

## Positive Psychology Couple Therapy

Edward Chan\*

International Psychology Centre, Malaysia

### \*Corresponding author

Dr. Edward Chan, FMAPsy, FMCBTA., FECARE., PMMSCM, D.Phil. (Psy), Cert (Couple & Family Therapy), Licensed Amen Clinics Therapist, Principal Consultant Couple Therapist, International Psychology Centre, Malaysia; Email: edward@psychology.com.my

Submitted: 05 June 2018; Accepted: 22 June 2018; Published: 26 June 2018

### Abstract

*In this paper a new model of couple therapy based on positive psychology which is positive and open compared to many other popular models such as Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy (EFCT), Imago Therapy and Schema Couple Therapy in the way that it is not constricted by a specific theoretical framework to view the couple and doing therapy as these other models are [1-6]. It will be shown that this model, Positive Psychology Couple Therapy (PPCT) is not only enjoyable but effective as a form of couple therapy and psychotherapy.*

**Keywords:** Positive Psychology Couple Therapy, Collaborative Therapy, Imago Therapy, Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy, Emotion Focused Therapy, Positive Psychology, Couple Therapy

### Introduction to Positive Psychology Couple Therapy (PPCT)

The positive psychology couple therapist (ppct) unlike other therapists such as the EFCT therapist is not committed to any rigid psychotherapy theory. EFCT is based solely on attachment theory [1]. Schema couple therapy is based on the theory that couples in therapy have dysfunctional schemas [6].

PPCT is more akin to Collaborative Therapy which has an open enquiry between the therapist and clients and together they arrive at the therapeutic solutions that work for a specific couple in therapy [7].

Together the ppct and couple create some new positive solutions together. The ppct may identify some previous solutions that once served the couple well but not necessarily so now, perhaps because one or both of them have changed. These may be suggested as re-romanticizing activities similar to Imago Therapy but the ppct is ready to drop this suggestion if the couple mentioned that these activities are not working for them anymore [5].

### From monologue to dialogue

The ppct would invite each partner to tell their story and listen briefly to each other story with empathy and interest.

The partners may respond to this invitation in a number of ways which would inform us their feelings about their relationship.

Most couples that come to therapy may have stopped listening to each other long ago. They may just be interested to tell but not listen much to their partner: the monologue stage.

With much facilitation skill and gentle persistent invitation for the other party to share their positive reflections of their story of their partner, the couple enters into dialogue. The ppct may need to reframe several time the negative reflections of the partner to reflect the positive intentions of any perceived negative behaviour, attitude or personality trait attributed to their partner.

Other couples may already be more open towards dialogue and it may just take a small invitation from the therapist get them dialoguing fully.

### Positive intentions behind negative behaviours, attitudes and personality traits

The core skills of the ppct is to help couples stuck in negative monologues with each other ie., giving constant criticism of behaviours, attitudes and personality traits of their partners, to dialog with each other.

The key to be able to do so lies in reframing the couples' perceived negative attributes of their partner to positive intentions behind these attributes.

### From getting home late to improving the quality of their relationship

A couple was in distress. Kate complained that Frank always come home late. Frank in turn complained that Kate was always in a bad mood. The ppct invited the couple to see the positive intentions of their perceived negative behaviour and attitude of each other.

Several attempts were made by each partner before they get towards something their partner could agree with. The ppct was able to help Kate reflect that maybe Frank intend to build good relationships with his customers so that he can get their businesses and the income to enable her to get the new car that she needed to replace her old car.

Frank also received the useful help to see that maybe Kate was worried by his coming home late and she was concerned and cared for him.

With this recognition, Kate was able to see that Frank's behaviour was actually positive: he went to solicit new businesses to improve the quality of their relationship. And Frank was able to see that Kate's behaviour of waiting up for him was likewise positive: she wanted to ensure that he was safely home.

### Positive Psychology Couple Reconnection

PPCT is a positive dialogue process between the ppct and each of the couple in therapy. Together they reflect on each of the couple's positive intensions behind their perceived negative behaviour, attitude and personality traits of each other. Eventually the couple was able to reflect on the positive behaviour, attitude and personality trait of their partner. They become ready to listen to each other, to dialogue with each other fully and reconnect intimately with each other.

### References

1. Johnson SM (1996) The practice of emotionally focused couple therapy: creating connection. London, UK: Taylor and Francis Ltd
2. Johnson SM, Hunsley J, Greenberg L, Schindler D (1999) Emotionally focused couples therapy: Status and challenges. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice* 6: 67–79.
3. Johnson SM (2009) Attachment theory and emotionally focused therapy for individuals and couples. *Attachment theory and research in clinical studies with adults* 410–433.
4. Hendrix H (1996) The evolution of imago relationship therapy: A personal and professional journey. *Journal of Imago Relationship Therapy*.
5. Hendrix H, Hunt H (1988) *Getting the Love You Want: A Guide for Couples*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.
6. Simeone-Difrancesco C, Roediger E, Stevens BA (2015) *Schema therapy with couples*. Chischester, UK: John Wiley and Sons Ltd
7. Anderson H, Gehart D (Eds.) (2012) *Collaborative therapy: Relationships and conversations that make a difference*. Routledge.

**Copyright:** ©2018 Edward Chan. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.