



Choosing a Couples Therapist:

Most people decide to end their marriages without seeking couples counseling. The decision whether or not is probably the most important decision anyone will make, yet a minority of couples with marital problems consult with marriage therapists. Some shy away from couples therapy after hearing others' experiences that they tried therapy and then called it quits, or that couples therapy even made things worse.

The unfortunate fact is that seeking professional advice doesn't guarantee that things will improve in your relationship. Also, many psychotherapists haven't been trained to do specifically couples therapy. That's why it's very important to consider the following guidelines when choosing a couples therapist:

- Make sure your therapist has received specific training in couples therapy. A couples therapist has to be skilled at conflict resolution, keeping two people from getting into "the blame game" while also helping each felt heard. So don't be shy. Ask your therapist about his or her training.
- Look for couples therapy that combines compassion with direct, open feedback. Ask your prospective therapist how active and directive they are in the sessions.
- Find a therapist with lots of experience in providing couples therapy. Look for a therapist who specializes in couples therapy, seeing at least 5-10 couples per week in their practice.
- Ask yourself if you feel comfortable and respected by your therapist. You should feel that he or she understands your feelings. If your therapist sides with you or your spouse, that's a bad sign. No one should feel ganged up on.
- Couples in crisis don't have the luxury to analyze how they were raised in order to find solutions to their marital difficulties. Find a therapist who will help you develop coping skills right away and is interested in helping you build skills for managing conflict and improving intimacy.