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## **What to Look For in a Marriage Therapist Do's and Don'ts For a Competent Therapist**

Most people don't know what to expect of a competent marriage therapist. Here are some qualities and actions that researchers have found to promote effective marital therapy.

### **Do's**

- ~The therapist is caring and compassionate to both of you.
- ~The therapist actively tries to help your marriage and communicates hope that you solve your marital problems. This goes beyond just clarifying your problems.
- ~The therapist is active in structuring the session.
- ~The therapist offers reasonable and helpful perspectives to help you understand the sources of your problems.
- ~The therapist challenges each of you about your contributions to the problems and about your capacity to make individual changes to resolve the problems.
- ~The therapist offers specific strategies for changing your relationship, and coaches you on how to use them.
- ~The therapist is alert to individual matters such as depression, alcoholism, and medical illness that might be influencing your marital problems.
- ~The therapist is alert to the problem of physical abuse and assesses in individual meetings whether there is danger to one of the spouses.

### **Don'ts**

- ~The therapist does not take sides.
- ~The therapist does not permit you and your spouse to interrupt each other, talk over each other, or speak for the other person.
- ~The therapist does not let you and your spouse engage in repeated angry exchanges during the session.
- ~Although the therapist may explore how your family-of-origin backgrounds influence your problems, the focus is on how to deal with your current marital problems rather than just on insight into how you developed these problems.
- ~The therapist does not assume that there are certain ways that men and women should behave according to their gender in marriage.