

## *Couples Therapy at North Brisbane Psychologists*

At NBP, we have over 50 years of collective experience working with couples. We believe that although therapy requires effort, it is overwhelmingly a positive experience. We all have a warm and friendly style and have received clinical training in the Gottman Method of Couples Therapy - an evidence-based approach backed by 45 years of research. Our goal is to support you in appreciating your relationship's strengths and to give you the skills to gently navigate through its vulnerabilities.

### *Overview of Gottman Method Couples Therapy*

The Gottman Method Couples Therapy is based on Dr. John Gottman's research that began in the 1970s and continues to this day. The research has focused on what makes relationships succeed or fail. From this research, Drs. John and Julie Gottman have created a method of therapy that emphasises a 'nuts-and-bolts' approach to improving relationships.

This method is designed to help teach specific tools to deepen friendship and intimacy in your relationship. To help you constructively manage conflicts, you will be given methods to manage "resolvable problems" and to sustain dialogue about "gridlocked" (or perpetual) issues.

*Gottman Method Couples Therapy consists of five parts:*

1. Assessment
2. Treatment
3. "Phasing Out" of Therapy
4. Termination
5. Outcome Evaluation

Early in the *Assessment* phase you will be given a questionnaire to complete that will help us better understand your relationship. In the first session we will talk about the history of your relationship, areas of concern and goals for treatment.

In the next session your therapist will meet with each of you individually to learn each of your personal histories and to give you an opportunity to share thoughts, feelings and perceptions. In the final session of Assessment, your therapist will share with you their recommendations for treatment and work to define mutually agreed upon goals for your therapy.

Most of the work of *Treatment* will involve joint sessions in which you will be seen together as a couple. However, there may be times when individual sessions are recommended. Your therapist may also give you exercises to practice between sessions.

Treatment follows a 'massing and fading' protocol. That is, treatment is often 'massed' (or concentrated) in the first two weeks, and then is rapidly 'faded' to weekly or fortnightly for

the following four weeks. Massing and fading in marital therapy has been shown to have better outcomes and significantly less relapse eight months after *Termination*.

The overall length of therapy will be determined by your specific needs and goals. Before "*Phasing Out*" of *Therapy*, we will establish points at which to evaluate your satisfaction and progress. Importantly, your therapist will encourage you to raise any questions or concerns that you have about therapy at any time.

In the later stages of therapy, we will meet less frequently in order for you to test newly refined relationship skills and to prepare for *Termination* of therapy. Although you may terminate therapy whenever you wish, it is most helpful to have at least one session together before *Termination* to summarise progress, define the post-*Termination* work that remains, and to say good-bye.

In the *Outcome Evaluation* phase of the Gottman Method, four follow-up sessions are planned: one each at six-months, 12 months, 18 months and two years following *Termination*. These sessions have been shown through research to significantly decrease the changes of relapse into previous unhelpful patterns. In addition, our commitment to providing the best possible therapy for you requires ongoing evaluation of methods used and client progress. The key purposes of these follow-up sessions will be to fine-tune any of your relationship skills, if needed, and to evaluate the effectiveness of therapy you have received.

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*Note on Fees*

Couples therapy is charged by the hour. Fees currently are \$175 per hour.

Couples therapy is not Medicare rebateable, although the individual sessions that are typically part of couples work are rebateable with a GP Medicare referral. Also, some private health funds cover couples therapy, so please check with your health fund.

*Contra-indications for Couples Therapy*

Therapy is not recommended in the case of untreated substance abuse, ongoing domestic violence, or a current affair by either partner (secret or revealed).

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Client 1 \_\_\_\_\_ (sign) \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

Client 2 \_\_\_\_\_ (sign) \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

## Review of Structure of Couples Therapy

### Assessment

Generally, the Assessment requires four hours in three to four in-office sessions. It also requires one to two hours of paperwork at home as you complete an online questionnaire known as the *Gottman Relationship Health Check-up Survey*. (The questionnaire carries a cost of \$39 per couple).

The components of the Assessment are as follows:

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|---------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| • Session #1: | Joint Intake Interview | 1 hour                      | } For best outcomes these three sessions take place over a one-week period |
| • Session #2: | Individual Interviews  | 1 hour each (2 hours total) |  |
| • Session #3: | Treatment Planning     | 1 hour                      |  |
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### Treatment

The components of Treatment vary according to your relationship's needs, but will commence with massing then fading, generally progressing as follows:

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|--------------|-----------------|---------|---|
| • Session #4 | Joint Treatment | 2 hours | } For best outcomes initial 'massed' Treatment sessions take place over a two-week period |
| • Session #5 | Joint Treatment | 2 hours |   |
| • Session #6 | Joint Treatment | 1 hour  | } For best outcomes 'faded' Treatment sessions take place once a week for four weeks      |
| • Session #7 | Joint Treatment | 1 hour  |   |
| • Session #8 | Joint Treatment | 1 hour  |   |
| • Session #9 | Joint Treatment | 1 hour  |   |
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### Phasing Out of Therapy & Termination

Your Phasing Out of Therapy process is flexible according to need. Couples may choose to remain weekly or move to fortnightly; others to move directly to a Termination session.

Termination often occurs as follows:

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|---------------|-------------|--------|
| • Session #10 | Termination | 1 hour |
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### Outcome Evaluation

For maximum effectiveness, Outcome Evaluation is designed to take place as follows:

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|---------------|------------|--------|---------------------------------|
| • Session #11 | Evaluation | 1 hour | - at 6 months post Termination  |
| • Session #12 | Evaluation | 1 hour | - at 12 months post Termination |
| • Session #13 | Evaluation | 1 hour | - at 18 months post Termination |
| • Session #14 | Evaluation | 1 hour | - at two years post Termination |
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Client 1 \_\_\_\_\_ (sign) \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

Client 2 \_\_\_\_\_ (sign) \_\_\_\_\_ (date)