Trainees’ Toolbox
Module 1B – Segments 3 & 4

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Table of Contents - ICT Toolbox Segments 3 & 4

Table of Contents ........................................................................................................... 2
Course Outline for Segments 3 and 4 ................................................................. 3
Overview of Segment 3 ............................................................................................. 4
Journal Suggestions for Module 1B ................................................................. 5
The Imago Dialogue – Removing Negativity .................................................. 6
Deepening the Dialogue – Intentionality ......................................................... 7
Intentional Behaviors for Sender and Receiver – Handout for Clients .......... 8
Affective Deepening of the Imago Dialogue ................................................. 9
Tools for Deepening the Imago Dialogue.......................................................... 10
Frequently Used Sentence Stems for Deepening ........................................ 11
Emotional “Shallowing” ....................................................................................... 12
Imago Feedback Process ...................................................................................... 13
Overview of Segment 4 ......................................................................................... 14
The Initial Interview (Harville Hendrix) .......................................................... 15-16
The Initial Interview (Bruce Crapuchettes) .................................................... 17-18
The Initial Interview (Maya Kollman) .............................................................. 19-25
The Flow of an Imago Session ........................................................................ 26-27
Imago Feedback Process - Steps 1-4 ............................................................... 28
Setting up an Imago Practice ............................................................................. 29-30
Between Module Assignments .......................................................................... 31
Imago Feedback Form for Module 2 assignment ......................................... 33
Scoring Sheet for Imago Therapy Certification – the Imago Dialogue ....... 34-35
Training Evaluation Form for Module 1 A&B ............................................... 36-37
Additional Materials for Days 1-4 ................................................................. 38-51

Intake Information form ................................................................................. 39
Reasons and Goals for Therapy form ............................................................ 40
Taping Consent Form ......................................................................................... 41
Guidelines for Financial Policy handout ...................................................... 42
Guidelines for Privacy of Information handout ............................................ 43
Session Rating Scale ......................................................................................... 44
Imago Relationship Therapy Evaluation Scale ........................................... 45
Relationship Goals Tracking Chart ............................................................... 46
How am I doing in the Dialogue Process ..................................................... 47-48
Guided Meditation of Transition and Connection ....................................... 49
Alternative Centring Meditation ................................................................. 50
Imago Relationship Therapy A Brief Outline (handout) ................................ 51-52
Repressive Messages of Socialization .......................................................... 53
Re-orchestrating the Messages ........................................................................ 54
### Module 1-B Course Outline

#### Segment 3
- **Opening** - contact & connection
- **Removing Negativity**
- The psychological and social journeys – healthy development
  - As they apply to the therapist/educator
- **High Energy Fun**
- **The Imago Dialogue**
  - Deepening (from content to affect) and “shallowing” (from affect to cognition)
  - sentence stems, doubling, focusing, directives, silence, voice modulation
- Demonstration: Imago dialogue with affective deepening and “shallowing”
- Practice: Imago dialogue – deepening affect and “shallowing”, with feedback
- **Closing** - journaling

#### Segment 4
- **Opening** - contact & connection
- **Introducing the positive and finding the balance**
- **High Energy Fun**
- **Evaluating Therapy – Outcome and Process**
- **The Imago Session**
  1) The initial interview
     - Demonstration
     - Practice: with feedback
  2) The flow of an entire session
- Basics of an Imago practice
- Assignment for Session 2
- Administrative issues
- **Closing** - journaling
Overview of Segment 3

Removing Negativity
A key element of Imago Relationship Therapy is removing negativity from relationships both on the part of the therapist and between partners.

The Psychological Journey and the Social Journey.
An understanding of the Psychological Journey and the Social Journey of human development informs the therapist about how to be with the clients, how to relate in healthy ways that support healing and wholeness, and ways in which to encourage the partners to be with each other that leads to the healing of old relationship wounds and to the re-integration of the missing parts of the self. Why and how to share this information with different clients in different settings will be discussed.

Deepening the Imago Dialogue
Once the couple has a sense of the structure of the Imago Dialogue the therapist can focus increasingly on introducing tools to help the couple to deepen their connection through moving from the content of their stories to the affective experience underneath and sharing this with each other. This leads to a deep way of knowing each other both through their behaviors but also by moving beyond their own interpretations of those behaviors into an awareness of how the other thinks and feels, their history, their current reality and their future dreams.

“Shallowing” the Imago Dialogue
At times it is necessary for the Imago therapist to have tools to help bring clients out of a deep regressive experience or re-centre them when they have been overwhelmed by strong emotions.
Journal Suggestions for Module 1B - Segments 3 & 4

**Segment 3:** Something I learnt or re-learnt about myself…
Something I learnt or re-learnt about deepening and shallowing affect…
A question that I am sitting with is…

**Segment 4:** Something I learnt or re-learnt about myself…
Something I learnt or re-learnt about doing an Imago session…
A question I am sitting with is…
The Imago Dialogue – Removing Negativity

We believe that couples will not be able to experience the connection they desire as long as they are negating each other, by which we mean putting each other down, making each other wrong or bad, blaming, shaming or criticizing (even “helpful” criticism). It does not mean that we are trying to remove all negative feelings they might have towards each other – these are inevitable, at least in the early years of doing this work together. Whenever there are put-downs, criticisms, etc. there will be pain, when there is pain there will be defensiveness. When there is defensiveness there will be ruptures of the experience of connectedness.

Negativity is defined as anything one partner experiences as a negative comment or gesture on the part of the other. This is identified by a simple “Ouch” because if they go into trying to prove how wrong, bad or hurtful the partner was, they themselves are then engaging in negativity.

Harville and Helen launched the Zero Negativity challenge in 2013, inviting couples to make a 30 day pledge to eliminating all expressions of negativity in their relationship. Kits are available for couples from www.harvillehendrix.com. These include calendars and stickers to use each day to track progress.

We invite all our couples in the dialogue process to eliminate negativity. Through our coaching we guide partners to express their hurt and frustration in ways that do not put the partner down, blame or shame them, criticize them or make them wrong or bad. Rather than talking about the partner in negative ways we guide them to talk about themselves, their own hurts, fears, reactions, desires. We also invite them to replace all negativity with appreciations and requests.

We also invite Imago practitioners to make a “Zero Negativity” pledge. This means we agree to do our best to eliminate negativity from our way of being with each other and towards ourselves. During the training eliminating negativity includes giving suggestions rather than criticism in the feedback process - both to ourselves and to others.

We see removing negativity as essential to the work. Some couples find this relatively easy and others have an extremely hard time doing it. This is where having concrete tools, such as the Zero Negativity package, can be extremely helpful. Negativity can be quite addictive for some and so very difficult to let go of. Some couples do not know how to talk to each other at all once they give that up because it has been such an integral part of their way of being in relationship and the way they have experienced relationship from an early age. This takes a lot of patient guidance on the part of the facilitator, combined with some psycho-education to help them understand the reason for giving this up.

We help our clients replace all negativity with appreciations, redos, requests and dialogues.
Deepening the Dialogue – Intentionality

Facilitator Guidelines for Helping Couples Send and Receive with Intentionality

It’s not what you say, it’s how you say it.

Before a Dialogue The FACILITATOR asks each partner to:

1. identify the topic s/he wishes to talk about
2. state his/her intentions for the relationship in addressing this topic
3. clarify how s/he needs to be and act to be true to their own intentions (The FACILITATOR may share the Intentional Behaviors Handout for Couples - see below)
4. As the Sender identifies the specific intentional behaviors they will engage in during the dialogue, the FACILITATOR writes this down to be able to come back to as they work, as necessary.
5. Similarly as the Receiver identifies the specific intentional behaviors s/he will engage in during the dialogue and the FACILITATOR writes these down also.
6. When partners switch roles the FACILITATOR invites them to pause and clarify the intentional behaviors for the new role.

It is also important for the facilitator to behave intentionally. The facilitator’s interventions are guided by their intentions. The intentions of the Facilitator are determined by his/her understanding of Imago Theory. The tools of deepening and “shallowing” are first and foremost used to support increased connection by

- Increasing safety
- Increasing differentiation
- Increasing empathy
- Increasing consciousness
INTENTIONAL BEHAVIORS for Sender and Receiver

Handout for Clients

What do you want to happen? How do you need to show up for that to happen?

HOW TO SHOW UP AS THE SENDER:

SHOW GOOD WILL AND HIGH REGARD

Soft voice
Eye contact
Open posture
Use feeling words that deepen vulnerability
Express emotions without attacking, criticizing or being judgmental in tone and facial expression
Be accountable for my behavior
Use “I” rather than you language
BREATHE
Upright posture (i.e. I will sit up so I can express my full aliveness)
Short sends i.e. I will be clear by using simple words & shorter sends
Contain my emotions
Refrain from blaming

HOW TO SHOW UP AS THE LISTENER:

SHOW GOOD WILL AND HIGH REGARD

Be curious
Mirror accurately – content and affect
Use pause button
Open, upright posture
Eliminate reactive facial expressions and tone, e.g. eye rolling, sighing, tsking.
Soft voice
Eye contact
Contain, sit on my world, not interrupt, turn down my inner volume
Stay present and be open and curious to what my partner is saying
BREATHE
Therapist Intentions and Tools for Deepening of Affective Connection in the Imago Dialogue

The Imago facilitator can help couples move out of discussing content and into deeper affective connection with each other. The tools described below offer the facilitator a variety of ways to do this. The choice arises out of the facilitator’s attunement to the couple. The intention of the facilitator in using deepening tools is to increase Connection through increasing Safety, Differentiation, Empathy and Integration in the relationship. Deepening is ALWAYS directed towards the SENDER.

**Intentions for Therapist Interventions**

**Tools for “Deepening” Interventions**

- “Is there more (about that)?”
- Sentence stems
- Doubling
- Focusing
- Directives
- Silence
All of the deepening processes should be used sparingly. Use them with attunement and follow the couple’s energy. Trust them first to know where they need to go.

**Tools for deepening from story and content to affect and connection:**

“Is there more (about that)?” This is the primary deepening tool in Imago. The question comes from the partner not from the Facilitator. It invites the Sender to go deeper within and share more of the self. The Facilitator may encourage a Minimizing partner to say “Yes, and the more is…” rather than an overly quick “No, that’s all”. The Facilitator may encourage a Maximizing partner to become less repetitive and focused in their “send” and to say “Not for Now”. The Facilitator may then use the other deepening tools below to guide the Sender and monitors whether the deepening interventions s/he uses contribute to increased connection, safety, differentiation, empathy and consciousness. The Facilitator also stays aware of the Receiver’s capacity to contain or whether it might be more valuable to switch roles than to deepen further.

**Sentence Stems:** (Based on the work of Nathaniel Branden). The Facilitator begins the sentence for the SENDER, using “I” as if speaking as them. See list below for examples of some fairly commonly used Sentence Stems. In the therapy setting, sentence stems always flow from the Facilitator’s attunement to the SENDER’S material. As Facilitator you can give brief instructions initially such as “Finish this sentence…” or move beside him/her more so you too are facing the RECEIVER when offering the stem. Once the clients have got used to this way of guiding them, you may just offer the sentence stem. It is better not to make eye contact with the SENDER when offering the stem, as they may turn to you and respond to you, breaking connection with the partner, as they would if answering a question. If they do this you can just redirect them to talk to the partner.

**Doubling:** (Adapted from psychodrama techniques). The Facilitator attunes to the Sender, imagines what is just outside of his/her awareness or is not being said and offers a whole sentence for the Sender to say if s/he feels it fits. The Facilitator may introduce it with directions such as “If this fits for you, say it to your partner, or put it in your own words”. Even when it is not quite right it can prompt the Sender to discover and express what was just out of awareness.

**Focusing:** (Based on the work of Eugene Gendlin). The Facilitator invites the Sender to connect with the body experience of what is happening in the session and speak from that place. You may introduce this with phrases like “Notice what is happening in your body right now, what you’re feeling in your stomach, your chest, your limbs, your head. Give a voice to that part of you.”

**Directives:** The Facilitator gives brief, direct, instructions to the Sender, such as “Slow that down”, “Say that again, louder”, “Go inside and see what more there is.” to help him/her stay with the experience longer or amplify it.

**Silence:** Leaving space for what is just below the surface to emerge. The Facilitator’s challenge is to be attuned enough to the client so that you know when the silence is coming from reflection and when it is because they have no idea what they are supposed to be doing and are waiting to be told.
FREQUENTLY USED SENTENCE STEMS for DEEPENING

Here are some frequently used sentence stems. Remember, the most important thing is to attune to the clients.

The story I make up about you/your behavior is…
When you did that/said that, I interpreted it to mean…
And then I felt… (not “You made me feel…” or “That made me feel…”)
What I am afraid of is…
What hurts about that is…
Then I react by…
What that reminds me of is…
How I protected myself in childhood was…
How that affects the way I behave today…
How I imagine my behavior affects you is…
A new decision I might make given that I am no longer a child is…
And out of that decision, a new way I might behave is…
What makes it hard to take in your love is…
When I get scared, one way I try to protect myself is…
Underneath my anger, what I am experiencing is…
If I reclaim my (feeling, lost part, etc.), what I am afraid will happen is…
What I am experiencing in my body is…
What makes it hard for me to give you what you need is…
How giving you what you need will help me is…
What I long for is…
My desire in our relationship is…

All the questions you might want to ask your clients can be turned into Sentence Stems. To practice creating sentence stems, make a list of questions you can imagine you might want to ask a particular client, and turn your questions into stems, e.g. “What are you feeling?” becomes “What I am feeling is…”, “What do you want to accomplish when you say that?” becomes “What I want to accomplish by saying that is…”. If the client is confused by the therapist’s use of the ‘I’ they may need further coaching such as “Say to your partner: What I am afraid of is… and finish the sentence”.
Emotional “Shallowing”

Ways to guide clients to a more grounded, less emotional state

If a client (either SENDER or RECEIVER) becomes overwhelmed by their affective experience, especially in a way that takes them out of connection with their partner, the Facilitator may wish to help the client shift to a less emotional, more cognitive state. Or it may just be that the session is coming to an end after a deeply emotional piece of work. There are several ways of doing this, including:

**Breathing exercise** with counting – extending the exhale.

**Questions**, especially with the word “think” in them, e.g. “What do you think might be happening right now?”, “What do you think you might be feeling?” “What do you think you might need right now?”

**Modulation of the Facilitator’s voice** – Using a soothing voice or a higher tone, drawing the client towards the emotional state you would like them to experience.

**Grounding** – Invite the client to place both feet on the floor, feel the floor beneath their feet, notice what they are feeling in their body, where they are feeling it. You might have them describe the sensations. In order to notice and describe them they have to engage the observing part of themselves, which helps them to take some distance from the experience.

**Actions** – Guide the client to stand up and stretch, walk, or place the hands behind the head, expand the chest.
The Imago Feedback Process – Steps 1-3

The Imago Feedback process is designed to help trainees grow into their own competence. It consists of 4 steps:

1) The body experience
2) What I liked
3) A suggestion
4) A growth gift and how this would be operationalized

In this Module we will continue to practice Steps 1 - 3

Reminder:

Process: After each practice session, (with the Facilitator mirroring during the following steps B. to D.)

A. The facilitator will give him/herself feedback – (group member mirrors)
B. The practice couple will give the facilitator feedback one at a time
C. Observers, if any, will give the facilitator verbal or written feedback
D. The clinical instructor, if present, will give the facilitator feedback

The facilitator may record the feedback on audiotape or may ask for it in writing.

What I felt in my body was…
Try to describe the body sensation in physical terms rather than an interpretation of the emotion this represents, e.g. I felt a tightness in my chest and belly (rather than I felt anxious).

What I liked about my/your work was…
Try to be as specific as possible in your feedback, e.g. I really liked when you leaned across beside the SENDER and gave the sentence stem “…."

A suggestion I have is…/Another possibility is…
The Facilitator and then other group members offer positive helpful suggestions of specific actions that the Facilitator might do, e.g. My suggestion is that you change questions into sentence stems such as “What I am feeling is…” when the client had tears in her eyes.

This is an opportunity for the person giving the suggestion to offer the Facilitator some other options. It is never offered as a criticism of what they did do. In Imago we work to create an environment of safety with zero negativity towards the self or others.

If as a Facilitator or an observer of the Facilitator’s work you feel moments of critical or judgmental energy, it is a wonderful opportunity to convert these into suggestions, whilst acknowledging that there are many effective ways to support clients on their journey.
Overview of Segment 4

The Imago Therapy Session - see supplement The Initial Session

1) **The initial interview** - The first interview is key in establishing connection with the clients and providing a sense that this will be a safe space for them to work on their relationship. It is important to give them a different experience of their relationship than what they are doing at home. Each trainer does this in their own particular way but are guided by some shared premises about what is important in the initial interview. In this toolbox we present three models – that of Harville Hendrix and the Master Trainers Maya Kollman and Bruce Crapuchettes. Your instructor may also give you their own outline. We recommend that you start by modelling yourself on your clinical instructor. Then you can read about how other faculty members conduct their initial interview in the supplement The Initial Interview. This will give you the opportunity to find the style of doing Imago that is right for you. The more you observe experienced Imago therapists, trainers and workshop presenters doing Imago work, the more you will be able to see the essential common threads as well as the individual differences. After trying out some of these styles you will eventually find your own style whilst holding to the core theoretical premises and skills that are the foundation of Imago.

2) **The Flow of an Imago Session - What to do when the clients come back for more?**
Putting it all together so that trainees have a sense of what an Imago session is like when the couple returns for on-going therapy. Trainees will have an opportunity to view a full Imago session where the Imago Dialogue is used throughout as the primary therapeutic modality.

**Therapy feedback forms - see Additional Materials at the end of this Toolbox.**
According to Scott Miller, Mark Hubble & Barry Duncan (*Supershrinks: Who they are. What we can learn from them.* Psychotherapy Networker, November/December 2007) getting feedback from clients is an essential component in developing competence and excellence as a therapist. Standard forms can be used to open a dialogue between the therapist and clients about their experience of the therapy.
- Session rating scale
- Imago Relationship Therapy Evaluation Scale
- Relationship Goals Tracking chart

**Basics of an Imago practice** - Some of the fundamentals such as length of sessions, set up of the office that constitute an Imago practice.

**Assignment for Segment 5**
**Evaluation of Segments 1 to 4**
THE INITIAL INTERVIEW (Harville Hendrix)

FACILITATOR: Say the words in bold print.

“I’d like to start by having you talk to each other about how you want your relationship to be when you have finished therapy. Assume you have finished therapy and have had the best therapy possible and now have the best marriage possible. Tell each other what that is.”

This helps get the clients out of expectations that the therapist is going to listen to complaints. As they respond the therapist keeps them out of negativity by editing, redirecting and keeping them talking about what they do want. The therapist holds the clients in the possibility of the new pathway – not letting them go down the old pathway. The therapist guides them towards articulating the qualities of a great marriage which is safe, they feel connected and passionate – until they arrive at that although they may have different words.

“What’s missing in your relationship that if it were here you would already be living the dream?”

Focus on the missing positive rather than the negative – if you had all these things you’d have the relationship you want. Responses may be enough time together, sex, kindness, respect, etc. This may take a session or two.

Tell people in the first session “What you want and the negative behaviours you are engaging in are incompatible so I want to challenge you to eliminate all negative transactions”. Sit with the panic and have them dialogue about what that would be like – talk from the future rather than from the past or present.

“Which one of these do you want to start with to fill in? We can’t do your whole dream today, so we have to pick one and work on that. Do you need any help to do this?”

This moves them away from cortisol to endorphins. Keep them in dialogue with each other. Dialogue is not just a healing tool, it is the healing that repairs the developmental ruptures. Put things on a chart and have them dialogue. The therapist steps in to help them clarify and keep them out of the negative frame. Keep them in their brains to build a picture of an alternative to their marriage. Move from the conditional and future tenses into present tense and into action from an abstract trait, e.g. “There would be more trust” to SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time and frequency specific), positive, present tense and behavioural actions. Get it languaged, modeled and practiced in the session.

Have them do an appreciation at the start of the planning of the dream unless they are so reactive they just can’t do it there. The purpose is to change brain chemistry and
perception. Sometimes help that by saying “My experience from all my years of working with couples is that 90% of their relationship is fine, I imagine that’s true of you and you can prove me wrong, you may have 20% bad, but like a hurting toe it makes everything ache, so let’s pick out something that you do appreciate about each other and about the relationship”.

If they somehow seem finished with the dream and can create it they don’t need to see the therapist again.
THE INITIAL INTERVIEW  (Bruce Crapuchettes)

FACILITATOR:  Say the words in bold print:

I would like to get to know the two of you better, and especially what brings you here.  You would like me to get to know you better.  But if one of you tells on the other, then you won’t feel safe.  I want to do this in a way that keeps you feeling safe.  I have a structure I would like to use.  Is that okay with you?

Turn to the one who made the appointment

Mary, if I had asked you to stay in the waiting room, and I were alone with George, what do you think he would tell me are your contributions to tension in the relationship?  I am going to give you a lead line.

George would say that I . . . .
1. I am too demanding.
2. I am not sexually available.
3. I spend too much money.

After gathering all the self reflections (it could be just 3, or it could be 8), say:  
I am going to read each sentence to you and ask you to evaluate how much tension you think it creates in George on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not very significant, and 10 being very significant.

Say:  George would say that I am too demanding.

How much tension do you think that creates in him?  
Then write that number in the column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ratings</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>G</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>I am too demanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>I am not sexually available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>I spend too much money.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So, turning to George:

Good.  Now would you be willing to do the same exercise?
If I were alone in the room with Mary, what do you think she would tell me are your contributions to tension in the relationship?

Mary would say that I . . .
Have George rate each item the way he thinks Mary would rate it. Now stay with George and check out Mary’s guesses. Have him speak a brief sentence or two to each guess and teach Mary how to mirror George.

Then switch to Mary and check out Georges’ guesses teaching George to mirror Mary.

In Imago we use dialogue as our method of work. Let me share a metaphor to get across why we use dialogue.

1. Hands or 2. Coaster

Now have them put both feet flat of the floor, close their eyes, and read all the items out loud to them. Then ask them to take a minute to think about what they would like to dialogue about. When one has a topic, have them open their eyes and ask for an appointment: “I would like to have an Imago Dialogue, is now okay?” Have them do word for word mirroring by raising their hand as a pause signal, and then summarize in their own words. It is often best to have them only mirror during the first session, and teach them validation and empathy later.

In between session assignment: For example: Read the pamphlet, "Preparation for Couples Therapy." Or, read Harville's book, or, listen to a tape of Harville's.

Principles
1. From the very first session, teach them how to be in process with each other, take turns, and how to mirror. Don't let them start the habit of talking to you about the other person.

2. Establish safety as the primary therapeutic issue.
THE INITIAL INTERVIEW (Maya Kollman)

Maya Kollman does a free 20 minute phone call before she sees clients for the first time to get a sense of what is going on and mirrors them to see if they can soften. If they want to come, she gives them the following questionnaire to complete and return before the first meeting, as well as the “Clear Expectations” sheet.

Pre-First Session Questionnaire

Please fill this out separately and email it to me:

Therapist’s name:
Therapist’s email address:
Phone:
Fax:

Name____________________________________
Address____________________________________

____________________________________
____________________________________

Tel:  Home ____________________  Work _________________
     Mobile ____________________  Fax ____________________

E-mail _____________________________________________________

D.O.B. _______________  Age _____  Marital Status _______________

Children:

    Name                  gender             age

Referred by__________________________________________

What would you most like to get out of our work together?

Describe your previous Individual or Marital Therapy Experience if you have had any.
Attraction Phase: Describe falling in love with your partner. What were the traits they possessed that made you decide to connect with them.

Power Struggle: (Things changed when....)

What do you imagine it is like being married to you?

What are the strengths of this Relationship?

What if any Medication(s) are you taking?

Alcohol & Drug History:

Is there anything else I need to know about you and your relationship that would be important so that I can be the most helpful? Remember, I cannot hold secrets from your partner, but I can help you tell them things you might be afraid to tell them.

I look forward to meeting with you.
CLEAR EXPECTATION ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE IN IMAGO COUPLE’S THERAPY WITH MAYA KOLLMAN (handout)

First, let me congratulate you for caring enough about your relationship to even consider couples counselling. In order for this process to be helpful and safe for you, I have compiled a list of expectations so you can make an informed decision if you want to work with me.

1. I schedule 1 ½ hour sessions every other week. I will do everything I can to find a spot for you that is consistent, and therefore I ask you to give me 24 hours notice if you need to cancel. If it is less than 24 hours, and I can find a spot for you in that same week, I will not charge you. However, if it is less than 24 hours and we miss the week, you will be charged my full fee. Of course, I am not unreasonable. If there is a family emergency or a serious illness I will certainly make an exception. The purpose of this policy is to help you stay committed to coming. As the work progresses, there may be hard times, and it is easy to just want to avoid them by canceling and I believe that is not in the best interest of your relationship.

2. My fee is $... for each 1 ½ hour session. I appreciate being paid at the end of every session. Again, if there is a problem, (you forget your check book, there is a money crunch), please talk to me. You will find I am very understanding.

3. Since this is couple’s work, I will only see you individually if absolutely necessary and then it is a decision we will make together. If we have a couple’s session and only one of you shows up, I will not see you and I will charge you for the session. I will also not hold secrets. Although I will always keep confidential from anyone other than the two of you everything you say, I cannot keep things that one of you tells me in private. I can however, help you say things that you are afraid to say in a way that your partner can hear you.

4. I will encourage you as soon as possible to attend the weekend couples’ workshop. I believe this workshop, which costs $... for the two of you is worth seven months of therapy. The workshop is designed to protect your privacy as a couple and therefore you do the processes with each other. Also, the workshop is educational rather than “therapy”. It is about skill building and learning to communicate.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE THERAPIST IN AN IMAGO SESSION

1. To show up for appointments on time and be clear about ending on time.
2. To be clear about my fee and give a three month warning if I am raising my fee.
3. To keep all information confidential
4. To be neutral and not take sides.
5. To only talk to the couple when they are together.
6. To find an equal balance between understanding and compassion and limit setting.
7. To recognize that the couple has all they need to move into connection together and wholeness inside themselves and that my job is to keep them in process using the structure of the dialogue so they can find their way to each other.
8. To be 100% present, able to put aside whatever is going on inside me.
9. To interact in a respectful, non-shaming manner, modeling healthy differentiation.
10. To respond to upset about my behavior by mirroring, validating, and being empathic and taking responsibility for my impact.
11. To explain the Imago concepts clearly and to have a good balance between process and educating.
12. To give clear homework assignments and support attempts.
13. To remember what happens in sessions so things can have continuity.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COUPLE IN AN IMAGO SESSION

1. To keep appointments by showing up on time and paying the fee.
2. To be as honest about your feelings and thought as you know them.
3. To follow the directive of the therapist to stay in the process of the dialogue.
4. To be willing to be open and curious about your partner’s reality.
5. To be willing to take responsibility for your part of the nightmare.
6. To be respectful to your partner in and out of the session.
7. To express upset and complaints to either your partner, or to the therapist rather than to friends or family members.
8. To NEVER, NEVER use material from the sessions against your partner.
9. To express appreciations and gratitude for your partner.
10. To take the risk to be vulnerable at whatever level stretches you but does not break you.
11. To give and receive repairs as soon as possible.
12. To become your partner’s advocate.
A First Session Protocol (Maya Kollman)

1. The couple sits on the couch and you greet them. Have them breathe and as much as possible be present. Congratulate them and thank them for the privilege of them bringing something as precious and private as their relationship to your office and to a complete stranger.

2. Ask them, “What is it you want to have in your relationship? What are the characteristics that you would like to have, that are not there now? Speak about the relationship rather than your partner. “The aspects I long to have in our relationship are...” Write answers on a flip chart.

3. Explain to them that you know they want this, and if they don’t already have it something they are doing is getting in the way. “It is easy to think it is about our partner, and if we stay there, we will be helpless to change what we have. We can’t change another person. We can only change ourselves.

4. Ask them “What do you think you do when you get scared, triggered that might get in the way of you having the relationship you long for? Think of how you react with your partner. Write down their answers.

5. Move them to the chairs. Do an extensive meditation.
   a. Close your eyes and feel the chair supporting you. Place your feet on the floor and allow yourself to feel the ground supporting you. Take some good deep breaths, in through your nose, and out through pursed lips, and with each breath out, feel yourself sinking even more deeply into the chair.
   b. Now go to the place right about the middle of your eyebrows. This is your cerebral cortex. Think of your brain as having four parts. The part at the base of your neck is inherited from the reptiles. Its only job is to keep you safe, and it doesn’t know the difference between past or present or degree of safety. Right above that reptile is the part we inherited from the mammals. It responds to the signals of the reptile and has an emotional and visceral reaction based on whether the signal says safe or dangerous. The third part of the brain is wrapped around those two parts and this part of our brain creates stories to make meaning about what the reptile and the mammal are communicating. I like to call this part of the brain, the monkey mind. There are millions of stories held in the adult monkey mind. Those stories are etched into this part of our brain reminding us what things are safe and what things are dangerous. so we can know this for the future and stay alive and safe. Finally at the very front is the monkey mind, is the part I like to call “the Dolphin”. We think that only humans have this part, but sometimes when I watch some animals, I think we might be wrong. This part of the brain has the capacity to be still and quiet and observe all the other parts of the brain. It can notice the body sensations and emotions and listen to the monkey mind and decide whether the signals are appropriate for now. It has the capacity if we train it to create new stories that are based on current time. See if you can connect to that dolphin part of you. Put your focus on that space between your eyebrows and notice. Observe your thoughts letting go of any attachment to the truth of them, (Give some time for this). Now notice the
space around your heart and in your stomach and see what emotions are living there. (Give time) Finally scan your body and just notice sensations. Where you hold tightness and observe (Give time). Keep breathing easily in and out as you grow this dolphin part of you.

c. Now, notice the space between you. The two of you have created this together in the same way you create a child. This space between you is an entity in itself. Pay attention to that space, to the history that lives in that space. A history that has difficulties, but also carries all the good things you have manifested over your years together. (If you know what they have created, children etc. you can mention those). You are both responsible for this tender space. It is your job to help this space which is currently struggling to move into a new place. Every word you say, every facial expression, every behavior and thought has an enormous impact on the ease or dis-ease of this space.

d. Take a moment to sit with this awesome responsibility. Recognize the opportunity that is before you. In addition to having such an impact on the relationship I want you to recognize that you, more than anyone else on this planet, have an enormous impact on your partner. In your face and in your eyes, your partner is looking for the answer to the eternal questions. Am I lovable, Do you delight in me, Are you glad I was born, Am I enough for you. Knowing you have this impact and that by answering yes to these questions I would like you to stretch no matter what else is going on and find the part of you that can welcome your partner into this space with your eyes and your tender smile for only five seconds. I will count from 5 to 1 and when I reach the number one open your eyes and just gaze. (If they respond with tears...have them notice how little it takes to change the relational space by being aware of their impact. If they remain closed, validate how and why this is so difficult and that it makes sense it is too scary to go there).

e. Tell them you are going to teach them a new way to talk and listen so they can gain an understanding of what is going on. “To do this, I am going to ask you to think of falling in love. Perhaps it would be good to close your eyes to do this. Picture the place where you first met....imagine yourself back there....notice your feelings back then...what was it about this person that drew you to them? Think of all the aspects that you experienced back then that made you decide out of all the many people you could choose, you chose them. Even if you haven’t experienced this person for a long time, I want you to remember they are right there in front of you and the reason you don’t see what you saw then is that they are afraid just like you are of opening and being vulnerable because of the hurt that has existed in your relationship.

f. Open your eyes and (ask the minimizer to begin).

6. Hand an object to the receiver. (I like to use a stone heart and say “Imagine you are custodian of your partner’s heart). Tell them their job is to listen deeply. Which means, empty your mind of any of your own chatter, Imagine you have a parking lot behind you that can hold it all. Your job is to be present and just lis-
ten. And then reflect back without interpretation or analysis what your partner says. If they are saying more than you can remember give them a signal by pulling your ear which means “I really want to hear you, but I am full, can I mirror back what I have heard so far”. (Sometimes it helps for you to model this first and then have them do it). Keep the sends short. Have the sender talk about the scene they saw and the traits. End with “Having revisited this experience what I am experiencing is...” Keep it tight and cut off any blame, shame, criticism. Help them if necessary to talk about their own pain, anxiety etc. Go back and forth with this topic, re-grounding the receiver when you switch.

7. Now ask them to help their partner understand what is going on under their reactivity. “When I get defensive, what is happening inside me is...The story I am telling myself that brings the defense up is...(Be careful not to let them move into blame, but simply notice it is a story). What I am feeling underneath, (if appropriate) what those feelings remind me of in my childhood, how doing this worked back then, what I am really longing for when I behave that way are some possible stems, but let the mirroring work its magic if it does. Do a summary and have them switch chairs and re-ground. Have the new receiver start out with, “one thing that touched me about what you said was...” and then have them explore what is going on when they behave the way they do. If possible help them anchor a picture of what is going on rather than what they think is going on when their partner is reactive.

8. Toward the end of the session, have them imagine one thing they might do differently that could begin to get them the relationship they long for. Try it out in the office. See if it would be helpful for the partner. Have them work as a team to figure this out using the mirroring. Remind them that this is about team work and they can help each other and support each other in the change process. Write this down for them. Remind them that we are experimenting here and old habits are hard to break. We have spent many years training our brain to signal us to react one way, and we have only just begun to do it differently. It is important to recognize when you go home you will most likely fall into old habits.

9. Say one thing you appreciate about each other in this session and mirror that and then choose one word to describe the relational space now. Hug or join hands.
The Flow of an Imago Session

After the initial interview, every Imago session usually includes:

**Opening the Session – preparing the ground**

**Beginning meditation and centring** - the meditation can be tailored to the couple or a reading may be used to invite the couple to be present and reflective about their relationship.

**Appreciations** – ‘What I appreciate about you is…’ mirrored. This can be deepened with sentence stems such as ‘That helps me to feel…’, ‘What that feeling reminds me of from my childhood is…’ Sometimes the appreciation becomes the whole session.

**Intentions** – making a positive statement about their intentions for their relationship and for the session, and how they want to be in the session. They may begin by reading their Vision statement to each other, which is their statement of intention for their relationship. This helps partners stay more conscious. Also, if they begin to behave in a way that is different from their intention, the therapist can help them to realign with their stated intention for the session.

**Homework Review** - Ask about homework assignments – have each state what they have done since the previous session about a specific assignment or about being conscious and intentional in their relationship. Have them mirror.

**The Core of the Session**

**The Imago Dialogue to deepen connection**: Every conversation in an Imago session uses Imago dialogue. Even if you step in and manage the energy when there is a breakdown, you move in using the Imago dialogue. Depending on the capacity of the couple you may only teach mirroring and summarizing at first. When the couple mirrors in a validating and empathic way, integrating validation and empathy is very easy.

Have the couple decide upon a topic. Whoever’s topic is chosen generally, although not necessarily, begins the dialogue: the topic may deepen through different processes, sentence stems or doubling, but no new topics are introduced, until both agree that it is complete. It is important to keep stories brief and go deeper to discover the feelings and concerns. Your main focus will be on providing a process that helps them restore and maintain connection, regardless of the content. It is also helpful for you to work with them in a way that balances the polarity of energy – helping the maximizer contain and the minimizer expand.

**High Energy Fun**: It is vital to balance difficult material with appreciations, high energy fun (dancing to music, having a belly laugh, etc.). Teach the 5 to 1 rule: for every negative interaction they must have 5 positive interactions to restore to baseline.

**Closing the Session**

**Appreciations** of each other from the session. You can also give them appreciations.

**Statement of new learning** from the session – A gem I want to take away with me is…

**Homework**: Remember to identify what they will be doing at home to continue the work in the sessions. This is tailored to where the couple is. It may include a 30 minute dialogue about a
neutral topic. As soon as they are able, encourage them to set up an Imago space in their home where they can dialogue. The space will include two chairs facing each other with a third where you would normally sit. It might also have objects that are meaningful to their relationship as well as pictures of each of them as children.

**Feedback** of the session – verbally or using the Session Rating Scale form (see Additional Materials starting p. 37) or other appropriate measure
The Imago Feedback Process – Steps 1-4

The Imago Feedback process is designed to help trainees grow into their own competence. It consists of 4 steps:

1) The body experience
2) What I liked
3) A suggestion
4) A growth gift and how this would be operationalized

In this segment we will add Step 4

Process: After each practice session, (with the Facilitator mirroring during the following steps B. to D.)

A. The facilitator will give him/herself feedback – (group member mirrors)
B. The practice couple will give the facilitator feedback one at a time
C. Observers, if any, will give the facilitator verbal or written feedback
D. The clinical instructor, if present, will give the facilitator feedback

The facilitator may record the feedback on audiotape or may ask for it in writing.

1) What I felt in my body was…

2) What I liked about my/your work was…

3) A suggestion I have is…/Another possibility is…

4) A Growth Gift is…

As Imago practitioners our own relational adaptive character structure can get in the way of us being our most fully present and connected selves. As with our clients there are two threads we look at that contribute to our Adaptive Structure - our ways of coping with unmet nurturance needs (e.g. clinging, detaching, pursuing, isolating, etc.) and the parts of our functioning that we overdeveloped or underdeveloped in response to social messages and other factors - our missing self (Being, Thinking, Feeling, Acting, Sensing). Your clinical instructor will invite you to identify your own growth edge, a new message you can give yourself that would support your full aliveness, or something that will help you to grow beyond your old adaptive strategy from childhood. Growth gifts are offered lightly and received lightly - they may be more about the person giving the gift than the one receiving it. Once a growth edge has been the trainee or instructor imagines what we would see in their work if they had grown beyond that adaptive strategy or into that underdeveloped part of themselves.
Setting up an Imago Practice

The client in Relationship Therapy is the relationship. We encourage you, as an Imago Relationship Therapist, to always see partners together when seeing clients who are in a committed relationship. This is because we believe that it is in the intimate relationship that the deepest healing can happen and that any issue that comes up for one individual has an impact on the other, and can be an opportunity for empathy, deeper connection, healing and growth. This means waiting until both partners are present before they enter your office to start a session. This communicates that you are treating the relationship and are not willing to be triangulated with them. If one partner needs to leave the room to go to the washroom during the session, invite the other to use the time to do some deep breathing, be aware of their own body and re-centre him/herself. Then sit in silence until the other partner returns.

Seating
For the clients: Two chairs face-to-face about two feet apart – just far enough apart that the knees do not touch. Have a couch or cushions and easy access to a wall space that is suitable for the Holding Exercise.

For the therapist: a swivel chair with wheels, placed to form an equilateral triangle with the clients’ chairs. Seating like this supports the therapy by keeping the energy and focus between the partners, rather than between each partner and the therapist, and facilitates the connection between the partners. The therapist can move closer to one or the other partner to facilitate a piece of work, or stay centred between the two.

Length of Sessions
Optimally, the minimum length of a session with a couple is one hour and a half. This allows time for preparation (centring, appreciation, intentions), some deep work, possibly including regressive work, to be done during the session, to determine homework for the couple to do between sessions, to bring closure to the session and to ask for feedback on their experience of the session. This increases the cost of the session and may seem prohibitive to some couples. It may be necessary, for financial or other reasons, to see the couple every two weeks for an hour and a half to two hours rather than weekly for one hour.

Between session homework assignments:
• supplement the in-session work
• encourage the clients to integrate new learning at home
• empower them to take charge of their own healing
• help them build their relationship skills

There are lots of activities the therapist can set as homework, and the assignment always flows from the session. Clients and therapist write down the between session assignment and the therapist can then ask how the assignment went at the next session. This provides continuity and accountability. Make sure that the assignment is doable.

Taping and Permission
Videotape as many of your sessions as possible. Tapes can be made for the clients to review as a between-session assignment to reinforce and deepen the learning and understanding from the session. It can be introduced in the first session or at the beginning of the second. Have clients sign a Taping Consent Form. If audiotaped, the therapist supplies the first tape, which the clients take home and bring back the following session, whether or not they have reviewed it, to be used again. Taping equipment that provides good quality sound is essential so that it is easy
to listen to. The microphone is the most important aspect in this regard. An external microphone
is often necessary. Built-in microphones are rarely adequate on either audio or video equipment
to pick up the sound with the desired quality. It is also important that audio recording equipment
has an auto reverse recording capability so that you do not have to turn the tape over in the
middle of the session.

The following guidelines are given to clients regarding their use of the tapes. They may use the
tapes:
• to learn more about themselves and their relationship and to deepen their understanding of
  and empathy for their partner
• to look at themselves to better understand their own contribution to the connection or dis-
  connection in the relationship.

They may not use the tapes:
• to prove a point, become self-righteous, shame, blame or otherwise make the partner
  wrong or bad
• to share with anyone else.

**Supervision/consultation** is strongly recommended. To achieve and maintain your certifica-
tion as an Imago therapist you will be required to engage in ongoing consultation of your work.
The following table has some options for during and after training:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Videotape each session. Watch it and give yourself feedback according to the Imago supervision process – what I experienced in my body, what I liked, a technical suggestion, a growth gift. Observe yourself rather than the clients. Follow the guidelines given to clients. Keep a journal of your challenges and learning. Video recordings are a very powerful way of observing oneself.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group &amp; Individ-ual</td>
<td>With an Imago faculty member or certified Imago consultant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Call on your colleagues or other Imago Therapists if you get stuck! We all need help. Asking for help is a sign of strength. Attend, as support staff, as many workshops as you can. This will not count toward your certification until you have completed Module 3, but it will help anchor the Imago ideas and skills in your bones.
Between Module Assignments

The between module assignments may very well trigger anxiety and avoidance. Notice any resistance you may have to doing the assignments, explore it, and use it to develop empathy for client’s resistance to doing the work in the office and out. Then just do the assignment anyway. The best way to find out you will not die from doing something is to do it and not die. The Imago Supervision process is designed to help you feel safe so you can overcome your own resistance to giving up your defensive character structure and grow into your fullest potential.

Professional Growth Assignments.

1. Work on your own “Growth Edge” which resulted from the growth gifts that you gave yourself or that others offered you in the first Segments.

2. Tape your own work as much as possible and self-observe using the Imago Consultation model. If you cannot tape with clients, practice with friends, colleagues, class-mates. Taping will increase your comfort at taping and observing yourself for supervision. Watch yourself and thing about what you are doing that supports connection between the couple and what distracts from their connection or contributes to their disconnection. Practice watching yourself with soft, loving eyes.

   Supervise at least one tape of your own work per week. Use the Imago Feedback Form – see below. (What I felt in my body, What I liked about my work, A technical suggestion for myself and My growth edge). Keep a written record of this. It also has a section for understanding your clients through an Imago lens. You can also start to score your own work using the Scoring Sheet for Imago Therapy Certification – The Imago Dialogue (see below) which is the measure that will be used to assess your final tape for certification. It will give you a clear sense of what the Imago Faculty is looking for in the work of an Imago therapist and what you are moving towards as a trainee.

3. REQUIRED for Module 2: Bring a recording (DVD or memory stick) of your own work to the next module of your training. The recording will be of an entire session cued to the start of a 10-15 minute Day where you feel you are doing a good job facilitating a couple in the Imago Dialogue process, holding the couple in the Dialogue structure, demonstrating mirroring, and if appropriate, validation and empathy. For some couples only mirroring and the summary mirror will be appropriate, for other couples who are ready to do the full process it means a clip of the full process. The clip will show you helping the couple learn and align with the structure of the Imago Dialogue. The camera will show a frontal view of you and side views of your clients. We will watch this recording as a group and you will be given feedback using the Imago consultation model to help move you a step further toward certification and your growth as an Imago therapist. If for whatever reason you do not bring a tape to the training you will be required to submit a tape at a later date at additional cost to you for individual supervision.
**Personal growth assignment**

1. Practice the Imago Dialogue with significant others.
2. What it is that you do that contributes to the nightmare?
3. Map out the relationship between you and your partner/ex-partner/friend
   - Our developmental task is…
   - Our relationship dynamic is…
   - My defenses against pain and frustration are…
   - My positive contributions to our relationship are…
   - I tend to minimize/maximize my energy.
   - My growth stretch/path is…

**Summary of required assignments**

Bring a recording of a full session (preferably two - one to show and a back-up) cued to a 15 minute section where you feel you are doing a good job facilitating Imago dialogue. This tape must be visible and audible.

Write out the professional and personal growth assignments and bring them with you.
Imago Feedback Form – for Module 2 Assignment

Part 1 – The Facilitator
What I felt in my body as I worked/watched my work was…

What I liked about my work as a Facilitator was…

A technical suggestion is… or Something I might have done differently is…

My growth gift is (re defensive character structure or lost self that would help me be more fully present and connected)…

What that will look like in my work and on my tape is…

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Part 2 – the Facilitator’s perception of the Clients
Ask yourself the following questions based on the tape:
a) What do you imagine is the wound displayed by each of the partners (e.g. abandonment, smothering, etc.)

b) Which partner do you perceive as maximizing/minimizing

c) What might be the unmet developmental need of each partner (e.g. consistent availability, attunement, mirroring)

d) What do you make up is the primary character defense of each (e.g. clinging, distancing, diffuseness)
What we are looking for in your work:

A. Essential Elements
1. The couple is coached to dialogue with each other while facing each other.
2. The couple has at least one back and forth with mirroring, validation and empathy, as appropriate.
3. If the sender criticizes, shames or blames, they are coached not to.
4. If the receiver is reactive, they are coached to contain their reactivity both verbal and non-verbal.

B. Establishing and maintaining the structure of the dialogue
5. An appointment is made: “I would like to have an Imago Dialogue. Is now OK?”
6. The clinician has the couple deal with only one specific topic (topic is not vague).
7. The clinician is professional, warm, present and neutral (no inappropriate laughing or taking sides).
8. About 90% of the session is between the couple (minimal teaching or direct therapy to one partner).
9. The clinician is in control as a coach, but is not controlling.
10. Mirroring - the clinician coaches the receiver to contain reactivity and to mirror accurately in a way that enhances safety.
11. Summary - the clinician coaches the summaries to be accurate and not interpretive.
12. The clinician coaches a clear and well done validation section.
13. The clinical coaches a clear and well done empathy section.

C. Therapist Facilitation of Deepening.
14. The clinician starts the session with an appropriate reading/centring/focusing piece to help the transition from “out there” to the sacred space of relationship.
15. The clinician uses the skills of attuned listening and good tracking.
16. The clinician deepens the work through the appropriate use of sentence stems, doubling, focusing, directives and silences.
17. The clinician coaches the Sender to self-disclose, be vulnerable and to send responsibly without criticism, shame or blame (sharing one’s inner experience).
18. The clinician coaches the receiver, when they become the sender, to stay on the same topic and to start with a bridging statements such as “What touched me about what you said...”
19. The clinician coaches the receiver to be invitational in style by saying “Did I get you?” and “Is there more?” as appropriate - not ritualistically.

D. Imago Education
20. Throughout the session, the clinician coaches rather than teaches. Educational pieces are short.
The student gives themselves good and constructive feedback (suggestions rather than criticisms) as “What I like”, “Technical Suggestions” and “Growth Gifts.

See full scoring sheet for final tape below and in Toolbox Module 3
# The Scoring Sheet for the Imago Dialogue (an Evaluation Tool)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supervisor's Name:</th>
<th>Print:</th>
<th>Sign:</th>
<th>Score:</th>
<th>Date of evaluation:</th>
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**Instructions:** Below are general and specific clinical skills to look for during an Imago Dialogue (ID). Score each item and put your score in the "Points" column. Make sure your comments are very specific.

- **This Scoring Sheet is also a training tool. Keep in mind the following principles:**
  1. The goal of the Imago Dialogue is two-fold: 1) emotional connection, and 2) differentiation. Differentiation breaks the symbiosis and brings about connection.
  2. Imago therapists are coaches of process. Process is more important than content. Couples need healing rather than problem solving.
  4. Always assume there is a good will on both sides, and because of matched woundliness, assume there is equal contribution to the conflicts.

- **Couple Session #:**
- **Treasurer's name acknowledging the receipt of this form:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>What I Like</th>
<th>Technical Suggestions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section A: All the following are essential for a good Image Dialogue (A &quot;Yes&quot; is necessary for each one)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. The couple is coached to dialogue with each other while facing each other.</td>
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<td>2. The couple has at least one back and forth with mirroring, validation, and empathy in each send.</td>
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<td>3. If the sender criticizes, shames or blames, they are coached not to.</td>
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<td>The sender may still criticize even when coached not to. This still gets a &quot;Yes&quot;.</td>
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<td>4. If the receiver is reactive, they are coached to contain their reactivity both verbal and non-verbal.</td>
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<td>The receiver may still be reactive even when coached not to. This still gets a &quot;Yes&quot;.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Section B: Establishing and maintaining the structure of the dialogue - 40 Possible Points</strong></th>
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<th>Value</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. An appointment is made. &quot;I would like to have an Image Dialogue, is now ok?&quot; (a consciousness raising ritual).</td>
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<td>6. The clinician has the couple deal with only one specific topic (topic is not vague).</td>
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<td>7. The clinician is professional, warm, present, and neutral (no inappropriate laughing or taking sides).</td>
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<td>8. 96% of the session is between the couple (minimal teaching or direct therapy to one partner).</td>
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<td>9. The clinician is in control as a coach, but is not controlling (this brings safety).</td>
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<td>10. Mirroring - the clinician coaches the receiver to contain reactivity and to mirror accurately in a way that enhances safety.</td>
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<td>11. Summarizing - the clinician coaches the summaries to be accurate and not interpretive.</td>
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<td>12. The clinician coaches a clear and well done validation section.</td>
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<td>13. The clinician coaches a clear and well done empathy section.</td>
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<th><strong>Section C: Therapist facilitation of desensitizing - 40 Possible Points</strong></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14. The clinician starts the session with an appropriate reading/conversation/setting piece to help the transition from &quot;out there&quot; to &quot;in here.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15. The clinician uses the skills of attuned listening and good teaching.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. The clinician deepens the work through the appropriate use of sentence stems (lead lines), such as, &quot;I feel scared because...&quot;, &quot;dramatizing&quot;, such as, &quot;I feel vulnerable.&quot;, the appropriate use of silences, and brief instructions, such as, &quot;Tell him more about your sadness. I feel sad because...&quot; (It helps the client to move into the instruction if it is followed with a sentence stem.)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17. The clinician coaches the sender to self disclose, be vulnerable, and to send responsibly without criticism, shame or blame. (Sharing one's inner experience rather than speaking as a &quot;we&quot;).</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. The clinician coaches the receiver, when they become the sender, to stay on the topic of the sender and to start with either: a) &quot;What I can own is...&quot; Or b) &quot;What means me about what you said is...&quot; This will enhance differentiation, reduce defensiveness and help move toward connection.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>These sentences are not said realistically with each mirror. Use clinical judgment.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Section D: Imago Education - 10 Possible Points</strong></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19. Throughout the session, the clinician coaches rather than teaches. Educational pieces are short.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. The client gives themselves good and constructive feedback both &quot;What I like&quot; and &quot;Technical Suggestions&quot;.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Growth Gift and General Comments** (If more space is needed, write on the back of this sheet or on a separate paper.)
Course #200: Imago Clinical Training
Training Evaluation Form for Module 1 A&B

Name of Instructor: _________________________________________

Name of participant:_________________________________________

Dates of this session #1: ______________________________________

What did you like best overall about these modules 1A&B?

What suggestions do you have for improving the format or schedule?

Briefly list the three most significant items of ‘new learning’ you acquired:

What general comments would you share about the Clinical Instructor?

What did you think was this Clinical Instructor's major contribution to this session?

Suggestions I have for the Clinical Instructor are:
What comments would you share about the Clinical Assistants (if any)? What were their major contributions to this training? What suggestions do you have for them?

Was the administration of this training carried out in a manner that met your need?

What suggestions do you have for improving the administrative and logistical support provided for the training program?

Circle the word below that represents your overall, global feelings about this training as to how it met your needs and/or expectations

very good  good  fair  poor

Additional comments about the training and/or about the instructors:

(Check here if it is okay to quote you ____)

Imago Clinical Training Toolbox 1B Segments 3&4 - IITI©
Additional Materials

Segments 1 to 4
# Imago Couples Therapy Forms

## Initial Session – Intake Information Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Therapist</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clients’ Names</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address(es)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel: Home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work/Mobile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.o.B.</td>
<td>Age:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referred by:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous therapy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medications:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescribed by:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact info:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Imago Couples Therapy
Initial Session – Reasons and Goals for Therapy

Presenting Problem and Goals for Therapy:
Partner A:

Partner B:

What like/appreciate/fell in love with
Partner B:

Partner A:
We authorize ___________________________________________________________
(Name of therapist)
to [ ] video and/or [ ] audio tape our therapy sessions for the purpose of enhancing our
work together. These tapes may be shared with us to watch or listen to and may also
be used for consultation as described below. All tapes will be used only within the con-
text of professional consultation and will never be used in a public setting without ex-
press informed written consent.

Client Name:  (please print) _____________________________________________
Client signature ___________________________________________

Client Name:  (please print) _____________________________________________
Client signature ___________________________________________

Therapist signature ________________________________________

Date ________________

Consultation – for client and therapist benefit. Therapists regularly require consultation
to enhance their work with clients and ensure their own ongoing professional develop-
ment. It is extremely useful to use tapes for consultation with a qualified training profes-
sional. Tapes and discussions are treated with the utmost confidentiality and will never
to be used for other purposes without express informed written consent. Consultation
is sometimes held individually or in a consultation group.
Financial Policy

Office Visits: Fee payment for each session is due at the time of service unless arrangements are made. Fees are payable by credit card, cheque or cash.

The current fee is ________ per hour and _______ for a 1 ½ hour couple session.

Cancellations: Appointments must be cancelled at least 48 hours in advance of the scheduled appointment time. Failure to provide 48 hours’ notice will result in a “missed appointment” charge of the full fee for the time scheduled which will be charged to your credit card. Late cancellations due to medical or other emergencies will not be considered as “missed appointments”.

Credit card # ____________________________________  Exp. ________

Name on card _________________________________________________

Telephone Conversations: Fees for brief conversations between the therapist and client are included in the fees paid for routine office visits. If frequent or prolonged telephone conversations are required (especially those of a therapeutic nature) a fee of __ per minute will be charged unless other arrangements have been made. This fee also applies to frequent or prolonged messages left on the therapist’s voicemail.

Private Insurance and Extended Health Benefits: Unless other arrangements are made, clients must pay the therapist and then claim repayments from the insurance provider.

Income Tax Deductions: Fees for therapy are deductible under medical expenses on your income tax return depending on your income and other deductions.

Receipts: Receipts will be given for all payments.

Increases in Fees: Clients will be given ___ months notice of any increase in fees.

You are encouraged to discuss the above financial matters with the therapist at any time. The payment of fees for counseling is part of the client/therapist relationship. As such it is as open for discussion as any other concern.

Agreement

We agree to pay a fee of _______ per hour in full at the end of each session unless other arrangements have been made.

Date: _______________   Signature _______________________________________

Name __________________________________________
Guidelines for Privacy of Information Handout - Example (Maureen Brine)

Name of therapist
Address of Therapist

Privacy of Information

All aspects of your involvement as a client of ____________________________ will be held in utmost confidence. Personally identifiable information regarding clients is not discussed or disclosed to outside parties without prior written permission of the client.

However, therapists and counselors are ethically and/or legally required to disclose confidential information to the appropriate authorities in four kinds of circumstances:
1. If a client indicates that s/he or another person may be a danger to his/herself or others.
2. In the case of apparent, suspected or potential child abuse or neglect.
3. If clients report sexual abuse by a Regulated Health Care Professional.
4. When a court issues a summons for records or testimony.

It is standard practice that from time to time your therapist may consult another colleague in order to improve the quality of the service provided to you. If video-tapes of your sessions are used for the purpose of consultation your written consent will be required. All efforts are made to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of client information.

Clients records are maintained for a period of ____ years from the date of last contact. Records are then destroyed.

General - Informed Consent

Other than the circumstances listed above, your therapist can not converse, write or give any information about you or your circumstance without your written informed consent to do so.

Although the goal of your therapy is to improve your circumstance(s), at times clients can feel worse as they confront the issues that are troubling them. If this is your experience, please discuss it with your therapist.

Clients are free to discontinue counseling at any time, although it is highly advisable to discuss the reason for considering discontinuation with your therapist prior to acting on the decision.

Please sign below to affirm that you have read this policy statement

Signature ________________________________________________________________

Therapist signature ______________________________________________________

Date __________________________________________________
Session Rating Scale (SRS V.3.0)

Name ___________________________________________________________ Age (Yrs):____
ID# _____________________________________________________________________ Sex:  M / F
Session # ________________  Date: __________________________

Please rate today’s session by placing a mark on the line nearest to the description that best fits your experience.

**Relationship**

I did not feel heard, understood, and respected.  I-----------------------------------------------I
I felt heard, understood, and respected.

**Goals and Topics**

We did not work on or talk about what I wanted to work on and talk about. I-----------------------------------------------I
We worked on and talked about what I wanted to work on and talk about.

**Approach or Method**

The therapist's approach is not a good fit for me. I-----------------------------------------------I
The therapist's approach is a good fit for me.

**Overall**

There was something missing in the session today. I-----------------------------------------------I
Overall, today's session was right for me.

Institute for the Study of Therapeutic Change

________________________________________________________________________

www.talkingcure.com
Imago Relationship Therapy Evaluation Scale

Name ____________________________________________________________

No. of sessions:____________________                Date:____________________

Please place a mark on the line nearest to the description that best fits your experience of Imago Relationship Therapy and return it to your therapist.

Connection

I feel more distant and disconnected from my partner.                      I feel closer and more connected to my partner.

Understanding

I do not understand myself, my partner or our conflicts any better.                     I understand myself, my partner and our conflicts much better.

I do not feel any more heard or understood by my partner.

Vision & Goals

We are not getting any closer to creating the relationship that we

Integration of Imago

We do not use the Imago skills or do homework outside of the sessions.

Overall

Imago Relationship Therapy has not helped our relationship im-

Imago Relationship Therapy has transformed our relationship.
**Relationship Goals Tracking Chart**

During the first one or two sessions the therapist and clients establish 4 primary goals for the relationship, i.e. when the therapy has been successful these statements describe the way the relationship is, e.g. We communicate effectively, We have an active sexual relationship. On separate sheets each partner scores where they feel they are now on each dimension by putting a mark on the line in the appropriate place. 0 reflects “our relationship is not at all like this” and 10 represents “we are where I want to be”. The clients take a blank copy home with them to read daily. Each session or periodically during the therapy they rescore the chart. The therapist will convert the points to a precise numerical score by using a 10 cm ruler. Progress can then be plotted to see if improvements are being made according to the clients’ goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: ___________________________</th>
<th>Scoring date: ___________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 1: _______________________________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 2: _______________________________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 3: _______________________________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 4: _______________________________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“How am I doing in the Dialogue Process?”

Reflect on your own experience and select the number that represents where you think you are in your process of using the dialogue.

5 is “Well done!” --------, 1 is “Need to work on it” --------. Circle your choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RECEIVER:</th>
<th>Well done!</th>
<th>Need to work on it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 I gave accurate mirroring and/or asked: “Did I get it?” or “Did I get you?”</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 I was open and curious to explore my partner’s reality. (i.e. I periodically checked, “Is there more?” or “Tell me more.”)</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 I was able to see my partner’s point of view or “truth” even if I didn’t agree with it. (i.e. “What you are saying makes sense because…”)</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 I was able to put myself in my partner’s “emotional shoes.” (i.e. “I can imagine that you feel…”)</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 I expressed appreciation for my partner’s efforts to share with me.</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reflect on your level of connection to your partner and select the number that represents the level of connection before and after the dialogue.

5 is “Very Connected, 1 is “Not very Connected”. Circle your choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL OF CONNECTION:</th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Not Very</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Level of connection prior to beginning the dialogue</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Level of connection after completing the dialogue</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“How am I doing in the Dialogue Process?”

Reflect on your own experience and select the number that represents where you think you are in your process of using the dialogue.

5 is “Well done!”, 1 is “Need to work on it”. Circle your choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SENDER:</th>
<th>Well done!</th>
<th>Need to work on it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 I asked for an appointment to dialogue.</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 I stated the topic and my intention.</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 I spoke about my feelings and experience in a non-blaming/</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-shaming manner.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 When I expressed my negative emotions like anger, disappointment and</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frustration, I looked for the fear or the hurt underneath.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 I was able to accept my partner’s efforts to connect with me through</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“mirroring”, “validation” and “empathy”, by:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Acknowledging or correcting the mirror in a positive way (i.e. &quot;You</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>got most of it and I also want you to hear...&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Acknowledging validation (non-verbal, or &quot;Yes, you’ve understood me,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or &quot;I’d like to be sure you understand this piece...&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Acknowledging the accuracy of the imagined feeling and/or offered</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>another feeling that hadn’t been mentioned so far.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reflect on your level of connection to your partner and select the number that represents the level of connection before and after the dialogue.

5 is “Very Connected. 1 is “Not very Connected”. Circle your choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL OF CONNECTION:</th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Not Very</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Level of connection prior to beginning the dialogue</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Guided Meditation of Transition and Connection for Starting a Session

Let's take a few minutes to be fully present here in this time together today, to make the transition from whatever we have been doing before being here, and to be more connected with ourselves as we move into connection with each other. I invite you to put down any books or papers, and to find a position that is comfortable.

Letting yourself go inwards and focus on your breath. Breathing slowly and deeply. Letting your body find it’s own natural rhythm. Noticing. Noticing the breath in and the breath out. With the breath in, noticing the experience of taking in, of receiving, filling up, expanding. With the breath out, noticing the experience of breathing out, expressing, of letting go, releasing, emptying. Slowly and deeply.

Letting yourself connect with your thoughts, preoccupations, worries, concerns, whatever is going on in your head. Noticing. Noticing the energy flow to your thoughts. And with the breath out letting go of any thoughts or concerns that you don’t need to hold onto right now. Releasing. Breathing in quietness.

Letting yourself connect with your feelings. Being aware of your emotions. Noticing the energy to your feelings, the intensity. And with the breath out, letting go of any emotions that you don’t need to hold onto in this time and place, that don’t belong to now. Releasing, emptying. Breathing in calmness.

Letting yourself connect with your body. Scanning your body. Noticing any places in your body where you may be holding pain or tension. Noticing the energy flowing to your muscles. And again with the breath out, letting go of any pain or tension that you don’t need to be aware of right now. Scanning your body again and noticing any places in your body where you may be feeling calm or energized. Noticing. As you breathe in, letting the breath fill those parts of you and letting the calm or the energy spread through your body. Noticing.

Letting yourself connect with your sensory experience in this moment – noticing the energy flow to your senses. Noticing the colors, the movement, noticing the sounds, the smells, the taste in your mouth, the touch of the air and your clothing on your skin. Noticing. Then releasing that awareness.

Letting yourself connect with your core energy, your life force pulsating within you and radiating around you. Noticing the quality of that energy.

Now I invite you to connect with your intentions: what are your intentions for your relationship. What are your intentions for your time here together this day. Letting an image come into your mind now of how you need to be and to behave to be consistent with your intentions. Letting yourself be that in your imagination. Noticing how it feels in your body to be that way.

Now expanding your awareness to include the presence of your partner. Being aware that s/he is having an experience of this moment that is different from your own. Letting yourself experience curiosity. Letting yourself know that each of you is a human being with a history of pain and hurt, each of you learnt how to survive and protect yourselves as children, each is on a journey to greater consciousness and each can contribute to creating the safety for both to more deeply explore and risk new possibilities. Opening your eyes now slowly and gently. Looking into each other’s eyes and connecting without words.
Alternative Meditation for Beginning a Session

**Therapist:** I am going to ask you to close your eyes and take a deep breath. Notice what you are feeling in your body. Try as your breathing becomes more rhythmic, to let all the tensions and cares of the day fade away.

Let yourself know that the person sitting across from you is not your enemy but your friend, one who holds the blueprint for your ongoing growth. Let yourself remember that there are no mean people here, just hurt people trying to do their best to survive in the ways they learnt to do that.

Keep the focus of your attention on yourself as much as possible. Remember that the only person you can really change is yourself and that you can work on yourself to make positive change happen in your relationship. We all contribute to the problems in our relationship especially when we are not aware of it. Therefore we can also help to make things right in our relationship by becoming more aware and changing our own behavior.

Remember that the universe has provided you with the perfect person to invite you into your growth. There are no mistakes here just opportunities for more learning and growth.

Go inside and right next to whatever the frustration or upset is that you may have with your partner, find an appreciation that you can give him/her, either in general or in specific terms. When you have found one, open your eyes. Take as much time as you need.

*You can also have them share what they most appreciated this week or how they have contributed to the relationship this week.*
Imago Relationship Theory - a Brief Outline
One Way of Perceiving Relationships

Childhood
- Most of us come into the world with our full potential relatively intact and with genetic predispositions.
- During childhood in our relationships we experience pleasure and pain.
- Pain results when we do not get some of our basic needs adequately met.
- Our primitive survival drive equates pain with the threat of death.
- We learn to adapt to get more of the pleasure and less of the pain.
- These adaptations help us to survive and they limit our full potential.
- We get messages about how we can and cannot be and behave to be accepted by our social group.
- To get this acceptance we give up some of our capacity to function fully in areas of thinking, feeling, acting, sensing and our very being.
- We emerge from childhood with some basic needs insufficiently fulfilled, with our adaptive styles firmly established, with some areas of our functioning repressed or undeveloped, and with an internalized image (the Imago) of the people who have been most important to us in our experiences of love and pain.

Some Premises of Imago Theory
- All things in nature have an impulse towards healing and wholeness.
- We were wounded in relationship; it is through relationship that we must heal.
- The unconscious purpose of adult intimate relationships is to finish childhood so we can reach our fullest potential and regain our natural energetic pulsation.

Adulthood - Unconscious Relating
- We are attracted to people who match our Imago, i.e. who have the best and the worst traits of the people who have been most significant to us, and they evoke in us similar primal feelings.
- We are attracted to people who function fully and sometimes excessively in the areas where we have shut down our functioning in order to be accepted.
- If we get into relationship with them we initially see only the positives. We are blind to the negative traits or find them attractive, endearing or easily changed.
- The “Romantic Stage” gives us a taste of the fullest potential of the self, the other and of relationship. Paradoxically we are in relationship with the reality of the partner’s most loved and loving self, and also with the illusion of who they are, based on our own idealized Imago which we project onto them like a movie onto a screen.
- The “Romantic Stage” does not last. Researchers believe that our brains habituate to the neuro-chemicals which produce the feelings and side effects of Romantic Love: euphoria, high energy and libido, decreased appetite, etc..
- The “Power Struggle” follows when we are both trying to get our unfulfilled needs from childhood met by a person who cannot meet them because of their own survival adaptations, which resemble the worst traits of our caregivers. These trigger in us the rage or fear with which we reacted when our primitive survival drives were threatened in childhood. More and more we project our negative Imago onto the screen of the other.
- The survival adaptations of one partner cause pain to the other, who defends him/herself and the defense causes pain to the partner, who defends …, thus establishing a vicious cycle of re-wounding and defense, re-wounding and defense.
- In addition, when we see in the other the capacities we repressed in order to be accepted, they trigger anxiety in us and we try to repress them in the partner.
- To get out of the pain of the “Power Struggle” many of us end the relationship or turn to other people and activities (e.g. lovers, children, work, addictions) to try to get our unfulfilled needs met.
- The conflict of the “Power Struggle” is an indication that growth is trying to happen. This stage is meant to be and is not meant to last.

Adulthood - Conscious Relating
- We become conscious of our own unfulfilled needs from childhood and our unconscious relationship agenda.
- We become conscious of our own disowned and denied areas of functioning.
- We become conscious of our own survival adaptations and how these trigger pain in our partners.
■ We develop and implement a Personal Growth Plan to re-integrate lost capacities to think, feel, do, sense and be.
■ We learn and use skills to relate in ways that are consistent with our intentions rather than our primitive survival directives. We exercise greater choice.
■ We let go of old relationship hurts and old reactive ways of being in relationship.
■ We learn to be safe and healing partners.
■ We learn to empathically understand and accept others as they are, while inviting them to grow back into their fullest potential.
■ We grow back into our full potential to meet our partners' unfulfilled needs.
■ We work through our resistance to receiving the love we want.
Exercise 5F:
The Messages of Repressive Socialization

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Study the messages directed to each function.
2. Circle the ones you think you received as a child.
3. Add any other messages you received in childhood and from ex-partners.
4. Rank the functions 1 through 5 with 1 being the function that received the most and/or strongest messages.
5. Now rank the five worst messages of all and write them below, with 1 being the worst message and 5 being the least.

Don’t think:
Don’t think for yourself.
Don’t solve problems.
Don’t assert yourself.
Don’t be creative.
You think you’re so smart.

Don’t be:
Don’t be fully alive.
Don’t express your aliveness.

Don’t touch:
Don’t be sexual.
Don’t enjoy your body.
Don’t show your body.
Don’t enjoy your five senses.
You’ll go blind if you...

Don’t feel:
Don’t show feelings.
You’re too sensitive.
Don’t show certain feelings (anger, sadness, etc.).
Don’t exaggerate.
Don’t be vulnerable.

Don’t move your muscles:
Don’t show off.
Don’t be strong.
Don’t make noise.
Don’t be athletic.
Be careful.
Exercise 5K:
Re-orchestrating the Messages

The Full Aliveness Circle

Review the five worst messages you received in childhood (page 65, sentence 2) and turn them into positive messages, giving new permissions that support your aliveness.

The messages I would like to hear to support my full aliveness are:

1) __________________________________________ (my name)

2) __________________________________________ (my name)

3) __________________________________________ (my name)

4) __________________________________________ (my name)

5) __________________________________________ (my name)

After the exercise: Turn to page 79, number 5, and fill in the blanks.

After the workshop: Recruit you friends, family, and colleagues to give you the messages you need to hear to support your full aliveness and let them know how and when you need to hear those new messages.