

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION  
WHITNEY VAN NOUHUYS, PhD, MFT

People sometimes ask me “what is your approach to therapy?” That’s a good question, but a hard one to answer. You get the best sense of my approach to therapy by our sitting and talking together. How I work depends, to some extent, on whom I’m working with and what that person wants to accomplish in therapy. I try my best to understand the issues that bring a person to my office and to call upon my knowledge and experience as we interact. Though I’ve been in practice more than twenty years I am always learning and trying to incorporate what I learn into my work.

I was originally trained in a family systems approach, a framework that is always in the back of my mind, especially when working with couples and families. When I am working with individual adults, especially in longer-term therapy, I am also guided by my study of Self Psychology which is a form of psychoanalytic psychotherapy. It is a model that has helped me understand and work with many of the common issues that bring clients into therapy: depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and problems with self-regulation, intimacy, and addiction.

I see working with couples as a collaborative process that involves addressing problems in communication and conflict resolution as well as understanding how both individuals have contributed to the impasses that bring couples into treatment. Self Psychology also helps me provide a safe, empathic environment for both people.

Although I no longer see children in individual play therapy, I like to work with parents who want help with parenting issues, and the sandtray, with my collection of miniatures, is still available for adults to use.