

Congratulations! In beginning couples' counseling, you are taking a crucial step in creating the strong connection in your relationship that you desire. Sometimes couples come to counseling to strengthen a weak connection, to repair hurt and damage to the relationship, or simply learn how to reconnect, period. It may seem like your marriage or relationship fell apart overnight, but it didn't. Disconnection happens over time. And, it will take time to see the results of your work in couples' therapy. To get the most, commit together to ten sessions and consider these tips as you embark on this challenging and ultimately rewarding experience. Many couples want the "fix" in the first session~ no therapist or couple is that skilled! Couples' therapy can be powerful AND it takes time and commitment from everyone involved to make the magic happen.

### **Eleven Tips to Help Make the Most of Couples Therapy**

1. Expect slow change. Consistency over time is better than a quick, short-lived change. You will also need time to learn to trust that the "change" is for real.
2. Approach with curiosity versus skepticism. Be open.
3. Recognize that underneath frustration is an unmet need or desire. Dig deep.
4. Give your partner the benefit of the doubt. Take the chance.
5. Take responsibility for your actions. Stop the finger-pointing and blame game.
6. If you choose to do something differently, it will create space for your partner to respond differently and disrupt a negative cycle. Be patient.
7. Criticism, Contempt, Defensiveness and Stonewalling will kill your relationship. Appreciation, Compassion, Responsibility and Engagement will heal your relationship! Try "catching" your partner doing something positive!
8. Sometimes, ending your marriage/relationship in the healthiest way possible is the better outcome. In couples' therapy, you can learn how to end the relationship well.
9. Create safety by not using what was shared by your partner in session against your partner outside of session. Keep it in session. Make therapy a safe space.
10. Show up to your session to the best of your ability every time. You get out of therapy what you put into it! Just showing up isn't enough~ you need to be willing to work.
11. Appreciate and celebrate what is working, and what you do well together, no matter how small.