

Couples Therapy for Depression (CTfD)

Client Information Leaflet

Relationship problems can be a source of stress that can trigger an episode of depression in a vulnerable person. Depression can make a relationship more difficult for both partners. Recent research shows that making relationship problems the focus of treatment can often lead to depression and relationship improvement.

The assessment phase of treatment lasts for four sessions. In the first session, we will discuss the difficulties you are facing as a couple and the history of your relationship. At the end of the discussion, your counsellor will book an individual session with each of you to learn more about you as individuals. This will be followed by a further joint session where your counsellor will give you feedback from the first three, enabling you to work on a plan to improve the relationship.

How does it work?

Couple therapy helps those who are suffering from depression by reducing the kinds of things that make partners feel alone and distressed or that push partners apart and make them feel angry with each other. It improves your relationship by helping you both to work together on the things that create unhappiness and to move on from stuck and sometimes hostile patterns of interaction. It helps you understand each other at an emotional and practical level (how you feel and what you do). It gives you skills as well as understanding. This can lead to a happier and more fulfilling relationship where differences between you are not so problematic. This relieves depression which in turn improves your relationship. This positive cycle improves mood and emotional well-being.

What does couple therapy involve?

Everyone's therapy will be different, but couple therapy aims to help you and your partner explore and understand more about your difficulties and then find solutions. Working with a couple of therapists, you will discuss the issues that trouble you and your partner. Together, you will explore new ways to relate, better understand your and your partner's feelings, and learn communication and problem-solving skills if needed. Couple therapists know that depression can affect how people behave and how they feel, and they help couples regain previous strengths and develop new ones.

Length and Frequency of Therapy

You each will have an initial assessment with a Psychological Well-being Practitioner and an individual telephone conversation with a Couples Therapist.

Depending upon the outcome of these appointments, you and your partner may be offered further joint and individual meetings.

For Couple Therapy for Depression to be effective for most people, you should have between 15–20 sessions of couple therapy over six months. Sometimes, sessions may be offered less frequently, for example, fortnightly rather than weekly. There should be a clear agreement between you and your couple's therapist on these arrangements. Some couples will require fewer sessions, and some will require more, but no therapy should stop when you feel better; there has to be a process ending.