| The Unique Skill of Couples                              |   |   |  |  |  |  |
|--|---|---|--|--|--|--|
|  | Therapy   | / |  |  |  |  |
| Building Lifelong Love in Commitment, Cooperation,       |   |   |  |  |  |  |
|  | Presented by:  Peter L. Sheras, Ph.D., / Phyllis R. Koch-Sheras, pendent Practice, Charlot October 18, 2024 |   |  |  |  |  |
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### The Unique Skill

- Clinicians see couples in many contexts
- Seeing couples requires more than just seeing two individuals conjointly or at the same time.
   It presents a different dynamic that is challenging and sometimes confusing
- Having a paradigm for couples' treatment can be helpful and interesting

2

# Understanding the Unique Skill of Couples Therapy Requires:

- Redefining "Couple"
- Understanding Couple personalities
- Exploring the Basic Tasks of Couple
- Setting the Goals of therapy
- Treating Couple
- Employing New Techniques Using the 4 C's

3

What is a Couple?

4

### **Shifting the Paradigm of Couple**

- A new paradigm requires new ways of thinking.
- Characteristics of paradigm shifts:
  - Challenging common notions and beliefs
  - Experiencing confusion and paradox
  - Thinking "out of the box"
  - Creating a "new" language
  - Constructing new metaphors
  - Increased resistance



5

## The Redefinition of "Couple"

- Couple is not a thing; it is a process, a way of bein
- Couple is an entity; it has its own personality and goals.
- Couple is not meeting an ideal; it is creating possibilities.
- Couple is not static; it is living in the present.
- Couple is not an act of compromise; it is the ability to cooperate.
- Couple is not a place to get to; it is a place to come from.

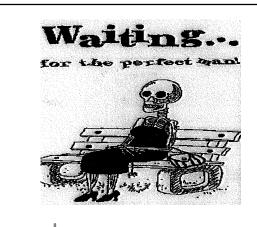
### **Barriers To Couple**

- Cultural Barriers
  - Individualism
  - Workplace
  - Education
  - Religion
  - Media
  - Gender roles
  - Inter-cultural/LGBT
  - Legal system
  - Network Interference



- **Personal Barriers** 
  - Family history
  - Relationship hx
  - Hx in therapy
  - Expectations

7



8

### **Couple Personalities**

- Romanticized
- Role-defined (Traditional)
- Independent (Self-focused)
- Co-creating (Dynamic)
  - Many possibilities/variations
     Operates outside the box
     100%/100%
     Flexible in dealing with change

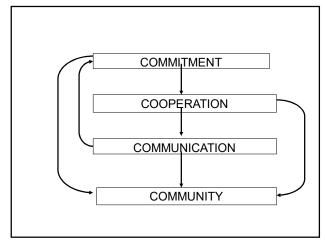


### **Goals of Couples Therapy**

- Creating the entity "Couple"
- Recognizing and Accomplishing the Four Basic Tasks of Couple (in this order)
  - Commitment
  - Cooperation
  - $\ {\sf Communication}$
  - Community



10



11

DOING COUPLES THERAPY



# What Makes It So Difficult to Work with Couples?

- Listening to complaints from partners about each other
- Teaching communication skills too early and watching them used as a club against their partner
- Expecting the therapist to fix the other person in the relationship
- Being placed in the role of mediator
- Dealing with differing emotional/cognitive styles
- Managing overt and covert hostility
- High levels of frustration and despair

14

Therapeutic Barriers to Couple

- Pathologizing
- Homeostatic myth
- Inflexibility of our training
- Insurance
- Individual Therapy

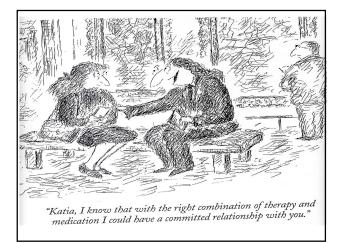
### Commitment

- Creating the entity Couple
- Creating a vision
- Stating the future/now
- Creating "being"
- Therapist's intention and commitment
- Commitment to relationship, not person
- Creating new rituals



- Teach listening for what is possible— NOT what is wrong
- Positive Psychology approach
- Assessing Commitment
  - Yes
  - No
  - Not sure

16



17

### How To Create A Couple Proclamation

- Short and succinct
- · Couple focused
- State as fact not hope
- · Present tense
- Positive language
- Inspiring for both
- "We are..."
- Non-verbal expression



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# Cooperation • Requests and Agreements

- Teamwork

  - Defining team
     Setting team goals
     Exploring coaching
     Developing cohesion by seeing outside threats/challenges
     Creating projects
     Establishing accountabilities
     Diverse strengths

  - Diverse strengths
- Practicing "doing"

- - Turning complaints into requests
    Respecting requests
    Making agreements
    Honoring one's word
    When's and how's

  - Gifts not compromise Generosity
- Assessing Cooperation



20



21



### Communication

(necessary but not sufficient for co-creating Couple)ufficietfo co-creating Couple)

• Verbal (Dedicated/responsible • Non-verbal

- Verbal (Dedicated/responsible speaking and listening)

  Language constructs the future

  Fighting fair

  Structured speaking

  Acknowledgement

  Feedback and echoing

  Reframing (renaming more
- - Reframing (renaming more powerfully)
     What About Sex?

  - Say "we"

- - Reading body language and other non-verbal cues
  - Creative visualization
  - Controlled aggression
  - Trust exercises
- TouchingPhysical representations
- **Assessing Communication**



23

### Community

- Types
  - Found or Created
  - Vertical Community (Extended family)
  - Horizontal Community (Friends and peers)
  - Identified reference or model groups
- Sharing "Couple" with others

- Groups
  - Couples group treatment
  - Couples Coaching Couples®
  - Post-treatment couples support groups
- Assessing Community



### **Fifth C: Couple Consciousness**

- Seeing the world through a "couple" filter
- Couple as source
- Couple as possibility
- Couple as a way of being
- Lifelong Love



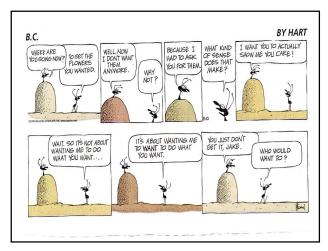
25



26

# Some Principles of Couple Power Therapy in Practice

- Proclaiming
- Reframing
- Acknowledging
- Creating Possibilities and Opportunities
- Teaching and Learning
- Inquiring and Exploring
- Coaching giving and receiving
- Expanding from Doing to Being



### The P-R-A-C-T-I-C-E Paradigm

- Put the principles into life
- Practice them over and over
- Create ritual practices
- See the possibility in everything
- "Think" couple
- · Celebrate couple



29

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30

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