

DO^s AND DON'T_s OF COUPLE'S THERAPY

Setting the stage for the best possible outcome.



ENVISION
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- Assessing suitability
- Avoiding triangulation
- Setting realistic goals
- BONUS: Ending cleanly



ASSESSING SUITABILITY

- Desire for divorce?
- Serious addictions
- Personality disorders
- Emotional dysregulation
- Domestic violence?
- Active affair





DESIRE FOR DIVORCE

Less Contraindicated

- Shorter duration
- Weaker desire
- Ambivalence, flexibility
- Substantive reasons to stay
- Fewer efforts at change
- At least neutral view of spouse

More Contraindicated

- Longer duration
- Stronger desire
- Clear desire, insistence
- Weak reasons to stay
- Many efforts at change
- Vilification of spouse



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Not necessarily contraindicated

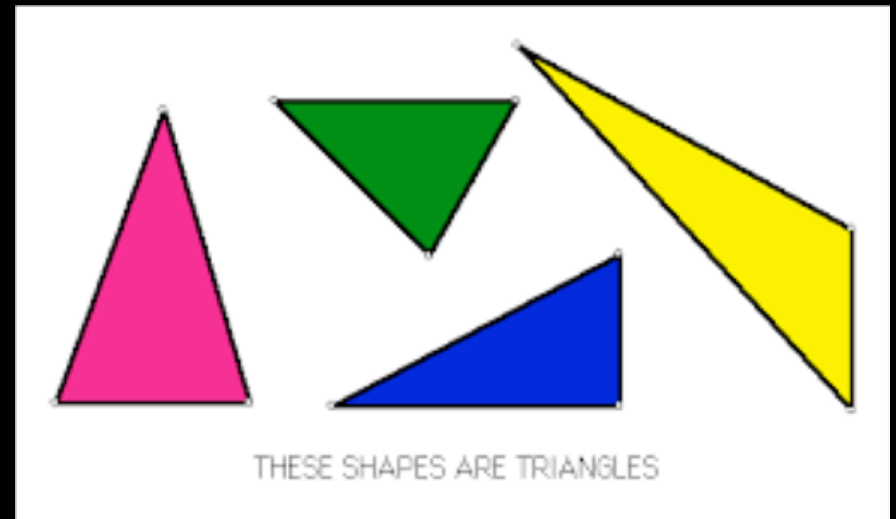
- Common couple violence
- Happens in specific argument
- Lack of communication skills
- Born out of frustration
- Male and female

Definitely contraindicated

- Battering
- Happens outside of arguments
- Environment of control, domination
- Intimidation by power
- Male partner

AVOIDING TRIANGULATION

- Address confidentiality
- Communicate with both spouses
- Relationship is your client



SETTING REALISTIC GOALS

- Stop bad behavior
- Start good behavior
- Promote humility and understanding
- Stay in your lane
- Embrace average



THERE IS ALWAYS HOPE



BONUS MATERIAL: ENDING AS CLEANLY AS POSSIBLE

- You're twice as likely to end in a negative space.
- Letter/Email to both partners.
- End of therapy with me \neq end of couples therapy or end of marriage.
- Some states don't allow a couples therapist to see one partner individually. Does yours?





Example Letter to Couples Client

I wanted to reach out to both of you at the same time. I have some thoughts for moving forward:

We've talked a few times about stopping therapy for a variety of reasons. We've met ___ times and I wanted to say that it is an appropriate time to say, "Ok, we gave it our best shot with Veronica." Thank you both for all that you've risked and brought to the process.

I'd like to draw a line in the sand and say that even if both of you were willing to continue engaging in marriage counseling, this also a good time to stop counseling with me and move to someone who might be able to get you further. We've done good work together, but as we've moved forward, I have found that I'm not able to give you all that you need right now.

The end of counseling doesn't necessarily mean the end of the marriage. In addition, the end of counseling with me, doesn't necessarily mean the end of counseling. I can recommend _____.

The state of Colorado restricts therapists from switching from being a marital counselor to becoming an individual counselor to either of the spouses, but to end without any contact always seems a bit abrupt. I handle this by meeting individually once (once with each spouse) if it is desired, to address the transition out of counseling and answer questions, etc. And certainly, it's not required to meet with me individually, I just like couples to know it's an option.



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