



Additional Informed Consent for Couples' Counseling

Successful relationships are based on clear policies and procedures, so please review the following carefully and thoroughly. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me at any time.

Guidelines of Couples' Counseling Appointments:

Consistency/Frequency: In couple's counseling **the couple is the client.** Couples counseling is more effective when both individuals in the partnership attend appointments in a consistent manner. I will generally meet with you on a weekly basis for approximately 50-80 minutes, which is recommended for effective progress and growth. The frequency of sessions/length of session time may be evaluated during times of crisis, as well as when it is mutually decided and appropriate to either increase or decrease the frequency/length of your session. I may also choose to meet with each partner of the couple individually initially, but will refer to another pastoral counselor if ongoing individual counseling is needed.

Outcome: Though you will be taught how to communicate at an intimate level, and often that can re-light the fire of love, sometimes one decides there has been too much damage for the relationship to continue. Counseling will help you understand where the relationship is and what can be done to help repair wounded hearts. It will help you make important decisions about your future, but there are no guaranteed outcomes.

If I talk to one of you separately it will not be an individual counseling session, but an attempt to help you understand yourself in relation to your partner or to understand your partner in a specific area. If you or your partner shares information with me in private, I will encourage you to share this information voluntarily to your partner in our session. If you do not share this information, I will need to share this information in order to preserve my neutral position in our counseling relationship.

Children are not appropriate at the counseling session. Primarily, they should not be exposed to adult problems. Secondly, they will try to mediate between the two of you through exquisitely timed

interruptions and distractions. Being a mediator is a burden they should not be allowed to carry. Therefore, if you cannot get a babysitter please cancel the session. We cannot work with children present.

No fighting: This time in session will be a SAFE time for listening, practicing, and growing in understanding. Fighting and screaming matches are useless and counterproductive. Unless fighting is stopped when the counselor intervenes, continued fighting will terminate the session, and full payment will be expected.

Due to couples work involving two people, the following information is important to clarify at the beginning of counseling. In order for counseling information to be released to a third party, **both** members of the couples must provide their written authorization. Since the couple is the client, one member's desire to have information released is not sufficient.

We understand that any information discussed in couples counseling is for therapeutic purposes and not for deciding who is right or wrong. The counselor remains neutral and will not judge between us, nor will his notes reflect any partiality. It is not intended for use in any legal proceedings involving the partners. We agree not to subpoena our counselor to testify for or against either party or to provide records in a court action since they will all be neutral.

Phone calls/ texts: If you or your partner needs to speak with me on the phone, you are welcome to contact me under the following conditions:

1. In order to maintain neutrality, both partners must be available to speak on the phone.
2. You will be billed in 15 minute increments after the first 5 minutes.
3. Texts to the counselor are not recommended and they are for both partners to see during a session.

Attendance/Cancellations: The established appointment time is set aside for a particular couple. It is expected that you will be prompt for your appointment. If you or your partner arrives late for your couple's appointment, the session will only start with both individuals present, and the session will still end at the regularly scheduled time.

Both spouses, please initial page to indicate that you have read it. _____

We agree to share responsibility with our counselor for the counseling process, including goal setting and termination. By entering into couples counseling, we accept that we both understand that working toward change may involve experiencing difficult and intense feelings, some of which may be painful, in order to reach counseling goals. We understand that the changes one or both of us makes will have an impact on our partner and on others around us. We accept that such changes can have both positive and negative effects and agree to clarify and evaluate potential effects of changes

before undertaking them. This is especially true if we have dependent children.

Our counselor has explained that his therapeutic focus in Biblical couples counseling is on preserving and enhancing the relationship, but if one of us in the marriage decides after careful consideration that remaining together is harmful to one or both partners, the focus will be on facilitating an amicable separation. If one of us decides on separation, whether temporary or permanent, we will not hold our counselor to blame for that separation carefully decided upon by one of us.

The signatures here show that we each have read, discussed, understand, and agree to abide by the points presented above and freely choose to accept these services from our pastoral counselor as indicated by our signatures below.

Spouse 1's signature _____ date _____

Spouse 2's signature _____ date _____

Counselor's signature as witness _____ date _____