

Lack of Progress in Counseling

Dear Rosa,

I have been aware that I have had problems within myself and in my marriage for several years. I have resisted going for counseling help, but now I have finally gone because my family doctor recommended that I go. My wife and I have gone separately and together. We have been in counseling for seven months. I hoped to see more difference in my situation and I wonder if I should continue.

- *Searching*

Dear Searching,

Once a person decides to go to counseling for help, they have made a giant step to move in the direction of sorting out problems and receiving help. It takes a lot of courage to make that first appointment.

It is not unusual for people to resist counseling. Some are afraid of what they will find out. In the case of marriage or family therapy, some are afraid the therapist will not understand their situation and that they may even be entirely blamed for the marriage problems.

Seven months is a long time to experience little, if any, progress. Several things come to my mind about your report of little progress.

- You may be making more progress than you know (you and your therapist need to review your goals and methods of achieving those goals individually and in your marital therapy).
- You have not switched to the “participatory” part of how you “own” the therapy. (You and your spouse need to actively work on the things developed in the therapy hour.)

Finally, you seem to have some sort of positive relationship with your therapist because I do not detect anger in your letter. However, your words say you are not believing that you have someone who is helping you toward your desired goals.

Again, if you have reviewed your situation and you believe you:

1. Have good goals and methods to achieve them developed in your treatment plan,
2. Own the responsibility to work on what has been developed in your therapy.

It is after this that you must then take a look at making a change of therapist or clinic.

I have a hint for you. It is sometimes just before a breakthrough that people get tempted to leave therapy. The unsettled feeling one has sometimes in working on inner and outer personal problems can indicate an answer on the way. Once again, though I am not able to determine the nature of the problem with therapy in a letter, there are things people are often learning and changing that they don't realize they are learning and changing.

- Rosa

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