

The Talking Stick: Improving Dialogue in Couples Therapy

The talking stick has a simple premise: only the individual holding it has the right to speak, ensuring they have their partner's full attention. This practice helps to navigate potential communication pitfalls, such as dominating the conversation or impulsively interrupting, by granting each individual a designated time to voice their thoughts and feelings.

Introducing the talking stick method involves a collaborative effort. Couples can be encouraged to embark on a journey to find objects that could serve this purpose. This exercise itself becomes an exploration of shared experiences and memories, and individual sentiments and values. Items can range from personal tokens evoking deep emotions to simple household objects that resonate with both partners. By actively participating in the selection process, the couple fosters a sense of shared responsibility toward improving their communication.

It can also be beneficial for therapists to have a designated talking stick in their clinical space. This can be an aesthetically pleasing and tactile item that serves both as a functional tool and a visual reminder of the session's purpose.

Key Points

- The talking stick method ensures that each partner gets an uninterrupted opportunity to express themselves.
- Choosing a talking stick becomes a collaborative therapeutic exercise, helping couples explore shared memories and individual values.
- The chosen object symbolizes not just a tool for communication but also the couple's mutual commitment to fostering understanding, respect, and growth in their relationship.