

# **What To Do If Your Spouse Refuses Counseling**

Adapted from <http://www.kevinathompson.com/what-to-do-if-your-spouse-refuses-counseling>.

What should you do if your spouse refuses counseling?

Here are a few thoughts:

**Consider how you asked them.** “You need counseling,” is not a good way to invite someone to work on the marriage. Even “we need counseling” is not the strongest start. When broaching a difficult topic, the start of the conversation is vital. Instead of telling your spouse what is needed, begin by telling them what you love. Remind them of why you love them, why you married them, what you enjoy about marriage. Paint the good picture and then tell them the truth—“I want more of that.” Tell them you want the marriage to be even better. You want to be an even better spouse. Marriage counseling is not simply about dealing with the bad aspects of marriage, it is primarily about expanding the good aspects of marriage. If you didn’t start with the positive, apologize to them. Tell them you were wrong and try again.

**Don’t demand an immediate answer.** It’s possible your spouse is surprised by your request or hasn’t put the time into thinking about your relationship as you have. They deserve time to consider what you are asking. Demanding an immediate answer often leads to defensiveness which can cause a spouse to say “no.” Give them time and space to consider your requests. Respect their decision making process. Give them time, but don’t let them off the hook. As you respect them by giving them time, they should respect you by giving you an answer. When you ask them to consider it, negotiate a time frame in which they will give you an answer. (“Will you consider this? Let’s have dinner Sunday night and discuss it.”)

**As you go, invite them to join you.** No matter what your spouse says, go to counseling. If you answered “yes” to any of the [13 Questions to Gauge If You Need Marriage Counseling](#), seek counseling. Preferably your spouse will join you, but go with or without them. You can only control you. You can’t make them change. If counseling is needed, you should go. Maybe they will eventually join you, but do not wait for them—Go.

**Go to change you, not to change them.** Do not attend counseling with the main focus being on how to get them to attend counseling. Any time we counsel, read, listen to a sermon, or do anything with the intent of changing someone else instead of us being changed, we have the wrong attitude. If you are attending marriage counseling alone, do so with the intent of becoming the best husband/wife you could possibly be. Do not attend with the assumption that the real problem is your spouse. Go to be changed.

Few things are as frustrating and isolating as a spouse who refuses to join us in working on our marriage. It is tempting to feel rejected and ignore the opportunities we have to work on the marriage. While it is preferred for a couple to seek counseling together, individual counseling can go a long way in turning the marriage in the right direction.

What would you say to someone whose spouse refused to seek help for their marriage?