



Couples Counselling | Part 1

It takes Commitment, Patience and Hard Work

Tips – communicate differently. If your immediate response is to yell or rebut straight away, try something different – be brave enough to sit and just listen. It is often hard to hear but the skill is to listen without responding (no insults, swearing, raised voices or walking away. Pretend you are talking to a colleague at work – be mindful of what you say and how you say it).

1. Have We Tried Everything?

If you have made it to marriage counselling, chances are you have just started to work on your relationship. One of the most important marriage counselling questions you can ask your partner is, “Have we tried everything?”

Tip: Focus on the reasons why you fell in love in the first place – focusing on the reason/s you fell in love rather than the reason/s you fell out of love helps shifts the thoughts from despair to hope.

2. What Are Our Main Issues? (consider writing a top five)

The things that matter the most to one partner often seem insignificant to the other. When you're in a relationship, engaging in couple's counselling sessions can focus on these potential conflicts. Write down your answers first and then ask your partner what he or she thinks are the main issues between the two of you and what can be done to change the situation.

Tip: Write down your answers and then show your partner what you wrote. Exchange information and just sit with what you have read. It isn't a time to critique each other, it is time to be open to airing issues and problems so you can move forward.

3. What Issues Are Most Important?

Find out what your partner considers are the most important issues and work on those first. This needs to be a negotiation between the two of you. You should also air your answers on what you think the most important issues are so that the two of you can work on them together.

Tip: Ensure you use 'I' statements when you communicate your needs. “I feel...” “I need...”, “I would like”.

4. Do You Want a Divorce / or to Separate?

If you are worried that your relationship has reached the point of no return, one of the most obvious marriage counselling questions is whether you should stay together. Unless you both give a solid 'yes' to divorce, it's worth trying counselling as a way to save your relationship. Seeking counselling is a process and a place to facilitate positive change. It takes time. Both parties need to be committed to change and/or talking about where you are stuck.

5. How Do You Truly Feel About the Relationship?

You may feel like the relationship is salvageable, but your partner may feel it is too late to save it. If you've got your partner to counselling, chances are there is still something left to work with, but it's important to know where your significant other stands with regard to making things work.

Tip: What are your expectations of counselling?

6. What Bothers You Most About Me?

In a marriage, some things about your partner will always get on your nerves. These things are usually not cause for a divorce, but big things like a lack of trust and honour can destroy intimacy. By asking marriage counselling questions you can find out what things your partner would like to change about you and you can work on those issues. Just don't make promises that you don't intend to keep.

Tip: What would you like me to work on? What things could I change that would help you feel more connected to me? What things can I do to make things better?

7. Do You Trust Me?

Trust is one of the most important factors in any relationship. If your significant other has a hard time trusting you, you will find it difficult to connect on any level. Regardless of history or events, it is never too late to build trust if you are both willing to work on it.

Tip: Do you trust me? What are some things I could do to build trust in our relationship? (topics/issues)

8. How Can I Gain Your Trust Back?

One of the key elements in gaining trust is forgiveness – it takes time. Has your partner learned to think negatively about you because of things you have done/said? Learn to talk about needs and feelings and share your reasons for what you did/said. Can you ask for forgiveness? Are you prepared to not repeat your mistake/s?

Tip: Give your partner a chance to tell you what you need to do to regain trust. This is a deep 'feeling' exercise. Your role is to listen to your partner when they show you their answers. It isn't about being right or wrong, it is about sitting with each other's interpretations of what was said or done.