

Nuts and Bolts of Initial Interview in Couples Therapy



with Dr. Ellyn Bader

*The Couples Institute &
The Developmental Model of Couples Therapy*

Getting Off to a Powerful Start

By the end of first session...

- Establish yourself as a leader
- Be active/not reactive-
Define a direction
- Get couples attention



So that...

- They know they will work
- They have hope

The Sequence

Person calls for an appointment for couples therapy.

Ask the caller what would be required of them. Not the partner to improve the situation or relationship.

Get a headline for their situation.
NOT THE
PROBLEM.

Tell them to reflect on the three questions before coming in.

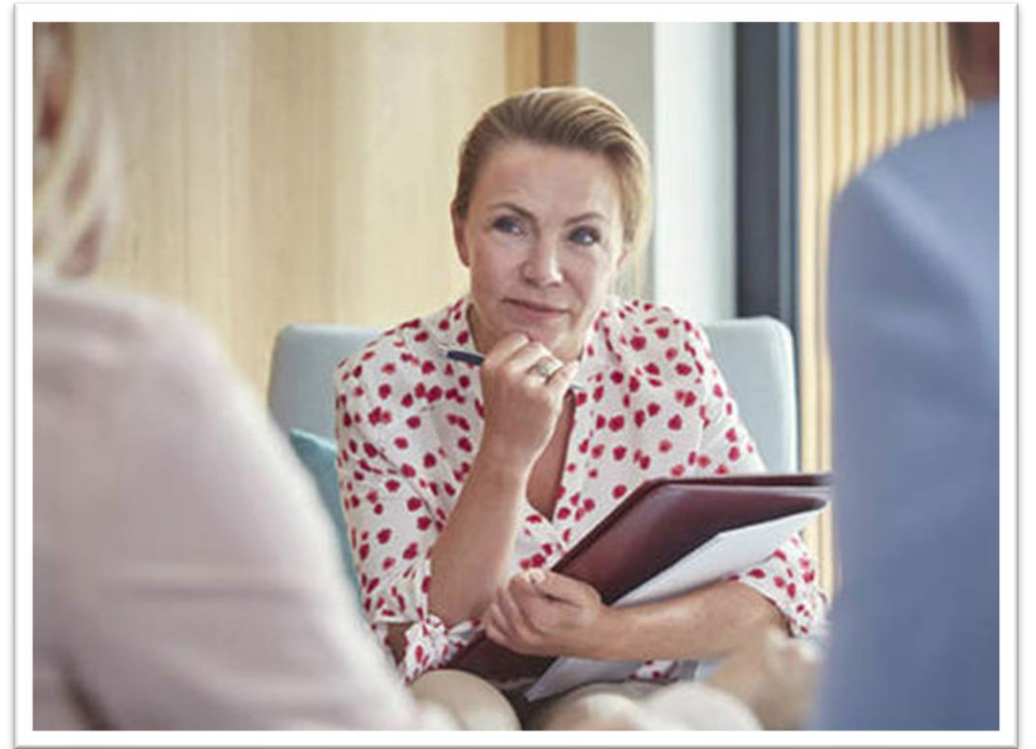
Send — a document about getting the most out of couple's therapy before the first meeting.

3 Questions to Ask on the Phone

- 1 What kind of marriage do you want to create?
- 2 Why is that important to you? This is about your motivation to do the work.
- 3 What is required of you—not your partner—to bring about your ideal relationship?

Essential Elements in Early Interviews

- Make positive contact with each partner
- Understand the problem from each person's perspective
- Name feelings being experienced
- Empathically embellish them-add to what they have said so each partner knows you really understand them



Essential Elements in Early Interviews

Describe the destructive cycle, but....

- Set a clear direction...a way out (including delineating the importance of containment, repair and autonomous change)
- Define your role and your expectations
- Do a long enough session that you make progress and don't leave them raw and exposed with no direction



An Effective Couples Therapist

- ✓ You are Decisive and Incisive
- ✓ You sustain Positive Momentum
- ✓ You don't get stuck in their Negative Cycles
- ✓ You Manage Volatility Quickly
- ✓ You create Alignment with each Partner
- ✓ You focus Attention on High Leverage Areas
- ✓ You target Goals that will have High Impact

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