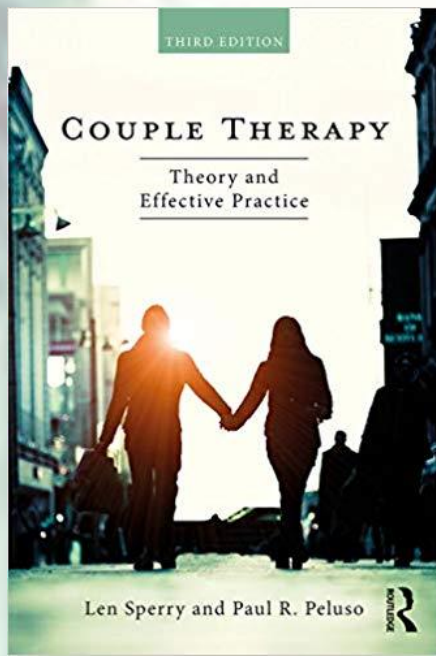


Three Techniques for the First Session of Couples Therapy

A Webinar for the International Association of Marriage and Family Counselors (IAMFC)

October 27, 2022

Paul R. Peluso, Ph.D., LMHC, LMFT
Professor and Senior Associate Dean
Florida Atlantic University



Agenda

1. Introduction
2. The First Session...
3. Story of How You Met
4. Imago Technique
5. Most Memorable Observation
6. Q&A

A Bit About Me....

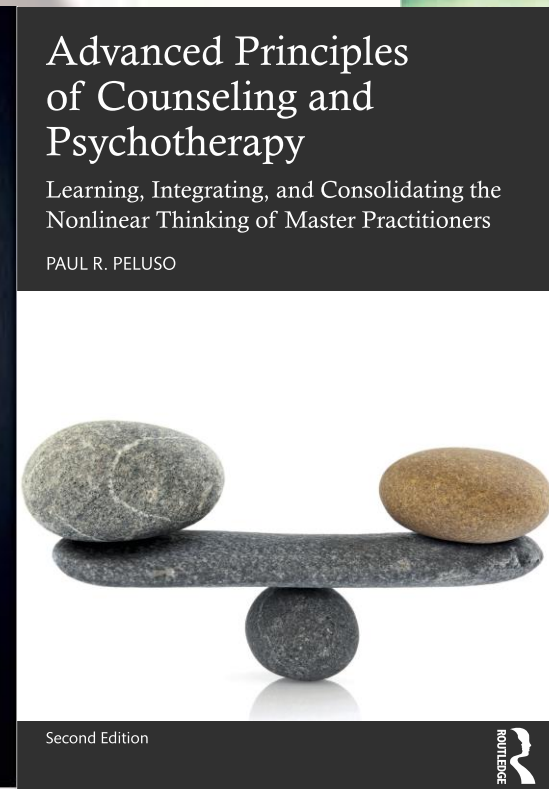
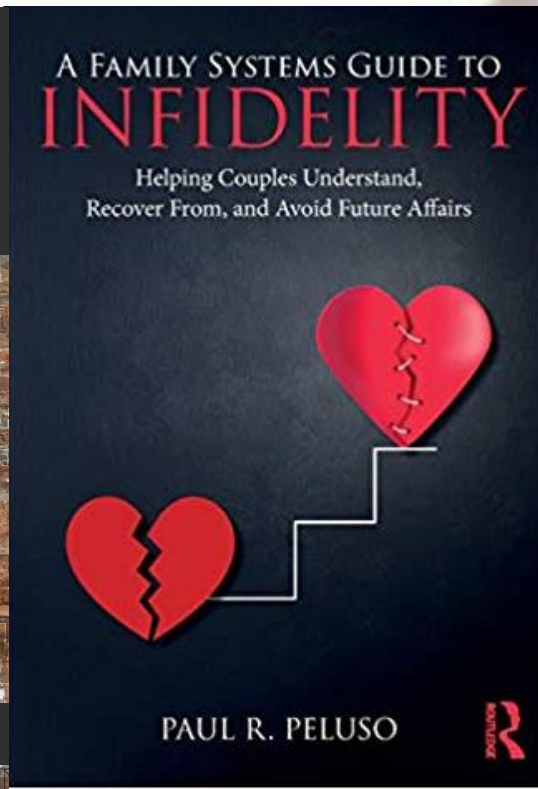
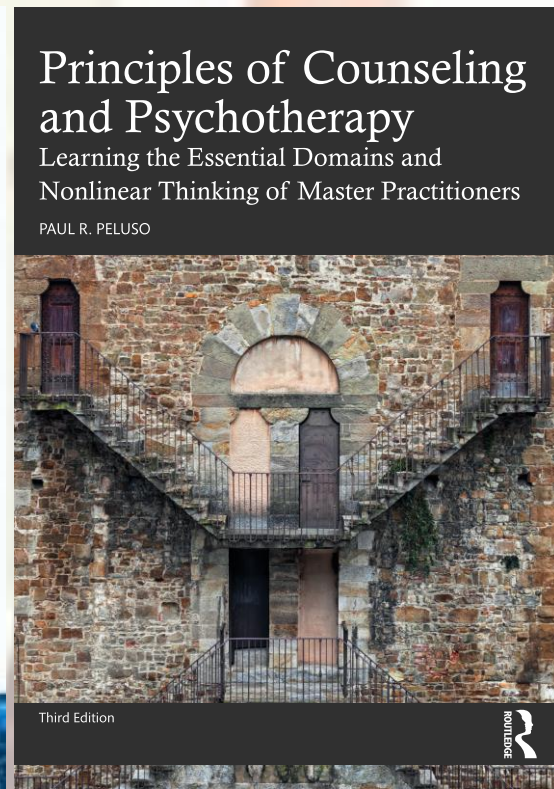
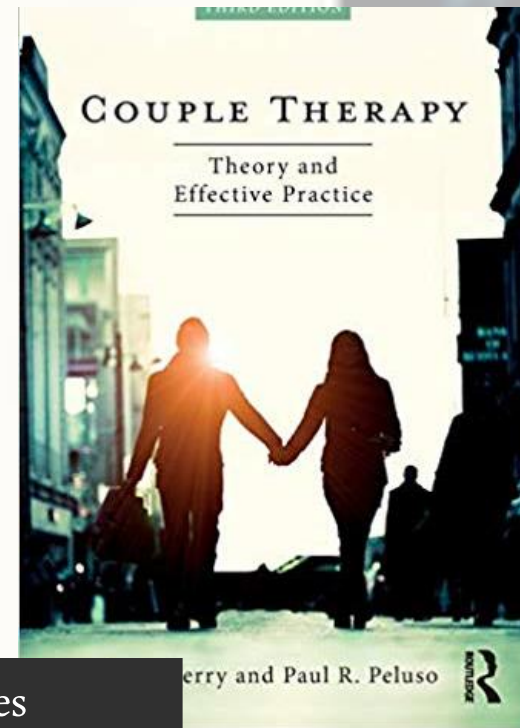
Who are You?

- Licensed for 25 Years
- Professor at FAU for 19 years
- Past President of IAMFC
- Past Member ACA Governing Council
- Former Editor, *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development*
- Researcher- Relationship, Emotional Expression in Therapeutic Relationship, and Couples (Infidelity)
- And...



SHAMELESS PLUG!!!!!!!

I'm an Author of 10 Books!



My Background

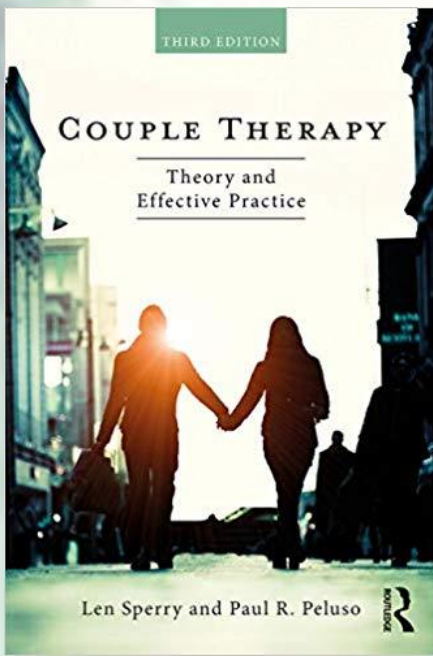
- Trained as an Adlerian (Jon Carlson, Len Sperry, Jim Bitter)
- Trained as a Symbolic-Experiential Family Therapist (Gus Napier)
- Worked with John and Julie Gottman (Co-Authored Research, Training)



CE Question #1

What is NOT a theoretical orientation that I will be presenting from today?

- A. Adlerian
- B. Symbolic-Experiential
- C. Gottman Systems
- D. Transactional Analysis



The First Session...

It is vital to set the right tone for the rest of therapy.

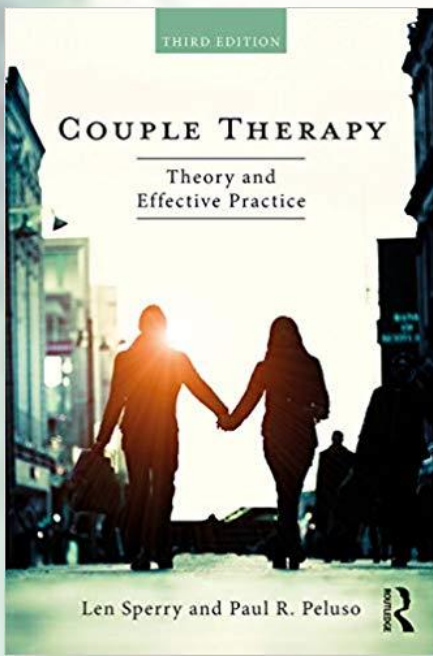
Many competing tasks have to be accomplished...

- Assessment

- Establish Rapport

- Set Goals/Agenda for Therapy

- Give Hope!



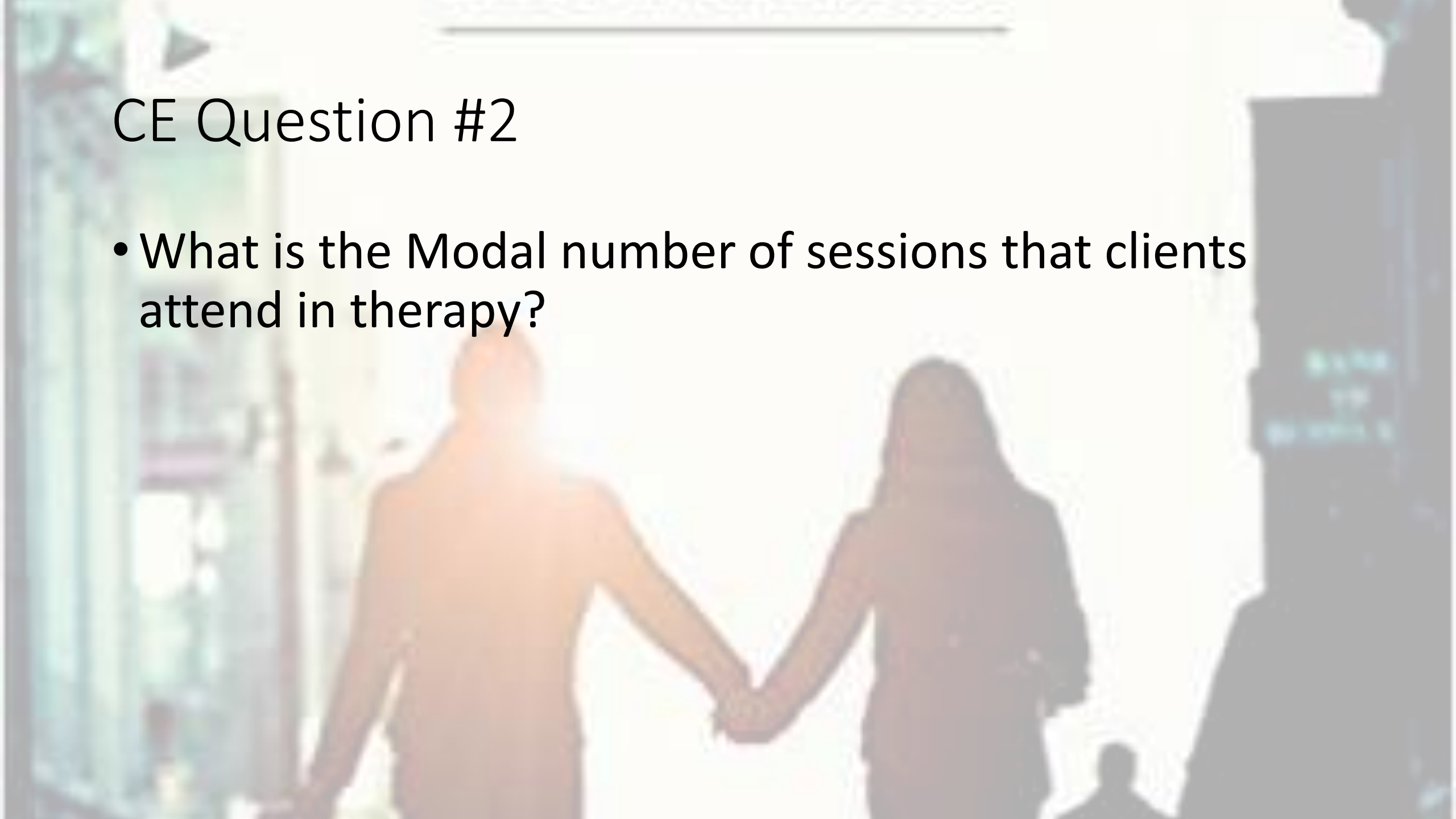
The First Session...

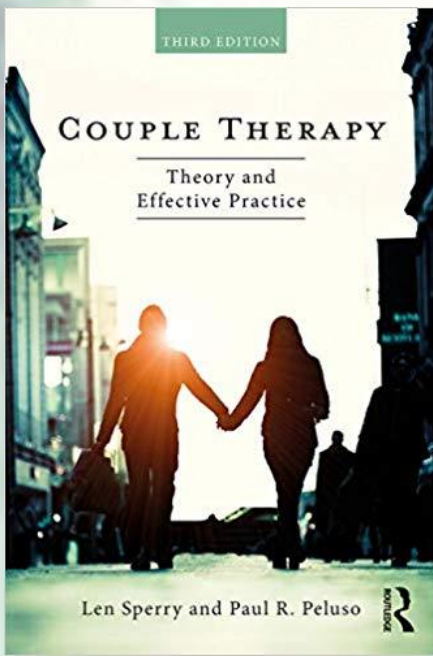
Modal number of sessions that clients (including couples) attend?

ONE

CE Question #2

- What is the Modal number of sessions that clients attend in therapy?





Story of How You First Met

The “Story of How You First Met”

Based on Gottman’s 40+ Years of Research

Part of the “Oral History Interview”

Look for Harsh Startups

Look for Areas of Agreement and Disagreement

Look for Overall Emotion Attached to the Story (Mad, Sad, Hurt. Happy)



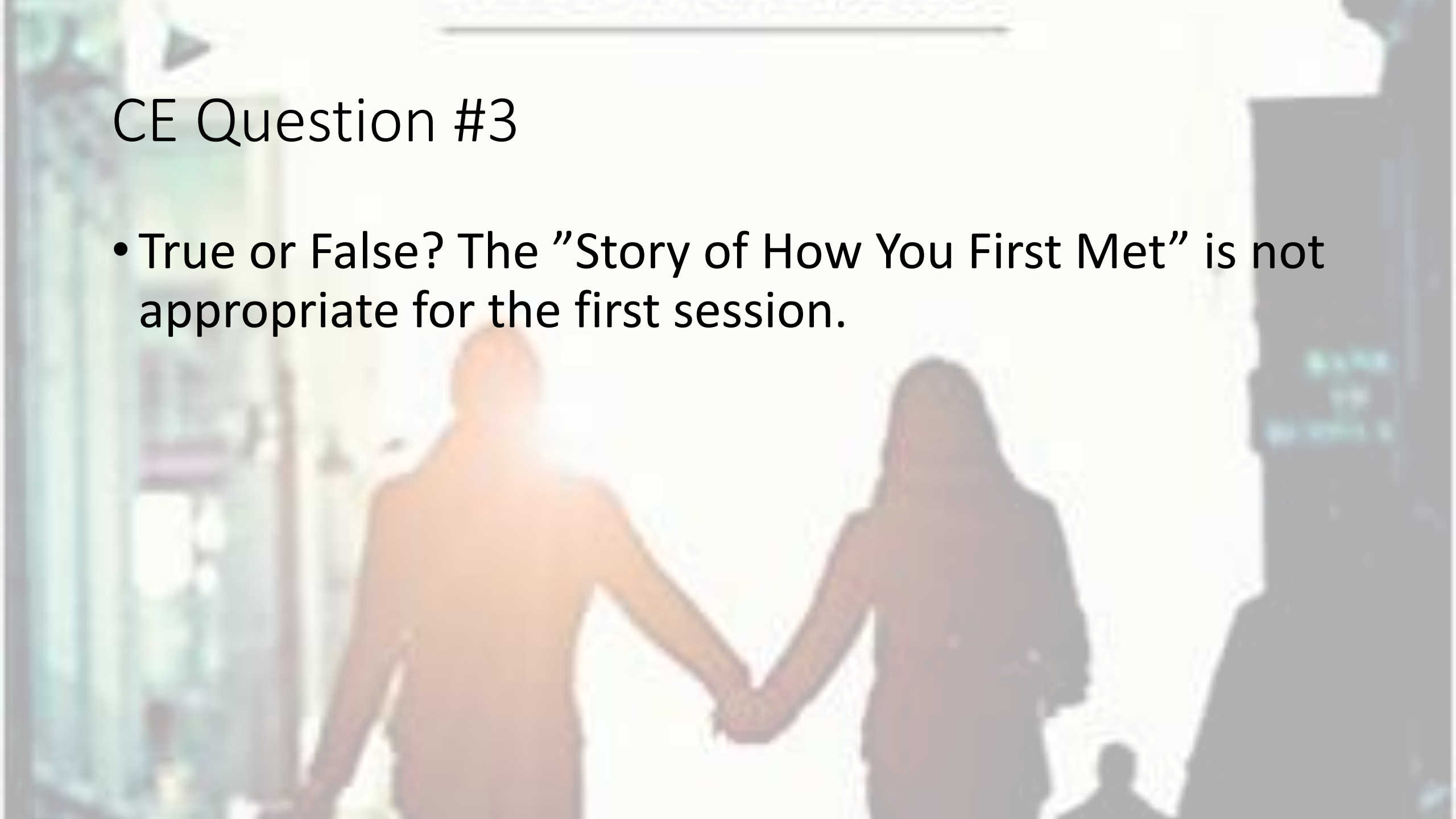


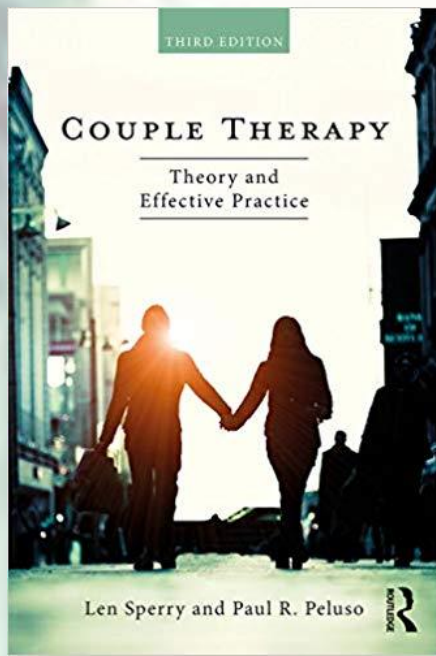
Let's Look at An Example!



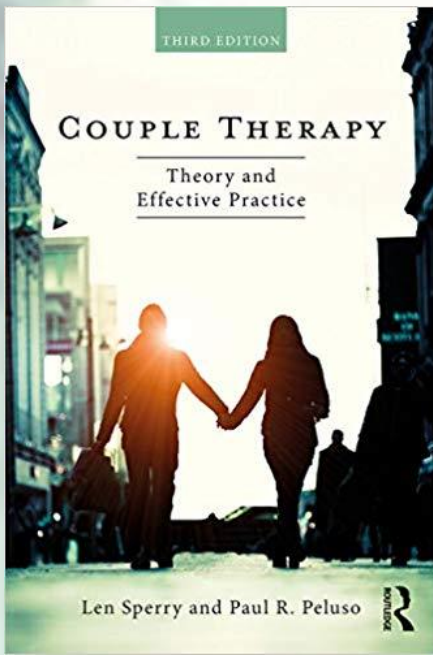
CE Question #3

- True or False? The “Story of How You First Met” is not appropriate for the first session.





Imago Technique



Imago Technique

Developed by Harville Hendrix

Term originated by Sigmund Freud

“Imago” = Image (Latin)

“an unconscious idealized mental image of someone, especially a parent, which influences a person's behavior.”

Imago Technique

Take a sheet of paper and divide it into five sections labeled A, B, C, D, and E. Answer the following questions in the designated area of the paper:

1.	A.
2.	B.
3.	C.
4.	D.
5.	E.

Imago Technique

Take a sheet of paper and divide it into five sections labeled A, B, C, D, and E. Answer the following questions in the designated area of the paper:

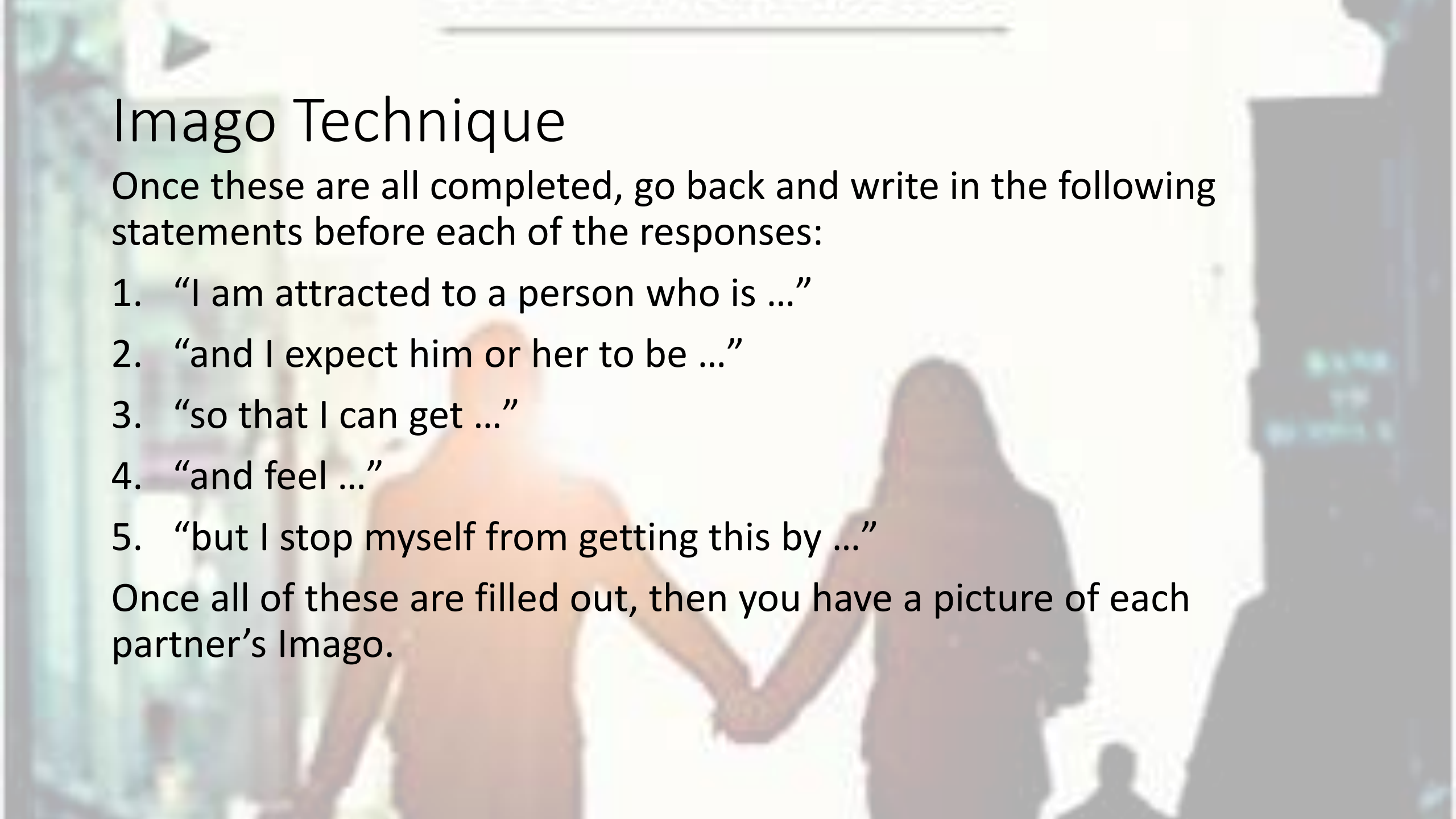
- A. Think about yourself as a young child (from birth to 18 years old), list at least three outstanding negative traits of the people who raised you or had an influence on your life (e.g., angry, mean, disinterested, sad, depressed, etc.).
- B. Now list three positive characteristics of these people (e.g., caring, giving, jovial, smart, funny, etc.).
- C. Thinking back to your family growing up, what did you need or want the most from the people around you—what was your heart's desire (e.g., I needed to feel safe, I needed to feel important, etc.).
- D. Now recall the happiest memories of childhood. These can be with your family, friends, in school, out of school, etc. Then list how you felt during these times (e.g., happy, secure, loved, etc.).
- E. Lastly, think back on the frustrations that you had as a child, not just with your family but with anybody (friends, etc.), and describe how you responded to these frustrations (e.g., getting angry, yelling, working harder, keeping to myself, blaming others, etc.).

Imago Technique

Once these are all completed, go back and write in the following statements before each of the responses:

1. “I am attracted to a person who is ...”
2. “and I expect him or her to be ...”
3. “so that I can get ...”
4. “and feel ...”
5. “but I stop myself from getting this by ...”

Once all of these are filled out, then you have a picture of each partner's Imago.



Imago Technique

1. "I am attracted to a person who is ..."	A.
2. "and I expect him or her to be..."	B.
3. "so that I can get ..."	C.
4. "and feel ..."	D.
5. "but I stop myself from getting this by ..."	E.



Let's Look at An Example!



Imago Technique

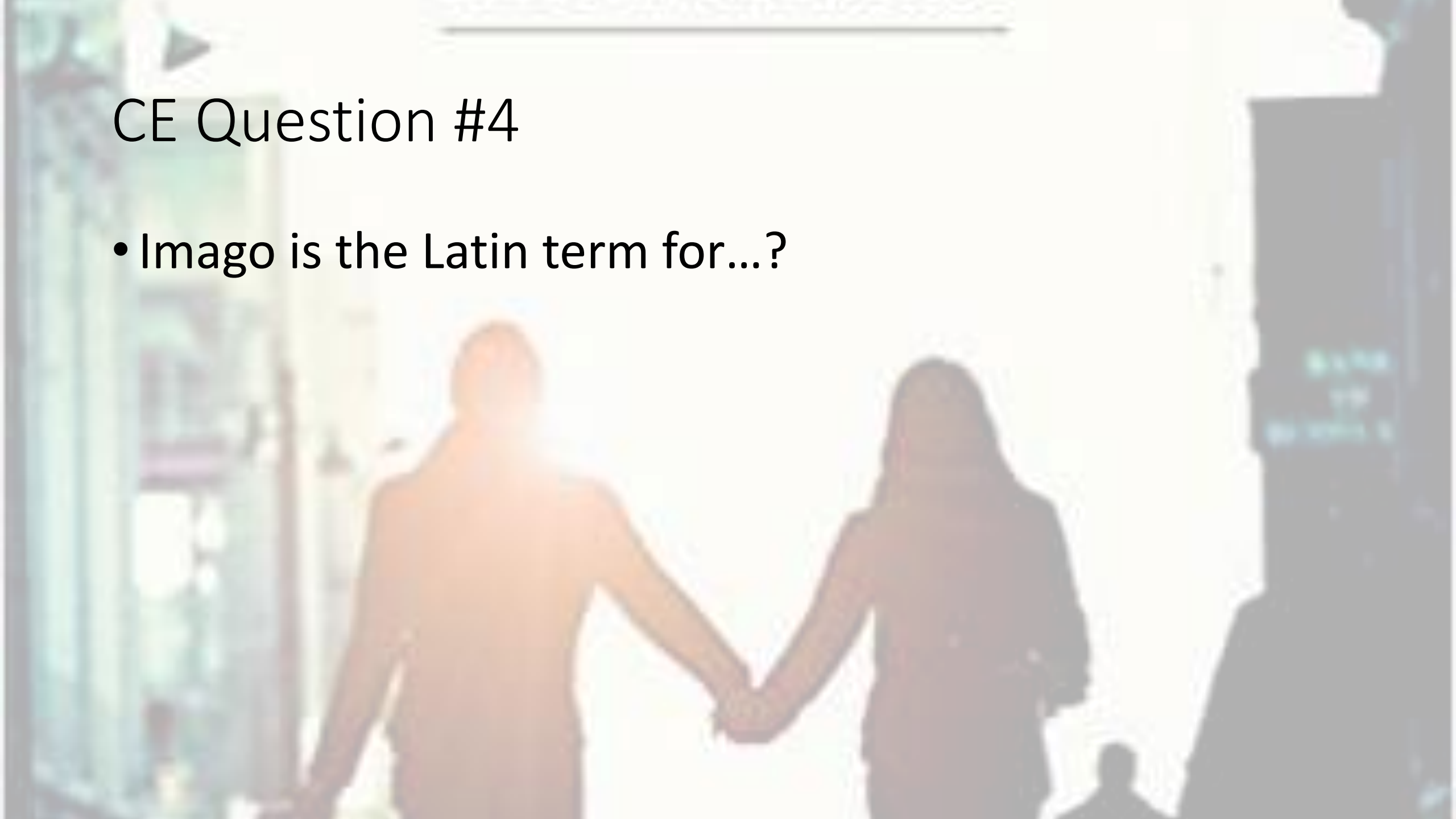
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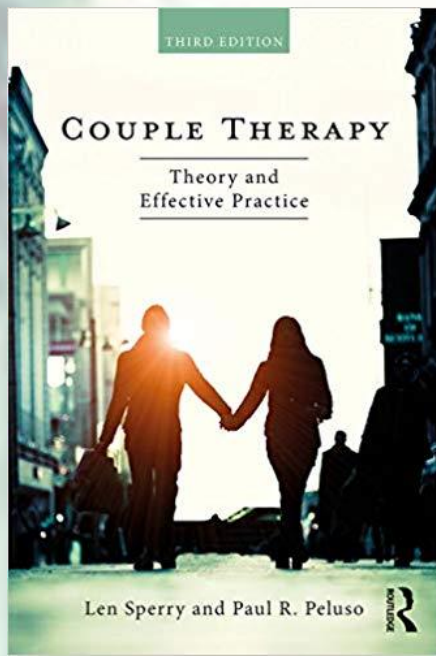
1.	A.
2.	B.
3.	C.
4.	D.
5.	E.



CE Question #4

- Imago is the Latin term for...?





Most Memorable Observation

Most Memorable Observation

Adapted from Walton (1998)- Originally used with Parents and Children:

- “Sometime in our early teenage years, or even in late preteen years, it seems very common for each of us to look around our family life and draw a conclusion about some aspect of life that appears to be important. Sometimes it is positive, “I really like this aspect of life in our family. When I get to be an adult I’d like it to be just this way in my own family.” Often it is negative, “I don’t like this at all. This is really distasteful. When I get to be an adult I am going to do everything I can to keep this from occurring in my family.” What was it for you? As you think of life in your family about age 11, 12, 13 or so, what conclusion do you think you drew? It may have been positive, it may have been negative, or it may have been both” (p. 488).

Most Memorable Observation

I have modified the prompt to ask couples about their Most Memorable Observation about their *parents'* relationship and any “conclusions” they may have adopted based on that. Often, this can help the couples counselor help the couple understand the nature of the “bargain” they made in the relationship

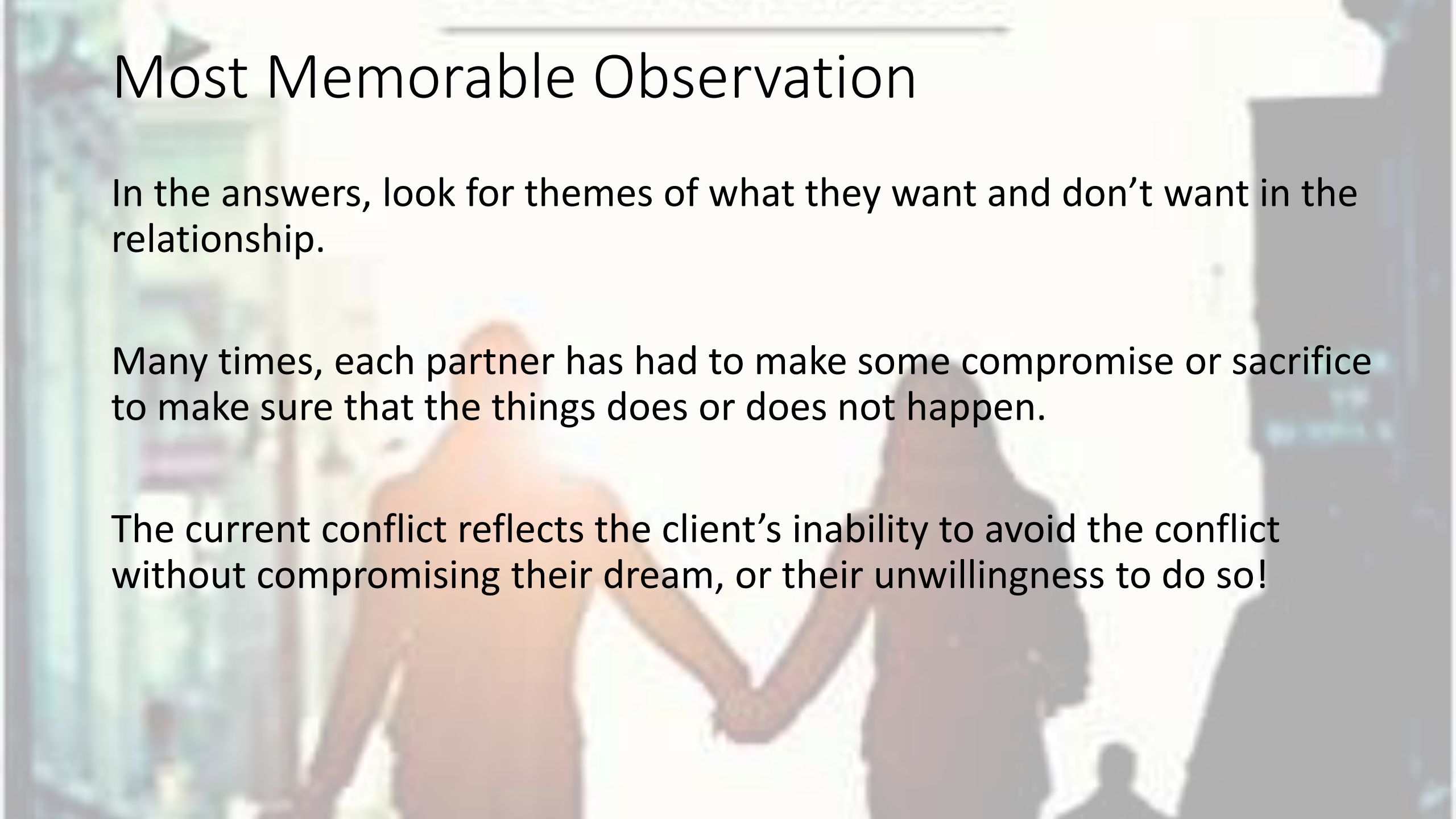
- “Sometime in our early teenage years, or even in late preteen years, it seems very common for each of us to look around our family life and draw a conclusion about some aspect of life that appears to be important. Sometimes it is positive, “I really like this aspect of my parent’s relationship. When I get to be an adult I’d like it to be just this way in my own family.” Often it is negative, “I don’t like this at all. This is really distasteful. When I get in a relationship, I am going to do everything I can to keep this from occurring with my spouse or partner.” What was it for you?
- Think back to your parents’ relationship. If they were divorced by this time, think about their relationship to each other post-divorce, as well as their relationship to any new partners/step-parents. As you think of life in your family about age 11, 12, 13 or so, what conclusion do you think you drew? It may have been positive, it may have been negative, or it may have been both”

Most Memorable Observation

In the answers, look for themes of what they want and don't want in the relationship.

Many times, each partner has had to make some compromise or sacrifice to make sure that the things does or does not happen.

The current conflict reflects the client's inability to avoid the conflict without compromising their dream, or their unwillingness to do so!



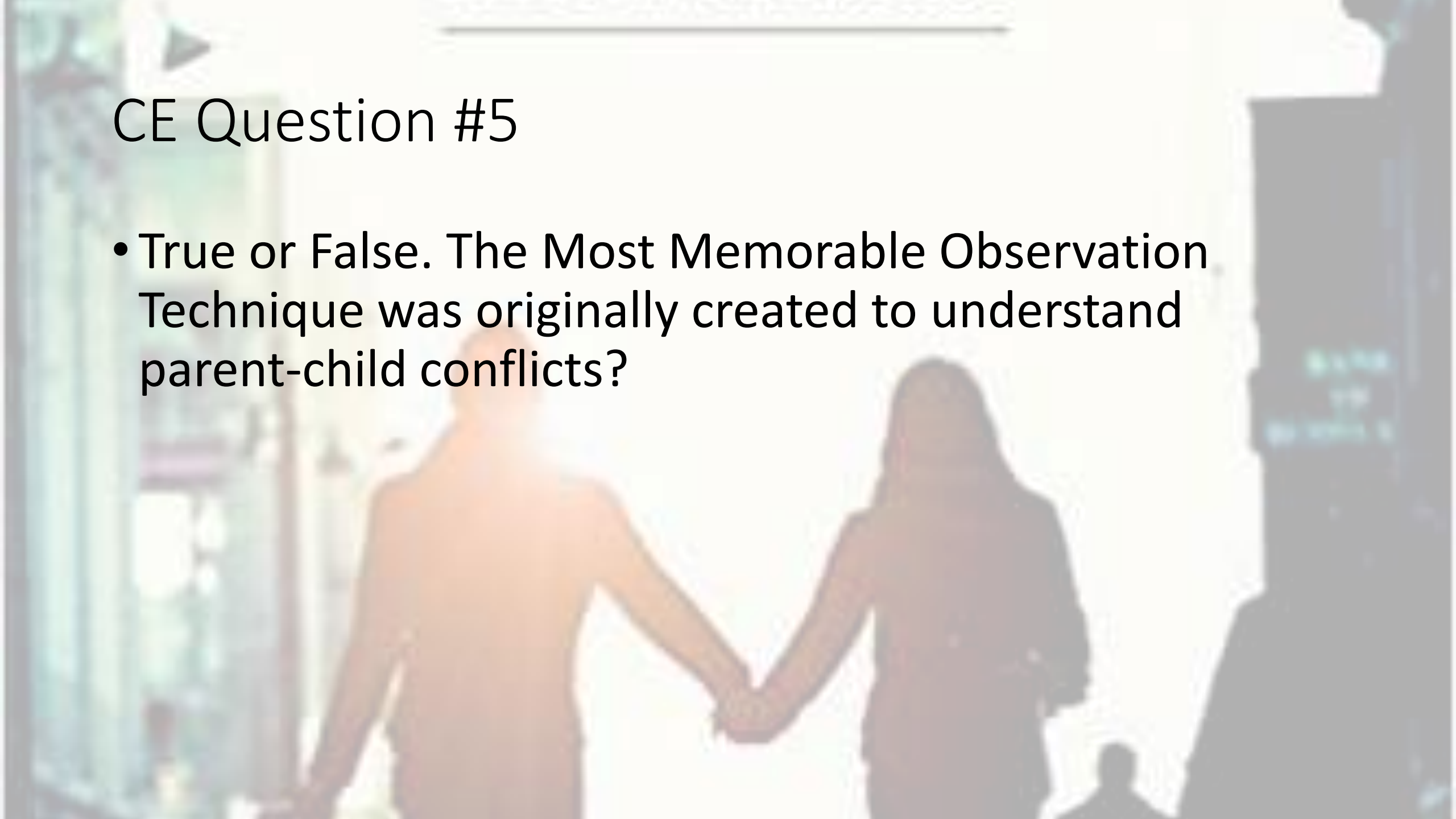


Let's Look at An Example!



CE Question #5

- True or False. The Most Memorable Observation Technique was originally created to understand parent-child conflicts?



Conclusion

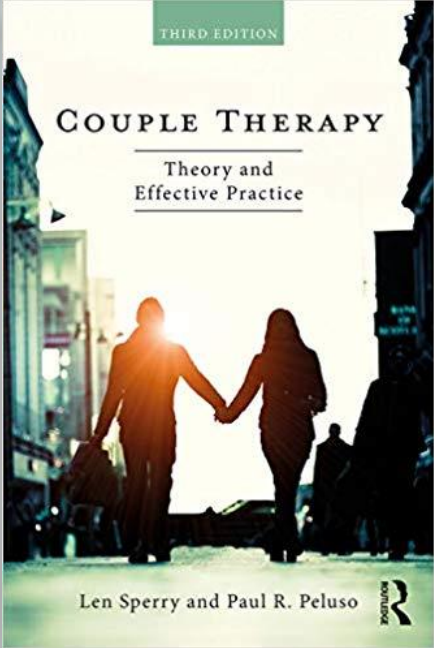
The First Session with Couples can be Tricky...

The Key is to Engage and Instill Hope

The Three Techniques Can Be Engaging and Illuminating for Couples

Provides Valuable Information to the Therapist

And Instills Confidence that Therapy Can Be Effective



Thank You!
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