



# The Ways We Love: A Developmental Approach to Treating Couples

*Sheila A. Sharpe*

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# The Ways We Love: A Developmental Approach to Treating Couples

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## **The Ways We Love: A Developmental Approach to Treating Couples** Sheila A. Sharpe

This innovative volume delineates a developmental theory of love relationships that provides a comprehensive framework for treating couples. Drawing on 30 years of clinical experience, Sheila Sharpe conceptualizes marriage and other committed partnerships as comprising multiple patterns of relating that develop over time in a parallel, though interconnected, fashion. Seven universal patterns of intimate relating are identified: nurturing, merging, idealizing, devaluing, controlling, competing for superiority, and competing in love triangles. In this multifaceted formulation, each pattern has its origins in early development, is reworked in different ways throughout life, and expresses everyone's basic needs for both connection and separateness. The book describes common problems that couples encounter in the normal development of each pattern, as well as the kinds of defensive interactions that result when a couple's development is more seriously disrupted. Guided by this framework, clinicians learn ways to precisely assess and more effectively treat couples experiencing a wide range of difficulties. Clear, vivid clinical illustrations bring to life the entire process of therapy and demonstrate how the therapist's emotional reactions may be used to enhance treatment.

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