

## **Couples' Counseling does NOT work in violent relationships!**

If you are struggling with a relationship, some people may advise you to get marriage counseling, or couples' counseling. While this can be good advice in some relationships, it is NOT good for couples where there is violence. In fact, in many cases, couples' counseling has increased the violence in the home.

### **Couples' counseling does not work because:**

- Couples' counseling places the responsibility for change on both partners.  
Domestic violence is the sole responsibility of the abuser.
- Couples' counseling works best when both people are truthful.  
Individuals who are abusive to their partners minimize, deny and blame, and therefore are not truthful in counseling.
- Couples resolve problems in counseling by talking about problems.  
His abuse is not a couple problem, it is his problem. He needs to work on it in a specialized program for abusers.  
A victim who is being abused in a relationship is in a dangerous position in couple's counseling. If she tells the counselor about the abuse, she is likely to suffer more abuse when she gets home. If she does not tell, nothing can be accomplished.

If you think you will benefit from joint counseling, go AFTER he successfully completes a batterer's intervention program and is no longer violent.

## **Perpetrator Intervention Programs For Abusers**

Abusers can enter voluntarily or be court ordered to Perpetrator Intervention Programs. It is important to note that there are no guarantees that he will change his violent behavior. He is the only one that can make the decision--and commitment--to change.

In Washington, there are certification guidelines for perpetrator intervention programs. Certified programs have completed a standards review process to ensure they meet guidelines.

### **An intervention program should include these factors:**

- Victim's safety is the priority.
- Meets minimum standards for weekly sessions (16 weeks).
- Holds him accountable.
- Curriculum addresses the root of his problem.
- Makes no demand on the victim to participate.
- Is open to input from the victim.

### **What programs teach:**

- Education about domestic violence.
- Changing attitudes and beliefs about using violence in a relationship.
- Achieving equality in relationships.
- Community participation.

In the program, an abuser should become aware of his pattern of violence and learn techniques for maintaining nonviolent behavior, such as "time outs" "buddy" phone calls, support groups, relaxation techniques, and exercise.

## **Am I safe while he is in the program?**

For your own safety and your children's safety, watch for these signs that indicate problems while he is in the program:

- Tries to find you if you've left.
- Tries to get you to come back to him.
- Tries to take away the children.
- Stalks you.

If you feel you are in danger, contact a [crisis line](#).

To find another [perpetrator intervention provider](#) in WA.

Learn more about [WA standards for Perpetrator Intervention Programs](#).

The best practice model for Perpetrator Intervention Programs is the [Duluth Model](#).

Learn more about the [current research](#) on the Duluth Model.

Learn more about Abusers & Abuser Behavior from: [Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#)

*Adapted from [Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#)*