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What is Imago Relationship Therapy?

IMAGO RELATIONSHIP THERAPY (IRT) is a form of relationship therapy innovated by Harville Hendrix, Ph.D. Dr. Hendrix was author of the two best sellers *Getting the Love You Want: A Guide for Couples* and *Keeping the Love You Find: A Guide for Singles*. It integrates and extends the insights of the major western psychological systems, behavioral science and spiritual disciplines into a uniquely comprehensive and systemic theory of primary love relationships.

Its basic premises are as follows:

- We were born whole and complete.
- We became wounded during the early nurturing and socializing stages of development by our primary caretakers (usually inadvertently).
- We have a composite image of all the positive and negative traits of our primary care takers deep in our unconscious mind. This is called the IMAGO. It is like a blue print of the one we need to be our partner in a committed intimate relationship.
- We look for someone who is an IMAGO Match, that is, someone who matches up with the

composite image of our primary caretakers. This is important because we marry or commit for the purpose of healing and finishing the unfinished business of childhood. Our parents are the ones who wounded us and it is they who could help us heal. A primary love partner who matches their traits is their stand-in.

- Romantic Love is the door to committed relationship and/or marriage and is nature's way of connecting us with the perfect partner for our eventual healing.
- We move into a power struggle as soon as we make a commitment to this person. The power struggle is necessary, for imbedded in a couple's frustrations lie the information for healing and growth.
- The first two stages of marriage, "romantic love" and the "power struggle," are engaged in at an unconscious level. Our unconscious mind chose our partner for the purpose of healing childhood wounds.
- Inevitably our love partner is incompatible with us and least

able to meet our needs and most able to wound us all over again.

- The goal of Imago Relationship Therapy is to align our conscious mind (which wants happiness and good feelings) with the agenda of the unconscious mind (which wants healing and growth). Thus, the goal of therapy is to assist clients in developing conscious, intimate, committed relationships.
- This transition cannot take place through insight alone. Specific skills and processes are necessary that need to be practiced daily to shift us from having an unconscious marriage or relationship to a conscious marriage or relationship.
- It takes two to five years of regular work although not necessarily therapy, to develop a conscious marriage, which will bring you the relationship you deserve, that is, one with safety and passion.

Source: *The Imago Match*, A Quarterly Newsletter, published by Francine Beauvoir, Ph. D. and Bruce Crapuchettes, Ph. D; Pasadena Institute for Relationships; Altadena, CA.