



Do you really need to have your spouse or romantic partner attend counselling in order to make it better? The short answer is no, you do not. In fact forcing a person who doesn't want to go to counselling for whatever reason, is very harmful. Any good that counselling could potentially offer won't happen because the person who doesn't want to attend counselling will make sure that the counselling session is not successful. They'll do this by turning up late, not speaking, looking bored or do any behavior to communicate to their spouse and the therapist they do not want to be there.

Worse yet, many spouses who drag and force their partners into counselling have some magical thoughts as to the power of a therapist and what we can do. As a therapist, I can only help people that wants my help. I can provide people with information, skills and tools but I cannot force someone to pick up and use those tools, or even listen to or interact with me. When a spouse forces someone into therapy, what they don't realize is that they turn are turning the therapist into something negative, like a punishment instead of a resource.

I get lots of enquiries from people asking me how they can get their spouse into counselling because they know that their marriage isn't going well and they firmly believe that they only way to make things better is if the spouse will come to counselling. Sometimes the problem with forcing someone into counselling is that the enforcing spouse may conceptualize counselling incorrectly.

I find that a spouse who is forcing counselling, (just listening to that word, forcing) is trying to use counselling like a mini-court of law or a moral court in which they can lay out all the horrible things their spouse is doing and have the therapist, a person of authority, agree with them the problem is all in the partner. Usually when these type of couples show up in my office the enforcing spouse is disappointed.

Should You Force Your Spouse Into Counselling?

Counselling is not a mini-court of law or a place where unhappy spouses come in to complain about their spouse and lay out all the things they don't like for the therapist to agree to them. Never are relationship all one person's fault. If a relationship is not working, both parties are contributing to the unhappiness in different ways. So if you are the spouse trying to force your partner into marriage, you need to think about if you are ready to look at your behavior not just your partner's. You may want to educate yourself on how counselling works.

Counsellors have no power over your relationship other than what you give to them. Any professionally trained counsellor will not sit in judgment of another person. Even if they should, there is no authority or law that says you or your partner have to listen to them. Counselling is voluntary. Counselling is about teaching skills and tools to be better. We cannot force anyone to do anything.

If you are desperate to save your marriage but your spouse doesn't want to attend counselling, you can do marriage counselling on your own to make the relationship better. You have 100% control over your half of the relationship. Our counsellor can help you understanding what choices you have over your behavior. By doing something different and probably more effective you cannot help but create a change in your relationship. By changing how you approach your spouse and respond to what they are doing, you force a change in their reaction because you are behaving differently.

We can also help you understand what your partner is saying to you even if they don't attend. Don't make counselling another power struggle between you and your spouse in which you try and force someone to come when they don't want to. If you really want to make your relationship better, don't wait for your spouse to come around- we can help you.

Read our article: [Marriage counselling- Going it solo](#)

Also helpful to understand why you don't need your partner is: [How you define the problem may ensure you don't solve it](#)

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