

What to Expect from Couples Therapy

A Guide for Couples Seeking Therapy

Couples therapy is a collaborative process focused on understanding and strengthening the relationship. Sessions provide a respectful, neutral, and non-judgmental space where partners can explore concerns, improve communication, and work toward shared goals. Couples therapy is not limited to married couples. It may support partners who are dating, engaged, married, common-law, or in another committed relationship.

There is no single approach that is right for every couple. The therapist will tailor the structure, therapeutic methods, session frequency, and treatment plan to the relationship's needs, goals, and circumstances.

Relationship-Focused Therapy and Individual Sessions

Couples therapy focuses on the relationship rather than assigning blame to either partner. Most sessions involve both partners. Depending on the therapist's approach and clinical judgment, the therapist may recommend one or more individual sessions to support assessment, case planning, or treatment.

Sessions with the individual partner(s) are generally part of the couples therapy process unless separate individual counselling is arranged. Before an individual meeting, the therapist will explain its purpose and how confidentiality and information-sharing will be handled within the couples work.

The Couples Therapy Process

1. Initial Couples Assessment

Couples therapy usually begins with both partners attending an initial assessment. The therapist will learn about the relationship's strengths, current concerns, history, recurring patterns, and the changes each partner hopes to make. The purpose is to develop a balanced understanding of the relationship and identify the most appropriate direction for therapy.

The initial assessment may explore:

- the concerns that led the couple to seek counselling
- communication and conflict patterns
- relationship strengths, supports, and areas of connection
- trust, intimacy, life transitions, or other relational challenges
- relevant individual or mental-health concerns that may affect the relationship
- each partner's goals, expectations, and readiness for the process

2. Shared Goals and Treatment Plan

After the initial assessment, the therapist will work with the couple to identify shared goals and establish a treatment plan. Goals may include improving communication, resolving conflict more constructively, rebuilding trust, strengthening emotional connection, understanding recurring patterns, or navigating a specific challenge or transition.

The therapist will also discuss the therapeutic approach, the suggested frequency of appointments, and any activities or practice that may be completed between sessions. The therapist may also discuss having individual sessions with each partner based on their therapeutic approach or clinical necessity.

3. Ongoing Couples Sessions

Most appointments are couples sessions attended by both partners. The therapist may use guided conversations, structured exercises, reflection, and evidence-informed strategies to help the couple understand relationship dynamics and practise healthier ways of responding to one another.

Couples sessions may focus on:

- expressing needs, concerns, and emotions more effectively
- listening with greater empathy and understanding
- recognizing and changing unhelpful interaction patterns
- developing practical conflict-resolution and problem-solving skills
- rebuilding trust and strengthening connection
- practising new skills between appointments

4. Individual Sessions When Clinically Appropriate

Depending on the therapist's intake process, therapeutic approach, and clinical judgment, one or both partners may be asked to attend an individual session. These are usually occasional sessions used to gather information, clarify concerns, support case planning, or complete a specific part of the therapeutic approach.

An individual session may focus on:

- Each partner's perspective and relationship concerns
- Personal experiences or patterns affecting the relationship
- Emotional triggers, coping, and communication skills
- Concerns that may be difficult to discuss together
- Individual factors that may affect the couples work

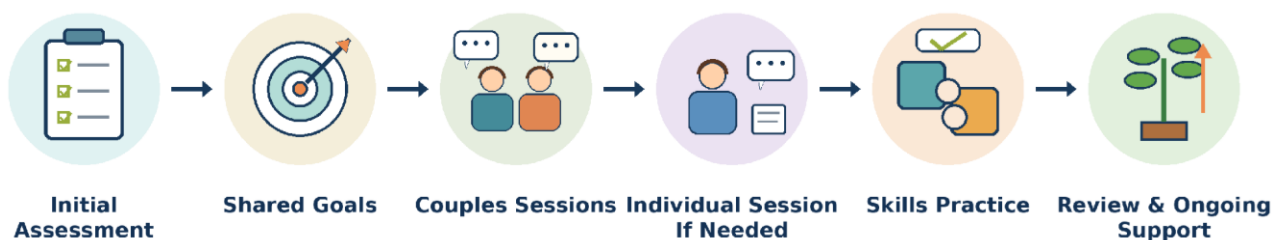
An individual session within couples therapy is not automatically the same as beginning separate individual therapy. The therapist will clarify the purpose of the meeting, who is attending, and the expectations for privacy and information-sharing before the appointment.

5. Practicing Skills Between Sessions

Couples therapy often includes practical exercises or strategies to practise outside the therapy room. This may involve communication exercises, reflection questions, planned conversations, or other activities connected to the couple's treatment goals. Consistent practice helps partners apply new skills in everyday situations.

6. Reviewing Progress and Ongoing Support

The therapist and couple will review progress throughout therapy and adjust goals, strategies, or appointment frequency when needed. Sessions are often scheduled weekly or every two weeks, although the timing and overall length of therapy vary based on the couple's needs, availability, progress, and goals.



Booking, Insurance and Receipts

Primary Booking Name

Each couple is booked under one primary name. When the clinic is direct billing an insurance plan, the appointment must be booked under the name of the partner whose insurance plan is being billed. If insurance is not available, either partner may be selected as the primary booking name. This primary name for couples sessions must remain consistent.

Although the appointment is scheduled under one primary name, both partners are documented as receiving the service when both attend the couples session. The booking name does not change that the appointment is a couples therapy session involving both partners.

Note: Please do not book couples sessions with both names, only a primary name for the couples session is required. The appointment scheduled will indicate it is a couples session, enter the other partner's name when a booking field requests it or asks for the same.

Receipts

Receipts are based on who received the service, meaning who attended the appointment. A receipt for a couples session will identify both partners who were present. If the therapist schedules an individual session, the appointment and receipt will be under the name of the individual who attends that session.

Individual Appointments

A planned individual appointment is booked under the name of the person attending. It should not remain booked under the other partner's name or under the primary couples booking name when that person is not receiving the individual service.

Note: If only one partner attends a scheduled couples session, the appointment will be billed under the individual present for the counselling service. The cost of the session will remain the same as this is considered a same-day appointment change.

Dual Insurance Coverage

If both individuals have separate insurance coverage, please contact the Client Services Team to inform us how you would like the insurance billing to be processed. The couple sessions should still be booked under one primary person, which can be decided between the couple or whose insurance is primary.

Additional Considerations When Accessing Couples Therapy

Confidentiality Within Couples Work

The therapist will explain confidentiality, its limits, and how information is managed within couples therapy. Because an individual meeting may still form part of the couples treatment plan, clients should not assume that it follows the same information-sharing expectations as a completely separate individual therapy service. Questions about privacy should be discussed with the therapist before an individual meeting begins.

A Collaborative, Non-Blaming Process

Couples therapy is intended to help partners understand their relationship patterns and work toward constructive change. The therapist does not attend to decide which partner is right or wrong. Progress usually requires participation, honesty, practice, and consistency from both partners.

Therapeutic Approach and Session Structure

Therapists may use different evidence-informed approaches and may structure sessions differently. Some couples will primarily attend joint sessions, while others may have one or more individual meetings within the couples process. The therapist will make recommendations based on clinical needs and explain the proposed structure.

Individual Therapy Outside of Couples Work

Individual sessions arranged by the couples therapist are part of the couples therapy process and remain connected to the couple's shared treatment goals.

When either partner is seeking separate, ongoing individual therapy for their own personal needs, they should contact the Client Services Team at **1-833-989-7561** or email info@yourcounselling.ca. To maintain appropriate therapeutic boundaries, the couples therapist cannot also serve as either partner's individual therapist. Our team will help match the partner seeking individual therapy with another therapist who is best suited to their individual needs.

Creating a Collaborative and Safe Environment

Couples can support the therapy process by:

- attending appointments consistently and arriving prepared to participate
- sharing concerns and goals as openly and respectfully as possible
- asking questions about the process, confidentiality, or treatment plan
- practising agreed-upon strategies between sessions
- informing the therapist of significant changes that may affect the work
- allowing time for new skills and relationship patterns to develop

At Your Counselling Ltd., we are here to support you throughout the couples therapy process. For questions regarding couples therapy or administrative & billing questions, contact us at info@yourcounselling.ca or **1-833-989-7561**.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do both partners attend every appointment?

Most couples therapy appointments involve both partners. The therapist may recommend an individual session when it supports the assessment, treatment plan, or therapeutic approach.

Why might the therapist meet with one partner individually?

An individual meeting may be used to gather additional information, clarify concerns, support case planning, or complete a specific part of the therapist's approach. It is generally an occasional part of the couples process rather than a replacement for joint sessions.

Is an individual session confidential from my partner?

The therapist will explain the specific confidentiality and information-sharing expectations before the individual session. Because the meeting may be part of the couples treatment plan, clients should not assume that it is handled in the same way as separate individual therapy.

Whose name is the appointment booked under?

The appointment is booked under one primary name. When direct billing is used, this must be the partner whose insurance plan is being billed. If insurance is not being used, either partner may be selected as the primary booking name.

Whose names will appear on the receipt?

The receipt reflects who received the service. When both partners attend a couples session, both are identified. When only one person attends a planned individual session, the appointment and receipt are under that person's name.

Can I see the couples therapist for ongoing individual therapy?

No. Individual sessions arranged by the couples therapist are part of the couples therapy process and remain connected to the couple's shared goals. The couples therapist cannot also provide separate, ongoing individual therapy to either partner.

A partner seeking individual therapy should contact the Client Services Team. They will help match the client with another therapist who is appropriate for their individual needs.

How long does couples therapy take?

The length of therapy varies. Some couples attend for a small number of focused sessions, while others benefit from longer-term support. The therapist will review progress and treatment goals throughout the process.

What if one partner is hesitant about attending?

It is common for partners to begin with different levels of comfort or readiness. Couples therapy is intended to support the relationship rather than assign blame. Concerns about the process can be discussed openly during the initial assessment.

Can couples therapy be provided virtually?

Virtual couples therapy may be available depending on the therapist, service location, and appointment availability. Reception can help identify the available options.