

## Preparing 4 Success: The 15min Consultation

During the 15 min consultation (or you might be doing this as a transition from mood work with a current client). I listen briefly (5-10 minutes) offer some empathy then do a modified paradoxical invitation. You will also explain how you work on relationships and if you do individual work, couples work, or both.

**Example for one-on-one work:** “Sounds like you are sad and frustrated by X doing Y (FE/TE). Also sounds like you want to improve your relationship which is great (SK). I can see you love X and really want to have a meaningful, loving relationship (SK). I enjoy helping clients get closer to those they love (IF/Dangle the Carrot). At the same time, I’m not sure I’d want to ask you to do this kind of work. You have every right to feel the way you do and it’s unfair but in the kind of work I do with clients, you’d have to be willing to look solely at your role in the relationship. You will have to commit to spending 20-30 min a day on homework such as reading, worksheets, and practicing communication skills we talk about in session (Gentle Ultimatum). In relationships there is a weird paradox of cause and effect. It’s never one person, yet one person can make the difference since relationships are 100% you and 100% me, not 50/50 like we’ve been led to believe. That means if you change your 100% the relationship must change, it’s impossible for it not to. This may or may not change the other person. This kind of work is unfair since we don’t ask the other person to do any work even if they are the biggest culprit in the conflict. (Psychoeducation). Is that something you are up for, totally makes sense if not. Or maybe we could look at helping you to feel better regardless of your current relationship, of course it won’t improve the relationship, but you’ll feel better. What are your thoughts on everything I’ve said so far? (IN/Sitting with Open Hands)”

**Example for couples’ work:** “Sounds like you are both feeling sad and frustrated about your relationship conflicts (TE/FE whatever emotions came up). I can see you love each other and really want to have a meaningful, loving relationship (SK). I enjoy helping clients get closer to those they love (IF/Dangle the Carrot). At the same time, I’m not sure I’d want to ask you to do this kind of work. You have every right to feel the way you do and it’s unfair but in the kind of work I do with clients, you’d each have to be willing to look solely at your role in the relationship. Each of you will have to commit to spending 20-30 min a day on homework such as reading, worksheets, and practicing communication skills we talk about in session. AND you are not allowed to track the other persons effort or time spent on homework (Gentle Ultimatum). In relationships there is a weird paradox of cause and effect. It’s never one person, yet one person can make the difference since relationships are 100% you and 100% me, not 50/50 like we’ve been led to believe. That means if you focus on changing your part, the relationship must change. Paradoxically the more we focus on fairness and getting what we want, the harder it is to have intimacy and connection. This is a lot of hard work and sometime unfair since we don’t try to figure out who the biggest culprit is in the conflict. That kind of focus leads to a competition of who is right and who is doing more work and does not lead to improving the relationship. (Psychoeducation). Is that something each of you are up for, totally makes sense if not. Maybe one of you came here just to appease the other person and you really aren’t up for this kind of commitment. What are your thoughts on everything I’ve said so far? (IN/Sitting with Open Hands)”

**Further Relationship Education HW** - I ask clients to read the first 2 sections of the book *Feeling Good Together* before doing ANY relationship work for homework before our first session (or after intake).

### Practice

Think of someone you’d like to get closer to. (You’ll want to stick with the same person for all the practices if possible.) Imagine you are doing a 15min consultation and the client has stated they want to do some couples therapy or relationship work. Do some BRIEF psychoeducation and set up the groundwork for doing relationship work. Practice empathy after they respond. You can choose one of the examples or make up one of your own.

# Testing & Empathy 4 Relationships

## Testing

You can use just the Relationship Satisfaction Survey or both that and the BMS, which is what I prefer. You may also have other “testing” tools from whichever modality you are incorporating.

The BMS has the advantages of checking in on the clients mood and any suicidal screening. This can be helpful in directing therapy/coaching such as encouraging personal work. The BMS is a must if they do personal work.

Relationship Satisfaction Scale*	Dissatisfied			Satisfied			
	0—Very	1—Moderately	2—Somewhat	3—Neutral	4—Somewhat	5—Moderately	6—Very
<b>Instructions:</b> Place a check (✓) in the box that best describes how satisfied you feel in your closest personal relationship on a scale from 0 (very dissatisfied) to 6 (very satisfied).							
<b>Please answer all 7 items.</b>							
1. Communication and openness							
2. Resolving conflicts and arguments							
3. Degree of affection and caring							
4. Intimacy and closeness							
5. Satisfaction with your role in the relationship							
6. Satisfaction with the other person's role in the relationship							
7. Overall satisfaction							
<b>Total Items 1 - 7 →</b>							

Score	7-Item Relationship Satisfaction Test (RSAT)**
0 - 10	Extremely dissatisfied
11 - 20	Very dissatisfied
21 - 25	Moderately dissatisfied
26 - 30	Somewhat dissatisfied
31 - 35	Slightly satisfied
36 - 40	Moderately satisfied
41 - 42	Very to Extremely satisfied

\*\* NOTE: Newer Relationship Scale is only 5 questions. Score key has changed.

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## Empathy

As with mood work you'll need to be skilled in doing the 5 Secrets. The client doesn't know it yet, but your modeling will be helpful for them in understanding what it looks and feels like. Although will have a different flavour in their personal relationships. If you are working with individuals, you can do empathy as you would in mood work. But with couples, there are a few nuances you may find helpful to keep in mind.

- It's hard to do Disarming tactfully, IE: "He's being a jerk." when "he" is right there. Rather focus on TE/FE/SK/IN.
- Do it in bite sizes, engaging each person for only short periods of time so the other does not feel ostracized.
- You may find yourself focusing more about the two people learning to give each other A+ empathy than on your own therapeutic relationship with the couple.
- Showing how to do a 5 Secrets response will be more valuable than just being empathic.

Sitting with OPEN hands will be VITAL!!!

- Safety first (screen for abuse, create plan)
- Client in charge (stay, leave, improve), no judgement
- Resistance makes sense!

During empathy you can also do Psychoeducation, Rules vs Roles, and Interpersonal Decision Making during the Empathy phase.

## Psychoeducation

You WILL find yourself repeating some of these concepts a few times. That repetition is important. First, clients may not "get it" the first time they hear it. They are in a triggered state and emotionally charged. Also, these concepts are not what most people are expecting in relationship work. They've been taught a 50/50 model where both people MUST accept responsibility and do work to improve the relationship. In TEAM and EFT the relationship, in a weird way, almost becomes the client, or at the very least is the focus, once the client buys in.

Like mood work, there are some fundamentals that clients need to understand and accept to move forward. IE: that thinking does elicit emotion. Here are the keys we look at in TEAM-CBT (can cover briefly or more in depth):

- 3 Options for ANY relationship
- Circular Causality - Relationships are 100% you and I
- I can only work on me
- I will have to change my thinking about myself and the other person

PS: I make ALL clients read the entire book *Feeling Good Together* before we meet for ANY relationship work. Thus I can keep education to a min.

### 3 Options for any relationship:

#### 1. Status Quo

- Stay the same
- Good for casual relationships
- Most common choice for many

## 2. Leave

- Walk away entirely or distance yourself
- Safety plan for abusive relationships

## 3. Improve it

### **Circular Causality**

Relationships are NOT 50/50

Any issues are caused 100% by me and 100% by the other person.

If one of us changes it changes the entire relationship.

We often push the other person to do the thing we hate most. EFT – pursuer withdrawer cycle. Example: My “Approval Addiction” and ex-boyfriend.

### **Personal Responsibility**

I can only work on me.

I can't fix or force anyone else. IE: We don't try to set boundaries for others, but rather for ourselves.

Responsibility is NOT Blame (David uses the word “blame” in a cheeky humorous way). IE: Car accident analogy.

### **Communication Tools vs Real Change**

Many therapists and clients think teaching communication tools is just scratching the surface. And that can be true if there is only a “behaviour modification” and not a change of heart. In TEAM learning and using the 5 Secrets can be transformative if done correctly.

- For healthy communication to be genuine, I will have to change my thinking about myself and the other person.
- Mood work
- Learning the 5 Secrets is more than “talking”
- Understanding the “rules” I create and making changes I can live with.
- Addressing Self-defeating Beliefs that affect relationships such as Approval Addiction, Conflict Phobia, Emotional Perfectionism, Relationship Perfectionism, Submissiveness, Entitlement, and so on.

### **Other Information**

Add anything else important for the client to know in working with you.

- If you use another modality you can explain how it works or anything they should know about it in this phase of therapy as well.
- EFT worksheets
- Gottman Expectations
- Faith Parameters

With all these educational pieces, clients may accept or reject the premise behind it. I don't try to convince a client by quoting research but rather I do ask them to read *Feeling Good Together* and if that aligns with them we can move forward.

## Practice

Explain to the client one or two of the important aspects of working on relationships.

Example: “Stanford, we’ve been talking about your relationship with John and I’d like to explore that more with you. There are a few things that it would be important to know before we do that. Can I share a little about how I’ve seen relationships work and what keys we’d need to address?” “Great, so there are 3 options in any relationship. Keeping the Status Quo, Leaving, or Improving. Improving will require quite a bit of work since you’ll need to commit to solely working on yourself, which can be unfair since relationship issues are caused 100% both by you and by John. This is good news though because that means if you change your 100%, the relationship MUST change, it can’t stay the same. Also in relationship work there is a transformation that happens when we really learn communication tools. It is not just about what we just say, but there is a change in how we very ourselves and the other person. We have patterns that develop over time in our relationships and we’ll also want to explore those too. What are your thoughts on what I’ve said so far?”

*STOP & DEBRIEF -- Client gives clinician feedback*

- Empathy Score with a letter grade.
- One thing you liked.
- One thing you would have improved.

SWITCH ROLES & REPEAT

## Sources

*Feeling Good Together*

Various Relationship Workshops by David

Interview with Neil Sattin, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O5PYe0XIMhY>

# Interpersonal Decision Making

This is the same form we use for Habits or other decisions. You can use the fillable PDF or the Google sheet that does the math for you.

Like with Habits, it can be helpful to explore whether or not a client really wants to get closer to someone. It may seem obvious but going through the steps can help client motivation when it gets to the hard work. It also gives you time to do more empathy before jumping into the more difficult work.

## How to do it

Ask client which they'd like to explore:

- Status Quo vs Improve
- Status Quo vs Leave
- Leave vs Improve

(Can do more than one!)

Follow the prompts on the worksheet.

Do a debrief:

- What do they think about the numbers?
- Assign them to read it over, adding anything they think of, for the next week.

## Practice

Choose someone you'd like to get closer to. You don't need to give your partner an full run down of the relationship. Just one or two sentences with a made up name and the nature of the relationship.

**STOP & DEBRIEF -- Client gives clinician feedback**

- Empathy Score with a letter grade.
- One thing you liked.
- One thing you would have improved.

SWITCH ROLES & REPEAT

**Decision-Making Form**

Option	Describe	Total Points
A		
B		

  

Advantages of Option A ↓	Disadvantages of Option A ↓
Advantages of Option B ↑	Disadvantages of Option B ↑