



MARITAL CONCERNS

Couples or Marriage counseling can be helpful to some, but not all relationships. Relationships where there is any physical abuse are not appropriate for couples counseling. Also relationships where there is drug or alcohol abuse or dependence, or relationships that have experienced chronic, multiple and ongoing episodes of infidelity are unlikely to benefit from couples counseling.

One of the keys to understanding relationship conflict among couples is to recognize that couples are made up of two individuals. This means that each has their own way of seeing things, their own preferences and desires, their own way of communicating, their own way of thinking, and their own feelings. It's no wonder that conflict will at some point enter into every relationship.

Couples who come into counseling together often expect the counselor to side with one or the other. There is no doubt that sometimes a counselor needs to point out what one individual is doing that is harming the relationship. But in most cases, couples counseling involves the counselor helping the couple communicate in a more effective method, so that each partner can work to resolve their conflict in a "win-win" manner. By helping a couple learn methods to resolve their conflict, it is hoped that any future conflict the couple may have can be resolved with the methods they have learned in counseling.

By understanding what motivates each partner in the relationship a counselor can help the couple negotiate a resolution to their conflict. When couples accept the concept that "Love is a Verb" they begin to understand that the behaviors they engage in with each other, are more important than the words they use to express their feelings. Unfortunately, when a couple is experiencing conflict usually one or both of them are withholding behaviors that would be rewarding to their partner. A standoff is occurring.

Counseling helps the couple to break the standoff and start to engage in the behaviors that lead to feelings of affection. By having a neutral third party to guide them, the couple is instructed in new ways to communicate with one another, and working together for their mutual benefit. It is always helpful for the individuals in the relationship to consider what they themselves may be doing to cause conflict in the relationship. Usually there is too much focus on what the other one may be doing. If couples counseling is going to be helpful, each partner needs to enter the process willing to make some individual changes.

Couples counseling usually requires at least two or three sessions just for the counselor to assess the situation and begin to recognize some of the patterns that may be contributing to the conflict. For this reason couples should be aware that there may be a need to continue counseling beyond their EAP benefit.