

# 5 Important Things to Consider Prior to Beginning Couples Therapy

There are important factors to consider before beginning couples therapy to increase your chances of success and maximize its benefits. They are the following:

## 1. Are you and your partner both willing to try couples therapy?

This is a crucial question because couples therapy is different from individual therapy. Its aim is to increase your knowledge about yourself, your partner, and the patterns of interactions between you. Therapy becomes effective as you apply new knowledge to break ineffective patterns of communication and develop better ones. Before you make a call for an appointment, you and your partner must have had a conversation about it and agree about seeking help from a professional.

## 2. Are you and your partner ready to make a commitment of time and effort?

Couples therapy can be described as a process. Being a process, it requires both time and effort. Conflicts in intimate relationships can have deep roots and require each partner to make significant changes. Therefore, it is unlikely a few sessions would be sufficient to dissolve the issues. A critical question to ask yourself before you begin is: "Is my partner and I both ready to commit to the time and effort?"

## 3. Do you and your partner know what your intentions are in seeking help?

The key task of couples therapy is to increase your clarity about the kind of life you want to build together, the kind of partner you aspire to be to build that kind of life and relationship you desire to create, and the skills and knowledge necessary to get there.

Many people considering couples therapy assume that they will be talking about their relationship problems at great length and all the things that are wrong between them. Although the issues that are creating blocks for the kind of relationship the couples wish to create are addressed in therapy, the most important task is to know what your deepest aspirations for the relationship are.

#### **4. Are you and your partner willing to look at the way you might both contribute to the issues?**

It is very common for couples to blame each other for the problems and refuse to try couples counseling because they assign fault to their partner. However, when couples can really look at what is truly going on between them with an open and curious attitude, they can discover what part they each play in the conflict.

#### **5. Are you and your partner willing to change?**

When it comes to improving your relationship, your attitude toward change is more important than what action you take. Couples therapy works best if you have more goals for yourself than for your partner and accept that you will need to improve your response to the problems at 3 different levels: how you think about it, feel about it, and do about it.

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