

**Heart Healing Counseling Corporation**  
**Deanne Carter, LMHC, NCC**  
**www.hearthealing.org**  
**253.651.3752**

**Couples Coaching**

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, magnifying your ability to give and receive love, 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.

My work with family reconciliation prepared me to help you shift chronic, long-term problems in a short period of time. I am available to begin identifying specific relationship saving goals and objectives, 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.

People often come to couples work with lots of fear and anger. It is difficult, at that time, to see how it can get better or what relationship patterns you are following. 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 working with a therapist. This is often not a comfortable process. It often begins with peeling off layers of learned defenses (withdrawal, criticizing, explaining, defending, ignoring problems, minimizing feelings, hostile compliance, etc).

Couples Coaching is often a short-term (12-20 sessions depending on the level of distress), structured sessions to develop the tools and skills necessary to achieve your specific goals. There is no cookie cutter approach to relationship rebuilding. There are some articles on the Couples Coaching page of [www.hearthealing.org](http://www.hearthealing.org) to give you an idea of some of the skills we may work on.

Typical set up:

1. First session: 75 minute assessment with both partners
2. Individual 45-50 minute sessions for each partner
3. 75 minute couples sessions: treatment plan goals and objectives, exercises, and homework practices.

Sessions are pay as you go whether you are seeking insurance reimbursement (regular rate of \$250 per 75 min) or using the income based sliding scale (\$220-240 per 75 min). You may also prepay the two individual sessions along with six 75 minute sessions for \$1830 credit/check or \$1650 cash or four 75 minute sessions for \$1000 credit/check or \$950 cash.

Sometimes, couples prefer a more immediate intervention. Jump Start comes after initial intake and individual session.  
Jump Start: 5 hours, \$1000 credit/check, \$950 cash discount

*\$400 deposit two weeks prior and paid in full ten days prior to scheduled day. Refund: 75% with one week or more cancellation notice, 50% with 48 hours or more notice. (other 50% can be used on session within 1 week)*

**Please read and answer the questions on the next pages to prepare for your first session.**

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**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: \_\_\_\_\_

## Automatic Negative Thoughts

*Every thought produces a chemical reaction, effecting 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.***