

What is Discernment Counseling for Couples?

Discernment counseling is short term, and the focus is not on solving marital problems but on seeing if they could potentially be solved.

- Unlike traditional marriage counseling that assumes that both people are willing to work on the marriage, discernment counseling helps people decide whether to work on their marriage or keep moving towards divorce.
- Unlike individual counseling that usually takes one person's side, the discernment counselor works to understand both partners, even if they see things very differently.

Who is discernment counseling for?

Discernment Counseling is for people who are considering divorce but are not completely sure if it's the right path for them. They want to take one more look before making a permanent decision with long term consequences. It's also for people who want to give their marriage another chance even though their spouse is moving towards divorce.

What does discernment counseling involve?

The discernment counselor helps individuals and couples decide whether to try to restore their marriage to health, move towards divorce, or take a time out and decide later. The sessions are divided between conversation with the couple together and individual conversations with each spouse. The counselor respects the reasons for divorce while trying to open up the possibility of restoring the marriage to health. The counselor emphasizes the importance of each party seeing his or her own contributions to the problems and the possible solutions. This will be useful in future relationships even if this one ends. Discernment counseling is considered successful when people have clarity and confidence in their decision.

When a decision emerges, the counselor helps the parties either to find professionals who can help them have a constructive divorce or to formulate a reconciliation work plan to create a healthy, successful marriage. In some cases, couples decide to take a time out from the discernment process and return later.

How many sessions are there?

Discernment counseling involves a maximum of five counseling sessions. The first session is usually 1 ½ to 2 hours, and subsequent sessions are 1.5 hours. Fees for counseling will be discussed. Insurances are accepted.

Discernment counseling is NOT suitable when...

- ... one spouse has made a final decision to divorce and wants counseling to encourage the other spouse accept that decision.... there is a danger of domestic violence.... there is an Order of Protection from the court.... or when one spouse is coercing the other to participate.

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