

Couples Therapy: The Big Picture

Look inward. It is not intuitive to do this. We want to look outward because we think our partner is the source of pain so we avoid looking at our contribution. Our default position is to spin things so our ego isn't damaged.

1. What kind of relationship do you want to be in? The Target: The reason you are here. Your North Star. Your vision. Why you are together?

2. What will be required of you to make that happen? There are no free lunches. You want it, you gotta earn it. Most people want great results with low efforts, this is natural and understandable. It is what the emotional brain wants – a big pay off with minimal efforts. But in the grown-up relationships, it takes persistent effort.

Creating a good relationship is not one decision. It is hundreds of decisions done daily – like dieting. You don't decide once to lose weight. You decide every time you are tempted to go off the diet. You decide every time you want to blame your partner without thinking through a better way to say something or understanding your partner's struggle. So—what will be required of you to create a flourishing relationship?

3. What are your internal obstacles that interfere with doing what is required of you to bring about the relationship you want to be in? For example, I don't listen well when I hear something that seems judgmental. Or I seek to be understood

before I try to understand my partner. If you don't know what some of your blocks are, your partner may be glad to mention a few.

4. Think of a very difficult topic that is sensitive to you. Something you think you would like to discuss in here. Now write down what you think you do that is ineffective in terms of creating a constructive discussion. (For example, attack, get aggressive, blame, become furious vs curious, withdraw, disengage, get passive, go into resentful compliance, don't bring up sensitive topics, etc.)

5. Now think of how you aspire to be in that situation. This aspiration puts you in integrity with your higher self. Write how you aspire to be during the discussion of a sensitive topic.

6. Implementing #5 is not going to be easy. So what do you need to learn in order to be how you aspire to be?

7. What is your level of motivation to do what is required of you – from 1 to 100?
1= I'd like to do it if it is convenient and my partner changes. The lower the motivation, the harder it is to hear your contribution to any given problem.
100= This is total commitment. It is rare but extremely productive.
8. What are some milestones that will let you know **you** are in alignment with what is required of you and how you aspire to be?
9. What habits, attitudes, emotions will be important for you to release in order to become the partner you aspire to become?
10. What are the top two issues you want covered within the next month? What will you do to make it easier for your partner to discuss these issues with you?