

## DISCERNMENT COUNSELING

**Discernment counseling** is a way for couples to look at their options before making a final decision about the future of their relationship. It is most appropriate for couples where one partner wants to preserve and repair the relationship and the other is leaning towards ending it.

Discernment counseling differs from regular couple therapy in three ways: a) the goal is not to solve problems in the relationship, but to figure out whether the problems can be solved; b) the process involves mainly individual conversations with each partner, since they each have different needs and agendas, and c) it is always short term.

### WHAT CAN COUPLES EXPECT TO GAIN FROM DISCERNMENT COUNSELING?

- Clarity and confidence about next steps for their relationship
- A deeper understanding of what has happened to their relationship and each person's contributions to the problems

### HOW MANY SESSIONS ARE THERE?

1-5 sessions. Discernment counseling can be as brief as one session and as long as five sessions. You decide each time whether to come back for a subsequent session. The first session is 2 hours. Subsequent sessions are 1.5 hours.

### WHAT DOES THE COUPLE DISCERN?

Which of three paths to take as a next step for their relationship:

1. Keep things the way they are in the relationship,
2. Move towards ending the relationship, such as with a collaborative divorce, or
3. Take divorce (ending the relationship) off the table and do serious work with the help of a therapist for a period of six months before making a final decision.

### WHAT ELSE MIGHT HELP?

- For general marriage difficulties, it can be helpful for at least one partner to read *The Divorce Remedy* by Michele Weiner Davis and to become a “champion” for the relationship.
- When there has been an affair, see [resources](#) on the website. These books may also be helpful:
  - *Getting Past the Affair: A Program to Help you Cope, Heal, and Move On—Together or Apart*, by Snyder, Baucom, & Gordon
  - *Not “Just Friends”: Rebuilding Trust and Recovering Your Sanity After Infidelity*, by Glass, with Staeheli