



Feeling unsure if Couples Counseling will work for you?

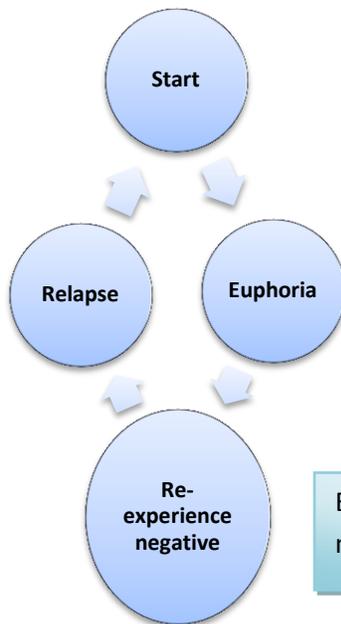
A message from Dr. Jennifer Ripley, Ph.D., Director of the Hope Project

People, who have faith, always have faith in someone or something. If you feel unsure if couples counseling will work for you, you are not alone. Many people worry that all the ingredients aren't there to see positive changes. We see this as a struggle in faith. See if any of the following apply to you and discuss them with your therapist and your partner.

- **Faith in each other** – it is important to help see the effort your partner is doing in making in your relationship better. Your therapist can use interventions to help you both examine your beliefs about your partners' motivations and capability for change. If you believe that your partner's actions are for the good of the relationship, and not selfish, that is a good sign. If you usually see your partner as using looking out for him/herself instead of your relationship, it is easy to lose faith. It is common for couples in unhappy relationships to see their relationship as always negative, and their partner the same. It's hard to notice the nice things each other is doing when the relationship is "in the talk." You may perceive each other more negatively than things really are. It's very important here to be accurate, and to give each other some benefit of the doubt. Therapy will help you examine how you can increase your faith in each other.
- **Faith in the therapist** – You will have the chance to grow a trusting relationship with your therapist. We ask that you get to know your therapist for a while and see if he or she can be helpful to you. If you generally have a hard time trusting people, or trusting people who are supposed to be there to help you (like therapists, parents, teachers or doctors) then discuss this with your therapist. There are certainly reasons why you struggle with trust and this might be a good time to explore trust issues so you can get the most out of your experience.

- **Faith in the Intervention** – faith in the interventions are important in order for couples to complete their homework and actively participate in treatment. Without faith in the interventions used, the tendency is couples get unmotivated and stop putting effort into the work assigned. The Hope approach uses simple memory devices and strategies to demonstrate important principles in healthy relationships. As you evaluate the interventions you are learning throughout your counseling, consider that the exercises, techniques and memory devices are a *means to an end*. The goal is to naturally and consistently use the relationship principles. Generally about 90% of couples who receive this whole intervention report benefitting from it. Discuss this with your counselor if you feel the techniques aren't working for you. Things can be re-shaped to fit you.
- **Faith in God** – Many couples see God as an important agent in their relationship. Do you believe that God is doing things for your relationship? Could there be opportunities to change your relationship for the better sent to you by God that are missed? If this is you, do you want to work to restore your faith in God's positive work in your relationship?

Be aware of the Start-Euphoria-Relapse Cycle in Counseling



Couples usually start therapy feeling they are giving the relationship a chance (sometimes last chance) to change. Normally, they start perceiving a better relationship in the early stage of therapy, but, after few sessions of great work, something happens between the couple that erupt similar negative feelings to those they felt when they were first seeking therapy. Be aware that is common to couples experience SER at some point in treatment. It's a good sign. If you work through the negative feelings then you engage in the deeper work of counseling that makes longer-lasting change and defeats the SER cycle.

Escape the cycle and work through the negative feelings