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Fortifying a relationship, couples therapy is beneficial at various life stages, making it a valuable resource for those looking to enhance their bond and tackle interpersonal conflicts. (Image Source: Pixabay.com) Can You Fix A Marriage Without Counseling?Repairing a marriage without involving a professional counselor is a valid option, especially for those seeking to cut costs or avoid a rigid time commitment. Couples can effectively enhance their relationship by working together and addressing issues collaboratively. Simple strategies can facilitate this process. Start by listing disagreements and prioritizing open communication to foster understanding. Patience and a willingness to invest effort are crucial in rebuilding trust, improving emotional connections, and enhancing communication. While there are moments when divorce may seem necessary, many signs indicate that a relationship can be salvaged through mutual work and commitment. Alternatives to professional counseling offer tailored methods that focus on strengthening communication and connection, allowing couples to navigate their challenges independently. Vulnerability plays a vital role by creating a safe space for honest dialogue, while empathy and active listening strengthen bonds. Commonly recommended steps include prioritizing your relationship, spending quality time together, and reintroducing intimacy. By focusing on shared values like commitment, respect, and forgiveness, couples can create a supportive environment conducive to growth. Although professional guidance is beneficial for some, many find success in utilizing available resources to repair and rejuvenate their marriages without formal counseling. Secrets of a Couples Counselor: 3 Steps to Happier Relationships Susan L. Adler TEDxOakParkWomenSusan presents the idea that if we nourish our relationships we become a team and build the trust and goodwill that we'll need to ... If you and your partner are entering into couples therapy, there may be times when you want to meet with the therapist individually. Most therapists have established guidelines in place for this situation to protect you and your partner, and to promote effective therapeutic progress for the relationship. The mental health counselors below discuss what usually happens in couples therapy when one partner wants to meet with the therapist alone: Traci Ruble, LMFT: There is not one answer to this question, and every few years the collective treatment thinking on this changes. Ask your therapist when you are interviewing them if they will see you individually. I absolutely see individuals in the couples I work with separately, but for short periods of time. I do not, however, see a couple and also become one partner's individual therapist. There are things that feel so scary to say in front of a partner, and being able to say it frankly and then get help on saying it more skillfully is one of the added benefits of seeing a couples therapist individually. Some things to be aware of: you may feel left out, anxious, mad, or other feelings on the day you know your partner is meeting individually with the couples therapist. It is a good idea to share those feelings in your next couples session, so you can study these reactions. If, at any time, you feel there is an imbalance in the therapist's time and energy, speak up and tell the therapist. It can derail good therapy if these feelings don't get tended to. I frequently check in with couples and see how each is feeling about our work and if anyone feels like they haven't been getting enough air time in the session. By being direct, I model good communication skills and create an atmosphere of honest and open curiosity, as well as make each partner feel totally safe in giving me feedback. As a rule, I would recommend asking ahead of time about any policies on this. Jonathan Bartlett, MA, MFT: Yes. Remember, however, that the primary focus of couples therapy is the relationship. From the therapist's perspective, the couple is the client. Confidentiality, in this context, means that no information received from either person would be revealed to outside parties (unless required by law or with your mutual written permission). Find a Therapist Additionally, a "no secrets policy" is often utilized to safeguard against conflicts of interest between partners. This policy allows the therapist to disclose private information shared by you in individual sessions with your partner during a shared session. Thus, your secrets are safe with your couples therapist, but not if they are in conflict with the interests of your relationship. Therapists are trained to use sound judgment before disclosing and will often first explore ways to support you finding your own way to share difficult information. Susan J. Leviton, MA, LMFT: Many therapists ask to see each partner separately at some point early in the treatment, perhaps even at the first session. Some make it a rule, while others decide on a case-by-case basis. There are even therapists who treat the couple by seeing each party separately for a period of time. There are valid reasons for both seeing each partner separately, and only seeing them as a couple. For example, there may be vital information that can only come out without the partner present. Or, there may be trust issues that will only be compounded by a partner speaking alone to the therapist. It is a clinical decision that each therapist makes on his or her own. There is no hard and fast rule about it. However, seeing each person separately does not necessarily mean that your therapist will keep secrets. This, too, is a clinical decision that each therapist makes and if you are not told upfront what their policy is, it is important for you to ask and not make assumptions. The therapy relationship, like all other good relationships, is based on trust. If you feel betrayed because your therapist shares with your partner what you considered private information, or if your partner feels that you and your therapist are hiding information from him or her, there will be no foundation of trust in which to work. The preceding article was solely written by the author named above. Any views and opinions expressed are not necessarily shared by GoodTherapy.org. Questions or concerns about the preceding article can be directed to the author or posted as a comment below.