Helping Couples with Connection: Strategies That Are Inclusive for All Types of Couples

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Learning Objectives

1. Rebuild friendship and attachment

2. Maintain emotional and physical intimacy

3. Tailor your work to the type of couple and both "traditional" and "non-traditional" couples
Research of John and Julie Gottman

- Early research included discovery of reliable patterns
- Masters vs. Disasters of Relationships
- The Love Lab

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Emotional Connection is the key to having a healthy relationship.

The Gottman Method
The Work of Dr. Sue Johnson

Emotionally Focused Therapy is focused on “creating connection in close relationships”.

Premarital Couples

Help couples to understand common myths about relationships

• Normalize connection/disconnection oscillation
• Solvable vs. perpetual conflict - 69% is perpetual!
Premarital Couples

Help couples get to know each other’s “inner” worlds
Intervention: Love Maps

Sample questions include:
• What is your partner's fondest dream, as yet unachieved?
• What is one of your partner's worst fears in life?
• What is one of your partner's best childhood experiences?
Couples with Young Children

Help couples stay connected: Closing Exits

Exits graphic.pdf
## Couples with Young Children

Help couples communicate effectively: Imago Dialogue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Listener</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I’d like to have a dialogue about_________. Is now a good time?</td>
<td>Yes or No and give alternate time</td>
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<td>I noticed I had a reaction when...</td>
<td>Mirror (repeat back) Did I get it? Is there more?</td>
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<td>What I told myself about this is...</td>
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<tr>
<td>How I felt was...</td>
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<tr>
<td>What this reminds me of from my past is...</td>
<td>Summarize. Was that a good summary?</td>
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<td>How I reacted was...</td>
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Blended Families

• Help couples communicate effectively about issues such as parenting stepchildren or issues with ex’s
  Intervention: Dreams Within Conflict
Help couples be on the same team

Intervention: Stress Reducing Conversation

The listener will:

- Communicate understanding
- NOT side with the other
- NOT problem solve
Empty Nesters

Help couples regain connection and intimacy

Broadening the definition of sex
Same Sex Couples

Help couples with experience of coming out
Help couples deal with bias & potential lack of acceptance

Case Study: Brenda & Amy
Couples with Different Races/Religions

**Speaker**

I'd like to have a dialogue about_________. Is now a good time?

I noticed I had a reaction when...

What I told myself about this is...

How I felt was...

What this reminds me of from my past is...

How I reacted was...

Confirm feelings or clarify then thank the listener for listening.

Switch Roles

**Listener**

Yes or No and give alternate time

Mirror (repeat back)

Did I get it?

Is there more?

Summarize.

Was that a good summary?

You make sense to me and what makes sense is...

I’m guessing you feel...

Did/Do you feel that way?

What touched me was...
Couples with Different Races/Religions

Intervention: Create Shared Meaning using Gottman’s 4 Pillars

Ritual  Roles  Goals  Symbols
Common Themes

Communication About Conflict

Intervention: Affect Moderation
Affect Moderation Interventions

Naming 5 Senses
Breathing (with counting, optional)
Visualization of a Calm Place
10-second Muscle Hold and Release
Common Themes

Intimacy—Emotional and Physical

Intervention: Bids for Connection “The Easiest Way to Improve Your Relationship” video by The Gottman Institute

• Any gesture that says "I want to connect with you"
• Three possible responses:
  • Turn Towards
  • Turn Away
  • Turn Against
Common Themes

Intimacy-Emotional and Physical

• Intervention: Bids for Connection
• Any gesture that says "I want to connect with you"
• Three possible responses:
  • Turn Towards
  • **Turn Away**
  • Turn Against
Common Themes

Intimacy-Emotional and Physical

• Intervention: Bids for Connection
• Any gesture that says "I want to connect with you"
• Three possible responses:
  • Turn Towards
  • Turn Away
  • Turn Against
Common Themes

Help couples learn to repair from conflict
Intervention: Repair

Gottman Repair Checklist.pdf
Gottman’s REPAIR CHECKLIST (abbrev)

I FEEL
I’m feeling blamed. Can you restate that?
I’m scared.

SORRY
Let me start again in a softer way.
I’m sorry. Please forgive me.

GET TO YES
I agree with part of what you’re thinking.
I never thought of things that way.

I NEED TO CALM DOWN
This is important to me. Please listen.
Can we take a break?

STOP ACTION!
Let’s agree to disagree here.
We’re getting off track.

I APPRECIATE
I’m thankful for...
This is not your problem it’s OUR problem.
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