



RE-WRITE YOUR STORY

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## Therapy Partners Fact Sheet Couple Counselling Common themes.



Our sense of who we are is intimately associated with our relationships - both to other people and the contexts in which we live. When relationships do not give us what we need, we no longer have our sense of comfort and confidence about the person that we are.

### Communication

Communication is the bedrock of our relationships. But when two people with different backgrounds, perspectives and concerns get together, there are many things that can go wrong along the way.

Constructive communication has various principles, some of which you or your partner might not know naturally. Or you might have different expectations and totally different communication styles.

For instance, your childhood has a lot to do with how you communicate. "If you grew up in a family where discussion meant debate, you'll talk very differently than if you grew up in a family where discussion meant sharing perspectives and building new ideas together.

Also, some people do not realise that when they are communicating, they might be doing something that is hurtful to their partner, as they may interpret it as criticism.

The key is to talk about the specifics of you and your partner's underlying concerns and be responsive to them. When you understand both partners concerns, the two of you can brainstorm specific solutions. This approach works best when couples take potentially overwhelming issues and break them down into smaller concrete concerns that can be addressed one at a time.

### Some questions we might use to help you think about as a starting point

- Would there be anything that would help you in that moment?
- What happens when the two of you have different goals?
- Can you describe the situation for 5 minutes without blaming the other?
- What would help you have that conversation?
- Is there one thing you could start with?
- Has it ever been different?
- What effect do you think your mood has on others?

### Common themes and issues in Couple therapy

- Navigating mutuality (“Us” “Me” “You”).
- Communication.
- Differences in ideas and beliefs.
- Lack of problem-solving skills.
- Balancing demands of family life.
- Lack of strategies that avoid escalation of conflict.
- Moving between the different positions of confiding, attacking and withdrawal.
- Different styles of dealing with emotions.

### The 9 Common areas of couple issues/conflict

- Housework
- Activities
- Affairs
- Money
- Sex
- Parenting
- Relatives
- Employment
- Addiction

### Couple Interventions how we work

We adopt different systemic interventions (i.e. Narrative, Structural, SFT, Strategic.) which help you to move from an emotional based dynamic and progress to a more behaviour goal action centred approach. This involves using the following techniques.

- Paraphrase what the other has said.
- Enquire what the other has heard.
- Naming the process rather than staying with content.
- Rather than go through a shopping list of issues focus on one.
- Set tasks/homework.
- Encourage them to talk to each other.
- Ask the couple to comment on what is going on underneath the high expressed emotions (vulnerability).

We appreciate dynamics of a relationship can prove very challenging, the purpose of couples therapy is to help you stay together as a couple unless you expressly wish to separate, in which case, relationship counselling can help you to do so more amicably.