

INFORMED CONSENT FOR COUPLES THERAPY

Welcome: Before starting your therapy, it is important to read this document so you understand your rights and commitments.

My Credentials: I am a licensed Israeli Social Worker. I have a Masters of Social Work from Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ USA. I have successfully completed the three levels of training in Gottman Method couples therapy and am now working towards becoming Certified in this method.

What to expect: Couples who enter Gottman Method Couples Therapy begin with an assessment process that then informs the therapeutic framework and intervention:

1. *Assessment:* A conjoint session, followed by individual interviews with each partner are conducted. Couples complete online questionnaires and then receive detailed feedback on their relationship in a second conjoint session. The couple and therapist decide on the frequency of sessions.
2. *Therapeutic Interventions:* Interventions are designed to help couples strengthen their relationships in three primary areas: friendship, conflict management, and creation of shared meaning.

Couples therapy is a process of identifying interaction and communication patterns that are negatively impacting the friendship, intimacy, and fulfillment of needs of one or both partners in a relationship. Each partner will be expected to honestly examine their own interaction and communication styles, identify and express their own feelings, and experiment with alternative methods of communicating and interacting. Each partner will be helped to further clarify their own values and their own level of commitment to the relationship, and the outcome of the therapy may be increased satisfaction with the partnership or increased clarity about the decision to part ways.

Limitations to couples therapy: Gottman Method Couples Therapy has been shown to have benefits for couples. It often leads to a significant reduction of feelings of distress, resolution of specific problems, and a stronger relationship.

In many cases, it has moved couples from thinking of ending their relationship to recommitting to it in new ways. However, it is important that you also understand the risks involved. Despite the “nuts and bolts” approach of this method, you will be asked to address areas of difficulty in your relationship. As a result, you and/or your partner may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anxiety and anger. Your therapy may also involve recalling unpleasant aspects of your history together and individually. Difficulties between the two of you may become temporarily amplified.

Couples therapy will only be effective in cases where both partners put in a good faith effort to work on their problems and their relationship. This means that when you are given new tools or techniques by your therapist and are coached on how to use them in session, you will need to practice and use those techniques in your daily lives together, just using them when you are in session will not by itself produce real change. Dishonesty, unwillingness to introspect and take responsibility for one’s actions, or lack of motivation to fully engage in the couples therapy process by one or both partners will undermine the therapy. Thus, there can be no guarantees about how the therapy process will be for the two of you specifically or what the outcome will be for your relationship. In addition, couples therapy is not advisable in the following situations:

- · If there is serious violence in your relationship, threats by one or both partners that serious violence might occur, or fear of such serious violence on the part of one or both partners. Violence can be physical, psychological or emotional.
- · If either partner currently has an untreated major mental illness (schizophrenia, recurrent psychotic depression, or bipolar/manic-depressive illness) that will interfere with the process of couples work.
- · If there is an undisclosed, current affair that you are not willing to disclose (such secrets predict marital therapy failure).

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The couple is the client: When you attend couples therapy sessions, the

couple is considered “the client,” and your records with me therefore belong to both of you. This means that except in the circumstances outlined in the Confidentiality Statement below, I will require a written consent from both of you to disclose any information from your records to a third party, *unless your records are subpoenaed for a legal case such as divorce or child custody.*

No secrets: As a therapist who is entrusted with information from both partners of a relationship, I have a policy of “No Secrets”, which means that I cannot protect secrets of either partner from the other person, especially if the secret is harmful or destructive to the process of the therapy itself or undermines the agreed upon intention of the therapy. It is also harmful to the relationship of trust that I seek to build with both partners if I betray that trust by keeping secrets between partners.

Confidentiality Statement: Although confidentiality and privileged communication remain rights of all clients of counsellors and psychotherapists, some courts have held that if an individual intends to take harmful or dangerous action against another human being, or against himself or herself, it is the therapist’s duty to warn the person or family of the person who is likely to suffer the results, or in an emergency situation to take action to inform the relevant authorities of any concerns. All mental health professionals are required to report incidents of any type of child abuse or neglect to appropriate agencies. As your therapist I will under no circumstances inform or report without making every effort to first sharing that intention with the client. Every effort will be made to resolve the issue before such a breach of confidentiality takes place.

Permission for Digitally Recording Couples Therapy Sessions: Video feedback is utilized as a primary tool in Gottman Method Couples therapy. This means that therapy sessions will be video recorded with your written permission and certain exercises and dialogues will be reviewed from time-to-time. By reviewing recordings in session, we can process how each partner might approach a discussion in a more productive way. Viewing the recordings also enables you to witness your progress as your relationship becomes more satisfying.

In addition to in-session use, I may use brief segments of video recordings to receive consultation from Drs. John or Julie Gottman or an assigned Gottman master-trainer consultant. Case consultation and

supervision is an important feature of Gottman therapy that assures quality care and continuing education among Gottman therapists; it is also a vital part of my becoming a Certified Gottman Therapist. If a segment of a video recording in which you are featured is reviewed, your name will remain confidential at all times. Furthermore, all matters discussed in consultation will remain completely confidential within the aforementioned Gottman Institute Staff. Video recordings are not a part of your clinical record and will be erased when they are no longer needed for in-session feedback or consultative purposes. Should you wish to review the recordings for any reason, I will arrange a session to do so.

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Consent: (please sign and return this last page to Esther Adams-Aharony)

We, the client, have read and understand and consent to the terms in the Informed Consent document, and agree to initiate treatment with Esther Adams Aharony, MSW.

Client Signature _____ Date _____

Client Name (print) _____

Client Signature _____ Date _____

Client Name (print) _____

Permission to Video Record Sessions

I understand and accept the conditions and give my permission to have my therapy sessions digitally recorded. I understand I may revoke this permission in writing at any time but until I do so it shall remain in full force and effect until the purposes stated above are completed.

_____ Client Signature Date _____

_____ Client Signature Date _____

The Gottman Institute and its agents have no responsibility for the services you receive.