

## **DISCERNMENT Counseling**

**What is Discernment Counseling?** This process is for couples where one or both partners are considering a divorce or separation, or are ambivalent about the future of their relationship. The therapist helps individuals and couples decide whether to try to restore their marriage to health or to proceed toward divorce.

### **Goals**

1. Make decisions regarding the marriage with clarity and confidence, with as much accurate information as possible.
2. Provide a neutral setting for honest and respectful communication.
3. Each partner is encouraged to learn as much as possible about their own actions that contribute to the problems in the relationship. This understanding can lead to healthier relationship skills and decisions in the future, a more fulfilling marriage, or a more amicable separation.
4. Both partners achieve a better sense of acceptance and understanding of the direction or steps the couple will take as they move forward from this self-evaluation.

### **Process**

1. This is a short-term process, usually no more than 5 or 6 sessions, leading to a decision.
2. Meetings will be together as a couple, as well as individually with each spouse.
3. The therapist does not side with one partner or the other, and respects both the reasons for divorce as well as the possible reasons for reconciliation.
4. The therapist will help the couple: review the relationship story from both partners' perspectives (meeting, courtship, decisions, and significant events), review the strengths, weaknesses, and both partners' contributions to the relationship, recognize the efforts that have/have not been made to address concerns.
5. The couple determines what the next step will be: 1) move to marriage therapy to work on a new, more fulfilling relationship, 2) proceed toward separation or divorce (the therapist can provide referrals to collaborative divorce professionals, including attorneys, 3) take other agreed upon steps (e.g., individual therapy, chemical dependency evaluation, domestic violence treatment), or 4) do none of these.

For more information:

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