

During 2015 I trained in Encounter Centred Couple Therapy, which was developed by Israelis Hedi and Yumi Schleifer over their working lives (they are now both over 70).

Hedi and Yumi have designed a therapeutic structure to bring each party in a couple to deeply understand themselves and their lover in times of trouble; and through empathic exploration of each other's experience to re-establish trust, compassion and intimacy.

There are three factors in achieving this : first is seeing the relationship as existing in its own space, called **The Relational Space**, which is created by both of you and is therefore the responsibility of both of you. The Relational Space is seen as **sacred**; and in need of protection by both of you at all costs. Metaphorically it is like the lake of your intimacy in which you swim together. It is fed by the river that each of you are. Each river can bring 'pollution' to the lake; and the effort of the work is to render the rivers free from pollutants to preserve the sanctity of the lake.

Second is **The Bridge**, which is another metaphor for the means by which each partner can visit the other in order to understand them and know who they are and what really matters to them. The bridge enables one partner to cross over and enter **the domain** of the other, leaving all their own pre-conceived ideas about their lover, and their own wounds and sufferings, safely behind in their own domain. The Bridge both connects, enabling communication; and separates, enabling empathy to arise.

Third is **The Encounter**, where each partner deeply meets the essence of the other; and is shown the great meanings that sit at the foot of their feelings and behaviours. My role as therapist is to facilitate your encounters in the relational space via the bridge. It is a very active role, to encourage you both to explore yourselves and each other; and I hold responsibility for directing this process. Responsibility for the content of the encounters lies with you both, although I will assist you in working out what domain you each want your lover to visit. I am also responsible for safety in the encounter and we will make agreements beforehand about what these need to be to achieve it.

Please feel free to contact me if you are interested in this work Email me at [psychotherapymelbourne2017@gmail.com](mailto:psychotherapymelbourne2017@gmail.com) or phone me on 0422 187189.

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