

# My Approach to Couple Therapy

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My approach to couple therapy is an integrated model that typically involves five stages of treatment ideally carried out over 15-20 sessions (David, 2015). The delineation and sequencing of these stages are as follows:

*Stage I:* The beginning of therapy concentrates on establishing a solid alliance with you and conducting a thorough assessment of your relationship.

*Stage II:* The initial stages of treatment focus on stabilizing the conflict in your relationship so that you can have more access to one another's emotional needs.

*Stage III:* Once more emotional access is accomplished, the emphasis is on enhancing the closeness in your relationship so that you can become more secure and responsive to one another.

*Stage IV:* Building on your enhanced closeness, treatment then shifts to more effectively managing the conflict in your relationship.

*Stage V:* The final part of therapy concentrate on reinforcing the positive changes that you have made in yourselves and in your relationship.

Essentially, these stages provide an overall “roadmap” to the therapeutic process that suggest a clear focus and order of treatment. However, in order for this approach to be successful, it must be flexibly adapted and applied to your needs as a couple. For example, if your relationship is not particularly stressed, but you would like to improve the quality of your intimacy, you don't have to begin your therapy work at Stage II. In other words, you start out at the stage most relevant to helping you move forward in your relationship.

As might be expected, my approach to couple therapy is based on extensive empirical research and outcomes studies that demonstrate what models and methods of couple therapy are the most effective (Gurman, Lebow, & Synder, 2015). Although my particular approach is derived from a variety of clinical models and methods, the ones I rely on most are based on an integration of the work of Gottman (1999) and Johnson (2004).

## References

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- Gurman, A. S., Lebow, J. L., & Synder, D. K. (Eds.) (2015). *Clinical handbook of couple therapy* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.