Wendy Maltz Hierarchy of Sexual Interaction

Wendy Maltz work around healthy sexuality is a wonderful resource in assisting clients to heal from sexual trauma. I use this hierarchy to identify what level of healing the (adult) client is in their own sexual intimacy. As I have said in the seminars, the ultimate level of intimacy does not occur until the thriver stage. You can find Maltz’s work at her website www.healthysex.com or in the Journal of Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity: The Journal of Treatment and Prevention (Dr. Patrick Carnes, editor-in-chief), Volume 2: Number 1.

Here is a preview of the Hierarchy:

+3 Authentic Sexual Intimacy
- Reverence toward body and self
- Ecstasy and communion
- Emotional intimacy
- Spiritual connection during sexual intimacy

+2 Making Love
- Focus on pleasure and performance
- Climax is the goal
- Equality and mutuality
- Consensual (with expectations)
- Experimentation and skills

+1 Role Fulfillment
- Duty, social customs
- Procreation is the goal
- Limited repertoire
- Sex for drive reduction
- Inequality – willing acceptance

-1 Impersonal Interaction
- The “partner” is a sex object only
- Self focused
- Shame based
- Sex under the influence of drugs or alcohol (possibly without protection)
- Disregard for possible consequences

-2 Abusive Interaction
- Entitlement
- Humiliation and exploitation
- Coercion (non-violent) and manipulation
- Submission and dominance roles
- Sex on demand
- Sex for power and control

-3 Violence Interaction
- Overt physical coercion
- Goal of dominance, destruction and annihilation
- Sexualized rage
- Torture, pain, physical harm
- Sadistic and ritualized behaviors