

Relational Life Therapy (RLT)

A Fresh Path to Healing & Connection in Your Relationship

[Valerie Kolick, M.A.](#) has nearly two decades in couple's therapy/coaching and is an advanced Relational Life Therapy practitioner trained under Terry Real for nearly a decade.

Why RLT Is Different

Most couples come to therapy stuck in painful cycles...fighting, withdrawing, feeling resentful, or feeling unseen. Traditional therapy often helps, but it can move slowly or avoid hard truths.

RLT is different. It was designed for couples who feel like they've tried everything, or are even on the verge of giving up. RLT doesn't just help you "talk better." It gets to the root of what's keeping you apart, helps you heal together, and equips you with tools to rebuild closeness that lasts.

What Makes RLT Unique

1. We Get Real (Fast). Instead of circling around issues, RLT shows you the *pattern* that's been driving your disconnection. The problem isn't you or your partner—it's the cycle between you. Once you see it, you can finally break free.

2. Balancing Power & Respect. True intimacy isn't possible when one partner feels "one up" (in control, dismissive) and the other feels "one down" (invisible, small, silenced). RLT restores balance so both partners feel equally respected and cherished.

3. Healing the Past—Together. We all carry old wounds and protective parts from childhood...shutting down, lashing out, people-pleasing. RLT helps you identify these "Adaptive Child" reactions and shift into your "Wise Adult." The beauty of RLT is that this healing often happens *in front of your partner*. You see each other's pain, hold each other through it, and grow closer instead of further apart.

4. Your Therapist Is In It With You. Unlike therapies where the therapist stays neutral, RLT therapists are active guides. We don't sit on the sidelines, we get in it with you, sharing tools and even our own lived experience of using them.

5. Lasting Skills for Real Life. Once wounds are healed, you'll learn powerful new tools like "Loving Power": how to stand up for yourself *and* cherish your partner at the same time. These are the skills that sustain intimacy for years to come.

Returning to True Relational Living

At its heart, RLT is about helping you remember what healthy love *feels* like.

- **Building Self-Esteem** – Instead of living from shame ("I'm not enough") or grandiosity ("I'm always right"), RLT helps you step into balanced, grounded self-esteem. From this place, you can love yourself and your partner without defensiveness.
- **Setting Loving Boundaries** – Boundaries aren't about pushing each other away; they're about protecting what matters most. RLT teaches you how to say "no" in ways that keep love alive, and how to stand strong *without shutting down your heart*.
- **Finding Empathy and Understanding** – When you can step out of automatic reactions, you finally see your partner not as the enemy but as another human being with fears, wounds, and longings of their own. Empathy creates the bridge back to intimacy.

This is the heart of relational living—standing as equals, rooted in love, truth, and respect.

Beyond the Surface: Real, Lasting Transformation

Most approaches to couples work stay on the surface. They offer first-order change—communication tips, date nights, ways to argue less. Helpful, but temporary. The deeper patterns always resurface.

RLT goes further. It creates **second-order change**—helping you actually shift the destructive patterns between you. Instead of staying stuck in the same fight, you see the cycle clearly and step out of it together.

And at its deepest level, RLT brings **third-order change**—a shift in *consciousness*. You move from the protective, defensive "Adaptive Child" (*first consciousness: me vs. you*) into your "Wise Adult" (*second consciousness: us, together*). This is where self-esteem, empathy, and loving boundaries become your new way of relating.

RLT also uncovers the invisible forces that quietly erode intimacy—patriarchy, narcissism, the myth of individual empowerment, and even generational family trauma—and helps couples break free. The result isn't just fewer fights. It's a whole new way of living and loving: balanced, equal, and deeply connected.

- **Patriarchy** – Many couples are stuck in unequal roles: men pressured to control, women pressured to keep the peace or carry the emotional weight. RLT helps couples break free so they stand as equals.
 - **Narcissism & Self-Protection** – Our culture rewards independence, self-focus, and hiding vulnerability. But intimacy requires openness. RLT teaches you how to move from “me” to “we,” creating safety instead of self-protection.
 - **Individual vs. Relational Empowerment** – Modern culture pushes “I was weak, now I’m strong” empowerment. But that often drives partners further apart. RLT teaches *relational empowerment*: “I stand toe-to-toe with you, strong and loving, and I want us both to win.”
 - **Family & Generational Trauma** – The struggles in your marriage didn’t start with you. They’re often patterns passed down through generations—silence, anger, avoidance, inequality. RLT helps couples name and break those cycles, so you stop reliving the past and begin creating a healthier future for your family.
-

The 3 Phases of RLT

1. **Wake Up**
Couples often describe this as an “*aha*” *moment*: finally seeing the exact pattern that’s been eating away at their relationship and realizing it can change.
 2. **Heal the Past**
This is where RLT goes deeper than most approaches. You’ll uncover and tend to the wounds from childhood that quietly drive your reactions today. And you won’t do it alone your partner will witness, support, and heal *with you*. That shared healing creates intimacy in the moment.
 3. **Learn New Skills**
With new awareness and healing, you’ll learn skills to protect and nurture your connection—listening without defensiveness, repairing quickly after conflict, and building a culture of cherishing.
-

Specific Problems RLT Helps Solve

- **Infidelity & Betrayal** – Instead of endless blame, RLT helps couples face the truth, understand the root causes, and rebuild trust step by step.
 - **Fertility Struggles & Loss** – RLT helps partners stay connected in the face of grief, fear, and disappointment—so you can carry the load together instead of apart.
 - **Living with Narcissism or Grandiosity** – RLT doesn't tiptoe. We compassionately confront destructive behavior while also uncovering the hidden shame and pain beneath it.
 - **The Mental Load & Resentment** – RLT teaches couples to balance power, share responsibility, and finally end the cycle of “I carry everything, you do nothing.”
 - **Anger & Conflict** – Instead of explosive fights or icy silence, RLT shows you how to repair quickly and communicate with strength *and* tenderness.
 - **Parenting Struggles** – RLT helps you stop fighting over parenting differences and instead present as a united team for your kids.
 - **Disconnection & Intimacy Loss** – RLT heals the wounds that keep you apart and helps you rebuild laughter, closeness, and desire.
-

What You'll Gain

- Relief from the same old fights that never resolve
 - A deeper sense of safety, intimacy, and trust
 - The ability to repair quickly when things go wrong
 - Confidence that you can do this—without waiting for your partner to change first
 - A renewed sense of being *on the same team*
-

Why RLT Works When Others Haven't

1. The Speed of Transformation

- Most therapies take months or years—RLT is designed to create dramatic change *fast*.
 - Even couples “on the brink” often feel relief and renewed hope after the very first session.
 - Promise: *“By the end of our first session, you won’t just talk—you’ll see the exact pattern that’s been eating away at your relationship, and you’ll know there’s a way out.”*
-

2. It’s Not About Blame—It’s About the Pattern

- Many couples fear therapy will turn into a blame game. RLT flips this.
 - The “villain” isn’t you or your partner—it’s the destructive *pattern* between you. Once you both see it, you can work together to defeat it.
 - Visual: “It’s like realizing the two of you have been fighting the wrong enemy all along.”
-

3. The Core Promise: Intimacy and Power Together

- Most approaches focus on communication skills or soothing conflict. RLT goes deeper: it gives you both the courage to stand up for yourselves *and* the tools to cherish each other at the same time.
 - Couples learn “loving power”—how to say what they need without shaming, silencing, or disconnecting from their partner.
-

4. What You’ve Never Been Taught

- We live in an anti-relational culture that rewards independence, success, and toughness—but never teaches us how to be truly intimate.
 - RLT fills that gap: it’s like learning the “user manual” for a lasting, passionate relationship.
-

5. Why It Works When Other Therapies Fail

- Traditional therapy often avoids taking sides. RLT isn't afraid to restore balance when one partner has more power.
 - It also tackles both shame *and* grandiosity—two hidden forces that quietly destroy intimacy.
 - Unlike other therapies, it blends *deep trauma healing* with *real-world skills*—so change actually lasts.
-

6. Real Hope for Couples on the Brink

- RLT isn't about patching things up temporarily. It's about transforming your marriage into a place where you both feel respected, desired, and deeply connected.
- Even if you've tried therapy before and it didn't stick, RLT offers something fresh: truth-telling, compassion, and practical steps to break free from cycles that may have lasted years.

Modality	What It Focuses On	How It Differs from RLT
Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT)	Healing attachment wounds gently, restructuring emotional bonds	Deep, but slower-paced; may stall if one partner resists vulnerability(Reddit , Wikipedia)
Integrative Behavioral Couples Therapy (IBCT)	Behavioral exchanges + emotional acceptance	Structured, behavior-light interventions vs. RLT's raw relational intensity(Wikipedia)
Imago Therapy	Healing relational wounds via past patterns and dialogue	Less confrontation or trauma integration; may lack RLT's empowering "waking up" spark(Wikipedia)

Before & After: What Change Looks Like

- **Before:** We argue, shut down, or avoid each other for days.
After: We repair quickly and feel close again—even after fights.
 - **Before:** I feel like I'm carrying the whole relationship.
After: We both take responsibility. I finally feel like I have a partner again.
 - **Before:** We've lost intimacy and feel like roommates.
After: We laugh, touch, and enjoy each other again.
-

Explore More

- [Relational Mindfulness Podcast with Terry Real](#)
 - [Being Well Podcast: Great Relationships & Intimacy](#)
 - [Relational Power Article in Vogue](#)
 - Articles & Video: <https://terryreal.com/articles/>
 - Podcasts, Articles & Resources:
<https://www.relationallifefoundation.org/rit-in-the-spotlight>
-

RLT is more than therapy. It's a wake-up call and a roadmap. If you're tired of feeling stuck, ready to heal old wounds, and longing to feel respected, desired, and deeply connected again—this is your fresh start. RLT helps you heal as individuals and as a couple, so your marriage can finally become the place of safety, passion, and deep connection you've always longed for.

READY FOR THE NEXT STEP?

Join a Relationship Bootcamp: www.valkolick.com/bootcamp

Schedule Your Private Weekend Intensive: <https://www.valkolick.com/intensives>

Work with Valerie for Couple's and Individual Coaching: www.valkolick.com