

First Session Schedule (1.5 hours)

Practical Details (10 mins)

Phone number, address, email addresses

Confidentiality, child protection, payment terms, cancellation policy, transparency (no contact without awareness of partner)

Explain the expectations of couples therapy (10 mins)

“You have to participate in your own rescue”

Self responsibility, counter intuitive, managing overwhelm

Today is the beginning of an assessment. I need to understand what is happening in the relationship in order to be able to understand where you are getting stuck. The assessment will take 2/3 sessions at least as well as the individual sessions. Normally I do these after session 2 or 3.

How are you feeling about being here (5 mins)

From this you start to get sense of where each person is, who is the more motivated partner, who you may need to draw out more and who you may need to slow down more. Keep this brief, don't allow them to go into their story

Focus on each partner individually (50 mins, 25 mins each)

Explain to them that you will spend some time asking each of them some questions. For the person who is going second ask them to listen without commenting on what their partner says. Also, for the person who comes second don't respond to the partner but speak from their own perspective. Encourage them towards 'I' rather than 'We' (I will often make a joke about this and tell them I will probably irritate them a lot doing this).

- 1. From your unique perspective what do you see as the issue within your relationship?*
- 2. What would a successful outcome look like? How motivated are you to participate in working towards this (0-10)? (gets a sense of how willing they will be to put in the hard work of couples therapy)*
- 3. What makes you a difficult partner? (gives you a sense of how much they are able to self-reflect on their own process)*

Check in with each of them (10 mins)

- 1. How are each of you feeling as you approach the end of the session?*
- 2. What is staying with you most from the session?*
- 3. What is something you appreciate from you partner in the session?*

Explain the next steps (5 mins)

They will go away and talk to each other away from you to decide if they want to engage in this process of couples therapy. Tell them to email or phone you with their decision