



Preparing for Couple's Therapy **Barbara LoFrisco, PhD**

Welcome. By asking for help with your relationship you are making a statement about how important it is to you. Because it is important to you, It is also important to me. Therefore, I have prepared this handout to help you get the most benefit out of our time together.

I would like you to take a moment and think about why you would like to do couple's therapy. "Because my wife/husband wants me to go" may be the only answer you have right now, and that's OK. But, it would be helpful if you could take some time and think more deeply about it. Think about what you really want from your relationship. What is your "dream relationship"? Be as specific as possible. Think in terms of the goals you would like to have for your relationship.

Generally, it is more helpful to think about what you can change about yourself rather than what your partner can change. If you both can do this, the couples' therapy has a much greater chance of working. Besides, you are in direct control of yourself, not your partner. On the other hand, it is also useful to have a clear (and realistic) idea of what you would like your partner to change. I say "realistic" because it is important to consider your partner's strengths and weaknesses in this process.

It is also useful to think of your partnership as a "system." As parts of that system you will naturally affect one another. A good analogy is an air conditioning system. In that system, if the air temperature gets too hot the thermostat kicks on the A/C, which then cools the temperature. In a very similar way, couples can either heat each other up, or cool each other down. I will help you discover such patterns and we will work on ways of altering them so a stable "temperature" is maintained.

The issues in your relationship have probably developed over many years, and so it makes sense that it may take several sessions to help you repair them. Like any bad habit, changing unproductive relationship patterns will take time and effort. But the rewards are great.

One final thought. It is natural and healthy for couples to argue. It is unrealistic to think that two humans with different temperaments, behaviors, and experiences will never disagree about anything. It is *how* you disagree that matters. I will help you learn how to "fight fair." It is through a process of negotiation and compromise that relationships can grow and improve.

I look forward to working with you.