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Choosing to Work with an Imago Relationship Therapist

HOW DOES IMAGO RELATIONSHIP Therapy differ from other types of marital therapy? There are many forms of marital therapy available

that rely on teaching new skills alone in an attempt to help couples change, perhaps by helping them negotiate their conflicts better or setting up weekly contracts for new behaviors. The skills Imago Relationship Therapists teach are part of a larger step-by-step process with the goal of individual healing through the transformation of committed partnerships.

Founded by Harville Hendrix, Ph. D., Imago theory subscribes to the belief that, in Western cultures, we unconsciously bring out unfinished business from childhood needs on our partners; and because both partners have the same agenda, relationship conflicts generally result. Because our wounding occurred in our early relationships with the people who raised us, our healing must also occur in the context of a relationship.

Imago Relationship Therapists are trained to assist couples in gaining access to the central unconscious motivations they bring to their relationships for resolution.

When these hidden hopes, fears and longings are no longer hidden and can be communicated in the structured atmosphere of safety provided by the therapists, partners begin to see one another differently, experience greater empathy towards one another and actively take steps to create a new experience of relationship. Imago Relationship Therapists help couple delve into the core problem or issue in the relationship—the relationship impasse. It is usually this impasse—that seemingly “unmovable object”—that brings troubled couples into therapy in the first place. In the course of therapy, just by working the process, impasses dissolve. It is in this process, too, that couples agree to take on a new purpose for being together - a mutual attempt to complete childhood and commit to becoming one another's healer in the context of a conscious relationship. In most troubled relationships, problems continue to escalate because one or both partners have

exhausted their resources and have literally run out of skills.

Therapy with a Certified Imago Relationship Therapist provides a safe container for change to occur and replaces the couple's old, unworkable problem-solving behaviors with new relationship skills that have been proven to help partners transform even the most seemingly “hopeless” situations. For example, the attempt to get one's needs met through criticism of one's partner (which experience shows, has the opposite result) is replaced with a skill called the Behavior Change Request process in which partners learn to translate their relationship frustrations into clear, direct requests for tangible desired behaviors that will meet the need.

Imago Relationship Therapy is a practical and cost-effective approach as well. The job of an Imago Relationship Therapist is to make himself or herself obsolete. Because partners are taught to become therapeutic with one another, they will have less and less need for the therapist over time.

Source: Imago Relationship Therapy Resources Catalogue, 1995-96, written by Lisa Kelvin Tuttle