ReKINDLE

Relationship Counselling

Course designed & created by Sian Hines in partnership with ReKindle Counselling ®

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Relationship Counselling

Module 1

Written by Sian Hines

Set up for each day

- There is flexibility within the course.
- Each day will run from 9.45am to 4.30pm.
- Two 10-minute breaks, morning and afternoon.
- Lunch will be 45 minutes.
- There will be icebreakers, getting to know each other for the first part of the course (#sorrynotsorry ☺)
- There will be discussion time included at various points of each day:
  - *To talk through what you have learned.*
  - *To share best practice thoughts.*

Module 1

- Introductions
- Aims of the course
- Rules of the course
- Ethics and principles with couples
- Safety in the room
- Rules of the session
- Up to date relationship statistics
- Couple's initial consultation and the couple's assessment
- Transference and counter transference in couple's therapy
- The first session –What do I/we want, why do I/we need it, what do I/we have
- Questioning
- Improvement scale
- Identifying rigid and inflexible patterns and Genograms
- Aims of the Couples Counsellor

What this Course is Designed to Convey

- How to implement couples counselling in a safe way for yourself and the couples.
- Focusing on main elements that couples can go through.
- Looking at each of the stages that happen working on ways of working, looking, understanding, thinking, responding, and reflecting.
- How to start the sessions, what the first session ideally should include.
- Questions, the different types and examples of them.
- What other sessions can include.
- Endings for sessions
- Information about worst case scenarios in the couple's sessions.
- Competency level working
- How to handle problematic sessions and emotions that can arise during those sessions.
- Working with communication, reactions, trust, betrayals, emotions, coping techniques and certain intimacy issues.

What the Course Includes



Information in the form of an electronic manual and a PowerPoint presentation.



Handouts and links where necessary



Suggestions (where appropriate) for mini exercises for the couples to do.



Moments for discussion and self-reflection – Therapists Corner



Journal encouragement for your journey into couples counselling



Suggested Reading, YouTube Links and documentaries.

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Role Play (#sorry not sorry)

I need 6 volunteers to be part of a couple with me being one half of the couple.

6 scenarios with the rest of you being the counsellor asking, listening, reflecting, suggesting, encouraging.

One scenario each module from module 2 to module 6

What this Course is Not

- This course is not designed to cover every single aspect of problems that couples go through. There is still an element of self-judgement on capability.
- It does not cover complex trauma cases, extreme sexual difficulties or differences between couples due to an ongoing addiction. Whereas there is crossover with communication and reactions with complex cases it is always recommended to refer on singularly or together.

What this Course includes Module packs

At the end of each module, you will get a module pack with various handouts that will be useful when working with couples.

Module 1 includes: Questioning examples, PHQ9, GAD7, Improvement tracker, Initial consultation, Contract, Life Journey, Wheel of life, Anxiety Checklist, power control and equality.

Ethics and Boundaries when Working with Couples

The aim of relationship counselling is to help the couple start healing their relationship. To understand each other better and to understand themselves.

There is no hard and fast rule on whether there should be single sessions involved in relationship counselling.

A fluid approach seems to work best.

The initial consultation will give you an indication of the presenting issues and other factors playing into it. Starting the sessions as a couple and depending on the interactions depends on whether you suggest single sessions.

Confidentiality is still just as important; the same rules apply to couple and individual counselling around reasons you may need to breach. However, it is ESSENTIAL that you make it clear in the session and within your contract that:

- What is raised in a single session will need to be raised at some point in the couple's session.
- There must not be secrets held with you as the counsellor. It impacts the balance of sessions.

Grey Areas with Ethics & Boundaries

Relationship counselling & individual counselling outside of the relationship sessions.

Working with multiple counsellors can make it more problematic. Including single sessions as part of the couple's process can help you to control the speed of progress between the couples allowing sessions to become more stable.

Individual Sessions for:

- The reason they came to counselling initially, this can be absorbed into single sessions as part of the overall picture.
- Something separate to the couple or is out of your scope of capability, then there is call for ethical consideration.

Being mindful

Working with your capability

Supervision

Understanding transference and counter-transference

Are you keeping them with single sessions to rescue them or for your own needs?

Ethics and Boundaries when Working with Couples

- Keeping strong boundaries is essential.
- Maintaining your frame of reference
- Cultural sensitivity and understanding is another important aspect to your couples counselling practise.
- Is there respect and understanding towards each others past?
- Checking the guidance around this as set by BACP and NCPS will help you to maintain required ethics and boundaries.

Relaying Basic Rules in the Counselling Room

1. Punctuality and connection - Phones off, be on time and allowing everyone in the room to finish speaking instead of interrupting.
2. No comparisons - Whenever possible in couples therapy, advise never to compare their marriage to those of others.
3. No criticism - Criticism of each other is damaging.
4. Encourage from the beginning to ‘Always listen to learn’ - Listen to learn - not to immediately react.
5. When one is talking, the other should listen. Understanding each other’s point of view is one of the most important aspects of having a successful marriage or relationship.
6. To not show bursts of anger or violence about the situation or toward your partner.

Relaying Basic Rules in the Counselling Room

7. Communicate - No matter how difficult a topic is, communication is key.
8. Instil the importance of not making verbal threats against their partner.
9. Make it a no accusations zone – accusations will only make things worse.
10. Be committed in and out of the therapy room.
11. Stay on topic - Discussions are valuable but it is important to remain on topic.

Statistical Information

DIVORCE RATES

• 42% of marriages end in divorce	*England & Wales* (ONS, 2013)
• More than 235,000 people divorced in 2011	*England & Wales* (ONS, 2012)
• Almost half of divorces involve children under 16 yrs	*England & Wales* (ONS, 2012)
• The average age of people divorcing in 2011 was 44.5 yrs for men and 42.1 yrs for women	*England & Wales* (ONS, 2012)
• 66% of divorces were on petition of the wife.	*England & Wales* (ONS, 2012)
• Of every divorce in 2011 - it was the first divorce for both partners in 70.1% of cases, while in 19.7% one party had been divorced previously, and in 9.6% of cases both had divorced previously	*England & Wales* (ONS, 2012)
• Second marriages are more likely to be successful than first marriages. If one or both partners are remarrying they have a 31% chance of divorce, compared to 45% if it is both partners' first time. *Note: There isn't consensus on this issue*	*England & Wales* (Benson, 2013)

Statistical Information

MARRIAGE DURATION

- 34% of marriages are expected to end in divorce by the 20th wedding anniversary.

  6% of marriages end by the 20th wedding anniversary because one of the spouses has died.

  England & Wales (ONS, 2013)

- Between the fourth and eighth wedding anniversaries the probability of getting divorced by the next anniversary is over 3%

  England & Wales (ONS, 2013)

- At the 26th anniversary the chance of divorcing by the next anniversary falls below 1%.

  England & Wales (ONS, 2013)

- 16% of marriages reach the 60th wedding anniversary without separation or death

  England & Wales (ONS, 2013)

Statistical Information

OTHER FACTORS

- Previous research indicates a trend that those who marry younger are more likely to divorce. For example, of women who had not been married before and who married in 1976:
  - 53% had divorced by their 30th anniversary if they were aged under 20 when they married
  - 23% had divorced by the same anniversary if they were aged 30 to 34 when they married
  - 7% had divorced if they were aged 45 to 49 when they married

England & Wales (ONS, 2013)

- Having children or staying childless has no clear effect on risk of divorce

England & Wales (ONS, 2012)

- While divorce rates are falling for the general population, the number of men aged 60+ divorcing has increased by 73% from 1.6 divorces per 1,000 in 1991 to 2.3 per 1,000 in 2011.

  Similar trends are reported in women aged 60+.

  Reasons suggested include an increased in life expectancy, reduced stigma surrounding divorce and greater financial independence among older women

England & Wales (ONS, 2013b)

Statistical Information

REASONS FOR DIVORCE

- Reasons proven for legal divorce (ONS, 2011):
  - 15% of divorces were granted for adultery, same across genders
  - 36% of divorces granted to men and 54% of divorces granted to women were due to unreasonable behaviour
  - Less than 1% of all divorces were granted due to desertion
  - 32% of divorces granted to men and 22% of divorces granted to women were granted following 2 years of separation and consent
  - 16% of divorces granted to men and 9% of divorces granted to women were granted following 5 years of separation

England & Wales (ONS, 2012)

Statistical Information

Relationships Take Work

- Marriage remains a risky business. According to the statistics by World Population Review, (as of 2019) 50% of all marriages end in divorce.

- If you get married between 20 and 25 years old, you have a 60% chance of your marriage ending in divorce.

- Second marriages have a 60% chance of divorce, and third marriages have a 73%.

According to John Gottman, founder of The Gottman Institute, unhappy couples wait an average of six years before seeking couples counselling.

This is six years of chronic conflict, resentment, criticism, contempt, defensiveness, drift, fantasies, and negative bias.

Statistically, more women are domestically abused than men, but men can be victims too with about 20-30% of domestic abuse being female to male.

Statistical Information

Things to consider:

- Nowadays, more relationships than marriages?
- How have relationships evolved?
- How have marriages evolved?
- How has the pandemic impacted relationships and marriages?

Statistical Information

Some further interesting Stats, this time about sex

Over 80% of all couples experience sexual discrepancy

15% of all sexual encounters end negatively

Low desire impacts 30%-40% of women and 15%-20% of men

85% of women do not orgasm during intercourse

Most people think sex should last 45 minutes, the average is 5 minutes.

75% of therapists across model don’t talk about sex with couples

Statistics from 2025 National Institute for Clinical Application of behavioural medicine

Final Statistical Information

Realistic Timeline for Relationship Growth….based on consistent work in and out of the therapy room

Trust after betrayal	1-2 years
Breaking attachment patterns	6-36 months
Learning secure communication pattern	8 to 16 hours
Changing conflict styles	6-9 months
Building emotional intimacy	4-8 months
Creating consistent boundaries	3-6 months
Stopping people pleasing	6-12 months
Healing childhood wounds	1-3 years
Stopping defensive behaviour	4-8 months
Learning active listening skills	2-4 months

Facts About Couples Counselling

- Couples' counsellors are taught that working with a couple means there are "three clients in the room, each member of the couple and the relationship itself
- Counselling is not all about being serious and working hard in sessions and coming out drained.
- Couples come to us to be saved. Countless messages have come through to me asking to save their relationship.
- As per Dr Gottman, couples wait an average of six years of being unhappy before getting help.
- Most couples come as a last resort.
- Both need to be comfortable and happy with the counsellor not just one.
- Even happy couples argue. Normalise this.
- There are 4 stages that a couple go through that signifies the ending of a relationship.
  - Recognising that there are problems in the relationship.
  - Talking through the problems are met with hostility.
  - Couple starts to lead parallel lives.
  - Loneliness and resentment starts to eat away at both.

Meaningful Quote



Aims of the Couples Counsellor

- Listen and identify what has not been said and bringing that into the sessions.
- Create an instruction manual so to speak on how to understand each other.
- Create rapport with both.
- Source the positives as well as the negatives in the relationship and the situations they can find themselves in.
- Create SMART goals with the couple and reflect on them frequently.
- Psycho education
- To control the session so that it remains productive and moving forward.
- To introduce new coping skills and strategies in the sessions with the instructions to safely practise outside the therapy room.
- To help the couple to understand the emotions surrounding them.
- Encourage each couple to hold space whilst the other is talking.
- To introduce the couple to the negative communication patterns that are happening within their relationship.
- To encourage each of them to use “I” statements more than “You” statements to then follow up with “My concern is” or “it would be great if we could”
- To continually show them the progress that they have made, the couple may not notice the small positive steps that they have taken.

Aims of the Couples Counselling

The aim of the counselling sessions is to help each person become a more understanding, supportive and responsive partner.

We can help them to learn to:

- Sit with discomfort
- Listen to understand not to defend
- Stop making everything about individual needs
- Practise repair after a rupture
- Be willing to look at own patterns of behaviour
- Love them how they need to be loved

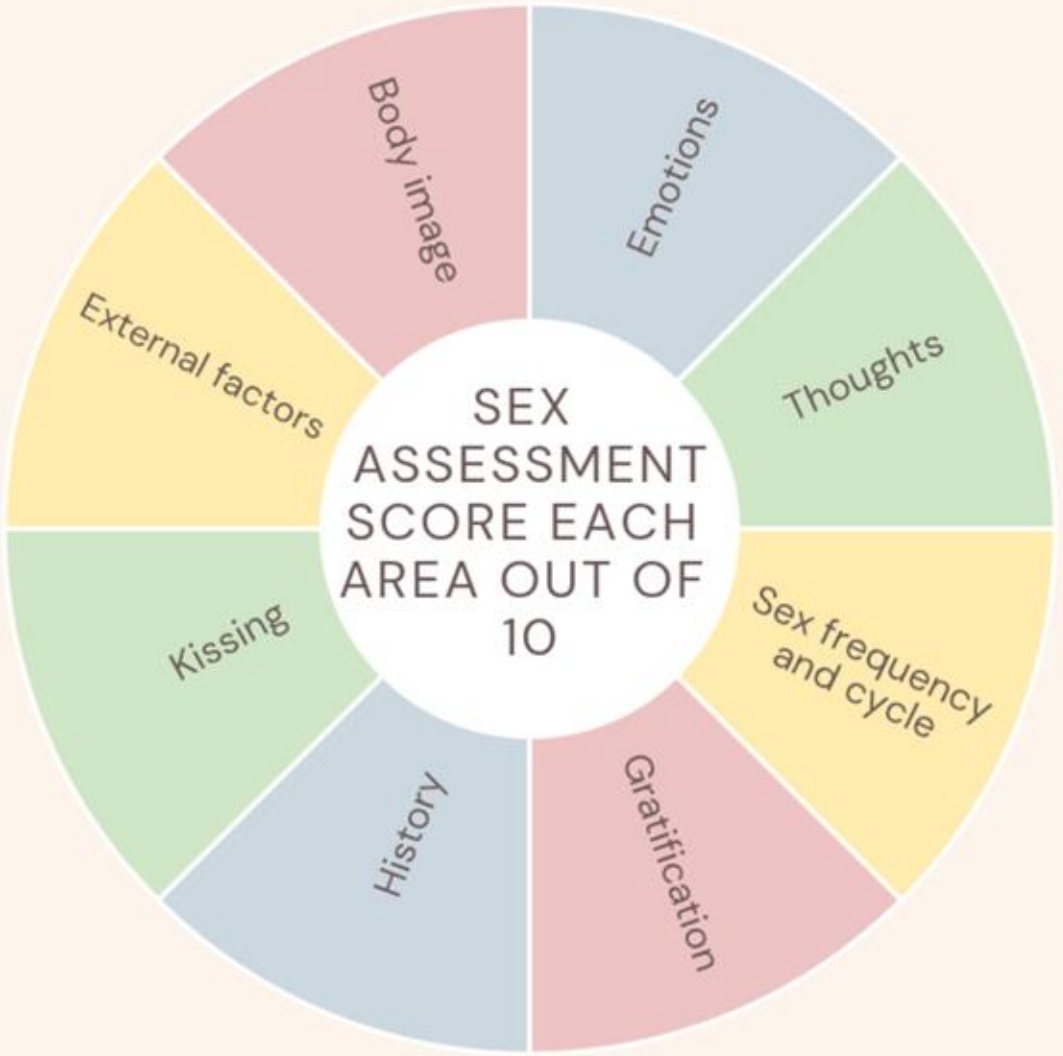
The Contract

- My contract for couples counselling differs to my singles.
- It has all the basic information that practising counsellors should have in a contract. It will also have:
- Information about what to expect in the session between three of us.
- It will have the rules of the session, what is not tolerated.
- It will have an explanation about what will impact the sessions from taking place and when I might have to stop them.
- It will have information on what they need to understand about single sessions within the couples counselling session.
- It will include anything I feel is necessary to protect all three of us (Or more if it is polyamory)
- The course as it goes on will have stops to discuss what would be good to include in the contract for safeguarding and clarity.
- I will have a clause about informed consent between myself and other counsellors.

Initial Consultation

- The importance of the initial consultation – asking the right questions.
  - *(Included are my initial consultations in useful handouts which will be sent to you).*
- The importance of private observations – assessing what has not only been said, but shown
  - *Who speaks over who*
  - *Body language of both*
  - *Language choices (I or You)*
  - *Criticism or contempt present*
  - *GAD7 PHQ9 needed on either?*
- Sex life
- Look out for the 3 As (abuse, adultery, addictions)
- Question internally if the initial consultation is done singularly

Initial Consultation



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The 3 A's

Abuse potentially present – subtle questioning in the first session, looking at the body language. Reading between the lines. We do more work on this in module 6 and over the next few slides.

The following situations would mean that work with the couple may not be suitable or safe at this moment in time and individual work may be appropriate and necessary before any couple's work.

- If there are risk factors for lethality (deadliness).
- If court proceedings for domestic violence are pending or in process.
- If there is an injunction/non molestation order.
- If child protection agencies are involved with the children.
- If there is a drug or alcohol problem that could increase the abuse.
- If there are mental health problems.
- If the victim minimises the violence/abuse.

The 3 A’s

If domestic abuse is disclosed during couples therapy, it is crucial to prioritise safety first. Here are the steps to follow:

Immediate response: Remain calm and maintain a supportive tone

Separate assessment: Conduct a thorough risk assessment. The Abusive Behaviour Inventory will work well here. This is in your Handout Pack.

Clinical decision making: Based on risk assessment make a clinical decision regarding the safety of the relationship and the need for further therapy.

Non immediate abandonment: It is important not to abandon a couple once the risk assessment identifies domestic abuse

Follow through: Maintain clear boundaries and consult with domestic violence specialists when in doubt.

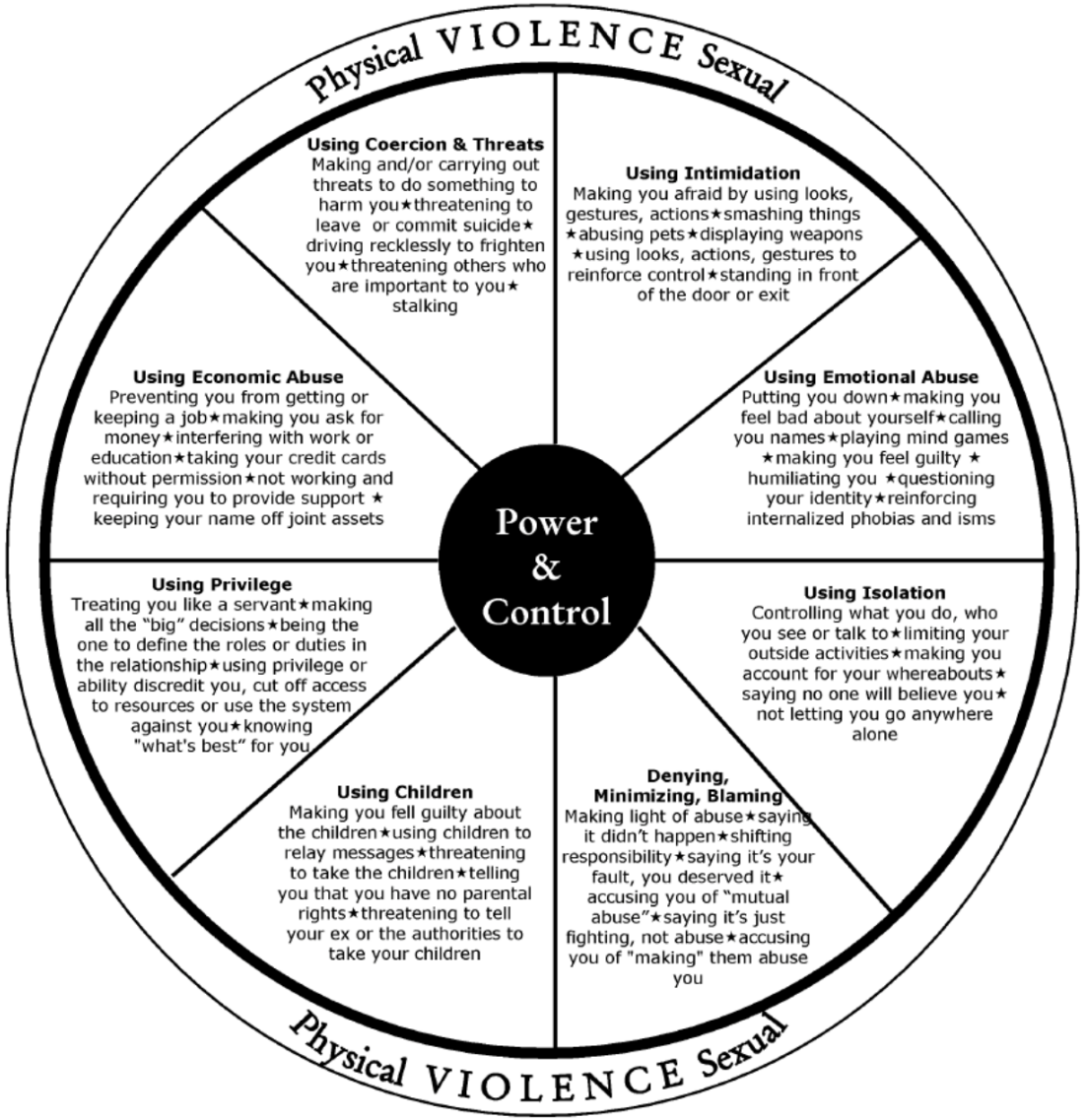
Separate sessions: If abuse is present having separate sessions is essential to assess the situation and plan for safety for both.

The 3 A's

Working with the couple if the following is present can hinder progress or grind it to a complete stop…. If the person using domestic abuse:

- Denies their actions or does not acknowledge there is a problem.
- Minimises the abuse.
- Shows no remorse.
- Shows no motivation to change.
- Is unable to develop a commitment to a resolution.
- Lacks appropriate boundaries.
- Is unable to reflect on past experiences.
- Blames their partner.
- Persistently blames others, like family or professionals.
- Is unable to empathise with their partner or listen to another point of view.
- Is unable to see professionals as potentially helpful.
- Lacks respect for social rules.
- Has extreme gender-based values.
- Sees others as objects rather than people.

The 3 A's



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The 3 A’s

Abuse

It is difficult to ascertain from the beginning of the couple therapeutic journey.

The power and control wheel shows the different elements of abuse to be aware of within a relationship.

It would be a good to include a clause about abuse in your contract and detail the steps you might have to do is abuse is present or has been present.

Note look out for reactive abuse in the initial consultation or in the first few sessions.

The 3 A’s

Adultery

This is covered more deeply in module 4 – if the affair is still happening, there is a high chance that the couples counselling will be counterproductive.

Be open and state that counselling will not work if the third party is still in the frame.

Addiction

Couples that have addiction present within the relationship will need to be clear about what the couples counselling is for. The addiction is a separate entity and therefore should not be the focus of the sessions.

How the addiction impacts the relationship is the focus plus any other factors.

Therapist Corner

Thinking about your Couples Initial Consultation

In groups spend about 10 minutes each on the following subjects:

Initial Consultation

What do you need to know from your couple?

Basic and essential information

Are there any danger areas within an initial consultation that could cause potential conflict?

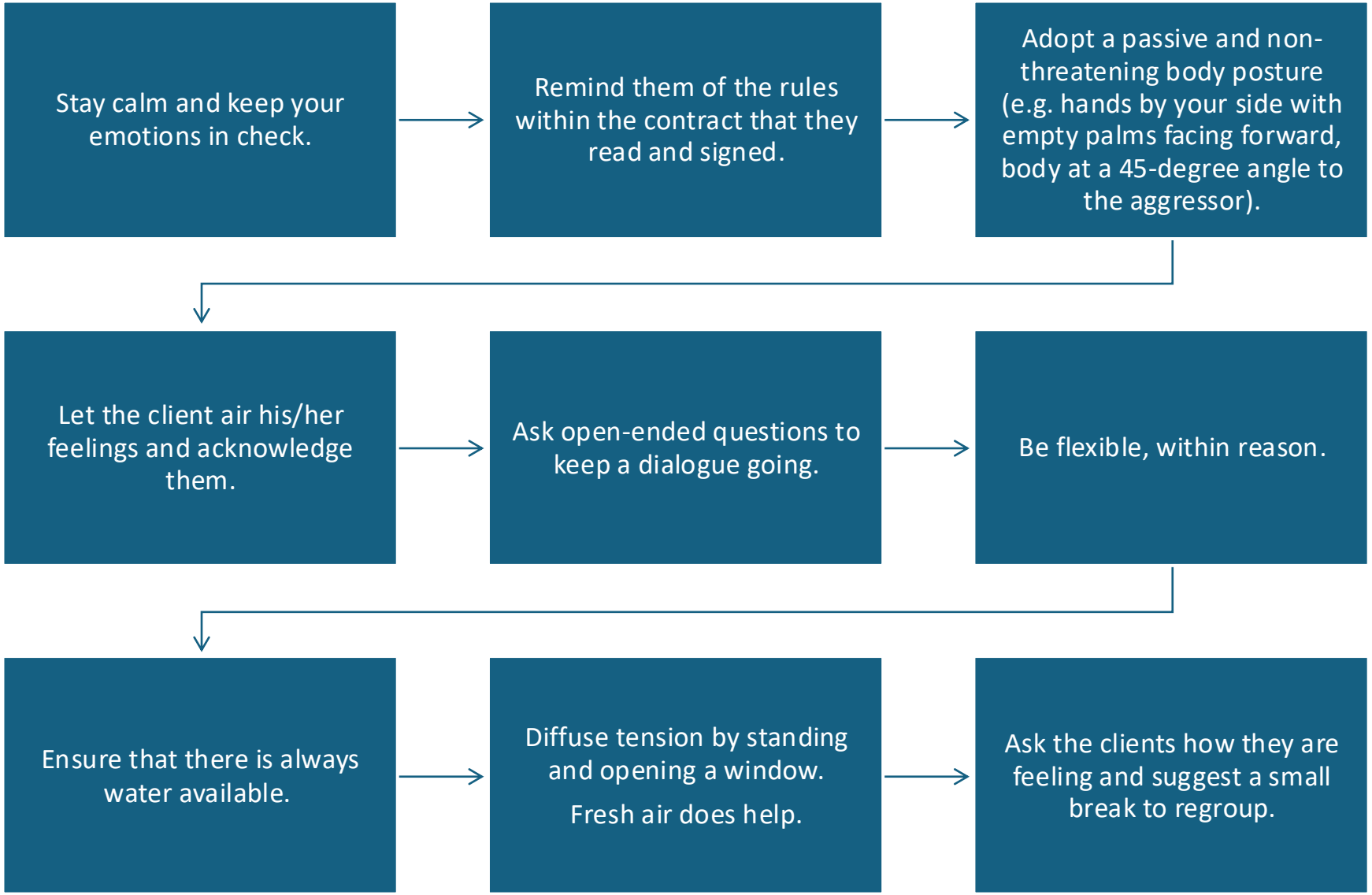
Couples Contract

What needs to be in a contract to make it safe?

Are you comfortable enforcing your contract?

Does there need to be a clause for Domestic Abuse, Adultery or Addiction?

Anger in Couples Counselling



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Arguments in the Therapy Room

Arguments happen, in the therapy room disagreements can sneak in unexpectedly.

As the counsellor you will need to intervene.

The main goals of the intervention are to:

1. *Interrupt any escalation*
2. *Restore safety and composure*
3. *Re-establish communication, with boundaries within the session*
4. *Promote understanding and a team approach*
5. *Address therapy as the context for the argument*

Therapist Corner

Things to consider for when arguments happen

- Some therapists thank their clients for arguing in front of them, because it shows a level of comfort on their part, and it allows the therapist insight into the escalation pattern.
- Be reflective, did we play a role in the argument? (Subconsciously of course) Did we mistime a question or not see that this was the wrong time for the subject discussion point. Do we need to apologise, if necessary, for any passive or active role you may have had in the argument, or the way it progressed. Sometimes the counsellor is (at least partly) responsible for couple arguments.
- Make sure to explain your initial interruption of the argument, your interventions, and any other therapeutic steps you have taken during the session.
- Clients may also have feedback for you about how you were helpful or unhelpful during the session. Asking for this feedback is a brave step and will help you adjust your approach to an in-session argument in the future.

Transference

A refresh on what transference is in the therapy room:

This is the unconscious projection of feelings, emotions, and experiences from a past relationship (parental/romantic/platonic/colleague/family) onto the therapist or someone else in their life .

The client may transfer feelings that they have towards these significant people in their lives onto the therapist. Or it may come up in conversations that there is transference happening.

Transference can be helpful as it allows a different dynamic in the room that can make significant headway in part of the reason for therapy.

Types of Transference

- Partner to partner – This is relationship based
- Partner to therapist – projections directed towards the therapist in different ways from both partners
- Couple to therapist – Both of them transfer expectation to you.
- Displacement – feelings being displaced.

Counter-Transference

A refresh on what countertransference is in the therapy room:

This is where the therapist's own personal responses and reactions happen towards the client.

It relates from the therapists own unresolved feelings towards a significant person or situation in their life.

One that has made an impact in their relationships. These emotional reactions can be conscious or unconscious.

Types of Counter transference

- Complimentary – responds and compliments their situation.
- Concordant – identifying
- Systemic – responding to the dynamic
- Personal – stems from own relationship history
- Cultural – differences in cultural background and different communication patterns.

Therapist Corner

Therapist Corner – Self-reflection

My recent brush with counter transference

Couple in late 50s/early 60s

Him feeling abandonment

Her workaholic

Him lacking empathy

Her feeling lost

I felt angry for her when I heard the steps that preceded the reason for coming to therapy.

Took it to supervision, my anger I felt towards him was coming from anger I was feeling in and around my life.

When was your last brush with transference/counter transference – what are your steps?

5-minute discussion with the person to your left on how you would handle this with couples.
Feel free to move into a free therapy room to do this.

Hats We Wear

Being a couples counsellor means playing multiple roles, you will be a:

counsellor

facilitator

witness

educator

First/Second Session

First session is a ‘back to basics’ when they first met each other.

- Likes/dreams that you remember from each other.
- Who were you both then?
- Who are you both now?
- What do you miss about who you once were?
- How do you both show that you care, and do you both see it?

This touches upon where they were at the beginning and where they currently are in the here and now.

They both hear it from each other in the same safe setting

First/Second Session

Visualisation/Starting Point - In the first session I start with a semi visualisation.

I bring into the room two paths.

I ask them to think about their individual path that they have walked and what they have seen and felt.

I then refer to the paths as merging into one and ask them about the obstacles on that path.

What are the obstacles, how big are they, can they be chipped away at or shrunk.

What is needed by each of them to see the obstacle differently.

Use ‘The Life Journey’ as a prompt to talk about the different paths that they walk.

Or Progress Tracker/Wheel of Life – scoring main areas of life for improvement. Good talking point.

First/Second Session – Progress Tracker

Progress tracker. The aim is for both partners to circle the number that describes their current state.

This is repeated in 6 to 8 weeks' time.

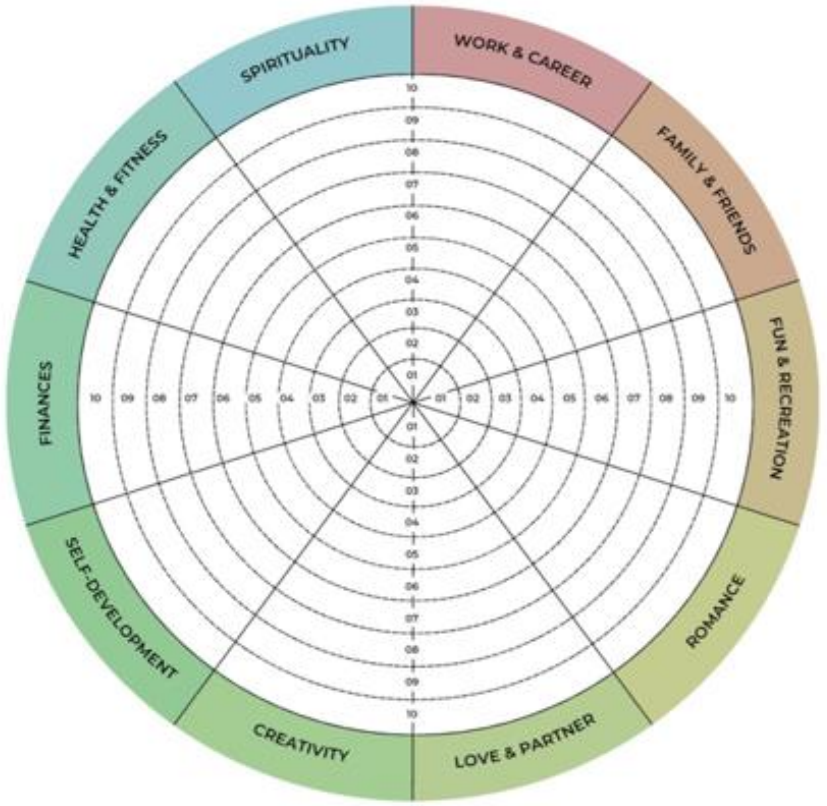
In-between that time part of the session focus can be on the lower scores of the tracker to see if they can be improved a couple of points.

1 = disappointing 5 = ok 10 = amazing

Joy	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*
Work	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*
Family	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*
Friends	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*
Exercise	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*
Energy	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*
Creativity	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*
Socialising	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*
Gratitude	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*
Alone time	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*
Meditation	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*
Mindset	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*
Couple time	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*
Emotions	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*
The Past	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*
The Future	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*
Love	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*
Communication	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*

First/Second Session – Wheel of Life

The Wheel of Life



How to use

1. Mark your score for each category. 1 being poor – 10 being fantastic
2. For the categories that are low, talk together about what you can do singularly or together to improve the score

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The First/Second Session Accomplished

By the end of the first or second session, aim to have the couple able to state:

What is it that they/I want?

- This is what they each want out of the therapy sessions, out of the relationship and their life together.
- This then forms a joint goal.

Why do we/I need it?

- The reason that it is needed, what you will receive from working on the wants.
- This is the driving force for the two of them.

What do we/I have?

- This is to identify what is positive in their lives and what is negative. The good is bolstered, the negative is analysed.

The First/Second Session Accomplished

So many parts of a healthy, functioning relationship relies on being in the window of tolerance (WOT) and in the adult ego state.

It is natural for couples to be the furthest point away from their WOT when they come to you.

The modules from 1 to 5 have been written to show you the techniques to understand and work with various issues in a relationship.

I start the WOT work gently or urgently from the first session.

I identify internally what is possibly happening with PAC, I have an inkling about attachment and drivers from the 2nd or 3rd session

We cover PAC, attachment and Drivers in Module 3

We cover WOT in Module 5

Third Session and Beyond - Working with the Past

Dysfunctional Rules	Four elements of recovery →				Healthy Ways of Being
	Behavioural	***Emotional***	***Cognitive***	***Spiritual***	
Rigidity	Practice letting go of control. Compromise and Change Behaviour.	Spontaneous release.	I am keeping an open mind.	I am open to learn new ways of experiencing spirituality	**Flexibility**
Silence	Talk about what you see, hear and feel.	Face fear, feel repressed feelings	I am talking about what I feel, hear and see.	I am expressing my belief in the action of my day-to-day life.	**Expression**
Denial	Match inner feeling states with outer expressions	Recognises inner feeling states.	I accept what I hear, feel and see is correct.	I accept that there is a spiritual force that works in my life.	**Acceptance**
Isolation	Seek support, makes contact with other people.	Honestly express feelings to others.	I am having rewarding relationships	I am sharing my beliefs and practises with people.	**Intimacy**

Third Sessions and Beyond - Genograms

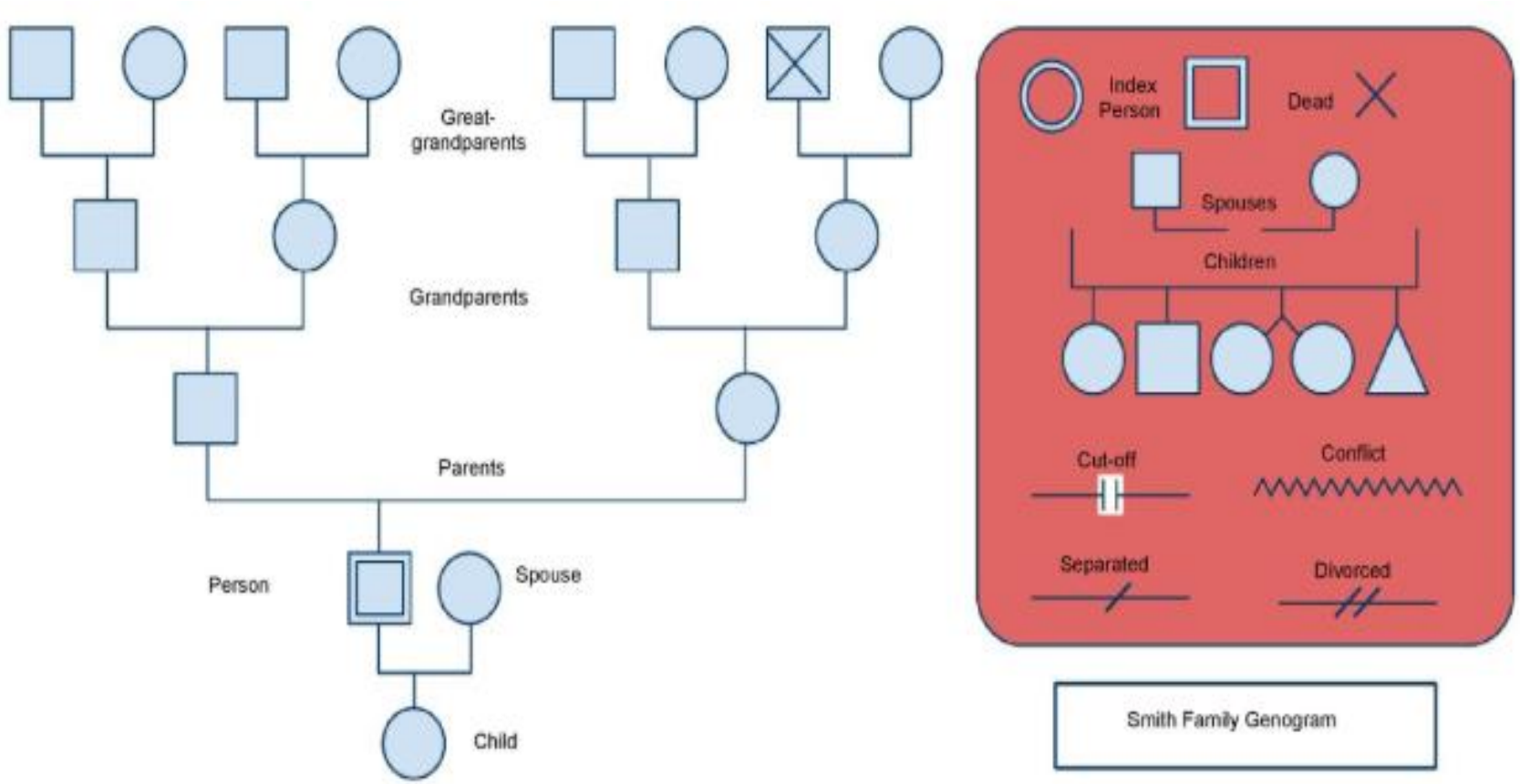
Introducing Genograms in the first few sessions can help the couple to see family dynamic as a bigger picture.

It will also help you to see patterns that run generationally in families. It is insight and a way forward.

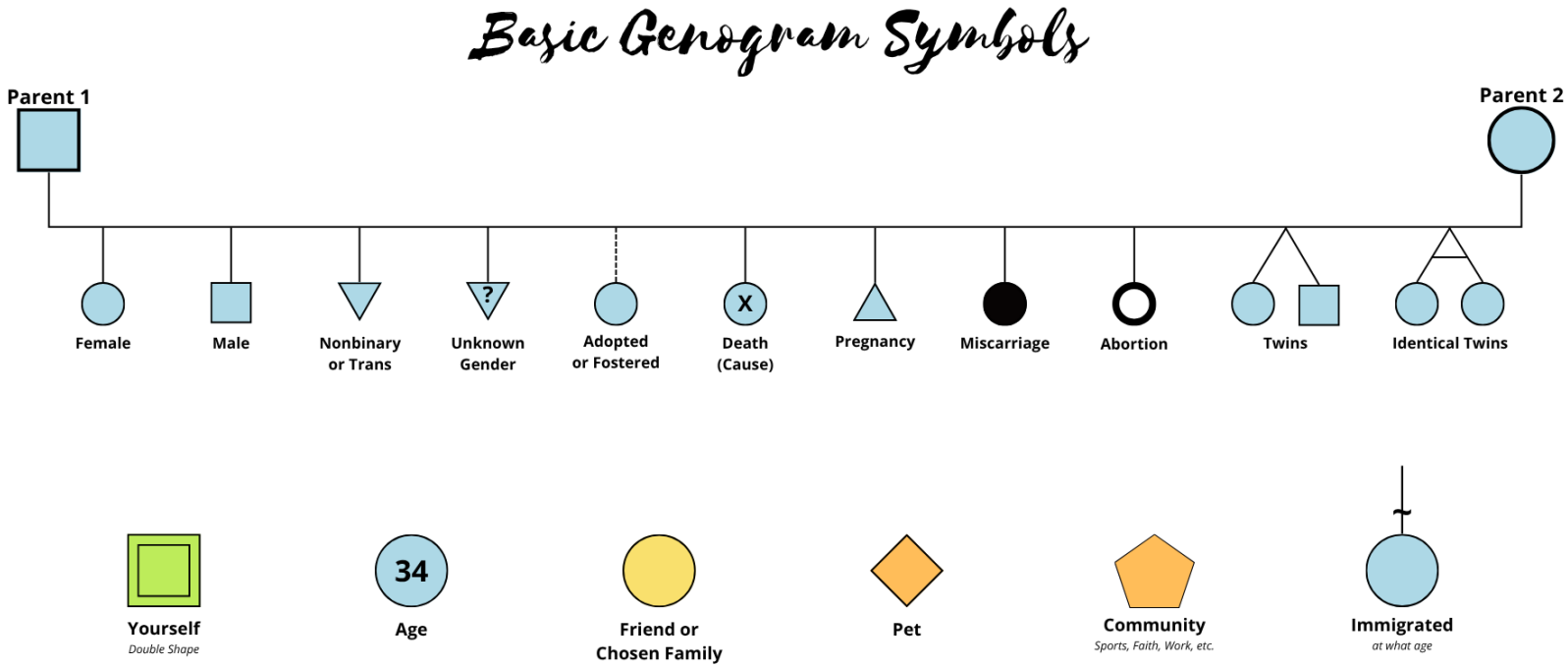
It is a starting point that most likely is showing up in the relationship.

It does not need to be in depth just the basics with notes on your own observations when the clients talk through it.

Third sessions and Beyond - Genograms



Third sessions and Beyond - Genograms



ReKINDLE Relationship Counselling

Therapist Corner

Things to consider with couples counselling for future sessions.

- Talking about single sessions for couple issues only then coming back together to move forward together. What is raised in single sessions needs to be raised in couples at some point.
- Identifying whether personal counselling might be relevant for the client to work on issues separately to couples counselling.
- Refer to Initial consultation document regularly.
- Are they stuck in negative patterns, where have these come from.

Questioning

- *Socratic*
- *Solution Focused*
- *Miracle*
- *Circular*
- Motivational

Questioning - Socratic



Socratic Questioning

Involves a disciplined and thoughtful dialogue between two or more people.

The aim is to expose, understand, challenge and unravel deeply held values and beliefs that frame and support what we think and speak.

To do this a series of focused, direct yet open questions are used to unpack beliefs, where they came from and the beliefs of those important to us.

Questioning

Socratic Examples

What are your core values, and why are they important to you?

Can you identify a moment in your life that shaped who you are today?

What do you think each other's greatest strengths are?

What motivates each of you towards your goals?

What would you both do if you knew you could not fail?

What are your biggest fears and how do they affect your decisions?

Questioning – Solution Focused



Solution-Focused Questioning
Is a type of therapy which focuses on setting goals and working out how to achieve them.

The questions are all future focused rather than about the past. The aim is to promote positive change by encouraging you to focus on what can be done rather than what can't.

Solution-focused helps the couple to discover, clarify and achieve their own solutions to problems. It supports and motivates them to move forward in life, rather than remaining stuck on the issues from the past.

Questioning - Solution Focused

Solution Focused Questioning - will help to:

- Explore Strengths and Successes
- Envision the Future
- Identify Resources and Supports
- Foster Positive Change
- Shift Perspectives
- Build on Small Wins
- Maintain Motivation

Questioning – Solution Focused Starting Questions

Solution Focussed Examples

What would we do if we were at our best?

When you have felt like this before, what has your attention been on?

What do your thoughts (or self-talk) need to look like to stop feeling negative?

When you have felt less than your best, what did you do more or less of?

Once you met, how did you first notice the potential for a long-term relationship?

Questioning – Solution Focused Continuing Questions

Solution Focussed Examples

What has helped so far?

How do you want to feel at the end of the session?

What would you both like to do that you have felt you can't?

Things don't seem to be going well between you and your partner, how would you like it to be different?

What is the single smallest thing you could do to make things easier between you?

What do you want to stay the same between the two of you?

Questioning – Miracle Question

Solution Focussed Miracle Question

The miracle question is a solution focused question. It works by asking the couple to imagine and discuss a possible world where problems are removed, and issues addressed.

The question could be asked in the following ways:

“Assume the problem has been solved. What is different?”

or

“Assume the problem is gone. What does this mean to you both?”

Questioning - Circular



Circular Questioning
Is used with individuals, couples, and families to help them see alternative or new options and possibilities, plus explore other peoples' views.

It focuses on the following subjects within the relationship:

Behaviour
Feeling
Belief
Meanings

Questioning - Circular

Circular Questioning covers the following aspects:

- Exploring Perspectives
- Identifying Patterns of Behaviour
- Considering Impact on Each Other
- Exploring Solutions and Change
- Considering Roles in the Relationship
- Exploring Communication Styles
- Looking at the Future

Questioning - Circular

Circular Examples

When A is depressed, what does B do in response to this?

When A asks a question about finances, how does B react in response to it?

When A queries if there is anything happening on a particular day so that they can go out, what does B do in response?

How might this problem change in the near future … medium future … long term future?

When you are unhappy with what's happening in this relationship, which part is more likely to take over: your rational side, or your emotional side?

Is this relationship happier at home …or on holiday …or elsewhere?

Questioning – Motivational



Motivational Interviewing (MI)

Is an effective tool that can help couples move away from conflict toward a relationship that is more collaborative, goal-oriented, with motivation and commitment to change.

MI can be used to help partners articulate their desires for change, recognise the importance of change, and build confidence in their ability to make those changes.

The core roots of MI are:

- *Empathetic listening*
- *Collaboration*
- *Guiding clients towards self-discovery*
- *Empowering clients in decision making*
- *Exploration of goals, values and aspirations*

Questioning - Motivational

Implementing Motivational Interviewing

It brings into conversations the ups and downs of the relationship where there are conflicting desires or goals and helps them to clear ambivalence in the here and now.

To implement MI in couples counselling you will need to adopt the following key strategies and techniques.

Questioning – Motivational

Addressing Ambivalence

- Explore both sides - encourage the couple to express reasons for change and reasons for concern.
- Highlight discrepancies - guide the couple to identify the discrepancy between the relationship as it stands in the here and now and what they want to achieve.
- Normalise ambivalence - they are not expected to agree on everything, it can't always be 'yes' and positive vibes only.
- Ambivalence is not failure or a lack of commitment to each other.
- Encourage change with promoting questions.

Questioning - Motivational

Addressing Ambivalence – Questions and Statements

- "You have said that you know _exercise_ is the best choice, but that it won't fit with your lifestyle. What are some of your concerns about fitting _exercise_ into your current lifestyle?"
- "What is it about your _reactions or behaviours__ that others may see as reasons for concern?"
- "How has _routine_ stopped you from doing what you want to do?"
- "How do you feel about _your partner being busy with life_?"
- "The fact that you are sharing this with me indicates that you are interested in learning about ___astronomy__. Why do you want to learn about _this, what will it do to your mindset_?"

Questioning - Motivational

Enhancing Motivation for Change

To address:

- Encourage the couple to reflect on positive aspects of change and express their desires for a better relationship.
- Help the couple to recognise the negative consequences of maintaining the status quo - Explore the cost of inaction.
- Highlight past successes and strengths about each other… confidence boosting for change.

Questioning - Motivational

Reinforcing positive change – Questions & Statements

- "That sounds like a good idea."
- "That's a good point."
- "You are very considerate of how your decisions affect other people."
- "It seems you've changed the way you think about _____. How do you feel about that?"

Questioning - Motivational

Building Rapport and Trust

To address:

- Encourage and teach active listening. Practise it to them and invite the couple to do the same.
- Reflect the couple's thoughts and feelings to demonstrate understanding and validate experiences.

Questioning - Motivational

Trust and Rapport Building– Questions & Statements

- "How important is this to you?"
- "How much do you want to _____?"
- "How confident are you that you can make this change?"
- "It sounds like you want to continue to _____. What personal strengths do you both have that will help you succeed? Who could offer helpful support so you can continue to _____?"

Questioning - Motivational

Trust and Rapport Building– Active Listening

- "You're feeling uncomfortable with your _____."
- "You are angry with/about ___."
- "You've tried to do _____ before and it has not worked for you."
- "You are frustrated with trying to _____."
- "So, if I understand you so far, you ___."
- "You are wondering if you should do something about ___."
- "I can see how you might feel ___ at this point."

Questioning - Motivational

Overcoming Resistance and Barriers

To address:

- Normalise resistance, reassure that it is a natural response to feel uncomfortable around change.
- Explore underlying concerns, fears, concerns or beliefs that could be contributing to resistance.
- Encourage the couple to express their desire for change and explore benefits of making positive changes, shifting focus forward.

Questioning - Motivational

Rolling with Resistance– Questions & Statements

- Ultimately, it is your decision. So, what would you like to try?
- I don't understand everything you are going through, but if you want to share what you've tried, maybe together we can find something that could work for you both.
- If things worked out exactly as you like, what would be different?
- If you decided to change, what do you think could work for you?
- What concerns do you have about making changes?
- What aspects cause you to think that this is a problem?
- What difficulties have you encountered trying to change your habits?

Questioning - Motivational

Part of Motivational Interviewing will involve couples in setting their own goals for counselling.

By giving the couple, a sense of ownership and control over their therapeutic journey we as therapists are strengthening the therapeutic alliance and promote active engagement between the couple.

Think back to earlier when I introduced the

What do I want

Why do I need it

What do I have

Those are the goals that will be supported by MI. In essence Motivational Interviewing starts from the very first session

Questioning, an important point

- *Socratic*
- *Solution Focused*
- *Miracle*
- *Circular*
- Motivational

Activity

In two groups create a list of questions that you feel would be good starting points for relationship counselling ensuring that they cover the following questioning styles:

- Socratic
- Solution Focused
- Miracle Question
- Circular
- Motivational

Each group has a scenario that comes up frequently in couples counselling.

Take 30 minutes to discuss and create your list before coming back and sharing.

Activity

Group 1

My partner doesn’t do housework the way I do it. It infuriates me.

We have so many rows.

He doesn’t listen to me

Activity

Group 2

My partner never thinks of consequences.

She rushes in and I am always the one that has to pick up the pieces.

It can be for buying things we don’t need to driving spontaneously and wasting an entire day.

Activity

A recap on the questioning styles in relationship counselling

Socratic - encourages deep reflection and critical thinking by asking open-ended, thought-provoking questions. Socratic questions can help partners explore their thoughts, feelings, assumptions, and beliefs about the relationship, while encouraging them to consider alternative perspectives and solutions

Solution Focused - to help couples to identify their strengths, explore potential solutions, and shift the focus away from problems toward creating positive change. These questions encourage a collaborative, future-oriented approach.

Miracle Question - it helps them both in a safe environment to envision their future without problems, this helps to identify their goals. It is also a good way to help the couples to see if they are sharing the same vision.

Circular - to explore relationships and interactions within a couple, encouraging them to consider their perspectives from different angles and think about how each partner's behaviour and feelings influence the other.

Motivational - focuses on enhancing a person's motivation to change by exploring and resolving ambivalence. MI can be used to help partners articulate their desires for change, recognise the importance of change, and build confidence in their ability to make those changes.

ReKINDLE
Relationship Counselling

See you next time

From all of us at ReKindle… bye for now