Why Working at Depth Makes a Difference

Why sometimes trying harder isn't the answer

You and your partner can both be trying hard to make things better. But how can you be expected to solve your difficulties with the same knowledge, ways of doing things and skills that got you stuck in the first place?

When things go wrong, you often see the end result: arguments, painful silences, distance or misunderstanding. It's harder to see where the difficulty starts. Beneath what you see are the emotional responses, needs and patterns that shape what each of you feels and does. A different way of talking might help for a while, but it can be hard to keep it up if the patterns underneath are still there.

What shapes the way we relate

Our adult relationships are influenced by nature and nurture: temperament, personality, early experiences, later relationships and what we have learnt about ourselves and others. Ways of responding develop quietly over time, become automatic and often come to life most powerfully in our closest relationships.

This helps explain why two partners experience the same event differently, or why a response feels out of proportion to what has happened. But not every difficulty is rooted in early life. Sometimes we have simply never learnt how to handle powerful emotions, express vulnerability or resolve differences together. I identify what is relevant to your relationship and work with that.

Different approaches to helping couples

There are many different approaches to couples therapy. Some use the same established model for every couple, some focus on practical and communication skills, and others provide a safe space to work through differences more calmly. Each has its place.

Some couples simply need new skills or a clearer understanding of their partner. Everyone needs to feel safe, heard and understood. My approach does something more: it enables me to address difficulties from their roots upwards while developing the practical, emotional and relational skills each couple needs.

What I bring to our work

My training as a psychotherapist and many years of working with individuals give me the ability to understand each partner, what is happening within them and between them, and how difficulties develop and are kept going even when both want a different outcome.

I draw on mainstream psychotherapies, relational and relationship work, and neuroscience and trauma research. I am not limited to one model. I shape the work around your individual and joint needs, whether that means learning skills, changing established patterns or both.

What we develop and achieve together

Where these abilities are missing or need strengthening, our work develops:

- **Empathy for each other**, even when you are angry, hurt or disagree.

- **The ability to manage your own feelings** without hurting, frightening or emotionally overwhelming your partner.
- **The ability to turn powerful emotions into words**, rather than shutting down, walking away, withdrawing into painful silences or reacting in ways that frighten or hurt.
- **The ability to hold two different views at the same time**, without either partner having to agree, give in or be wrong, and to create win-win outcomes that work for you both.
- **The ability to respond effectively to your partner's emotions**, even when their experience is very different from your own.
- **The freedom to express your feelings openly**, including when you feel vulnerable, hurt, afraid or unsure.
- **The ability to create a relationship in which you both feel free to be yourselves**, without fear of judgement, criticism or rejection.
- **The ability to understand and value your differences**, and make them work for you rather than allowing them to divide you.
- **An understanding of your core emotional needs**, and the ability to recognise when an argument or disagreement has one of these needs at its root.
- **The ability to recognise old patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving**, understand when they belong to the past, and step out of them rather than repeatedly triggering each other.
- **The ability to meet your own needs and respond to your partner's needs**, without building resentment or losing yourselves in the relationship.
- **The thinking and understanding that support successful relationships**, including how to approach differences, emotional needs, individuality and being a couple.
- **Advanced communication and relationship skills**, enabling you to solve differences, remain empathic, understand each other's perspectives and create joint outcomes that work for both of you.
- How to begin healing your relationship when healing is needed.

These abilities are more than techniques for managing an argument. They change how you relate, solve differences and create a relationship that works for you both.

How I work with you both

My work is not about putting one partner under the spotlight or making the difficulties about one person. Much of my work happens quietly within me. Before we begin, I learn what I need from a little of your individual histories. I also draw on what you tell me about your relationship, what I hear from each of you and what I see happening between you as we work together. This then gives me what I need to understand what is happening within you and between you, and how to shape therapy to work for you both.

I use that understanding to show you what is happening, why you experience and react to the same situations differently, and what needs to change. We develop the skills to make those changes real. When one or both partners bring trauma, an existing condition or other individual difficulties into the relationship, my psychotherapy background enables me to provide further help where appropriate.

When you are unsure whether to stay together

Some couples come to therapy unsure what they want, or whether they want to remain together. I help you look closely at every aspect of the relationship: what you have now, what you once had, and what each of you wants from a relationship.

We explore what is creating the distance or uncertainty. Is something happening within either of you? Is it a difficulty that has been present for a long time but has only now become impossible to overlook? I help you ask the questions that uncover what is really happening, rather than letting immediate emotional reactions or protective defences decide for you.

This gives you the understanding to reach a clear, considered decision about your future together.

Understanding your differences and protecting what you build

You will each come to understand why your partner can experience the very same situation so differently, feel differently about it and have different emotional reactions. You will understand what is happening within each of you and between you, rather than being left confused by reactions and differences that once seemed impossible to make sense of.

With this understanding, and the practical, emotional, relational and communication skills you develop, you will both know how to respond to those differences, solve difficulties together and protect what you have built. You will know how to recognise patterns before they take hold and how to create outcomes that work for you both. This is the central outcome of our work: you both understand why things happen as they do, know how to change them and know how to protect your relationship.

Paul
M: 07843 472163