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First Visit Couple (I am a licensed MFT, give card) Email Window of Tolerance handout before first session.

Guidelines

- Confidentiality exceptions!!!!
- Agreements contact information, consent forms, online
- Don't talk about therapy for at least 60 min after session (turn on music in car)
- Don't use things from therapy against each other
- No secrets policy, Email policy, texting policy
- No interrupting but I will interrupt
- Focus on yourself not your partner, I messages, I for Impact
- No name calling, belittling, button pushing or attacking each other
- Anger – feel free to stand up, leave the room and take a break then come back
- Avoid mindreading – instead say “The story I tell myself is”
- Agree to be honest in session
- Avoid leaving language or leaving actions, divorce off the table during treatment period (Two nuclear weapons: leaving language and silent treatment)

Tools: Window of Tolerance, Consent, Time Out, Mirroring, Practicing, Appreciations Exercise (introduce second session), Speaker/Listener exercise (introduce second session), Ouch and Oops, The Third Way, We, Marriage Meetings, idea of written agreements and shaking hands. (Always have them take away some Tools on first visit.) (Also The Fence Analogy for addiction).

Reminders:

- Make contact with each partner (sit equally in front of both) Give equal attention to both. (You may have to work harder with opposite sex.)
- What are your best hopes for our work together? Keep asking, Reflect back
- Clarify problem from each point of view and reflect back
- What would it look like if the problem were solved?
- Ask, what has each contributed to the problems?
- What would you like to work on in yourself to get that outcome?
- What would you each like to start doing and stop doing?
- Level of commitment to the relationship and the work
- Previous couples therapy? What went well?
- What solutions have you tried?
- Set goals for treatment – desired outcome (what do you long for? Wildest dream?)
- Have partners practice mirroring in session
- Normalize/Empathize developmental stage of relationship
- Relate to family history if appropriate
- Set clear direction for change-Summarize – what I see.... **Give HOPE**
- Suggest that couple go home and think about whether or not this therapist is a good fit, clients to contact therapist re next appointment. Email handouts after session