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# The Beacon

## *Guiding You Through the Process of Change*

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### ***A Couple's Work***

Marriage can be a wonderful journey of partnership, support, love, and companionship. It also can be a journey that becomes sidetracked by many factors, including careers, children, life stressors, and our own unresolved pain from earlier years. It takes regular attention and effort to keep a marriage on the right road, as well as willingness to compromise and sometimes put your partner's needs ahead of your own. Healthy marriages go through up and down periods, sometimes veering off course but returning to the road that works for them. Sometimes couples need assistance with finding their way back. Sometimes couples veer so far off course that the core of their marriage becomes threatened.

Beacon Behavioral Services offers many different types of couples work. This newsletter will explain one therapeutic modality that can be used with "Couples in Crisis," called Imago Therapy. This type of intervention is the brainchild of Harville Hendrix, Ph.D. He is probably most famous for his book *Getting The Love You Want* and for his many appearances on the Oprah Winfrey show. Dr. Hendrix hypothesizes that many of us enter adulthood with significant childhood wounds. Our unconscious minds enter adulthood with a very specific agenda: to heal the wounds of childhood and become the complete human being we were born to be. The solution lies with the partner we are attracted to and eventually marry.

Consciously, we begin looking for a partner with all the right attributes. These include physical attributes, similar likes and dislikes, or values and skills we admire. However, unconsciously we want to find someone who will heal our childhood

wounds and help us become complete. Our childhood wounds were created because certain needs were not met by our parents and we are now looking for the same type of person as our parents to heal these wounds in our adult life. It is not good enough to finally get the hugs we need; we have to get these hugs from a non-hugger. It is not good enough to get the praise and admiration we crave; we have to get this praise from one who is critical. Our unconscious has in mind the exact type of person who must meet our unmet needs. This person embodies both the negative and positive attributes of our parents although the negative attributes are more important because these are the ones that caused the wounding in the first place. Harville Hendrix calls this image of the ideal mate that our unconscious has formed, our Imago. Therefore, with this Imago in mind, our unconscious begins the search and after the romantic stage of the relationship, the frustration begins. Imago relationship theory explains why the differences, which lead to frustrations, are actually a natural part of what originally attracted you to each other.

The therapeutic work comes in recognizing and communicating these now recognized needs to a willing and loving partner and the partner's desire to understand and respect these needs. This, of course, goes both ways.

Whether you have a desire to improve your already 'good' relationship, or have gotten to the stage of crisis, we feel that couples' work is worthwhile. Imago Therapy is a highly effective tool to assist couples to better understand their partner's and their own needs, as well as develop the skills and strategies to more successfully meet these needs.

For more information, contact Betty Ann Rudolph, LCSW, Founder of "Couples in Crisis." *After the Affair* by Janis Abrams Spring, Ph.D.

Selected readings:

*By Betty Ann Rudolph, LCSW.*

*Getting The Love You Want* by Harville Hendrix, Ph.D.

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