



READINESS FOR COUPLES COUNSELING

By Dr. David Hawkins

1. *Both partners must be ready to show up for couples work, willing to hear one another, validate each other's perspective, and collaborate on what to do next.* Both must be able and willing to come to couples work NOT to point at their mate but ready to listen to their mate. They must be able to “create space” for that to occur.
2. *Both partners must be ready to put into words what they are feeling, what they envision and need for themselves, and share that with their mate.* Both must be ready and able to speak about their feelings, be vulnerable, and be transparent. They must be able to share with their mate what they would like to see happen in their marriage.
3. *Both partners must be willing to come out of self-protection, share vulnerably, and help create safety for the other to do so.* Both must speak from their “core self” where they are clear, calm, compassionate, and caring for themselves and their mate. They must encourage and invite vulnerability from their mate.
4. *Both partners must be willing to allow each other, and the counselor, to speak into their lives.* The counselor is, after all, a coach. A coach coaches, of course, and requires that the counselees be teachable.
5. *Both partners must agree on where they want to end up. Is it both of their desires to save the marriage if possible?* If so, it is best to articulate this. Our motto at The Marriage Recovery Center is, “We’re in this together, and we can figure this out.” (Assuming that is each partner’s goal as well.)
6. *Both partners must be able to articulate where and how they have been wounded and how they have wounded the other, taking ownership for it.* There is no place so perfect for healing of wounds, if both will take it upon themselves to be a “healer.” Both must have some awareness of their wounds and be able to share those wounds in a no shaming way.

7. *Both partners must get out of the other's head, staying on their side of the street, doing only their work, not trying to force the work of the other. We cannot, of course, speak for another person. We can and should imagine what they **might** feel but should never tell them what they are feeling or thinking.*

8. *Both partners, and the counselor, must help to get out of the destructive rut and into creating a constructive, goal-oriented, solution-focused relationship. Healing old wounds is much easier if current functioning is healthier. Let us help you be healthier in the moment so we can bring resolution to the past.*