

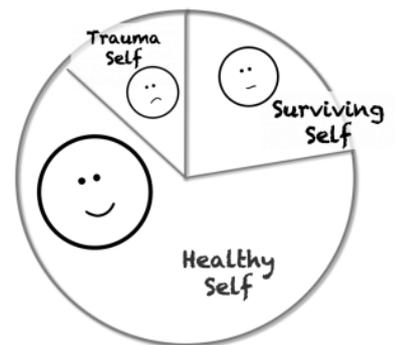
Sessions for Couples

Being in a couple relationship is probably the second most intimate relationship we experience, the first being the intimate relationship with our Mother. In adulthood coming together with another to create a relationship that honours the basic human needs of connection, and healthy boundaries that preserve one's own sense of Identity, can be one of life's most enriching and fulfilling experiences. And, a couple's relationship can also bring to the surface dynamics that are distressing and dysfunctional.

Often times when a couple are building their relationship each one realises that the way they think, feel and behave form part of their Identity, and 'who they are'. They also realise that their individual view of the world is different to their partner's, and this can prove either enriching or depleting. Personality, temperament and background are factors which contribute to how a couple builds their relationship, and how individual Identity is either enhanced or diminished by being in their couple. Intimate relationships, like a couple, can be very complex and in effect provide a mirror to each person about their own Identity and their inner psychological structures which contribute to how they relate to each other.

Sometimes to maintain harmony in a couple, one or both partners can 'give up' their own Identity and sense of 'self', which over time can become a matter of internal dissatisfaction and can turn into stronger negative emotions. These negative emotions can then spill out into the relationship and can also lead to one or both partners being unwell, with either physical or psychological issues.

What can be seen is that the difficulties being experienced in the couple in some way connect with the personal history of each person. Distressing and traumatic issues encountered earlier in life have a lasting effect, and leave an 'imprint'. And even though these traumatic experiences may not be something the person thinks about, or even remembers (as is the case of early childhood distress) they get split off and are unconscious. Never the less these can contribute to the unpleasantness and distress surfacing in the couple's relationship.



Using the Intention Method of the IoPT approach, the focus of couples' sessions is on each person in the couple, and their own inner psychology, rather than the presenting issues that are being experienced in the relationship. This is because when the individuals in a couple have a clearer understanding about themselves, and about how being in a couple affects them, they strengthen their own self insight and self responsibility, which in turn has an effect on how they 'are' in their couple. Sessions are opportunities for deep and personal **exploration & encounter**, which is enabled through a **Sentence of Intention** of one or both people, in the presence of the other. In this way each witnesses the other from the context and setting of the session, which gives rise to new self insights for both, and the potential of new connection.

Couples who desire an improvement in their relationship can have joint sessions, in the presence of their partner to undertake personal work. Or, each person can start with one-to-one sessions which focus on themselves and their inner psychological structures, with the ultimate aim of having joint sessions together.

