

## A Checklist: 20 Things to Consider Before Booking Couples Therapy:

Ideally, you want to find a couples therapist when you're not in a real crisis. It's nice in theory, but of course we are all busy. Most of us aren't going to bother doing preventative work if there's nothing urgently wrong.

Anyhow, here are 20 things to consider if you are the one booking in for couples counselling (Recommended Reading List is at the bottom):

1. **Consider whether couples counselling is the best course of action:** Should you go together or to individual counselling? (IMPORTANT: If there is family abuse (verbal, emotional, physical, financial, sexual abuse) in your relationship a counsellor will recommend individual sessions. If you are unsure, give Ghita a call.)
2. **Make sure you are both 100% invested** in attending **therapy** together. (You can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink.)
3. What do you want to achieve?: **Discuss shared goals for therapy with your partner**
4. **Research:** Search for a couples counsellor that would suit you. Who is a good fit for you both? Here's how to make sure you find the right fit:
  1. Do you want a male or a female therapist?
  2. What therapy type do you want?:
    - Gottman Method
    - Narrative Therapy
    - Heart over Ego (Andersen)
    - Emotionally Focused
5. **Read therapist biographies and watch introductory videos if they have any:** A therapist's professional statement and video can give you a helpful sense of the therapist's demeanor, and how they speak. A therapist must be friendly, firm, unbiased and interested in getting results. [The best Couples Counsellors are also Family Dispute Mediators](#)
6. **Same Sex Couples:** Check to see if your counsellor normally works with same sex couples to avoid any bias
7. **Culture:** Do you want someone from a certain cultural background?
8. What are your **location** and **scheduling** requirements?
9. **Schedule one initial phone call with providers.** Learn about each therapist's approach to couples counselling and decide which appeals to both of you.
10. **Ask your partner to call the therapist** to make sure you both would feel comfortable proceeding with in-person sessions
11. Do you want someone who will give you a **relationship diagnostic** or feedback straight up?
12. Ask family for a referral: Who is recommended?.

13. Clear your schedule for the day of **your first appointment** if you can
14. Decide whether – and what – you want to tell your friends and children
15. **Prepare to talk about your feelings:** Expect to get uncomfortable in session discussing personal matters and things you avoid talking about. Aka conflict (This is normal.)
16. Know **that it's okay to be nervous about your first session!** Many couples who go to counselling together are, understandably, anxious about their first appointment. After all, you may be opening up about certain challenges and intimate issues that you and your partner have only ever spoken about to each other. In some cases, you might be sharing things you've never even told your partner. It's completely normal – common, actually – to feel anxious about embarking on this new experience. Don't worry if one (or both) of you is still hesitant on the day of your appointment.

Unknowns make many people anxious. It can be helpful to simply be patient and stay hopeful that after both partners meet the therapist, some of the anxieties about going to couples counselling will be put at ease. *Ghita Therapy is a home based business in Currumbin and there are teas and coffees available and wonderful, relaxing views of nature.*

17. Check the fees for counselling. Expect to pay between \$150 and \$400 in Queensland. Also, will they give you an invoice for insurance? (Some insurance plans will reimburse you for therapy costs, or at least count it towards your deductible). Ghita Therapy is \$200 per hour. (And no, Medicare does not subsidise couples counselling in Australia like it does with MHCP's.)

#### 18. **What if one of you isn't sold on therapy to begin with?**

Hopefully you're both invested in therapy, but chances are, one of you is going to be more into it than the other. "When one person wants to go more than the other, it's very important that they let their partner know how much they appreciate their willingness to go," says Ghita. "They should also make it clear that it's an opportunity for the partner to say what's on their mind and express how they're feeling - it's not just a one-way street."

As for drawing out the less-enthusiastic party - remember, a good counselor is trained to do that. "At a certain point, it's on the therapist," says Ghita. "Your goal is to get them in the door, and then we take over."

#### 19. **How can you tell if a therapist isn't working?**

If one of you isn't feeling comfortable with the direction therapy is going, don't quit yet — talk to your therapist about it first. "A lot of people think that they're going to hurt their therapist's feelings if they say they're uncomfortable in the room, or upset about something the therapist said," says Ghita. "But a good therapist should welcome that information, and not get defensive. That kind of communication can actually lead to very fruitful conversations."

Of course, some therapists just aren't going to be the right fit, and that's okay too - that's why you should shop around a bit before settling down with one person.

#### 20. **What kinds of results should you expect to see?**

Even the very best therapist can't save certain relationships. And sometimes couples come to therapy not even sure that they want their relationship to be saved. "All I ask of my clients is their commitment to doing the work," says Ghita. "They don't have to know if they want to stay in the relationship. It's nice if they're committed to the other person, but the most important thing is

that they're committed to working on the relationship. Then it's a win-win. Even if the relationship ultimately doesn't work, you're still learning something from the process. You may even learn that there is work that you need to do on your personal growth to make relationships work."

Also, be explicit about your goals. "I think it's a good idea, in the first few sessions, to figure out one or two goals that you want to work on as a couple, and then do periodic checks along the way to see where you're at," says Ghita. "Sometimes progress is hard to measure. It may just be that a feeling has shifted, or that there's been a small change in behaviour. But it's important to pay attention. Even the slightest pieces of progress is progress. And remember: The last thing your therapist is going to do is judge you. They're there to help you manage and understand your emotions in a way that can help you both move forward."

### **In Summary:**

High fives to both of you for taking this important step towards repairing your relationship! So long as you're both committed to putting in the work, you're off to a great start.

Call or text Ghita on 0439 888 070 if you have any questions about therapy or if you would like to see if she would be a good fit for you.

Recommended reading:

<https://www.ghitaandersen.com/couples-preparation.html>

<https://www.ghitaandersen.com/first-session.html>

<https://www.ghitaandersen.com/ebooks-for-couples.html>

<https://www.ghitaandersen.com/fees-and-payments.html>