

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.

Judicial Subcommittee of the American Bar Association's Commission on Domestic Violence, "Judicial Checklist" 2002. Page 2

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.

Holtzworth-Munroe, A. "Standards for Batterer Treatment Programs: How Can Research Inform Our Decisions? Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment, and Trauma v5 n2 (2001) pp. 165 - 180. Specifically, pp. 168 – 170, Section 4.5 of the Massachusetts state standards states.

Lundy Bancroft, R. and Silverman, J. "The Batterer as Parent: Addressing the Impact of Domestic Violence on Family Dynamics" (2002).

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.

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. "Effective Intervention in Domestic Violence and Child Maltreatment Cases: Guidelines for Policy and Practice [Greenbook]" (1998) Reno, NV. Specifically, pp. 66-67.

Whalen, Mollie. "Counseling to End Violence Against Women: A Subversive Model" (1996) Chapter Five - Counseling Practice With Battered Women.

Lemon, Nancy K. D., "Domestic Violence Law: A Comprehensive Overview of Cases and Sources" (1996). See [Introduction, E. Use of Mental Health Professionals to Help Resolve Custody and Visitation Issues.](#)

Frank, Phyllis B. M.A. & Houghton, Beverly D. Ph.D. "Confronting the Batterer: A Guide to Creating the Spouse Abuse Educational Workshop," for the Volunteer Counseling Service of Rockland Co. Policy statement on couples counseling

Frank, Phyllis B. & Golden, Gail Kadison. When 50-50 is Not Fair: "The Case Against Couple Counseling When Men Abuse Women" (2002). An earlier version was first printed in [Social Work](#) (November 1994).

Wetendorf, Diane. "Police Domestic Violence: A Handbook for Victims,"