

13 Things Marriage Counselors Know About Your Relationship

Counselors across the country weigh in on what they are really thinking during couples therapy.

1) I love couples who fight in the waiting room. At least they still care about each other. If one or both of you seem indifferent, my job is a lot harder.

2) When you say your feelings "just aren't there anymore," I know you're probably cheating.

3) Sometimes I'll tell a couple "no sex until the next session. Don't touch each other, period." What I'm really hoping is that they'll fail and feel a sense of unity from their mutual rebellion.

4) It may make you feel better to talk about your marriage issues with a good friend, but it will just make things worse. Never talk to outsiders about things in your marriage that you haven't already talked about with your spouse.

5) I'm not going to tell a couple that I have no idea why they're together. But take the hint if I say something like "You both have to make a decision about whether this is going to work long term."

6) What do I wish I could say? "Grow up!" "Stop whining!" "Get a life!" When I feel this way, I know I need a vacation.

7) Don't try to convince me you're the good one. In most marriages, there isn't a good one.

8) Yes, you should go to bed angry. If you try to resolve everything before you hit the sack, you'll both be sleep-deprived and cranky the next day. Instead, get a good night's sleep and talk once you're rested.

9) Three signs that a couple is not going to succeed: name-calling, finger-pointing, and when one or both partners fail to accept even the tiniest bit of responsibility for the situation.

10) Sometimes two people love each other but have such different styles of living that I recommend they live together in a duplex. It sounds strange, but it works for some people.

11) I've seen couples I thought didn't stand a chance end up staying together. Often it's because they're both willing to try. But sometimes it's just that they are too dysfunctional to leave each other.

12) The big thing most women don't understand: Men are not mind readers. If you don't tell him how you feel, he's not going to know. The big thing most men don't understand: If you hardly acknowledge your wife all day, she's not going to want to get intimate with you at night.

13) If I ask you how long you've had problems and your answer is "ten years," you're not going to change things in ten minutes or ten sessions.

Sources: Jeff Palitz, a marriage and family therapist in Chula Vista, California; Susan Fletcher, PhD, a psychologist in Dallas; Tina B. Tessina, PhD, a psychotherapist in Long Beach, California; Nancy Mramor, PhD, in Pittsburgh; Karen Sherman, PhD, in New York; Lawrence J. Levy, PsyD, a licensed psychologist in Boca Raton, Florida; Meghan L. Reitz, LCPC, NCC, in Schaumburg, Illinois; and a marriage counselor in Pennsylvania.