

Couples Therapy Can Help Mend a Marriage



Problems and crises can affect any relationship, no matter how much two people love each other. Sometimes you might need professional help to resolve a problem. Some mental health experts are trained to help couples heal pain, rebuild trust, and improve communication.

Research shows that couples who seek couples therapy increase their chance of staying together. They also improve communication and satisfaction in their relationship.

What is couples therapy?

Couples therapy is short-term counseling. It's provided by licensed therapists trained to help couples resolve conflicts. An effective therapist helps couples understand their problems. They teach the couple ways to help them work out disagreements. And they help them to come up with solutions.

When can it help?

Common issues marriage counselors are trained to help with include:

- Communication problems
- Conflicts about money issues
- Conflicts about raising children
- Infidelity
- Substance abuse
- Step-parenting
- Conflicting expectations
- Sexual problems

Couples are less likely to benefit from therapy if they wait too long before getting help. Therapy will probably not help if one partner is not interested in saving the marriage.

How does couples therapy work?

Different therapists have different approaches to counseling couples. The therapist encourages each partner to answer honestly and fairly to questions. The therapist acts as a mediator or referee. They will guide the participants to an understanding of each other's feelings. The therapist will model respect and acceptance. Marriage counselors don't take sides. They stay neutral and open to helping both people.

The key to healing is honesty and a willingness to bring deep-seated resentments and disappointments to the surface. This is more like to occur in a safe environment with a trained mental health professional.

What if one partner won't attend counseling?

Couples therapy works best when both people in the relationship go to the sessions. If one partner won't go, it may still help if the other person learns better communication skills and puts them to use. Couples therapy works best when both people are committed to change and problem solving.

How do you choose a couples therapist?

Look for a marriage counselor who is a licensed mental health professional. This includes:

- Psychiatrists (MD, DO)
- Psychologists (PhD)
- Licensed clinical social workers (LCSW)
- Licensed marriage and family therapists (LMFT)
- Clinical mental health counselor (CMHC)

The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy also provides information on credentialed therapists. You may need to meet with more than one therapist before you find a therapist with whom you feel comfortable. There are no guarantees that couples therapy will save or improve a relationship. But many couples find that a fair, experienced counselor can clarify issues they couldn't resolve on their own.

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