

## **Couples Therapy**

Couples therapy is a healing and strengthening process used by two people who are involved in an emotionally significant relationship, but are experiencing difficulties that interfere with their functioning together as happy and fulfilled life partners.

Couples therapy usually involves an examination of couple's communication, maladaptive patterns of interaction in their relationship, how well the needs of each person are met, how conflict is resolved, the emotional baggage that each member of the couple brings to the relationship, and what needs to change if the relationship is to become healthy and satisfying.

Most couples present in a state of crisis. That being the case, the first few sessions usually focus on developing ways of stabilizing the relationship and preventing further damage.

Once the relationship has stabilized, more definitive and deeper work can be done on the various problems that caused the relationship to become unstable in the first place.

Couples therapy requires a commitment on the part of both people to meet weekly for an hour or two in my office, perform homework assignments when applicable, and spend time between sessions working on communication, unhealthy relational patterns, and conflict resolution.

The goal of therapy is to develop a healthier relationship based on each person's personality, relational abilities, communication style, needs, tolerances, and willingness to change.

Couples therapy is a process that promotes balance, honesty, open communication, fairness, psychological health, and peace within a couple's relationship. Couples therapy is also a process that promotes emotional and sometimes physical satisfaction and pleasure within the context of the couple's relationship.

Sometimes people need help not with keeping their relationship intact, but instead with managing a break-up. This is particularly important when the couple has children, although people without kids can also benefit by ending the relationship well, particularly if they decide to remain friends, or intend to develop a future relationship that doesn't have the same problems.

Couples therapy is not for everyone. This is particularly true when significant domestic violence has pervaded the couple's relationship, when one or both parties are addicted to substances, when each person has a very different agenda regarding

the outcome of the therapy, and when one of the parties is either unwilling or incapable of examining him or herself.

Couples therapy is not an easy process. It requires a great deal of time, work, and effort to make significant changes, particularly if the unhealthy patterns in the relationship are long-standing. Nonetheless, most people are able to make significant changes that improve the quality of the relationship and increase its longevity.