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Power struggles are common in relationships. Many people aren't aware they're happening.

Here's some signs your relationship has power struggles:

Power struggles are dynamics in relationships where: there's "one upping" and a feeling of being in competition.

In relationships with chronic power struggles, conflicts aren't worked through.

Instead, each partner wants to "win" the argument.

SIGNS YOUR RELATIONSHIP HAS POWER STRUGGLES:

- partners speak over each other, or attempt to dominate the conversation

- blaming and deflecting is common ex: "I did that because you did x."

- vulnerable information is weaponized

ex: you share with your partner how you were unfaithful to a past partner, and it's used to create a narrative "you cheated before, and I'm sure you're doing it again!"

- push pull dynamics (periods of close connection, and periods of withdraw)

- silent treatment or stonewalling used to avoid issues or conversations

- high defensiveness

- refusing to come to a team based decision "my way or the highway" behavior

It's helpful to understand that power struggles are common when we felt helpless in childhood.

If we had parent figures who: shamed us, engaged in harsh punishment, emotionally abandoned us, invalidated our reality ,

etc. we attempt to gain power as adults

Our younger developmental parts (inner child) fears losing our autonomy or being in a helpless situation, so we attempt to assert our dominance to stay safe.

The issue is: these dynamics block authentic emotional connection

Healthy relationships operate as a team.

In healthy relationships, the goal isn't to "win" and argument. It's to better understand each other and come to a compromise.

If control struggles exist in your relationship, you're not doomed.

Awareness of this can help you and your partner create healthier dynamics.

Here's how:

1. Active listening: Allow your partner to speak (even when you're uncomfortable)..

without interrupting or refuting what they're saying.

2. Ask: Am I right?: We assume like crazy (especially in intimate relationships). Mirror back what you believe your partner said and ask if you're correct.

They'll be able to affirm if this is what they're actually saying, listen.

ex: "Ok so you don't like when I'm on the phone after dinner because you would like to have more time together and feel like we don't connect as much as we used to, am I right?"

3. Breathe through the ego: our ego can become highly active in conflict

You'll know your ego is active when instead of listening, you're waiting to prove a point. Or, when you can't let your partner finish up their thought.

Practice ego work: observing your ego rather than reacting to it.