



DEANNE CARTER, LMHC, NCC

Couples Coaching Orientation

I work with all types of couples who struggle with feeling misunderstood, lonely, and frustrated about issues such as trust, repeated conflict, and communication breakdown. Whether you want pre-marital counseling, feel yourself drifting, or have a major wedge between the two of you, I provide neutral, yet intentional guidance to challenge you.

You can give up, try to control your partner, fight fire with fire, or be proactive and do what you have control over. As much as your mind may distract you and focus on what the other has done or is not doing, it is by honoring who you are, and making a conscious choice to focus on solutions that a relationship heals. By understanding your own beliefs and actions that contribute to your fulfillment and/or dissatisfaction, you empower yourself to obtain the relationship you want.

We will work step by step to improve communication, respect, and personal responsibility so you may experience a rewarding, close relationship. I cannot pressure your partner into participating. However, I can offer objective, direct, and respectful guidance with strategies that have been proven to work. Many people experience some level of anxiety or resistance prior to our work together. This is often not a comfortable process, but quickly will provide transformation. It often begins with peeling off layers of learned defenses (withdrawal, criticizing, explaining, defending, ignoring problems, minimizing feelings, hostile compliance, etc). You will learn specific relationship saving strategies to move beyond ineffective and harmful ways of reacting to your partner, and strengthen your ability to be trustworthy, vulnerable, clear, assertive, and present. More about the 3 phases and how long it will take [here](#).

Assessment Phase 1

Can be completed virtually and in 3-4 hours. Assessment includes Individual: up to 45 minute session for each partner, Couples intake: 60-75 minute assessment with both partners (return your assessment prior), 60-75 minute couples sessions: strategy plan goals and objectives, exercises, and starting practices. \$850 payment due within 24 hours of scheduling to hold appointment time open.

Venmo: 253-651-3752 / @Deanne-Carter-4 OR www.paypal.me/Revive0704/850

After Couples Assessment Phase 2 : Service Levels

Couples Monthly Retainer Packages: Four 2.5 hour sessions, \$1975 OR Six 2.5 hour sessions, \$2900

Relationship Revival: 3 days + 30 days of support: \$3400,

- [More info about the Relationship Revival here](#)

Relationship Transformation Intensive: 5 days + 30 days of support: \$5200

- [More info about the Transformation Intensive here](#)

On Demand

- Pay as you go 2.5 hour sessions, payment due at the time of scheduling, \$500
- Text or email for first available time. Provide an estimate of the amount of time wanted.
Payment due at the end of the call, billed in 10 minute increments: \$35 per 10 min

Couples Coaching is often a short-term (20-35 hours, depending on the level of distress), structured sessions to develop the tools and skills necessary to achieve your specific goals. As I will not be treating you for an individual mental health diagnosis through couples work, it is not deemed as medically necessary by insurance companies, therefore, couples coaching is not covered by insurance and does not qualify for HSA reimbursement.

First Step: return your Completed Intake and Disclosure

This handout is for your first appointment: sign this form and answer the questions to share at your intake



DEANNE CARTER, LMHC, NCC

Stages of Relationship

Romance, Courting, Fantasy

The brain is flooded with feel-good chemicals. Typically the euphoria is attributed to the other's presence, character, and/or behaviors rather than our own charge or fantasy that is created. While swept away by the romance it is easy to minimize differences, avoid conflict and be wide-open. Free time is dedicated to spending time with the other and staying focused on the positive.

Disillusionment, Familiarization, Adjustment

There tends to be a reality check that comes within a few months or sometimes a couple of years. All of a sudden, flaws are recognized, both yours and your partners. You may find yourself feeling betrayed or lied to by the other (your fantasy of the other). You may experience disappointment and withdraw or be angry and lay blame. Many people begin to focus on being right, so they may continue their fantasy and euphoria. People who are uncomfortable with conflict, may minimize differences, attempt to please, and convince themselves that they can easily adapt (become enmeshed). Again, this is only perpetuating the fantasy and keeping you from experiencing the potential depth in relationship. This is an invitation to grow together rather than grow apart. Honest communication with yourself and your partner is essential at this stage to grow the relationship.

Power Struggle, Disappointment, Distress

When initial adapting or negotiating doesn't return ones euphoria, the pleasing tends to cease. Blame is common in this stage. Unhealthy coping skills such as withdrawal, blame, labeling, mind reading, and other cognitive distortions add to resentments and break down communication. Partners may resign by giving in or may act out by having an emotional or physical affair. Emotional needs can be negotiated with clear boundaries and autonomy within the relationship can be established in this stage. Effective communication will support growth of both individuals.

Stability, Friendship, Reconciliation

It can be tempting to subdue emotions and be afraid of dealing with ongoing insecurities. Yet, by genuinely showing up with all of you, the relationship will gain depth, predictability, and connection. As people get closer, fear of intimacy can show up. The brain may use cognitive distortions to keep you distracted from taking personal responsibility. Again, this is an opportunity for personal growth where the relationship can nurture your individual goals. Problem solving and romance are co-created here as shock and denial subside. Fantasy gives way for deeper trust of yourself and your partner.

Commitment, Acceptance, Transformation

Clear acceptance of each other happens here. You have done the hard work of communicating with vulnerability and set boundaries to take care of yourself. There is no need for defenses and denial here. Relationship becomes a choice rather than a means to get emotional or ego needs met. You work more as a team, yet your individual self flourishes within a shared vision of relationship.

These stages are not necessarily linear, a couple may cycle through stages. What stages have your relationship been in? Where do you think you are now?

Attachment Style

Read the four types of attachment styles below. Find the one that best describes you.

1. Secure: "It is easy for me to openly express positive and negative emotions. I am able to give my partner the benefit of the doubt. I am comfortable depending on him/her for support and I am available to offer support. I don't worry about being alone or having others not accept me."

2. Anxious/Ambivalent: "I like intense support and affection from my partner. I can be demanding for time and attention but it's because I think if my partner is not available to me that means they might leave." Often people with this type of attachment get feedback that they are needy, clingy or dependent. This can be confusing since other times they pull away or reject closeness.

They are often sensitive to criticism and hard to soothe.

There is an under regulation of affect. This may result in an automatic "no" answer being too overwhelmed to explore or take risks.

They may be eager to please, which can result in intruding on others space or conversations. Dependency on others can undermine self-esteem. This makes relationships difficult, which reinforces the fear of abandonment.

3. Avoidant: "I am comfortable without close relationships. It is very important to me to feel independent and self-sufficient, and I prefer to have a partner who is not needy. I do not depend on others because it is easier to take care of myself. When there's a problem, I often intellectualize and focus on solutions, rather than feelings."

People with this style of attachment are often accused of incessantly doing/being busy, being emotionally distant or hard-headed.

They may have an aversion to physical contact or be socially isolated (though some can be extremely close to friends, yet distant from an intimate partner).

Underneath what can look like a very confident, even arrogant façade, can be a sense of feeling flawed, dependent, and helpless in regards to personal relationships.

People with this type of attachment style can also use dismissive, angry or controlling responses as an attempt to over regulate affect.

4. Disorganized: "I am uncomfortable getting close to others because I worry that I cannot trust them. It takes me a while to believe that my partner cares about me and is going to stick around. I have a hard time seeking support and often withdraw when it is offered. When I look back on past relationships, I think I have a good reason not to trust others."

People with this style may be seen as playing victim since they may feel betrayed or rejected easily, and often blame others for being affectionate on their terms.

They may also be accused of being manipulative to get control or attention.

They were often put in a role of being caretaker or responsible one with their own parent. This might be in the form of scolding/ being punitive with the parent or nurturing/sweetness while subduing one's own needs. Being helpful may have been the only way to get acknowledged.

The attachment style that best describes me is:



DEANNE CARTER, LMHC, NCC

Automatic Negative Thoughts

Every thought produces a chemical reaction, affecting your brain and body Identifying and reframing these patterns is your ticket to freedom, health, and truth.

- 1. Focusing on the negative and/or discounting the positive:** Even if there is only one single negative detail, you exaggerate and focus on it, which distorts the overall picture. This maintains a negative belief by ignoring any information that contradicts it. You trivialize your successes/positive qualities, which often keeps you stuck in not trying out new ways of being.
- 2. Over generalizing:** Taking a single event/feeling and making it into an ongoing issue. Using words like “always”, “never”, “forever”, “no one”, “every time”, “everything”. “It’ll never get better.” “No one appreciates me.” Making all or nothing statements like this often results in lack of responsibility to change the situation because of the perception of hopelessness and feelings of fear.
- 3. Labeling:** This is a result of over generalizing. Instead of describing one aspect that isn’t working for you, you label yourself or others as “inconsiderate”, “cold-hearted”, “irresponsible”, “lazy”, “airhead”. Instead of addressing a behavior by setting a boundary or a plan for improvement, you simmer in righteous labeling/mislabeling. This sets you up for perpetuating the other cognitive distortions.
- 4. Mind Reading:** Assuming that you know what another person intends, thinks or feels, and you react negatively without checking it out. Others often respond with distancing and defenses. Do you really know, or are your fears keeping you distant from others?
- 5. Future Tripping:** Anticipating the worst, you don’t put your best foot forward, or your energy is depressed or defensive because you’ve already determined failure is coming. You set yourself up for a self-fulfilling prophecy and your brain/ego feels reassured, but the rest of you feels lousy.
- 6. Thinking with your Feelings:** You reason with your feelings and make them a truth without evidence. “I feel inadequate” “I feel you don’t trust me” Those are thoughts to check out. Oftentimes, we are feeling based on past events and other cognitive distortions rather than facts.
- 7. Guilt beating with “should”:** Beating yourself up with what you “should”, “must”, or “ought to” do or have done. This keeps you from acting on what you want to, can and will do because shame settles in. Perhaps you were parented this way to keep you in line, how do you want to parent yourself now?
- 8. Personalizing:** Interpreting events or actions of others to mean something about you. You take on responsibility/fault/shame/blame that is not yours. You are likely to do this to others, as well. What others say or do is about them, not you. This fault finding critical voice keeps you small and fearful.

Which do you use the most? #____, #____, #____

How do you end up feeling or acting when you think like this?

Together we will work to free you from types of thinking.