

Cognitive Behavioural Couple Therapy: a personal view

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Introduction

- Jacobson & Margolin (1979). *Marital therapy: Strategies based on social learning and behavior exchange principles*
- Jacobson & Christensen (1996). *Integrative couple therapy: Promoting acceptance and change.*
- Epstein & Baucom(2002). *Enhanced cognitive-behavioral therapy for couples: A contextual approach.*
- Dattilio (2009). *Cognitive-behavioral therapy with couples and families: A comprehensive guide for clinicians.*

Assessment

1. How distressed is this couple?
2. How committed is this couple?
3. What are the issues that divide them?
4. What makes these issues such a problem for them?
5. What are this couple's strengths?
6. What can treatment do to help them?

Distress

- Reflective question 1
 - What are the signs that a relationship is a happy or unhappy one?
- Task 1
 - Engage the couple
 - Manage their interactions
 - Validate the distress of each partner
 - Identify the presenting issue

Commitment

- Reflective question 2: What are the pros and cons of being in a relationship?
- Task 2: assess motivation and each partner's agenda

Issues

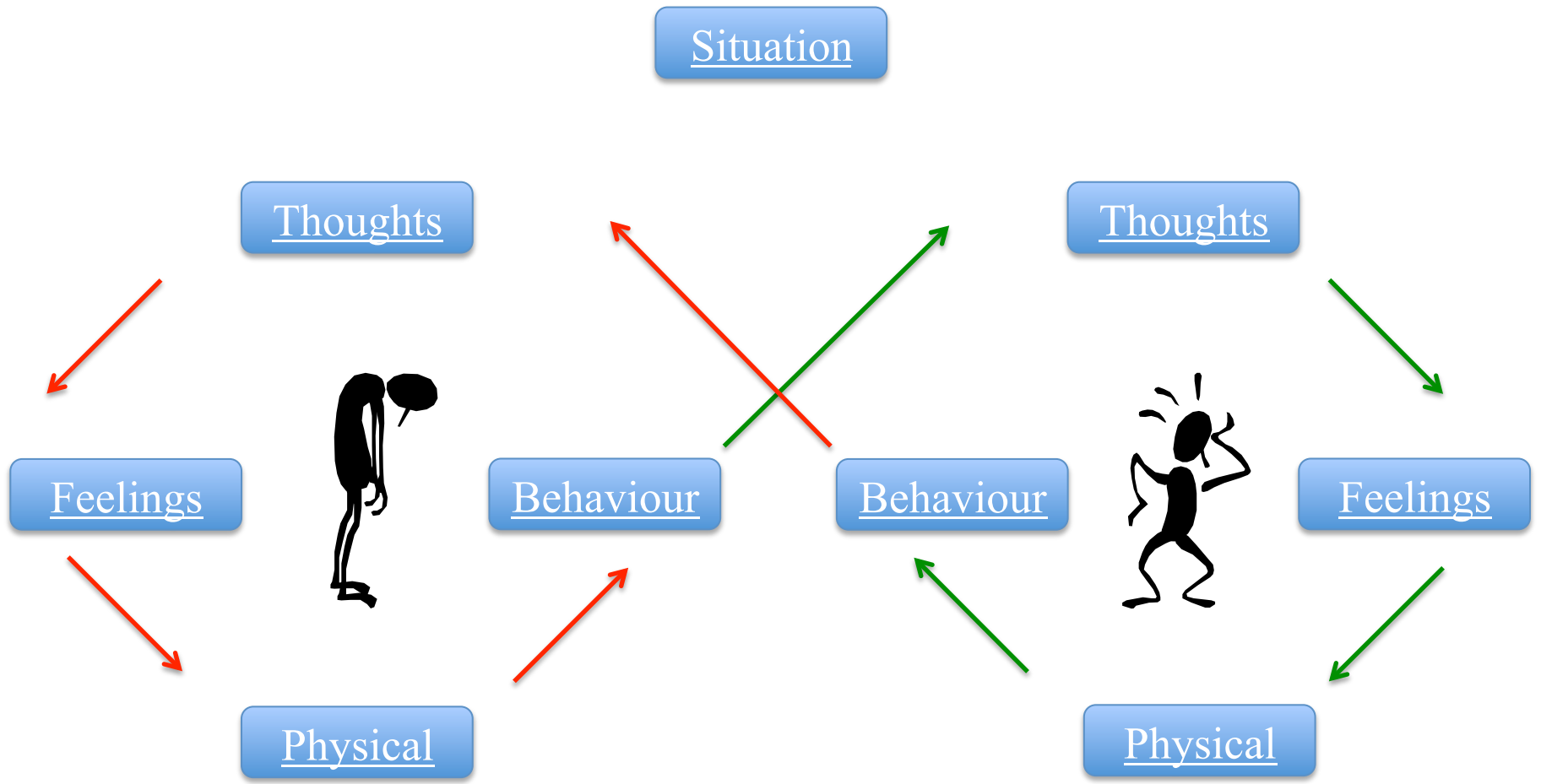
- Reflective question 3: what do couples fight over?
- Task 3: assess areas of disagreement and division (don't forget sex!)

Formulation

- Reflective question 4: What turns a difference or disagreement into prolonged conflict or unhappiness?
- Task 4: assess couple dynamics
 - assess couple fit (reason for being together)
 - develop problem formulation
 - ascribe positive intent

From love to war

- The Theme
 - What is it about my partner that means I'm not getting my needs met (and what is it about me that means they're not getting their needs met)?
- Polarisation
 - Maladaptive coercive patterns of influence
- Mutual trap
 - We can't go on like this but we can't give up either



Strengths

- Reflective question 5: what makes a relationship resilient or fragile?
- Task 5: assess couple protective factors, resources and deficits

Treatment

- Reflective question 6: what would you want from a couple therapist (and what would you not want)?
- Task 6: develop and propose a shared plan for therapy based on acceptance and change

Acceptance

- Generate intimacy through empathic joining
- Communicate effectively
- Manage emotional arousal
- Revise unhelpful perceptions
- Explore the impact of distressed interactions on each partner and wider family

Change

- Behaviour change
- Dyadic stress management
- Problem solving/conflict management

Thank you

- Any further thoughts or questions?

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