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## 23 Couples Therapy Techniques & Exercises



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No two people see the world exactly the same way. An occasional argument can be healthy. However, if it's frequent, it's likely a source of stress and unhappiness.

If it's time for you to enhance your relationship, rest assured, there are a [multitude](#) of couples therapy techniques and exercises at your fingertips.

In this article, everything you need to know about couples therapy and couples' activities is here. You can download the pdf to use and keep with you.

## 1. Soul Gazing

Face your spouse while you're both seated. Move so close that your knees are nearly touching, and look into each other's eyes.

Hold this eye contact for three to five minutes. It's okay – you can blink! Although, refrain from talking. Simply look into each other's eyes. It will seem awkward at first.

Make this experience more powerful by playing a good meaningful song in terms of your connection while you hold eye contact until the song ends.

## 2. The 7 Breath-Forehead Connection Exercise

Begin by either lying down on your side by your partner or sitting upright facing each other. Gently touch your foreheads together. Tilt your chins down so you aren't bumping noses and keep this position for a few breaths.

Breathe at least seven slow, deep breaths in sync. It might be difficult at first, but you will get the hang of it before long. If you're both enjoying the exercise, by all means prolong it – take 20 breaths, or 30, or simply breathe together for a set amount of time.

This close breathing exercise will put you both into an intimate, connected space. Practice it whenever you feel the need to slow down and refocus on each other.

### 3. **Express Gratitude And Appreciation**

Expressing gratitude comes from the heart and appreciation expresses how much you value something.

Communicating these feelings in your marriage can help strengthen your bond.

Be creative in finding ways of expressing these feelings daily through in-person conversations, texts, or sticky notes where your partner will see it.

### 4. **Deeper Conversation Topics**

Move past surface-level conversations and ask your spouse questions other than “What’s for dinner?”

Slipping into the busyness of day-to-day requirements, we don’t realize we’ve stopped having conversations about deeper feelings or issues.

### 5. **Good Qualities**

Working in sync to solve your problems is a reminder why you were drawn to each other.

List on a piece of paper at least three treasured things that come to mind for each point:

- The [good qualities](#) which first drew me to my significant other
- My most cherished memories of our journey together include
- I appreciate my partner because
- My partner shows me they care by

### 6. **Identify Your Partner’s Love Language**

Just because you’re in a relationship doesn’t mean you experience love in the same way. Each person has a preferred way of receiving love.

“The 5 Love Languages” by Dr. Gary Chapman has helped couples identify what makes them feel loved so they can learn how to show up for each other.

- receiving gifts
- acts of service
- words of affirmation
- quality time
- physical touch

**7. Schedule Important Conversations**

Are you looking to have an important or difficult discussion with your partner? In order to avoid conflicts because the timing is wrong, serious talks are best when you have a plan.

Schedule tough conversations in advance so not one partner or the other is caught off guard.

**8. Pencil In 1:1 Time**

Life can be hectic, however, don't let outside pressures override time with your partner.

Schedule an hour of 'couples time' to be intimate for a great start. Also, schedule an hour to focus on topics to help improve the marriage.

**9. Fill Your Intimacy Bucket**

For a healthy relationship, understand that you both have intimacy needs, as a couple and individually.

Consider these types of intimacy:

- intellectual
- experiential
- social
- emotional
- sexual

Find fun activities for couples in each bucket to do. For example, you may explore a new hobby with each other or have a game night with mutual friends.

**10. Partner Yoga**

Team up with your partner for couples yoga.

Partner yoga allows you to balance as one with your partner, establishing and strengthening trust as you flow through tandem moves.

Research from a 2016 study linked mindfulness to increased satisfaction and mental health.

**11. Common Goals - Dream**

Explore the type of future you'd like to build, individually and as a couple. Sometimes our struggle can be because we don't know what our goals actually are.

Practice Imagining or dreaming in sync that overnight your life instantly improved - in every way. All the problems and troubles disappeared. What would you notice that was different? How would you BE different?

Use this discussion as an opportunity to learn something new about your partner and plan for your future together.

**12. Engaged Listening**

Engaged listening allows you to feel heard, understood, and cared for.

Set a timer for three to five minutes and let your partner talk. Whatever is on their mind – work, school, you, the kids, friends or family, stress – is fair game.

Your job is to do one thing: listen. Don't speak at all until the timer goes off. Simply soak it all in. You're free to give your partner non-verbal encouragement or empathy through body language, facial expressions, or meaningful looks.

When the timer goes off, switch roles.

**13. Extended Cuddle Time**

This exercise is just as simple—and fun—as it sounds! The instructions are simply to cuddle more often. Cuddling causes your body to release oxytocin and reduces cortisol, the stress hormone.

Right before bed is best, but you can carve out any time of the day to cuddle. The important thing is to get some one-on-one time, show physical affection, and enhance affection with your partner.

**14. Start A Book Club For Two**

You can share an experience at your own pace. Alternate the responsibility of choosing a book that's grabbed your attention, and set a date to discuss it over dinner.

**15. Connect With Music**

Feel nostalgia for the days of making your school crush the ultimate mixtape.

Curate your own playlist of songs that remind you of your partner and the moments you've shared. Swap your playlists and get a peek into each other's romantic side.

**16. Icebreaker Questions**

Just like icebreakers from summer camp or work seminars, this conversation-starting game may help reinvigorate your marriage and teach you something new about your partner.

Set time aside to discuss icebreaker questions that dig beneath the surface.

**17. Share A List Of Things You Want From Your Partner**

Share three things your partner could do weekly that would make you happy. Share your list with one another while looking into each other's eyes.

This reminder of things they can do once a week will help build trust and communication.

**18. Show Interest In Each Other's Day**

When was the last time you asked your partner what they were most excited about for the day?

Spend a few moments discussing your partner's agenda and goals to help support them in feeling cared for in your relationship.

**19. The 6-Second Kiss**

With the 6-second kiss, as advocated by the Gottman Institute, couples can add a dash of romance seamlessly throughout the day.

The kiss is long enough to be passionate while also acting as a distraction from the busyness of the day.

**20. Get Crafty**

A vision board can help remind you of your shared desires and goals.

Write down your goals and collect pictures that embody your relationship desires.

Marriage, like any relationship, is a work in progress. It takes hard work and time on both ends to create a strong, healthy, and long lasting relationship.

**21. Talk About Childhood Memories**

Beneath our defenses, we all have a scared child we're still trying to protect. The struggles we play out in relationships often have their origin in our childhoods.

Talking to each other about your experiences growing up will help foster deeper understanding, empathy, and emotional affection between you.

**22. Do Something That Scares You**

Talking to your spouse about your fears—in the relationship or in general—increases your emotional confidence.

If there's something you're both afraid of that's relatively safe to try, doing it together will create a vulnerable experience you can process with one another afterward, increasing your emotional intimacy.

### 23. **Dig Deeper - Find Out Why You're Really Fighting**

Past experiences can cause you to translate words or actions into something you never meant.

There's something more vulnerable underneath what we claim to be fighting about. For example, fights about doing the dishes can be rooted in feeling invisible or unloved.

Be vulnerable enough to share your feelings to create space for exploring what actually happened and to start unlinking concrete events from these painful subjective interpretations.

When you practice the activities in this article properly, these couples therapy exercises can have demonstrably positive effects.

## **What Is The Best Therapy For Couples?**

[Couples therapy](#) is an important tool for couples dealing with communication problems, marital trouble, or who just want to discuss big topic issues in a therapeutic environment.

Once you decide to try couples counseling, the next step is to research information on the best type of couples counseling for you.

You may need a therapist that dovetails well with your unique needs. Most therapists are versed in a variety of counseling techniques. It's rare that a therapist exclusively adheres to a single approach.

Here in this article, you'll find a summary of couples counseling:

- **Emotionally Focused Therapy**  
Emotionally Focused Therapy or EFT aims to provide a better understanding of what drives our emotional responses.

EFT usually entails a lot of conversation about the deeper meaning of emotions.

Rather than thinking he or she is angry just because you didn't take out the garbage, EFT helps to keep you emotionally focused and reframe your understanding of the deeper meaning of that anger.

- **Imago Relationship Therapy**

Imago practitioners believe our relationship with our parents informs our adult connections.

So couples counseling is based on the connection between formative childhood experiences of adult family members with our adult relationships. Imago, in Latin, means image.

With an Imago therapist, expect a lot of conversation during sessions and a lot of emphasis on listening.

- **Narrative Therapy**

The spotlight here is on the stories individuals use to understand their world. We tell ourselves stories about ourselves and others. Those stories guide our behavior and decisions.

Overly negative narratives, for example, can foster self-defeating attitudes and spur bad decisions.

Narrative couples therapists then help them try to write new stories if needed.

- **Solution Focused Therapy**

It might not be an ideal couple therapy for wide-reaching problems in the relationship.

However, the solution-oriented conversations at the heart of SFT can have good results for couples who need help bridging a narrowly-defined difficult situation they're facing. It can be very empowering.

- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy**

This is a common form of therapy for individuals, couples, or family therapy, which focuses on how our thoughts influence our behaviors.

If you can understand and change negative thoughts, you can also change how you feel and how you act.

It's about building behavioral skills, like communication, problem solving, and allows ways for the couple to remain connected to one another.

- **Relational Life Therapy**

This couple therapy is based on the influence traditional gender roles have on intimate connections.

Our culture, for example, has created an environment that does not graciously allow men to create intimate closeness and be in touch with their feelings and their emotions.

A traditional perception of masculinity can impede men's ability to be connected and intimate with their partners.

- **Discernment Counseling**

Discernment counseling can be viewed as couples counseling of last resort - whether they should split up or stay together.

It's a short term therapy, lasting five sessions or less. It's meant to help couples consider all the options before they make a decision to work on it or terminate a relationship.

## **What Is Gottman Method Couples Therapy?**

Doctors John Gottman and his wife Julie developed nine components of healthy interactions known as the Sound Relationship House Theory.

The goals are to disarm marital conflict in verbal communication; increase intimate connection, respect, and affection; remove barriers that create a feeling of stagnancy; and create a heightened sense of empathy and understanding within the context of the relationship.

- **Assessment**

Treatment begins with a joint session, followed by individual interviews with each person. Couples complete questionnaires and then receive detailed feedback on their relationship.

- **Therapeutic Framework**

The couple and therapist decide on the frequency and duration of the treatment sessions.

- **Therapeutic Interventions**

Treatment interventions are designed to help partners strengthen their connections in three primary areas: friendship, conflict management, and creation of shared meaning.

People learn to replace negative conflict patterns with positive interactions and repair past hurts with specific techniques.

Interventions, designed to increase closeness and intimacy, are used to improve friendship, deepen emotional connection, and create changes which enhance the partners shared goals. Relapse prevention is also addressed.

The Gottman Method is designed to support people across all economic, racial, sexual orientation, and cultural sectors.

## **What Questions Are Asked In Couples Therapy?**

The therapist will facilitate conversation between each spouse. They do this by asking a series of questions and allowing you to open up about an important topic or conflict.

Here are some questions to expect:

- What problems are you experiencing in this relationship?
- Do you want a divorce? Can this marital relationship be saved?
- Can you trust each other again?
- What type of love do you have for your companion?
- Are you satisfied with the close affection levels in this relationship?
- Do you see a future with one another?

## How Can Couples Therapy Be Successful?

There is a secret to approaching couples therapy that can make the difference between getting what you need from it and failing miserably.

The secret is the readiness stage. Both individuals must be ready before the wanted results can be achieved.

Research shows that traditional marital counseling has a success rate of 70 to 80 percent.

It's clear then, that people in troubled relationships need not give up in despair if their situation seems bleak. By the same token, this is encouraging for people afraid of entering long-term relationships. Troubled relationships may be fixed.

These five principles of effective therapy suggest ways people can build and maintain positive close relationships:

- Take an objective look at your marriage
- Receive help to reduce dysfunctional behaviors
- Security about sharing your emotions
- Communicate effectively
- Emphasize what's working

Most importantly, remember each marriage has its unique challenges and strengths.

With counseling and therapy techniques, you can feel like you'll be giving yours the best chances  for survival and have healthy relationships with others around you too.