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10 Ways Marriage Counseling and Marital Therapy Help Relationships©

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Marriage Counseling, also called Marital Therapy, started back in the 1950s. Since then, major research programs have helped us learn the methods that best help couples to have a better experience together.

By using psychotherapy in a safe and neutral space, couples can explore how they relate to one another and how their interaction causes problems.

For more in-depth detail, check out our articles **15 Common Couples Conflicts & Differences: Lessons from Decades of Couples Counseling** and **10 Ways Marriage Therapy Helps Reduce Couple's Conflicts**.

Marriage Counselors Assess Couple Problems

Couples come into the clinic identifying conflicts they may have. They may detail some of their pet peeves. They may talk about injuries that have happened between them. They may have come through major stresses in their lives that have left them with challenges in how to cope – challenges such as a major accident, a serious health problem, infertility, infidelity, or some other kind of fairly significant and harmful challenge.

While we are working overcoming those challenges, counselors also ask bigger questions, namely,



- What prevents the couple from resolving those problems?
- Why are they unable to achieve stable couple satisfaction?
- What are the underlying factors in their relationship problems?
- What is getting in the way of them working through whatever challenges, stresses, disagreements, or conflicts they may have.

Marriage Counselors Assess Partners' Ways of Relating

Marriage Therapists look at the personal and psychological histories of each of the members of the couple.

- We look for factors that affect the way in which each one forms a partner relationship.
- By taking a history of their families of origin and how their own parents may have related to one another, we look at the models that they had for relationships
- We look at trauma experiences, particularly interpersonal traumas, such as sexual abuse, experiencing infidelity, sexual assault, a bad breakup, or domestic violence.
- We look for patterns that the past affects how this new couple relates.
- We look at people's ideas for how to form a relationship and their life experiences that help to shape those ideas.
- We then understand the patterns that each member brings to the relationship – patterns that affects how they relate.

That tells us the strengths in the relationship, but also challenges. We can see weaknesses, that is, the areas where the couple is unable. To effectively solve their problems.

In fact, most of the couples we see have ways of escalating or heightening those problems.

Marriage Counseling Can Help

Here are some of the major ways that marriage counseling helps couples. By addressing the underlying issues contributing to their disagreements and helping change current behaviors, we help achieve these changes.



Improving Communication: Therapy helps couples learn effective communication skills, enabling them to express their thoughts and feelings more clearly and listen to each other without judgment. Therapy helps them realize those communications that turn away from solutions, that escalate conflicts, that hurt feelings, and that increase dysfunctions.

Identifying Underlying Conflicts: Often, conflicts in marriage stem from deeper, unresolved issues. Whether they're related to finances, intimacy, trust, or other personal matters, Therapists can help couples identify these underlying problems.

Developing Conflict Resolution Skills: Therapists teach couples how to resolve disputes in a healthy way, helping them to understand and respect each other's perspectives and to find common ground.

Building Empathy: Therapy can foster empathy between partners, helping them to understand and relate to each other's emotions and experiences, reducing the likelihood of conflict arising from misunderstandings.

Strengthening the Relationship: By addressing and resolving conflicts, therapy can help strengthen the bond between partners, leading to a more fulfilling and resilient relationship. We also work on improving the emotional attachment of the couple.

Setting Goals and Expectations: Couples can work with a therapist to set realistic goals and expectations for their relationship, which can help in reducing

disappointments and misunderstandings. Couples enter the relationship with a set of conscious expectations and a set of unconscious expectations. Often, it is the latter that lead to disappointment and frustration. We help clarify those expectations and help make for more functional, realistic ideas.

Providing an Outsider's Perspective: A therapist can offer an objective perspective on the relationship, which can be helpful in breaking repetitive patterns of conflict.

Improving Individual Well-being: Therapy can also focus on individual problems that may be impacting the relationship, like stress, anxiety, or past traumas.

Creating a Safe Space: Therapy provides a safe and confidential environment for both partners to openly discuss their feelings without fear of retribution or escalating the conflict.

Learning to Forgive and Move Forward: Therapists can guide couples through the process of forgiveness, helping them to let go of past grievances and work towards a healthier future together.

Marriage therapy is not a one-size-fits-all solution and may not be effective for every couple. While marital therapists aim for improvement in the relationship, sometimes a cooperative separation is a positive outcome for therapy. Couples who split up with recriminations and lingering hostility are in fact prolonging the relationship on an emotional level! So, we aim for a parting that is cooperative.

When children are involved, but the couple splits up, we aim for Positive Co-Parenting. That means the ability to work cooperatively, always keeping in mind what is best for the children. Research shows the children of a conflictual divorce have poorer outcomes than those from a family – one that now has two households – in which the parents stay involved with the children and positively co-parent.

For many, marriage therapy can be a valuable tool in navigating the complexities of married life and reducing the frequency and intensity of conflicts. And aiming for the positive well-being of the couple and its two members.