

COUPLES' INTENSIVES

I created the Couples' Intensives format out of a desire to offer a less fragmented approach to therapy than what the standard, 45-minute-per-week approach typically offers. Intensives are three-hour, monthly sessions that allow couples to address their issues in a very focused, directed manner. I have created material for these intensives that follows a specific sequence and is intended to be instructive, challenging and thought provoking. Couples' Intensives are best suited to highly motivated couples who want to remain together and are ready to take action to improve and heal their relationship. Sessions invite the active participation of the couple, and the period of time in between sessions will be used for specific "homework" assignments. The format for these intensive is outlined below. Although this format is divided into an assessment session followed by three intensives, the actual number of sessions will depend upon the goals and desires of each couple.

ASSESSMENT SESSION:

(Note: Unlike the sessions that follow, this is a 45-minute session. This provides participants with the opportunity to make sure they are comfortable with me and with this process before making the commitment to continue.)

- Identify relationship concerns/problems
- Identify relationship strengths
- Gather a brief history of the relationship
- Set initial goals for therapy

SESSION ONE:

Personal and family history: This unit explores life experiences, family of origin relationships, family patterns and how these factors shaped each individual and created particular patterns/problems in their current relationship.

Differentiation: This is a term that refers to the process of developing a strong sense of "self." Until we know who we are, we cannot relate in healthy, stable ways to others. This unit guides participants through a process of self-assessment and skill-building that will better help them understand their own role in relationship problems and interactions.

Personal Growth: This unit helps participants identify both life goals and personal growth goals. Focusing on personal growth and personal goals enables each participant to more clearly identify the strengths and unique characteristics they bring to this relationship.

SESSION TWO:

Assessing the relationship: This unit leads participants through a process of assessing the strengths and challenges of the relationship.

Relationship goals and dreams: Participants will work together to identify goals and dreams for their relationship and to better understand how they can cooperatively achieve these goals and dreams.

Communication: This unit takes the very general concept of “communication” and assists participants in addressing very specific issues: self-assessment of one’s current skill level; understanding various forms of communication; enhancing listening skills; learning more effective self-expression; identifying triggers for conflict and hurt; re-structuring conflict.

SESSION THREE:

Affection and sex: The goal of this unit is to help participants become more comfortable discussing their concerns, needs and desires.

Stress management: This unit explores the impact of “negative stress” on each individual and on the relationship as a whole. The goal is to become more self-aware and to develop more effective ways of managing life’s inevitable stress.

Spirituality: If desired, couples can discuss their religious/spiritual beliefs, how these beliefs shape them and the impact these beliefs have upon their relationship. This unit can also incorporate a discussion of values and non-religious beliefs that may either be causing conflict in the relationship or may be a potential source of solidity and strength that is not being adequately tapped.

Evaluation: Using an evaluation tool specifically developed for this Couples’ Intensive program, participants will have the opportunity to identify what they have learned and what they may still need/wish to accomplish. Additional sessions or post-therapy activities can be designed at this point.

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