

How to Get the Most from Your Couple Therapy

A Brief & Sweet Introduction

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Couples are often uncertain what to expect from the process of couples therapy. Perhaps they've never been, have a past bad experience with it, or can only go by what they've seen on TV. I've created this document to provide clarity and focus to our work and help you get the most from your couple therapy. This is the "Brief & Sweet Introduction" – just enough that you need to know coming in the door. If you're intrigued and really want to learn how to get the most out of your couple therapy, I invite you to read the additional articles in the *How to Get the Most from Your Couple Therapy* series.

Some key points:

- Most couples approach therapy hoping that it is their partner who will do most of the changing. In truth, both will need to work, and your best bet is approaching it with the question, "What does my relationship need from me?" instead of "What am I getting out of my relationship?"
- Couples therapy works best if you have more goals for yourself than for your partner. Only then can you develop shared goals for your relationship. I am at my best when I help you reach objectives you set for yourself and your relationship.
- Conflict is an opportunity for growth and healing, not a sign of the apocalypse. Realizing this can be a first step in turning things around... The second step is realizing that you (not just your partner) are contributing to the conflict.
- Your brain is wired for love, but can keep you mired in conflict. The limbic system of the brain is the home of the "fight or flight" response – when it gets triggered, it sends you back into conflict. Learning to manage against this "limbic hijack" is essential to the work.
- Problems are like icebergs. You only see what's on the surface. And just like icebergs, 90% of them lie hidden beneath the surface.
- The definite possibility exists that you have some flawed assumptions about your partner's motives. And that he/she has some flawed assumptions about yours. The problem is, most of the time we don't want to believe those assumptions are flawed.

Our work:

- One of the most important tools you will ever learn is the Imago Dialogue – a new way to communicate predicated on safety, containing the "flight or fight" reactivity, and promoting deeper understanding and connection.
- Listening is the most important and most difficult part of this work because you have to turn down the chatter in your own mind in order to truly understand and empathize with your partner.
- Nurturing the good – expressing appreciations to one another, spending quality time together, being of service to one another, etc. – is fundamental to a healthy relationship.
- Couple therapy is an investment – of time, energy and finances. It is not a quick fix. Like many things in life, an investment requires risk and how much you get out of it will depend upon how much you invest in it.

It Can Be Done!

All this may seem daunting to you, but I want you to know that it can be done. The first step is having the curiosity and openness to start the process. That's all. I will help you from there.

Start now. Contact me at: 310-268-7792 or Michael@DrMichaelD.com

To get more in depth, see the other brief articles in the *How to Get the Most from Your Couple Therapy* series at www.DrMichaelD.com:

- So What's Really Going On in Relationships?... Understanding Relationships
- So What Do We Do About It?... An Overview of Imago Relationship Therapy
- So How Do We Do It?... Ground Rules & Guidelines

P.S. please review these documents periodically as there is simply too much to absorb in one reading of it. We all will benefit from your efforts.

Note:

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the following from which this series of articles was created:

- **“Imago Relationship Therapy”** An Essay by Harville Hendrix – author of the bestseller *Getting the Love You Want* and founder of Imago Relationship Therapy. Learn more at www.gettingtheloveyouwant.com.
- **“How to Get the Most From Your Couple Therapy”** by Peter Pearson & Ellyn Bader – founders of The Couples Institute – <http://www.couplesinstitute.com/how-to-get-the-most-from-couples-therapy-tx/>