



How Does Imago Therapy Help Couples?

Imago Relationship Therapy **provides the tools necessary for transforming stuck and troubled relationships into affirming, meaningful, loving, and joyful relationships.** It also assists in bringing relief to those in distressed relationships.

Most of us are unaware of the hidden agenda of romantic love, and we unconsciously continue to repeat painful mistakes that leave us feeling unfulfilled and hurt. As we begin to realize that *conflict is actually growth trying to happen*, we can partner in real growth and positive, transformational shifts in relationship. Imago dialogue and related Imago techniques are powerful tools in addressing power struggles and problems in relationships. The structure and art of the dialogue helps couples bridge the gap between, creating safe emotional space for the relationship to heal and grow. In such an environment, safely connected partners are freed up to experience deeper, abiding love that offers possibility, passion, joy, and hope.

Once we learn to feel emotionally safe with each other, we can grow and become increasingly authentic with ourselves and with each other. We are safe enough to share and discover, to gradually drop our defenses and be present to one another. With the tools of Imago Therapy, you can learn the hidden gifts in conflict, and begin to actually welcome them in the relationship. As you learn how to honor each other in conflict and utilize dialogical tools, your most important relationship can become a harbor of safety and healing.



Imago Therapy

Are you struggling in relationship? Do you wonder how the person you fell in love now seems like a stranger behind a cold mask? Or perhaps you are a couple beginning the journey and preparing for marriage and you want to be one of the 50% who actually make it. Or maybe you are single, lonely, desiring a partner in life, but feel discouraged by dead end relationships that leave you unfulfilled.



Imago Therapy helps people to **understand** the unconscious factors (the Imago) in their selection of each other. It **reveals** the emotional dynamics that are being replayed from childhood and past emotional learning. And it **teaches** couples how to relate to each other, and themselves, in a more nurturing, attuned, and loving way.

We are taught that when we fall in love, the feeling is supposed to last forever. We meet the person of our dreams and a magical transformation takes place within us. We feel alive, whole, connected to the world and the people in it. Then, before we know it, that magical feeling disappears. **Disillusioned**, our dreams shattered, we begin to feel angry and betrayed.

We may then try to coerce our partners into giving us what we need. Coercion takes the form of criticism, withdrawal, shaming, blaming, intimidating, or attacking (to name a few). Or, sometimes it is just the opposite. **We enter into numbness, where there seems no emotion or love at all.**

We may feel *entitled* to wait for our partner to come alive first, to wake up, to see our pain and how they have wronged us . . . and to make motions towards amends. Most likely, we end up in a stalemate. Some of us go on locked in this painful power struggle for years until we either break up or seek help, desperate to have the love relationship we have always desired.

The Power Struggle

One of the reasons for the power struggle between partners is that nature has a way of attracting “Maximizers” and “Minimizers” to each other. Couples tend to share similar wounding, but each partner’s way of reacting may be different. The chart below describes some ways we might tend to handle emotional pain and conflict. Do you identify with either style?

Maximizers

Explode feelings outward
Exaggerate feelings
Tend to depend on others
Mostly exaggerate their needs
Share a lot about their inner world
Excessively generous
May ask direction from others
Tend to be other-focused
Tend to be more submissive
Also known as "Hailstorms"

Minimizers

Implode, turn feelings inward
Minimize feelings
Tend to be self-reliant
Mostly deny/minimize needs
Withhold information about inner world
Withhold feelings, thoughts, behaviors
Gather direction from self
Tend to be inward or self-focused
Tend to be more controlling
Also known as "Turtles"

A power struggle is inevitable!

A power struggle is inevitable when we stop listening to each other. Power struggles intensify when we truly do not want to hear our partner's reality because it feels threatening to us. Confusion and misunderstanding ensues when we do not take full responsibility for trying to make ourselves understood. We can slip into a complacent, unrealistic expectation that our partner should be able to read our mind and heart's desire. After all, if s/he really loves me - why would that not be second nature?



Confusion, intense hurt, and loneliness can set in when we are unable to work through the power struggle effectively. These emotions hold history and they can be powerful. Out of fear, we run from the very intimacy and feeling of safety we long after. We may exit emotionally, divesting our energy into **careers, the kids, hobbies, the PTA, the internet, pornography, affairs, hobbies, volunteering, athletic pursuits, drinking, drugging, friends, or extended family**. If we shift away from the most important person in our life, our primary love, then we remove the opportunity for nurturing and connection to have thriving relationship. This is likely to prove fatal to the relationship.

We become distant strangers or passionate arguers. Either way, we are painfully fractured.

Does this describe the relationship you're currently in? Would you like to restore some of the passion and intimacy you once had? Perhaps you need to rebuild from the ground up. Or, are you an individual looking to find the love of your life and do not want to repeat past mistakes?

Whatever your situation, Imago can bring clarity while equipping you for the journey in healing and growth. The skills and tools available through Imago support individuals and couples in learning how to deeply and authentically thrive in love relationship.