

Orientation to Marriage Counseling with Veronica Johnson

Marriage counseling is for two reasonable people who love each other, but for various reasons are disconnecting. When things aren't going well with our spouse, we often feel hurt and scared and don't express our love well, which tends to make things worse. Marriage counseling addresses the disconnection so that the two of you can be close again and work together.

Your relationship is my client. As a marriage therapist, I am working to

- Stop the damage to your connection
- Repair the connection
- Help you deepen your connection

These efforts require *two people to change*.

Marriage counseling is **not**:

- a place to explain how your spouse is causing problems
- a therapist judging who is right and who is wrong
- necessarily going to lead to agreement (you are two different people)

There are some realities in marriage counseling that you'll need to be willing to accept:

- You have to focus on changing *yourself* (your behaviors, beliefs, expressions, etc.)
- When you do things that are likely to damage the relationship, I will ask you to stop it
- I will not keep big secrets from your spouse
- If you reach out to me individually, I will bring your spouse into the conversation
- I may refer you to individual therapy to address dynamics that are likely to get in the way of marital therapy (e.g. depression, emotional regulation, negative interpretations)
- It won't always seem fair

If the following dynamics are in place, marriage counseling with me won't work:

- Insisting that your spouse is to blame (complaining about them at every session)
- Inability to calm down
- Severe addiction
- An on-going affair or attempts to have an affair (emotional and/or physical)
- Personality disorders

I will assess for these dynamics. If I see them, I will let you know and we will end therapy. The end of marital therapy with me does not mean the end of the relationship. It just means I can't take your money because I know I cannot help through marriage counseling.

There are a few ways you can help marriage counseling be successful:

- Ask yourself, "How am I influencing this problem?"
- Say things from your perspective, "I feel..." "I would like to see..."
- Be open to hearing a different perspective
- Be honest about your own pain and fears
- ****Work to understand your spouse**