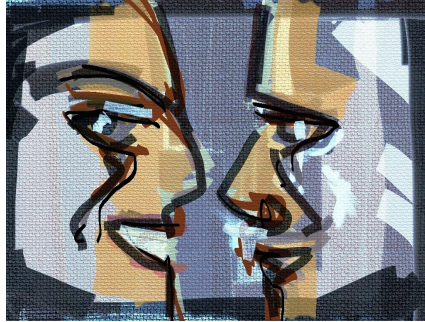


The Structure of a Couple Therapy Session

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The structure of a couple session typically follows three phases:

- Warm up
- Interaction
- Sharing.

The Warm up Phase

This phase is complete when each person is ready and willing to work for the repair, healing and enrichment of the relationship. The actual couple therapy does not begin until such a commitment to work on the relationship by each party is achieved. The warm up in the initial stages of the therapy, can be on the phone, by email, in one to one sessions and in couple sessions.

The warm up at the start of each session is crucial to the success of the session. There is no step by step process that can be followed but at workshop in Christchurch in 2011 we developed a series of principles for warm up based on our knowledge and experience that we tested sociodramatically. More detail in this document:

<http://www.psybernet.co.nz/rel/warm-up.pdf>

The Interactive Phase

This can consist of any activity that the couple and the therapist enact during the session. The interactive phase works towards an encounter between the parties

where their love is matched by deep understanding. During this part of the session any of the following may take place:

Interaction with the therapist:

The therapist may work with each couple in turn. The other party is invited to listen and share their learning.

Dialogue:

The dialogue approaches developed by Imago Relationship Therapy may be used.

Psychodramatic methods:

A variety of styles of mirroring, doubling, concretisation and role reversal may be introduced. These can be used with all couples, without undue distraction of having to learn new unusual techniques or words. This will involve role training so that each person is an auxiliary to the spontaneity and creativity of the other.

We introduce social atom repair and role training at points where this fits with the readiness of the couple to accept and make changes.

The Sharing Phase

Appreciation, gratitude, development and learning is named and consolidated. The therapist can facilitate this processes by ensuring the emphasis is on the new. The embryonic developments need nurturing and this is the phase where and therapist can suggest that the couple build on the learning. Sharing can be mirrored.

The latest version of this document and more resources are online here:

<http://www.psybnet.co.nz/rel>

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