



**SEPT 11, 2020 HALF-DAY
YOUR CLIENT NEEDS HELP!**

SENDING A CLIENT TO THERAPY

*"The problem is all inside your head", she said to me
The answer is easy if you take it logically
I'd like to help you in your struggle to be free
There must be fifty ways. . . .*

Paul Simon wrote *50 Ways to Leave Your Lover* reputedly just after his divorce from first wife Peggy Harper. The song relayed a mistress's humorous advice to a husband on ways to end a relationship. Hum a few bars and it can apply to a particular dilemma nearly every family law attorney has faced: how to tell a client to go get therapy. Here are 50 suggestions.

It's All About Me. . . .

1. As part of the intake, I ask that all my clients find a therapist. This gives you the benefit of two perspectives and I find the input is often very helpful. Divorce is a very emotional business.
2. I have no problem going into court/depositions/mediation, but I do it all the time. Most clients find it incredibly stressful and some coaching can be very helpful.
3. Let's step back for a minute. There's a lot of pressure on you right now. It would be better if we had someone who could objectively advise you— but I'm not that person. I'm a lawyer and I can tell you about the law, but these questions about your spouse/children/worries are best handled by a counselor.
4. I encourage all of my clients to seek outside, professional support at the start of this process. It helps keep us on track with the legal issues.
5. Most people find divorce to be one of the hardest experiences they'll ever go through. It's important that you have someone to lean on emotionally. As your attorney I'm not equipped to provide that kind of support, but I can give you the names of several really good people in the community.
6. How about some short-term counseling? I think the right therapist could help you clarify what it is you would like to do here and then I can help you go about it.

7. I'm going to encourage you to talk about these concerns with a professional. They have training and skills that I don't have as an attorney.

8. You have all my sympathy but I'm not competent to guide you here. I'll do a great job on the legal part, but let's get an expert on board for this issue.

All About Him/Her. . . .

9. S/he may be trying to make you look bad. Don't let that happen, get some counseling.

10. The best way to counter that accusation is to get some short-term therapy. It'll make you look open-minded and self-aware.

11. If you're convinced s/he would never get help, then you go get it. Can't hurt and it might work in your favor.

12. S/he may be unable to let go of you and some expert advice would be useful. I'm going to suggest you talk this over with a psychologist and get their input.

13. We can't control what s/he is doing, but we can plan how you should respond. I think a few sessions with someone trained in this would benefit your case. I'm going to suggest that you meet with one of these professionals to set up a game plan for handling him/her.

14. What s/he did was outrageous. But we have got to be clever about how you handle this. I'm going to suggest that you work out some options with a therapist, someone who could really understand what s/he is doing and why.

15. If you're afraid, then it's really important we get professional help on board. I'm going to give you the names of several professionals who specialize in domestic abuse.

16. I can't answer that question, I don't know why s/he would do that. But it's at least worth exploring with someone better qualified to give you an answer.

17. It's important to say all these things, but not to your spouse, not now. Don't go there. Let's set you up with a therapist who can hear you out.

18. You may feel badly about initiating this divorce, but you need to do what's right for you. Let's find someone who can focus on your needs and help you sort out these feelings.

Help the Kids. . . .

19. A good therapist can help you do what's best for your children. And it keeps the kids from thinking they are the problem if you're the one getting the advice, not them.

20. If you think it's harming the children, then talk it over with a therapist. A therapist will be able to give you the right advice and we can go from there.

21. Your family is depending on you. I think it would be easier if you had someone who was there for you too, as well. As your attorney I'm not in a position to give that kind of emotional support, but I have the names of some professionals who could.

22. I know you want to protect your children. The best way to do that at this juncture is for you to get the advice of a therapist on how you can best parent them through this time.

23. Why don't you bring this up with a therapist and see if it can be reframed in a way that makes you look like the person who is willing to cooperate and do what's best for the children?

24. You need to be really strong for your children. Kids have great radar and they will pick up on how you are feeling, even if you don't say anything. So let's find a place where it's safe for you to process all the negative feelings without exposing the children.

It's Not You, It's the Divorce. . . .

25. Some of my past clients have found it really helpful to work with a counselor while getting divorced. It helped mitigate some of the wear-and-tear that comes with the legal process.

26. It's going to be a challenge to get through this. Why not spend a few sessions with a professional who can coach you through the things that are going to be thrown at you?

27. Divorce brings up a lot of feelings—about your ex-spouse, your ex-friends, your lawyer! So short-term therapy is a good investment.

28. There is no operator's manual for a divorce. Getting through it all requires a lot of assistance and I'm just one part of it. A therapist can offer a lot and I recommend it to all my clients.

29. The most important thing you can do right now is take care of yourself. That's why it's helpful to have a therapist on board for the duration.

30. I can see how difficult this is and it might really help talking through this divorce with someone who is professionally trained to sort through these feelings.

31. It's not uncommon to lose a lot of the friends you had as a couple. Divorce scares people. When the dust settles, some may come back and you will make new friends. But until then, I encourage clients to work with a therapist so they don't feel so alone.

It'll Help the Case. . . .

32. It's really tempting to do a lot of mud-slinging, but I'm going to advise against that. It can backfire legally. But what you brought up is important, so I'm going to suggest you talk through it with a counselor.

33. I think the Court looks favorably on someone who sought out professional help in order to stop the fighting and shorten the proceedings.

34. I want you to be clear about what's best for you and your children so that you will be able to ask the Court for what is fair. A counselor can help you sort through all that.

35. It's important that you be at your best during the upcoming deposition/ trial/mediation. I recommend that you spend some sessions with one of these people to help coach you on how to put your best self forward.

36. A therapist can help you come up with a reasonable, solid parenting plan, one that will work for your children and still be persuasive to the Court.

37. You know, domestic abuse isn't just about hitting. It's about control in all its forms. I think it's important for the case that we get you in to see a specialist and make sure we've got everything covered.

Sympathetic Neutral. . . .

38. These are big changes in your life. Let's get somebody on board who can help guide you through it.

39. It's not about being crazy, it's about having someone on your side throughout this. Think of it as a professional friend.

40. This process can be difficult and long but it will be easier if you are getting a therapist's support to deal with your feelings and reactions.

41. These things are really important but it'll be a lot less expensive if you let your health insurance cover some of it. Let's see if we can find someone who is covered by your health plan.

42. It is really running up your legal bill to be talking about this with me. I really think you would get more practical advice from someone with training, someone who could help ease your stress level.
43. All this anger can really backfire on you. I'm going to suggest that we get you into some counseling where you can get it all out safely. It's not going to help you if you share it publicly.
44. A counselor might have some practical, concrete suggestions for getting through the next few months. Would you like some referrals?
45. It can be really hard for friends or family to do or say the right thing. A therapist can be a real help in the short-term.
46. That sounds really painful. Let's get you some help on that front so you don't have to go through this alone.
47. Legally I don't have any suggestions to help with that, but a professional with training could give you some practical methods for dealing with it.
48. I'm concerned to see you so low. It may seem like it's never going to get any better, but it will. Until then, let's arrange for you to have the support of a therapist who can help you get through this low spot.
49. I don't want you to be intimidated or feel you have to back down. A good therapist can help you decide what's important and give you extra support when you need it most.
50. Would it help if I gave you the names of some professionals in the community who could counsel you on this? I'd be happy to do so.