The No-Hype-Mentor's
Website Basics

Website Critique
And Recommended Changes

from The No Hype Mentor // Deah Curry PhD, CPC // 12 January 2015
on www.CCMarriageCounseling.com

TechSpecs

Your site was viewed on Windows 7 Professional, in the Chrome browser, on a desktop monitor set at 1680 x 1050 resolution, with page view set at 100% to start. All comments below should be read from this context.

First Impressions

- Pleasant, calm color scheme – but doesn't help motivate calling, too laid back
- Redundant menu bars make navigation easy if a bit puzzling, may confuse some visitors
- Redundant buttons – marriage counseling and couples counseling – create confusion
- Nice logo graphic
- Header space feels a little cramped
- Well located and sized phone number
- Overall WordPress "theme" is slightly dated
- Site lacks a footer (except for SiteNetMarketing link)
- Some confusion on discrepancy between domain name and website/business name

First Apparent Design & SEO Flaws

- **Not enough content on this website to get good Google ranking**

Research shows that websites with pages having 700-1000 words get more traffic and rank better with Google. The more pages the better. This has to do with Google's desire to provide relevance and significance to searchers.

Skimpy content misses the opportunity to use more keywords on your pages, so there is less chance Google will match your site with searchers looking for your type of service.

Short content also misses the opportunity to begin cultivating trust and rapport with potential clients through a marketing message that conveys your understanding of their pain or problem.

An outline for writing the perfect long form marketing message for homepages and niche specialty pages is included as a supplement to your critique.

◆ Discrepancy between site title and content

Your site title is given in the source code as:
Marriage Counseling ███████████ | Marriage Therapy, Therapist Michigan

But on your pages the location is given as ███████. This discrepancy could cause Google robots to assume one or the other is a mistake. At best it causes confusion, at worst it hurts your trustworthiness in Google's algorithm.

Suggestion: if you can use "███████████" on the page content with the ██████ zip code, I would do that. This then gives you the option to list nearby areas on the page content. Even better would be to put it in a footer.

For example, in Seattle we have lots of different zip codes for different areas of town. If my office were actually in Greenlake my address could be Greenlake WA 98106, but I could also use Seattle WA 98106.

In a footer I might make a statement like -- Office location convenient to Greenlake, Northgate, Montlake Terrace, Capitol Hill, and Seattle neighborhoods.

Providing a "location convenient" statement adds extra SEO juice to the website without confusing readers.

◆ Source code meta tags could be strengthened

Source code is what search engines and visitors' computers read to decide how to index your site and how to display it properly on others' monitors. Crucial to good SEO are 2 special meta tags in the source code, which can be optimized for marketing advantage:

1. **Meta title** – This is the link that shows on Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs). Here's yours in Google:

Marriage Counseling | Marriage Therapy ...
marriagecounseling.com/ ▾
         Counseling's mission is to provide a safe, comfortable
environment ... a **marriage counselor** and offers **couples counseling** services in

You can see that the top line is truncated. That's because it's longer than Google's character length limit.   Using this online tool http://www.seomofo.com/snippet-optimizer.html you can experiment with a better title that will fit.

Recommend one of these options:
Marriage Counseling ███████████ | 586-731-████
Marriage Therapy | Couples Counseling | 586-731-████
Marriage Counseling | 586-731-████ | ███ Township

2. **Meta description** – the description is the little "abstract" about the page that Google and other search engines show when including your site in search results. Yours is not as effective as it could be. In addition, each page should have its own meta description, and that should be visible in the source code. It appears that your homepage is the only page that was optimized with a meta description. This is prime marketing real estate that you aren't getting the advantage of.

When you don't install unique meta descriptions and meta titles on each page of your site, a Google robot pulls what it thinks makes sense. Usually when that happens, it's not an advantage for you. This is a prime opportunity to take control of an important piece of marketing. For example:

The home page meta title and description could be:

Title -- Couples Counseling | Marriage Therapy | 586-731-████

Description -- ██████ Twp. Angry with your spouse? Decrease anxiety, depression. Improve communication. Marriage Counseling. Couples. ████████████, LMSW.

The counseling services page meta title and description could be:

Title -- ████████ Counseling Services | ███ Twp | 586-731-████

Description -- Counseling for stress, anxiety, depression, panic attacks, marriage, parenting, relationships. ████████████, LMSW. Convenient to ████████████.

The marriage counseling page meta title and description could be:

Title – Marriage Counseling | Partner Relationships | 586-731-████

Description -- Stop fighting, start talking. Marriage counseling helps couples weather relationship storms, sexual issues, money problems, style differences. ████ Twp.

The cognitive behavioral therapy page meta title and description could be:

Title – Cognitive Behavioral Therapy | Coupes | Adults | 48316

Description -- CBT is a top psychotherapy tool for quickly finding and coping with anxiety, depression, stress, relationships, and more. ████████████, LMSW, Shelby ████.

The about me page meta title and description could be:

Title -- ███████████, LMSW | Marriage Counselor | 48316

Description -- ████████ Counseling, ██████ Twp. Specializing in couples counseling, healing the hurt in marriages. Using CBT for anxiety, panic, stress, and depression.

Critique of Overall Site Design

The website overall does have a calming effect, which is pleasing but not necessarily helping to motivate the reader to take action – which is to call for appointment. Content needs more white space so that text is not crowded together.

The huge red and green buttons feel oversized and glaring, especially since they are off-palette with the soft teal of the header. It's likely they are so large to accommodate the script font. Research shows that the font Arial is the top action producer. Script fonts are discouraged for use on buttons.

There are too many different fonts used on your website. The header is script, the mission statement and menu are a sans serif, and the text is serif. The two menus have two different versions of a sans serif. This make the reader's eye have to adjust more than is necessary, and makes the home page especially look a little messy.

In general when a script font is used for the header, a sans serif font such as Arial, Verdana, Helvetica, Tahoma, or Open Sans, etc., looks best and is easier to read when used for content, menus, and buttons. The script font can be used for the large titles on each page.

It is quite unusual now to include a tab for the site map on the menu bar. This is a very old technique and one that signals that your site is not current. Few sites display the sitemap anymore, although Google does like to crawl them.

 ◆ **Suggestion:** Remove the sitemap from the menu bar and make a discreet text link for it either in the sidebar or in the footer. This is the current standard practice.

The search tool for the site is practically hidden in the redundant menu bar at the top of the screen, especially since the field for typing in search terms is only a slight shade lighter than the black menu bar itself. That field should be noticeable if you retain that widget.

 Since the search tool was nearly invisible, I was surprised when I clicked on the icon that it took me to your blog, which does not appear on the menu bar – where it should be. Perhaps you have hidden the blog on purpose, so as to not feel pressured to keep up with it. If so, it might be important to know that blogging is very important to gaining website traffic and rank.

 More on what to do about the readability and usefulness of the blog further in this report.

This site would greatly benefit from change in these main aspects of site design:

◆ **Aspect: The WordPress theme is stale and a bit non-descript**

The psychology of color and design come into play especially for the websites of psychotherapy practices. There is a subtle subliminal yet powerful impact that contributes to website visitors deciding they want to make an appointment. Design can create the impression that you are an active source of help, or design can give the impression that your style is gentle and non-directive. Your design should match your clinical personality.

Your design is quite soft. I get the impression you might be a great listener. I'm not certain if you would call me or my partner on our stuff, and the softness of the site makes me doubtful you could successfully intervene during our arguments. I'm a little afraid our strong personalities would overwhelm you. CBT seems a more active clinical orientation than your website conveys.

People seeking psychological services are to some degree or another in distress. They unconsciously want reassurance, ease, comfort, care, and containment, and the confidence that you will be in charge and take a firm hand when needed. They want to get the impression that change will happen for them.

The Fix -- A new, more contemporary, more vibrant WordPress theme could be installed. You may need a tech expert to assist with that. Consult your webhost, perhaps they can help.

◆ **Aspect: The content font style is hard to read online**

Serif fonts make the eye work harder to read on a computer monitor, creating eye strain and making your visitors work much too hard to comprehend your message. Sans serif fonts are easier for skim readers to grasp the highlights of your message.

The Fix – Change the text font from serif to san serif. See differences here:

◆	I can teach you techniques to decrease your anxiety or depression, usually in just a few sessions (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, CBT). A few simple communication skills can get the two of you back to talking and relating to each other again. Serif = Times New Roman	I can teach you techniques to decrease your anxiety or depression, usually in just a few sessions (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, CBT). A few simple communication skills can get the two of you back to talking and relating to each other again. Sans Serif = Arial

◆ **Aspect: Confusing redundant buttons**

The Marriage Counseling and Couples Counseling buttons go to the same single page. This creates a cognitive dissonance – having two buttons implies having different pages and making some distinction between marriage and couples. When the buttons lead to the same page, the visitor assumes that something is wrong with the website, and may get frustrated with not being able to access the phantom "correct" page.

Additionally, this is a problem because Google reads two pages with identical content very unfavorably. In fact, it has been penalizing websites with duplicate content by not allowing them to be included in search results. Technically you have one page, not two, but the use of two buttons with different words to link to that one page is an old and much disapproved type of SEO. This problem may be hurting you more than you realize.

While there is SEO value in using both terms – marriage counseling and couples counseling – the use of those terms will do you more good when used in a narrative on a single page, than on buttons, since Google may not crawl or index text on buttons.

The Fix --- Either get rid of one button or add a distinctly different page. Adding a page would provide more content and allow you to have a marketing message addressed to people who are dating, or are same-sex couples, who might not identify with the term marriage counseling.

There could be great benefit to you to niche specifically to people who are dating, as this is more unusual, and because you may not have the personal credibility to offer services to the LGBT community. I recommend adding a new page for these sub niches.

◆ **Aspect: Button Colors and Font**

In contrast with your soft site theme, the buttons are very strong, to the point of being overwhelming in size and color tone. The red is jarring, and the green doesn't match. But they grab the eye, taking the read away from your content message. They demand to be dealt with, which sets up a resistance, because the demand occurs too soon, before the distressed reader is ready.

The script font contributes to the buttons needing to be so large, and also just does not perform as well as a sans serif font for getting people to do what you want them to do.

The Fix – when there is more content on your pages, the buttons will be less jarring, but for best effectiveness they should be reduced in size by about half. Put all button text in Arial, Verdana or Helvetica to ensure that all computer systems will read it properly.

◆ **Aspect: The Header should be optimized**

It appears from your source code that your header graphic – that area at the top of the page that appears on all pages – does not have good alt tags, if it has any at all. Alt tag is an abbreviated term for alternative tag or text. They are like keywords for pictures, but more importantly, they are another place to insert your primary keywords such as:

  ◆ Marriage counseling
  ◆ Couples counseling

- Therapy
- Sterling Heights
- Shelby Twp
- Candace Daniels, LMSW
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Relationships
- Divorce
- Parenting

Google cannot read text that is embedded into photos, so alt tags are used to tell Google the relevance and significance of images. This is a basic SEO factor that you are missing out on. Alt tags, like the previously mentioned meta tags, are installed in the coding of the website as part of the image identification. There is a place in the WordPress media library to add the alt tag (it might be called alt text in WordPress).

Text can be used in headers, but must be laid on top of the image as a separate layer (like putting a sweater on top of a shirt) rather than having the text embedded in the image (like having wording printed on a tee shirt.)

The Fix – If your header were deconstructed and redesigned, you'd have the advantage of both a text layer that Google and visitors can read, AND you'd also still be able to get the advantage of the alt tags. At the very least, add keywords to your alt tag for the header image.

However if you deconstruct and redesign, I'd recommend inserting your nearby areas, and deleting the line -- When you feel, you heal. This line could be used differently and to better advantage throughout the website, as I'll suggest below.

Home Page Design and Content Critique

- The word count on the homepage is 132, not including the contact info. For Google to take this website seriously, the homepage needs a minimum of 700 words.

- For potential clients to feel like you can help them, the homepage needs a marketing message that is emotionally compelling (no just logical), and formatted for easy readability.

- More white space on this page will enhance the marketing message.

- The Mission Statement does not enhance your "brand" because it does not speak to what is driving clients into counseling. Phrased in generic terms, it does not set you apart from other therapists who could claim the same thing.

- Your photo on the homepage has a lovely smile, and good lighting on your face. The dark clothing combined with the dark studio background indicates that this is an older website or old style or formal photography. From the latter perspective it can give some people an impression that you might be very formal in person, and even a bit rigid or impersonal. That's certainly not how you sound on the phone! The dark background also draws the reader's eye away from the content on the page, and detracts from absorbing the marketing message, which is not what you want.

Home Page Recommendations

- Rewrite the message to speak directly to the potential client about their problem. The supplement on writing a perfect homepage provides instruction and example to follow.

- More padding around the content will improve readability. The equivalent of about ½ to ¾ inch margin between content and the edge of the white area of the page would improve the visitor's experience of the website.

- If possible, decrease line separation to about 1.2. It is currently 1.5, putting too much space between the lines within the paragraphs.

- **Recommendation:** Use a more casual photo of yourself, taken against a white background so that the background disappears on the web page. This would be a more contemporary style, and less distracting to the content on the page.

- **Suggestion:** Consider using a photo of happy people to represent how clients feel due to / after working with you. An inexpensive photo source is www.DepositPhotos.com

- **Recommendation: Use the footer more effectively.**

If there are neighborhoods within and around your office location that you draw clients from, name those specifically **in your header and/or footer** to boost SEO. This might be worded as:
- In header as: Serving Sterling Heights, Shelby, Rochester Hills, Macomb and Troy
- In footer, changed to: Office convenient to Shelby, Macomb, Rochester Hills Troy and Sterling Heights

- **Recommendation: Replace the mission statement with your tagline**

I'm not crazy about this photo. The green doesn't match the soft teal, and the photo doesn't add any motivational power to getting people to call you. It's redundant to the line drawing logo in the header. And it's a bit old style, design-wise. In my opinion you don't need it. But if you want to keep it, I recommend replacing the mission statement with this wording:

Counseling
for individuals, couples, & families

When you feel, you heal
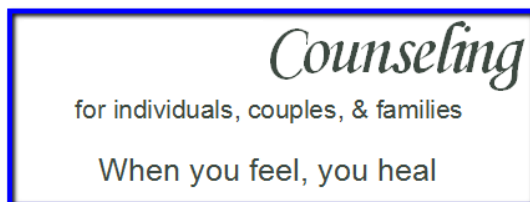
The more simple the wording on this photo, the better the message will stand out. Don't forget to layer, not embed, the text, and add alt tags to this photo.

About Page Critique

- This page is titled About Me, but in the sidebar you use the terms Contact Us and Connect with Us – which is it?

- You refer to yourself as ███ and as ███ on this page. Be consistent.

- It's great that you use first person tense and are so open about your family. That helps begin a good connection with potential clients.

- The last paragraph of this page is weak as a marketing device. It suggests that you don't do much when it says that the client has to decide on the frequency and on the goals. While this may be true and good clinically, many people will wonder why they should pay you if they are making all the decisions. A stronger call to action is needed.

About Page Recommendations

- Let the prospective client know more about your interest in working with clients like them on this page. Address the following -- Where does your passion for this work come from in your own life? Why do you do this versus being a lawyer or engineer? Find ways to make your details relevant to them. Remember to insert some SEO keywords into your story, and that Google likes to see about 700 words.

- **Recommend:** using a more casual photo of you, as previously addressed.

- **Recommend:** Keep paragraphs to no more than 3-4 lines deep, double space between paragraphs to make the reading easier (applies to ALL pages)

- **Suggestion:** Put your academic, experience, license credentials in partial sentence in bullets. They are easier to comprehend this way.

Counseling Services Page Critique

- I like the photo of your office

- Unclear pricing differential – are the family and couples work more expensive because they are longer or just more difficult? Raises questions like -- If I want marriage counseling, but my spouse won't come with me, do I have to pay the higher price….

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is not a problem or disorder, shouldn't be on this list

- Occupational Stress should be on its own line

- Panic Attacks under Anxiety is odd – just Panic Attacks would be better

- Not enough content to gain authority and trustworthy points from Google.

- Not enough content to help potential clients understand how counseling can benefit them.

- Redundant, distracting, and glaring red button pulls the eye away from the list.

Recommendations and Suggestions

- **Suggestion:** Enlarge photo and extend across this column to the sidebar. Add alt tags.

- **Suggestion:** Group items on this list in logical categories, then write a marketing message paragraph about each category and end each with a call to action to help extend content on the page. For example:

   Help for Problems with Relationships
   - Anger Management
   - Interpersonal Relationships
   - Divorce Recovery
   - Communication Skills
   - Parenting

   When your relationships are difficult, it affects every area of life. Whether you are arguing with your spouse, feeling betrayed by a friend, or having trouble with your kids, counseling can help you, your marriage, and your family.

   In counseling you will learn new skills for expressing your needs and getting them met. And you'll learn better ways to talk about boundaries, hurts, and expectations.

   If you are tired of feeling angry, alone, frustrated or hurt in a relationship that's important to you, counseling can help you make changes for the better. Call today and let's get started.

   You have other logical categories in your list:

   Help for Problems in Life
   - Anxiety
   - Panic Attacks
   - Depression
   - Stress Management

   Help for Problems at Work
   - Career Transitions
   - Occupational Stress
   - Conflict Resolution
- Make sure each category section on this page has its own strong call to action

Marriage Counseling Page Critique

- The significance of the photo on this page makes no sense to the topic of the page – it would be better to use a photo of a couple in therapy, or a happy couple enjoying each other.

- I like the bullet list, but this page need much more content.

- Because of the list and the photo, my eye completely skipped over the initial paragraph about dating, engaged, or living together. I think this format misses a great opportunity to carve out a distinctive niche, as previously mentioned.

Recommendations and Suggestions

- **Recommendation --** Replace the water fall photo with a picture of happy people. Low cost photos can be found at www.depositphotos.com. Be sure to remember to add a copyright credit for the photographer, found on the purchase page of that site. And don't forget the alt tags.

- **Recommendation –** Add a new page called Couples Counseling specifically for non-married couples. Write a marketing message that details some of the unique problems for each of your distinct type of non-married couples. Incorporate bullet lists for each type of sub-niche.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Page Critique

- I like the diagram, although I think that the same figure on a white background would be better because the dark green pulls the eye away from the message, and clashes with the teal of the menu bar just above it.

- The content on this page is too skimpy to help much with SEO.

- It's unclear whether you have copied content from the Mayo Clinic website or have paraphrased. If copied, it's plagiarism and a copyright violation that could result in a huge fine if they chose to prosecute. It's always better to simply explain in your own wording and understanding.

Recommendations and Suggestions

- **Suggestion --** Create or find another diagram on a white background, and use an enlarged size to fit across the entire column to the sidebar. Don't forget to set the alt tags.

- **Recommendation –** Give examples, anecdotes, show an exercise, extend the content in a useful way so that potential clients know more clearly what to expect. Say something specific and hypothetical about why you prefer this technique over other talk therapies. Contrast with the stereotyped assumptions people have about counseling or therapy –

lying on a couch, talking about your dreams or your mother, therapist nodding and asking how does that make you feel, etc. Make it sound more attractive and advantageous than other types of therapy. Say something about it being especially useful in couples work, then explain how so. Don't forget to end the content with a strong call to action.

Testimonials Page Critique

- Very little visual separation in this long mass of grey type.

- Great photo of the couple, but more would add more life to the page.

Recommendations and Suggestions

- **Suggestion** – Add more photos of couples, various ages and ethnicities. Be sure to give them all alt tags.

- **Recommendation** – Add subheads to each review highlighting the best thing said. Set the subheads at an H2 or H3 size to help break up the grey mass. For example, the sub headline for the first testimonial could be: ██████ **Helped Us with Infertility Stress.** The second one might be: **Experiencing Life Anew After Counseling.**

Frequently Asked Questions Page Critique

- FAQs is plural, not possessive. The apostrophe is incorrect. Periods are unnecessary.

- Good info on this page.

- Questions should be in larger type so they stand out and help break up the grey mass.

- Second sentence in the Confidential section contradicts the first. What other therapists do you have working in your office? If none, don't refer to "the therapist". If you have interns working with you that you supervise, this needs to be noted on your website so that clients don't feel there is a bait and switch going on.

- Under Accept Insurance – it's odd to reference yourself in the third person, as if someone else was writing this for you or works in your office.

- Visa, Mastercard, Discover, and American Express are brand names that should be capitalized.

- Under How to Make Appointment – if you are the only person the client will encounter, don't refer to "we" or "us".

Recommendations and Suggestions

- **Recommendation** – Drop the apostrophe on the page title and on the menu bar tab for this page because it is grammatically incorrect**.**

- **Suggestion –** if you keep the question mark photo, add alt tags.

- **Recommendation--** Correct all discrepancies noted above.

- **Recommendation --** Because you provide your social media icons, it would be good to state a social media policy on this page regarding interacting with clients online.

Contact Page Critique

- Great photo
- Great map
- No changes to this page are needed.

Payments Page Critique

- Clear, directive, specific. Well done.

- What I can't see ---- Do you have the PayPal widget setup so that it returns the client to a thank you page on your website? If not, you should create such a thank you page, and adjust your PayPal buttons.

Patient Forms Page Critique

- This is a download rather than a webpage.

- I assume you have other forms and disclosures such as the required HIPAA Notice that you provide at the first session.

The Blog Critique

- The Blog page needs to be on the menu bar.
- Content width is much too wide for comfortable reading. It will turn people off.
- The page needs to be identified at the top as the blog.
- None of the entries posted constitute actual blog material.

Recommendations and Suggestions for The Blog

- **Recommendation –** change the settings on the blog page so it displays on the menu bar.

- ◆ **Recommendation --** change the margin padding on the center column of the blog page so that the content is not more than about 75-85 characters wide. This is the best width for readability on computers. One trick with WordPress is to activate sidebars on each side of the page but don't put anything in them. That forces the content to be in a center column that is automatically more narrow.

- ◆ **Recommendation –** read up on how to blog to attract clients. Content marketing, which includes blogging, is a main marketing method today because it works, and because it helps put new content on your website, which Google likes. Then it also gives you something to promote on your social media pages, to drive more traffic back to the website. You're missing a golden free opportunity to connect with clients if you don't blog effectively.

  Here are a few of my blogs on blogging:
  (hold the ctrl key and click the mouse to open these links)

  How to Write a Juicy Blog Post

  4 Blogging Tips to Keep Readers Reading

  How to Start Blogging When You Really Don't Like to Write

  And grab my give-away info project from the homepage of **www.DeWriteSites.com** Where you'll get 46 different ideas for blogging – enough to give you ideas for a whole year!

Additional thoughts

Your website and your practice would benefit from offering a give-away information product. These are typically 4-8 pages of tips, explanations, and anecdotes that illustrate a problem and provide common self-care solutions. They are great for marketing because they:

- ◆ Enhance your reputation as a knowledgeable professional
- ◆ Provide something interactive on the website
- ◆ Help hesitant prospective clients begin to trust and like you
- ◆ Let you start building a list of email addresses for further marketing

If you are interested in learning more about give-aways, I'd be happy to do a consult with you.

Video is becoming more and more important to client attraction and to search engine optimization. If possible, I'd suggest creating a 1-2 minute video greeting for your homepage so potential clients can see and hear you welcome them and hear your reassurance that counseling works.

Let me know if you have questions on my critique and suggestions.

All the best to you,
Deah
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This critique and its recommendations are based on the most current credible information about website design, content marketing, and search engine optimization available and relevant to therapists, coaches & healers from multiple sources including Website Magazine, Search Engine Land, Marketing Land, CopyBlogger, Website SEO-Tips & Tricks, Solopreneur.Biz, Wix Blog, and Sean D'Souza's Psychotactics, among others.