

Balance the power in your relationship

Does your romantic partnership feel out of balance? Professor Sarah Niblock, CEO of the UK Council for Psychotherapy, and psychotherapist Nicholas Rose discuss power dynamics in love, and how to find greater harmony with the aid of an expert



Relationships have their ups and downs, and power can play a role in

couple dynamics. Maybe you have noticed your partner raising their voice during disagreements or highlighting things they do for both of you. In this month's podcast, I chat to therapist Nicholas Rose to find out how to recognise when power dynamics are unhealthy, and the role therapy plays in helping you redress the balance.

Sarah
CEO of the UK Council for Psychotherapy

About the UKCP and how to find a therapist

• **The UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP)** is the leading research, innovation, educational and

regulatory body working to advance psychotherapy for the benefit of all. We have a register of more than 8,000 individual members, who offer a range of therapy approaches for couples, individuals, families and groups. We also have more than 70 training

and accrediting organisations for those who wish to become psychotherapists.

• **To find the right therapist for you, or learn how to become a therapist, visit psychologies.org.uk**



UKCP psychotherapist Nicholas Rose discusses how power struggles develop between partners, and how they can be dealt with effectively

Problems with power in a relationship often stem from small issues that go unaddressed. Even though they seem insignificant, little niggles are often connected to important underlying differences with regard values and beliefs, and can escalate into something bigger – and that's when power struggles can ensue.

Awareness of the health of your relationship is a positive step, so ask 'is the relationship working for both of us?' If one partner feels it isn't, something needs to be addressed.

It's important to know the difference between problems in a

relationship and abusive relationships – please get support from a domestic violence helpline if that is the case.

Begin the healing process

Broaching the subject of couples therapy with a partner can be daunting. Maybe you want to find better ways of discussing your issues, work through a crisis or end your relationship amicably. Starting with how you feel is a good way to introduce the idea. For example: 'I am uncomfortable in our relationship and I think we could benefit from outside help.'

Try not to attribute blame – the issue simply exists because the relationship exists. If one party is not interested in therapy, that may suggest something about the potential of the relationship.

The attitude to couples therapy is somewhat behind the attitude to therapy in general. Many who seek



couples therapy often do so as a last resort, when there's too much hurt to face alone, instead of getting help before things get unmanageable. This is perhaps why there is a stigma, as it's perceived that the relationship must be at breaking point before therapy. Therapy affords you an outside point of view in a space you control. If one thing changes in your relationship as a result, then therapy is worth pursuing. If not, a therapist can help you understand your options.



The podcast

The complexities of power in a relationship can feel like a minefield. In this episode,

Sarah Niblock and psychotherapist Nicholas Rose outline how to recognise when power issues are arising in a partnership, and the ways in which psychotherapeutic support can help a couple. Listen at psychologies.co.uk/your-relationship-balance-podcast-ukcp

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HOW I BECAME A THERAPIST

Nicholas Rose says a need to connect with others put him on the path to psychotherapy

MY FIRST EXPERIENCE of psychotherapy came in my early 30s at an introductory workshop. Until then, the most connected and engrossing experiences of my life had taken place when talking to other people about their lives, hopes, fears and problems. Of course, such conversations are rare in everyday situations.

Disillusioned with my life and feeling a void as if I was starved of something, my experience of sitting in the therapist's chair was one that solidified my future in psychotherapy, satisfying my desire to be there for others.

Psychotherapy continues to give me a sense of purpose and meaning. I have been working as a psychotherapist for more than 17 years and find fulfilment every day that I practise. I feel honoured and humbled to have this opportunity. nicholas-rose.co.uk

What will couples therapy be like?

You may be worried about booking therapy for you and your partner and not know what to expect. Therapist Nicholas Rose explains how sessions work to remove any concerns you may have

1 *In the first session with a couple, I always ask what brings them here, so I can develop an understanding of what is happening in their relationship. I look at both sides and seek to understand the dynamics they have created as a couple.*

2 *A therapist plays one of three roles in a couples session – mediator, facilitator or referee. I will figure out which role I perform the most throughout the sessions and explicitly state it with the hope that the couple can reintegrate*

this skill into their relationship on their own in the future.

3 *Throughout the sessions, I also look at what isn't being said by either party because sometimes that is what needs to be said the most. For example, if a couple hasn't discussed sex, I raise the subject to see if either partner wants to share something.*

4 *My aim as a therapist is to make it so I am no longer needed – that way, we know when our psychotherapeutic time together has run its course.*