

# STILLPOINT.

THERAPY - ASSESSMENT - CONSULTATION

PAUL W. FREHNER PSY.D.

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## **Treatment guidelines for Couples treatment**

There are situations where I work with couples with a systemic family therapy approach, which involves a combination of individual and couples sessions. In this situation my main focus is the improvement of the quality of the relationship and connection between the partners.

Treatment will consist of a combination of individual and joint sessions, depending on the needs of each partner and the state of the relationship. Individual sessions will generally focus on and the connection of one's personal history, upbringing and ways of experiencing and reacting towards our partners. Joint sessions will focus on communication, listening skills building and increasing of empathic behaviors.

To better understand the goals of Couple's therapy please view the 'Sound Relationship House' Model by Gottman on my website under RESOURCES.

### **Scheduling of sessions:**

As couples we have varying levels of trust with each other. In some areas we are comfortable discussing everything and in other areas we don't have the trust to be open and honest with our partner. We may even fear that our partner may use some of our private and vulnerable feelings and statements against us during a conflict.

In order to be able to engage in meaningful psychotherapy it is important to feel safe when we are vulnerable. In relationships with intense conflicts that can be a challenge.

When working with couples it is often helpful to work in individual sessions first, and then move gradually into couple's session as the treatment of each partner progresses. At times one partner may be involved in intensive work and the other partner may take a break for a while. Eventually the sessions will be held jointly until each partner feels the treatment goals have been achieved.

### **Confidentiality:**

This approach poses some challenges for confidentiality. The following rules apply:

1. All information discussed during psychotherapy is confidential and protected by HIPPA laws. Any disclosure of information requires a signed Release of Information (ROI).
2. Dr. Frehner will not disclose information from individual sessions to the other partner. This will allow you to explore feelings, worries and past events without fear of disclosure. It is not the role of the therapist to relay information from one partner to the next. However, you may prepare in individual session how to address a particular issue with your partner in a joint session. It is then up to you to bring up the particular issue.
3. Each partner is free to share anything they want from their individual therapy session with their partner, both in session or outside the therapy room. If you disclose information in your individual session that poses a danger to your partner or to your relationship Dr. Frehner will ask you to share that information with your partner directly either by yourself or in a joint session. If such an issue cannot be resolved in that manner treatment may need to be terminated and you and your partner may be referred somewhere else.
4. Dr. Frehner will only re-lease information from couple's session if both partners agree jointly (in writing) to do so.

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**Special situations:**

**Feasibility assessment:**

Dr. Frehner will, at the beginning of treatment, make an assessment to determine if you and your partner are candidates for this treatment approach. If contraindications to this approach are present, we will determine what the best approach for your situation is.

**Other therapists involved:**

If one or both of the partners have ongoing individual therapies Dr. Frehner will confer with these therapists at the beginning of treatment. A Release of Information for each therapist is required before engaging in couple's treatment. We will jointly make a decision what the best approach for your situation is.

**Divorce/separation situations:**

If one partner decides to divorce or separate the treatment plan may need to be revised. If the couple (or one member of the couple) makes a firm decision to separate, then couple's treatment is in most cases not useful anymore and will be terminated. Further treatment arrangements will need to be re-negotiated.

**Court proceedings:**

Dr. Paul W. Frehner is not willing to cooperate in court proceedings of any kind. If Dr. Frehner is forced to participate in court proceedings the parties are responsible for Dr. Frehner's fee for the necessary hours involved. Details are outlined in the Extended Services Contract which will need to be signed before couples treatment begins.

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I have read, understood and accepted the above guidelines for couple's treatment:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_