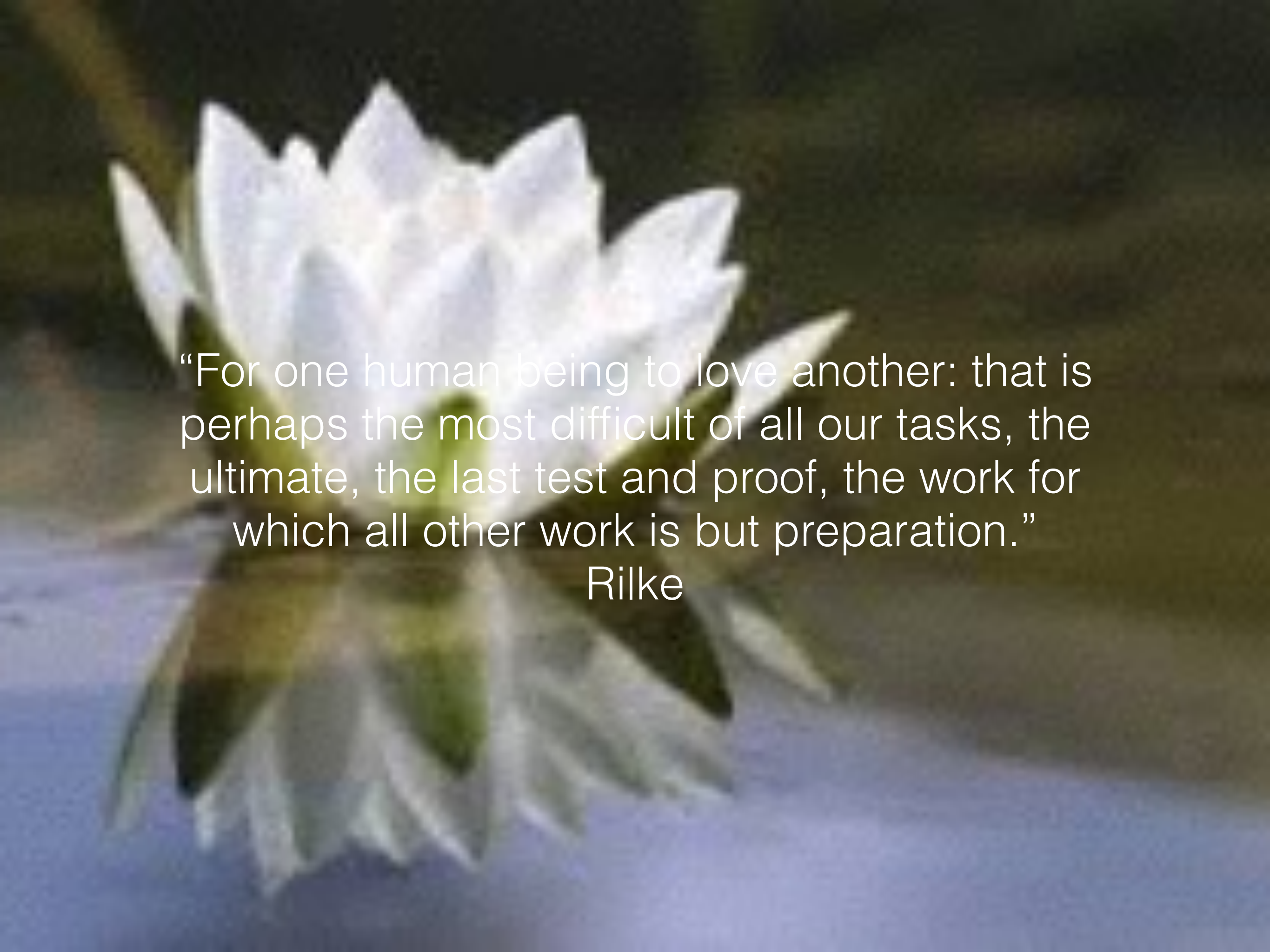
A close-up photograph of a pink lotus flower in full bloom, surrounded by large green lily pads on a pond. The background is slightly blurred, emphasizing the flower.

Most conflicts and tensions are due to language. Don't pay so much attention to the words. In love country, language doesn't have its place. Love is mute.

Shams tabrizi”


– **Juan López**



A close-up photograph of a white lotus flower in full bloom, with its petals fully unfurled. The flower is positioned in the upper half of the frame. Below the flower, its reflection is clearly visible in a calm, blue body of water. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a pond or lake setting. The overall lighting is soft and natural, highlighting the delicate texture of the petals.

“For one human being to love another: that is perhaps the most difficult of all our tasks, the ultimate, the last test and proof, the work for which all other work is but preparation.”

Rilke



“only someone who is ready for everything, who doesn't exclude any experience, even the most incomprehensible, will live the relationship with another person as something alive and will himself sound the depths of his own being.”