Dangers of Couples Counseling

Couples Counseling is Not Recommended By…
- The Department of Justice (prohibits)
- The American Bar Association
- Futures Without Violence
- California Partnership to End Domestic Violence
- All US State Coalitions Against DV
- National Network to End DV
- National Coalition Against DV

Couples Counseling is Dangerous Because It…
- Endangers victims
- Can blame the victim when focusing on couple’s interaction by ignoring the denial, minimization and deception
- Increases the victim’s isolation, as she may fear to speak in therapy sessions, for fear of retribution and more violence at home
- Implies the victim is responsible for seeing that her batterer gets help

Couples Counseling is Not a Viable Therapeutic Tool in Domestic Violence Because…
- Couples counseling is beneficial for MARITAL problems, and domestic violence is a VIOLENT CRIMINAL ACT not a marital problem
- Domestic violence is illegal
- Domestic violence is solely the responsibility of the offender, regardless of perspective or provocation
- Domestic violence is a chosen strategy
- The offender alone is capable of changing his behavior

Do Not Engage in Couples Counseling Unless…
- The former batterer has completed a Batterer Intervention Program
- The batterer has acknowledged his responsibility for his violent actions
- The batterer recognizes his ability to stop his violence toward his partner and further clearly states that he will not be violent towards his partner
- The victim validates, in separate session, that he has not been violent for one year and has affirmed his commitment to never be so again
- The victim has supports in place and is actively progressing from dependence to freedom
Couple’s Counseling is Dangerous for Victims: Citations

Couple's counseling is dangerous for battered women and not recommended.


National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) – Each of the 52-member state coalitions have standards and policies that state that couples counseling is dangerous for Battered Women and not recommended.


Schechter & Edleson. (1998)

California Penal Code Section 1203.097
(c)(1)(G) A requirement that [batterer’s intervention programs] excludes any couple counseling or family counseling, or both.
(c)(3)(D) No victim shall be compelled to participate in a program or counseling, and no program may condition a defendant's enrollment on participation by the victim.


