

Help for Counselors

The following suggestions have been used by Pastor Tommy and proven to be very effective in counseling. The most important thing is getting off to a good start. These suggestions can help you do just that.

The first session:

1. In the first counseling session, remind the couple that the most important tool in solving any marriage problem is communication. *Journey To A Maximum Marriage* is designed to get them to hone their skills, using the tool of communication.
2. Inform the counselees in the very first session, and on a regular basis afterward, that you as a counselor can't improve their marriage, but through the counseling materials (*Journey To A Maximum Marriage*) you can give them the tools they need to improve their marriage themselves. Building a good marriage is much like building a good house. You need the proper tools and you need to know how to use them.
3. After going over the first assignment, ask each spouse what one thing his or her mate could do that more than anything else would improve their marriage.

Write the response of each on a sticky note and put it inside the front of your (counselor's) copy of *Journey To A Maximum Marriage*. At the end of all the other sessions, look at your sticky notes, which contain their assignments, and ask them how they are doing in those two areas. Tell them part of their homework for all four sessions will be to work on improvement in those two areas. Remind them we are not looking for perfection but improvement, and any improvement is worthy of praise and is a tangible sign of love and an attempt to improve their marriage.

It takes at least 30 days to change a behavioral pattern or to begin to break a bad habit. So, it is very important they work on their areas of improvement every day and to know they will be held accountable by their counselor. Let them know this is critically important, and you will hold them accountable at each counseling session.

All Sessions:

In each weekly counseling session, as you go over the assigned lessons, ask them which questions they discussed were the most difficult. Then, ask what questions were most helpful or most needed to help them improve their marriage. If a lesson doesn't seem to apply to them, skip it and spend the time on the chapters that seem to focus most on their problems.

As you discover other needed changes, make the appropriate assignment and write it on a sticky note to remind you to hold him or her accountable.

When assignments are made that require behavioral change, be sure to give both partners an assignment. If you don't, one partner may feel you think he or she is more to blame than the other. Always make sure it is clear you are not trying to place blame but to fix the problem.

The most important function of a counselor is to listen with compassion, without judging or condemning. As the couple goes through the counseling materials, which are based on God's Word, the Holy Spirit will convict them of any sin. Try to get the counselees to talk as much as possible. Try not to let one dominant. When they learn they can tell you anything, without you judging them or preaching to them, they will feel comfortable telling you about all their problems.

Be sure to end each session with prayer, asking God to give the counselees wisdom, understanding, and patience.