

Couple's Therapy for Depression

Couple's therapy is an approach that can help both people in a relationship with the emotional difficulties that sometimes flow from problems between partners, especially when one or both people are depressed. There are many different types of couple's therapy but what is described here is a particular type of couple's therapy that has been developed to help people who are suffering from depression.

Couple's therapy might help for lots of different reasons. It may be that the relationship has broken down or that there is anxiety that it might. Sustaining a fulfilling and stable relationship is never easy. Pressures from work, money, children, family tensions and ill health can all contribute to creating problems and these problems can lead to depression and other difficulties for one or both partners. Sometimes couples can't talk to each other and meeting with a couple therapist can open the way to better communication which seems to be a key part of improving relationships.

How does it work? Research has shown that couple's therapy helps people with depression when they are in relationships that are experiencing difficulties. Improving your relationship through working together on the things that create unhappiness, helps both you and your partner move on from often unfriendly patterns of interaction. This in turn can lead to a happier and more fulfilling relationship. Having a happier and more fulfilling relationship often relieves depression which in turn improves your relationship. This positive cycle tends to improve mood and emotional wellbeing.

What does couple's therapy for depression involve? Everyone's therapy will be a bit different but typically the couple therapist aims to help you and your partner open up the issues that seem to be troubling you both. Together, you will decide on new ways to relate to each other, gaining a better understanding along the way of your own and your partner's feelings.

Talking openly with your partner about problems for the first time can feel difficult and you may be worried about what your therapist thinks about you. Your therapist will usually try to get a good a picture of what you and your partner are finding difficult in your relationship and how this is affecting you both.

You may both be offered a session on your own at the beginning of therapy as some things can be hard to talk about with your partner at first. Although your therapist will need to get some basic information about you and your life, most of the time they will let you take the lead.

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Sometimes your therapist may suggest ways for your partner and you to improve your communication and this may occasionally involve some “homework”. Mostly, however, they will be interested in helping the two of you have a conversation so that you can find your own ways to understand and resolve the problems you are having.

Are there any forms to complete? A contract and confidentiality agreement is signed in the first session. There is also a form to complete before each session, this is a set of questions to see how you’re getting on and see whether there’s any risk of harm to yourself. At the end of your sessions there is a feedback questionnaire.

How long and how often would you see a therapist? There may be some variation in the number of sessions of therapy you are offered. However, it is worth bearing in mind that if you are having some relationship problems and you are depressed, it is recommended that you have up to 20 sessions of couple therapy over a period of six months.

You will be seen once a week for about 50 to 60 minutes. Your therapist will discuss with you any planned breaks and what happens if you cancel sessions.

To find out more, and to get more information about this type of therapy and what you can expect from your therapist visit https://www.ucl.ac.uk/pals/research/cehp/research-groups/core/pdfs/Couples_Therapy_For_Depression/Couples_Therapy_service_user_information.pdf where you can find a guide for service users. You may also wish to visit the Tavistock Centre for Couple Relationships website at <http://www.tavistockrelationships.org/>

For more information about couple’s therapy or for an informal chat about whether this type of therapy might be useful for you, please contact the counselling team, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, on enquiries@mnessexmind.org or 01206 764500.

We’re Mid and North Essex Mind, the mental health charity. We’re here to make sure anyone with a mental health problem has somewhere to turn to for advice and support. We are a local, independent charity connected to the national charity Mind. We have to raise our own money to run our services.

If you want to raise some money or donate to support the work we do in the local area, make sure you are clear on any fundraising or cheques that the money is for Mid and North Essex Mind. This means we can use this money locally. We cannot take donations to ‘Mind’.

Thank you