

What to Expect in an Initial Couples Therapy Session

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If you call to schedule a couples therapy session, here is what you should expect. An initial appointment will be scheduled and it is important that both members of the couple attend.

The initial session or two will involve taking a history. I will ask about the current problem and any precipitating factors. A complete history of the couple relationship will be taken. I will also take a history of each individual partner and their family of origin. This information will be used in a subsequent analysis.

I use an Imago style approach to couples therapy. This means that one of the primary areas of focus will be an evaluation of unmet needs in childhood from one's early caretakers. The theory suggests that we unconsciously choose mates who we hope can fill our unmet childhood needs while at the same time provide some familiarity (both positive and negative) with the way we were raised. How we react to those in our most intimate relationships are therefore highly influenced by how we were raised. Naming, understanding and bringing these expectations to the forefront help understand partners' behaviors towards each other and hopefully allow the couple enough empathy to change the way they react to each other.

As in other types of therapy, progress goals will be set and the length of therapy depends on the effort and progress made by the couple.