

## How to Choose a Couple Therapist

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With couples divorcing and splitting up at the highest rate modern time, quality couple therapy is a must. And, finding a qualified couple therapist is essential. Only 14% of therapists in the United States that state they do couple therapy have actually had training in how to do couple therapy. Most therapists claiming to be competent in working with couples are applying training they received in working with individuals to the couple dynamic and think that this will work; it doesn't. Here is a quick list of things to ask a potential couple therapist during the interviewing process.

- 1) Have you actually had training in working with couples? If so, what were the classes/seminars titled? This will help you know if the therapist is being honest with you about their qualifications.
- 2) How many couples have you seen in your practice within the last 12 months?
- 3) What theoretical perspective do you conceptualize your couples with? There are two very well known theoretical perspectives designed specifically for working with couples. They are Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy (EFT) and IMAGO therapy. If the therapist does not incorporate a theory then they will have no idea where they are going with the couple and you will be wasting precious resources and time in their care.
- 4) Does the therapist work on communication skills? This is a tricky one. If the therapist answers "Yes" and does not qualify their answer, you may be in trouble. For example, research clearly states that working on teaching a couple how use "I" statements and other basic communication techniques does not work. Communication is about trust. If the couple does not trust their partner then the words coming out of their mouths will not be taken in and listened to.
- 5) Does the therapist split the couple up and work with them individually? If they do, then they are not a couple therapist; they are an individual therapist. Only in extreme cases should a couple be split up and worked with separately i.e., domestic violence, unprocessed trauma, active substance abuse. Splitting a couple up for one (1) session for assessment purposes is ok as long as that is the reason for the division.
- 6) How does the therapist ensure that they do not take sides? This question will help understand how the therapist conceptualizes the couple's dynamic. Do they see the couple as two people impacting the other and therefore causing a reaction that further impacts their partner? Couples are systems and just like interlocking gears, one can't move without affecting the other.
- 7) Does the therapist see the couple as an "Emotional Bond" or a contract that needs to be renegotiated? Therapists that give their couples tasks to complete such as going on more

dates or doing more chores around the house are missing the point. "It's not about the trash!!!" It's about the emotional bond between the couple and when that emotional bond is not strong enough, the couple will respond with distress. These tasks to do more chores or bring home more flowers try to get at strengthening that bond. However, without directly focusing on how that bond is weakened, the couple therapist will be wasting more time and missing the point completely.

If you would like more tips or explanation on how to interview a potential couple therapist, please feel free to contact me at any time.

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