

DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH TO MARRIAGE COUNSELING FOR TROUBLED MARRIAGES

The following is a developmental approach to marriage counseling. It assumes the couple is in trouble. They have probably tried other forms of counseling to no avail. One of them is probably not interested in either counseling or in restoring the relationship. In all probability the marriage has become at the very least a “room-mate” relationship where the couple live as estranged roommates as opposed to lovers. In all probability communication is low and poor and feels like walking on eggshells. We begin with the above assumptions.

The Developmental approach uses the word developmental as a guide to the 13 steps to develop a true marriage. The process takes at a minimum 26 weeks if all goes well. It usually does not. This is hard work. Frequently it does not work because of either the difficulty of developing the relationship where one of the spouses is an unwilling participant or the discouragement factor based on level of expectation and maturation of the willingly participating spouse.

In addition to the above, the developmental approach places all the responsibility for change on the one marriage partner that has agreed to come in and take the responsibility for the marriage to improve. This is not based on fairness but reality. Sometimes for whatever reason one spouse has abdicated their responsibility to and for the marriage. It is in this case that the developmental approach may hold out some hope. It is based on the additional assumption that the unwilling spouse will not change directly, but may change as a result of the willing spouses’ changes. This is not fair, but may be accurate.

This is not a fair approach since it places the burden on one spouse to change and to bring about change. However, it may be the only way the marriage may survive.

I understand the above and am willing to proceed with the Developmental approach to marital counseling.

Signature

date

THE THIRTEEN STEPS TO DEVELOPMENTAL MARRIAGE COUNSELING

1. **DIVINATION** what does your spouse really want? What is missing? This has to be determined first.
2. **ENCOURAGEMENT & RESPECT** how do you demonstrate that in the relationship? Without it marriages die.
3. **VALUING AND VALIDATING YOUR SPOUSE** every three days find something they do or are that is unique or important to you and say so.
4. **ENTHUSIASM MEANS GOD WITHIN** are you bringing enthusiasm or energy to the marriage? The opposite of love is not hate but apathy.
5. **LOVE LANGUAGE** do you understand and speak your spouses' love language?
6. **OPPOSITE** find out what your spouse expects you to do that is negative and do the opposite.
7. **PUSH** gently nudge for help and or change. Your spouse will probably resist and provoke at this point.
8. **MATURE** someone has to be the adult in the relationship. Acting like the adult will keep the interactions and communications in adult form.
9. **EVALUATE** this is where most marriages feel like they have hit the wall in the marathon. What is working what is not? Crises mean change is occurring.
10. **NINETY-DAY NOTICE** of necessary changes. These are the changes that must be made in order for me to stay in and maintain the relationship.
11. **TELL THE TRUTH IN LOVE, BUT TELL THE TRUTH** consistently and constantly focus on the light of truth
12. **ALONE OR ALL ONE?** What's it going to be? It only takes one to be alone. I can be alone by myself, but do you want to come along and be all one? It takes two—me and you to be all one?
13. **LEAVE.** If at some point you honestly and prayerfully can say you have done all the above, God helping me, it is time for a separation. A separation is not a divorce. A separation is a time of prayerful consideration and reflection for God's will and fruit in your life. Three words are critical: **PEACE, FRUIT, and WAIT.** First, leave in peace and only return or allow your spouse to return in peace. The man should be the one to leave and the wife to stay. Second, bear fruit. The fruit of the Spirit found in the fifth chapter of Galatians of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, goodness and self-control. Look for this in yourself and in your spouse. When you see this being produced, reconciliation is possible. Third, wait until you feel the peace of God directing your return and the fruit of the Spirit produced in each other's life.

I have to be willing to let my old marriage die in order to save my new one.