**What is Differentiation – Ellyn Bader**

Differentiation is the active, ongoing process of defining self, revealing self, clarifying boundaries, and managing the anxiety that comes from risking either greater intimacy or potential separation.

It’s about:

1. Looking within & getting clear on what you think, what you feel & what you want/desire
2. Holding steady while you communicate this to your partner
3. Managing your own anxiety in the face of your partner being different from you &/or wanting/desiring something different than you do.

**What is Differentiation – David Schnarch**

Differentiation requires developing these Four Points of Balance:

1) Solid Flexible Self - A solid sense of self is the mature evolution beyond dependence on a reflected sense of self. A solid self comes from tolerating internal conflict rather than from arguing with your partner. You’ll need to hold on to yourself in the face of disconfirmation from your partner.

2) Quiet Mind and Calm Heart – This means calming your mind and soothing your own heart, instead of riling yourself up, letting your mind run away with you, and blaming other people for it. People who can’t control themselves control the people around them!

3) Grounded Responding – This means making moderate, respectful responses to people and events. Not over-reacting (escalating) or under-reacting (shutting down) to other people’s reactivity.

4) Meaningful Endurance – This means tolerating discomfort for growth and persevering in the face of frustration, disappointment and failure to accomplish your goals. It’s about sticking with activities that could help you but may feel awkward at first. But it doesn’t mean persisting if your partner continues to abuse you or avoid you. Meaningful Endurance requires being honest with yourself when your quest is no longer meaningful. If you really don’t want to resolve issues with your partner, being honest about this requires Meaningful Endurance too.

Having difficulties with each of the Four Points of Balance contribute to your difficulties in maintaining a collaborative alliance with your partner around your differences.