

## Couples Therapy: Rescuing Your Relationship

By Laura Allan, MA, CPC

### **Wanted: A Relationship “The Way It Was”**

The financial difficulties of the past 18 months hit Beth and Rick hard. The crisis they find themselves in as a result of Rick’s job loss and the ensuing financial conflicts suddenly present a very real threat to their marriage.

Beth and Rick are experiencing what thousands of couples go through every day. And when pushed, both Beth and Rick blurt out the crux of their issue: Things have changed and they want their relationship “*the way it was*”.



During their therapy, they’ll begin to recognize that it’s not the *issue* that’s the issue but their response to it that determines the outcome.

In the hands of a competent, compassionate therapist, there’s great hope for not only resolving these issues, but also for returning to the close, intimate relationship they once shared.

### **Therapy: No Issue Too Large or Small!**

A crisis is not the only reason couples seek counseling, of course. Struggles such as parenting, in-law problems and health issues just to name a few, can severely test a relationship.

The goal of therapy, whether long-term or brief and solutions-oriented, is lasting change for the couple and family as a whole. The trick, if you will, is seeking help *before* the situation becomes overwhelming.

Most couples seek counseling when the relationship is in serious trouble; however, you needn’t wait, because like a crisis or the serious issues mentioned above, even feelings of general dissatisfaction with a relationship can benefit greatly from therapy.

### **Experiencing Lasting Change in Your Relationship**

An essential part of therapy is the use of homework. Why homework? And how can it help in therapy? Well, much of the change you’ll experience when *in* therapy occurs *outside* your therapy session.

As mentioned above, most couples seek counseling when the relationship is in serious trouble. Change needs to occur quickly and homework is a perfect way to achieve that while taking an active role in your therapy.

### **Beth and Rick: Developing Strategies**

As a couple, their issues seem insurmountable to them, but actually, they’re really quite common.

During therapy, Beth and Rick first tackle the most pressing issue: Rick’s job loss and the resulting financial conflicts. They’re encouraged by their therapist to determine *how* their money is currently being used and develop conscious decision making regarding their spending.

These are strategies and skills that ultimately take them far beyond their present difficulties and pay off handsomely for their marriage in the long run.

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Next, as a couple they learn during therapy that one of the most devastating results of Rick's job loss is the effect on his self confidence, so strategies are developed:

First, Beth learns *how* to listen compassionately. Listening is absolutely an art and Beth must learn the skills necessary to truly *hear* Rick without the intent of adding information or talking over him with suggestions.

They're both surprised to realize that their most heated arguments occur as a result of Beth's almost righteous attitude towards Rick's job loss. The dynamics of the relationship has changed, further lessening Rick's confidence. Beth felt she was being helpful while Rick was hearing that he couldn't even look for a job right!

This awareness and the ensuing communication changes they make, pave the way for greater intimacy at a time when they need it most.

### **Relationship Strategies for Success**

Numerous strategies exist to guide you compassionately, and in a focused way, through your relationship issues.

With therapy, you'll have the strategies necessary to grow together and develop a stronger, more intimate partnership that can survive, and thrive, whatever comes!

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