



five principles of couple's work

Andrew Christensen
*'A unified protocol
for couple therapy'*

emphasize strengths & grow positive behaviours

reasons for initial attraction to each other; assess & feedback strengths; encouragement of positive behaviour; learning from successful interactions; vulnerability behind demands & hostility

modify emotion-driven maladaptive interactions

therapists may highlight & interrupt these patterns in session; at home, 'time-outs', mental contrasting & implementation intentions can all have a part to play

shared, non-blaming dyadic, understanding

cooperatively arrived at 'reappraisal'; may involve an understanding that both partners are trying to meet valid needs but that how they're doing this is unhelpfully coloured by their pasts

develop more adaptive communication skills

helping speakers become more 'self-focused' (less blaming of others, more disclosing own emotions & vulnerability); helping listeners become more 'other focused' (body language, standing 'in the other's shoes, summarizing)

'elephants': problem- solving and intimacy

at the right time, it's likely to be important to open up about any of a variety of potentially important avoided 'elephant in the room' topics; this can allow constructive joint problem-solving & deepen understanding & closeness

note importance of identifying & changing couples' key distress-producing cause-effect chains