

KEEP MOVING»»FORWARD
COUNSELING & CONSULTING LLC

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Informed Consent for Marriage / Relationship Counseling

There are many potential benefits to relationship counseling. Counseling can help you connect, build fondness and admiration, build and reinforce attachment bonds, enhance quality time with your partner, aid in developing better ways of communicating with your partner, facilitate better conflict management, make life dreams more attainable, and create shared meaning and purpose. As relationship counseling can be an intensely personal process, unpleasant memories or emotions will likely arise. Our goal is to help you learn to regulate your emotions, and how you react and respond to them, more effectively. Couples can sometimes make improvements only to go backwards after a time. Progress is rarely experienced in a straight line; and it can often be uneven and unpredictable. Progress may happen slowly and requires an active effort on your part. What this means is that in order to maximize your experience, the expectation for you is not only to be present in session, but also to be an active participant in the process, and be open to new ideas and perspectives

In order to maximize the success of relationship counseling, your first three sessions, 90 minutes each, are devoted to a thorough assessment and treatment planning process. The 2nd session is usually split into two 45-minute sessions where your counselor will meet with each of you individually. You will also be asked to complete a comprehensive online assessment that will take approximately 60-75 minutes of your time outside of the office. This process will help your counselor to fully understand the problems and concerns you are facing from your point of view. To further enhance your positive counseling experience, you will be asked to work on things we discuss outside of sessions. This will require a relatively small yet significant investment of time and effort on your part. We find that the most successful couples who have the best outcomes take full advantage of the skills and exercises they complete and learn in session and practice them fully outside of the counseling office.

Most of the work will involve sessions where you will be seen together as a couple. However, there may be times when individual sessions are recommended. You may also expect exercises to practice between sessions.

The length of therapy will be determined by your specific needs and goals. In the course of therapy, we will establish points at which to evaluate your satisfaction and progress. The number of sessions for relationship counseling may vary from couple to couple but you may expect to attend anywhere between 10-12 sessions in total. You are also encouraged to raise any questions or concerns that you have about therapy at any time.

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Initially, we will meet more frequently. In the later stages of therapy, will begin to meet less frequently to allow you to test and practice your new relationship skills and prepare for termination of therapy. You may terminate therapy at any time. However, it is most helpful to have at least one session together to summarize progress and identify any other work that remains.

Relationship Counseling is:

- Neutral
- Structured
- Educational
- A way to grow as a couple/family
- Making changes to improve the relationship
- Accepting responsibility for your own behavior
- Forgiveness

Relationship Counseling is not:

- Proving who is right and who is wrong
- Professionally ganging up on one or more participants / taking sides
- Fighting it out
- Making yourself happy at the other's expense
- Forcing the other person to change
- Proving the other person is wrong
- Blame
- Keeping secrets. Your therapist cannot keep secrets that are disclosed while meeting individual with one or the other partner.

Other Helpful Guidelines

- Express feelings openly and honestly. Feelings are internal states of emotions, not thoughts. Do not use them to express opinions. Example (I feel that you are being rude). Instead, use "I feel hurt, angry, confused when you turn away when I'm trying to talk with you."
- Avoid blaming or shaming language.
- Use "I" statements to express an opinion or thought. "I believe..." "I think..." "In my opinion, I believe..." etc"
- Speak only for yourself. Avoid speaking for others.
- Try to avoid bringing up old arguments that are irrelevant to a discussion, in order to divert from a current topic of discussion.
- Avoid interrupting or talking over the other person. Each person has the right to be heard and to express their opinions and feelings.
- Avoid "all or nothing statements". Example "Why do you always...." "You never..."
- Avoid labels to describe a person's character. "Addict" "Moron" "Crazy". We are always so much more than the labels that we apply to each other.

- Be open to compromise. There are no individual winners or losers in relationship counseling and it is not a competition.
- Allow yourself to be open and honest with your feelings and opinions.
- Focus on one thing at a time. A little progress somewhere can yield big results everywhere.

Consent for Treatment

The counselor and client have read and fully understand and agree to honor this agreement, including the commitment to negotiate any differences that may arise during the counseling process, and will respect one another's views and differences in their outworking. We have also agreed to an initial definition of work and to the fee to be paid by the client.

Client Name (print)_____

Client Signature _____

Date_____

Client Name (print)_____

Client Signature _____

Date_____

Provider Signature _____

Date_____