



How to Get the Most out of Couples Therapy

Congratulations

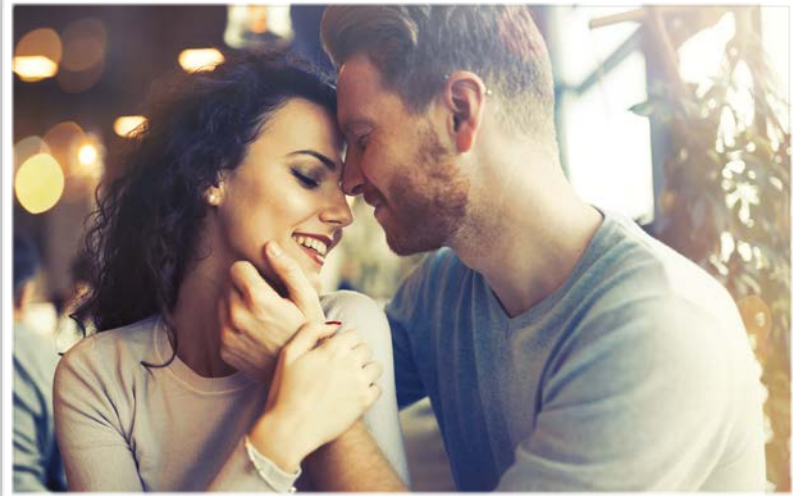
You have had the courage to seek help in your relationship. Now you may be wondering what you need to do to get the most out of the time and money you will be investing to improve your relationship dynamics.

Couples often struggle for months or even years in patterns of interaction that have not been working. Most likely you have tried many things, yet something's missing; you are still not getting your desired outcome. Feeling helpless or frustrated is not uncommon. After working in the mental health field for over 21 years, I have developed a few concepts and principles that I believe give you a better chance to succeed.

Your First Steps

Become clear on your purpose or intention for therapy. What do you want to create? What are your fears and limiting beliefs that keep you from your intention? In working with your partner, what is your middle ground? Are there any deal breakers?

In couples therapy, the counselor cannot magically fix your problems. But she will work with you to help you understand the reasons or challenges that are bringing you into therapy, and she will teach you in the event that there is a skill gap. The rest is up to you: your attitude and determination will set the stage for success in your sessions.



So, what is therapy about?

- *Therapy's intention* is to relieve pain by learning life's lessons and processing them. Couples therapy is not about blaming or shaming you for your partner in the relationship.
- *Therapy's purpose* is to gain a greater understanding and perspective about how your mechanics of interaction work. Becoming more self-aware about how your behaviors contribute to the relationship dynamics is the first step in relieving the tension between you.

In changing a few things about the way you interact, you can improve your sense of connectedness, satisfaction and fun together. To that end we will be exploring how your current behaviors are not lending themselves to the results that you deserve.

Therapy can be about:

- Challenging yourself to make small shifts in how you act.
- Increasing your ability to communicate in an open and honest way.
- Learning ways to improve your sense of safety with each other.
- Developing enough trust to allow you to say to your partner, and to hear from your partner, things that are difficult.

Garwood Counseling

Please answer these three questions

The answers to the following questions will help inform your future journey together. *Please bring your answers into our next session.*

- **What kind of life do you want to build together?**
- **What kind of partner do you aspire to be in order to build the kind of relationship and life that you hope to create?**
- **What keeps you from being the kind of partner that you aspire to be?**

What does it take to change the dance that you have with each other?

When one party in the relationship says, "If only my partner would change, things would be better," he or she is missing the point that the partner-dance has two people in it. While that would be great if your partner would change, there is something keeping you in this pattern of interaction. Each person is contributing something to this dance. I'm here to help each of you start the process of recognizing your contributions to the relationship and to lead you to ways that are more functional and transformative. The good news here is that once each party owns how their actions keep the relationship stuck in old patterns, then, a process of healing can begin.

In other words, It might take you clarifying your boundaries or managing your anxiety that comes from risking either more intimacy or potential separation. The idea here is not to compromise your core values and beliefs but to build on them.

Commitments that will bring results

Therapy takes work. Things that will improve your experience and results in therapy include:

- Commit to regular weekly sessions and, then, show up each week OR attend Couples Intensive Retreats
- Follow through on the Action Plan (i.e. practice new skills or fill out questionnaires that help you to build more self-awareness).

What can you expect from me?

The good news here is that I will help you find a better way, a more supportive and nurturing way to both give and receive in the relationship. The following concepts will give you a better chance of success.

- Problems or issues that have been causing you pain in your relationship with your partner need to be broken down.
- Healing the wounds that keep getting triggered and are in the way of you accomplishing your therapy goals requires attention.
- Trying new ways of being and acting with each other is a challenge worth undertaking.
- The better you can define who you are, separate and in contrast to your partner, and how your traits complement each other, the better your relationship will become.
- Building trust with your partner is essential to becoming a better team.



Elements that may Change when you Invest in Your Relationship by Attending Therapy:

- Working as a team in collaboration may mean putting aside your differences in order to support your partner when he or she is in pain.
- You may be able to maintain your curiosity about your partner's self-disclosure while managing your own reactions
- You may be able to work effectively through conflict and negotiate your differences — which can lead to improved emotional and sexual intimacy.

So if you are ready to...

... Take a deep dive into what is causing you and your partner pain,
... Take the necessary action and challenging yourself to change the things that are not working and
... Attend regular appointments and following through with your action plans, let's set up some appointments, so we can get to work.

I can be reached at 319-332-2055 or email me at gail@garwoodcounseling.com to schedule an appointment.

I also offer 15 minute [Complimentary Phone Consultation](#).

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