

## **Dangers of Couples Counseling When Domestic Violence has Occurred**

While it is understandable that victims want to jump directly to couples counseling to 'fix' their relationship there are many important reasons not to.

### ***Couples Counseling is Dangerous Because It...***

- Endangers victims
- Can blame the victim when focusing on couple's interaction by ignoring the denial, minimization and deception
- Increases the victim's isolation, as she may fear to speak *in therapy sessions*, for fear of retribution and more violence at home
- Implies the victim is responsible for seeing that her batterer gets help

### ***Couples Counseling is Not a Viable Therapeutic Tool in Domestic Violence Because...***

- Couples counseling is beneficial for MARITAL problems, and domestic violence is a VIOLENT CRIMINAL ACT not a marital problem
- Domestic violence is illegal
- Domestic violence is solely the responsibility of the offender, regardless of perspective or provocation
- Domestic violence is a chosen strategy
- The offender alone is capable of changing his behavior

### ***Do Not Engage in Couples Counseling Unless...***

- The former batterer has completed a Batterer Intervention Program
- The batterer has acknowledged his responsibility for his violent actions
- The batterer recognizes his ability to stop his violence toward his partner and further clearly states that he will not be violent towards his partner
- The victim validates, in separate session, that he has not been violent for one year and has affirmed his commitment to never be so again
- The victim has supports in place and is actively progressing from dependence to freedom