

## **The History of the Institute**

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Harville Hendrix, Ph.D. and Helen LaKelly Hunt, Ph.D. founded the Institute for Imago Relationship Therapy (IIRT) in 1984. It thrived for many years offering face-to-face learning opportunities and products that teach the dynamics of the committed relationship in achieving personal growth. This includes national and international workshops and seminars for couples and singles, as well as training programs for qualified therapists in the theory and practice of Imago Relationship Therapy.

In 2001, Harville Hendrix and Helen LaKelly Hunt along with a Founding Board of Imago Therapists transformed the Institute for Imago Relationship Therapy (IIRT) into a non-profit organization called Imago Relationships International, Inc, (IRI) which supports Imago therapists worldwide and has the Mission Statement included below. This new non-profit organization, IRI, succeeds IIRT and gives it continuity to serve the larger international community even better. The Imago International Institute (III) is the education and training division of IRI and is supervised by the Board of IRI. Tim Atkinson is the president of the Imago International Institute and is responsible to the Board of IRI of which he is the Executive Director. About two thousand Certified Imago Therapists, one hundred and sixty Workshop Presenters and an Institute Faculty of twenty Clinical Instructors offer therapy, workshops, and training courses and conduct ongoing research of significant relationships for the purpose of enhancing the systematic theory of Imago Relationship Therapy.

Imago Relationship Therapy, originating in the partnership of Harville and Helen, integrates the seminal interpersonal insights of major Western psychological systems, behavioral sciences, and spiritual disciplines into a uniquely comprehensive theory of primary love relationships pairing us with an “Imago match” – an individual who is like our caretakers in emotionally significant ways – our unconscious drives us to re-create our childhood psychological dynamics in an attempt to heal the central wounds we carry. The process of Imago Relationship Therapy is aimed at using this context to transform relationships into a therapeutic encounter and fuel for each partner’s psychological and spiritual self-completion.

Imago Relationship therapy utilizes a variety of clinical procedures to teach couples and individuals desiring an intimate union to identify their defenses against intimacy and to understand the unconscious forces that influence partner selection and contribute toward flawed relationships. Goals of the therapy include: identifying frustrations rooted in primitive and illusionary ideation of one’s love partner; recognizing the failure of archaic behavior to gratify needs and achieve self-completion; and perceiving one’s partner realistically without the encumbrance of one’s own unconscious projections. Other aspects of the Imago process involve learning new skills and changing hurtful behavior, in the course of which partners consciously aim to meet one another’s needs and thereby restore the lost and denied parts of them. A core skill is the three-part dialogue that breaks couples out of defensive and symbiotic relating and promotes differentiation and compassion for the other. Eventually, each partner becomes skilled at containing the other’s pain and reactivity. The Imago process is a transformative journey, and when applied consistently, promotes mutual healing and maturity.