

Couples Relations

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Statistics claim one out of every two marriages in the United States will end in divorce. The first couple of years can be a “make it or break it” time for many couples as they face new experiences together for the first time. Some of the most challenging phases can include the birth of a child, empty nest transitions, mid-life and aging. Other issues that can cause strain on a relationship are:

- Anxiety
- Communication styles
- Depression
- Emotional/physical abuse
- Empty-nest stage
- Extra-marital affairs
- Loss and grief
- Marital conflict
- Sexual intimacy
- Substance abuse
- Transitioning to parenthood
- Re-marriage

There are many theories that therapists use to help couples deal with these kinds of issues; the following are just a few examples. Keep in mind that your therapist may use a combination of these approaches.

Information and Skill Deficits: Your therapist will provide psychoeducation and skill training, attributing problems to a lack of information or lack of a particular skill, such as how to communicate effectively.

Loss of Voice: Many people struggle with how they feel and how they express it in words. Couples then often withdraw or take adversarial positions. This approach helps couples to “find their voice”.

Difficulty with Differences: All relationships must deal with differences - in character, interests, stage of life and so on. Your therapist can help you understand and deal with those differences.

Lack of Boundaries: Your therapist can help you to stop putting excessive blame on your partner and learn to take personal responsibility, or, in some cases, not take too much responsibility for your partner.

Unrealistic Expectations: Sometimes expectations can be burdensome, such as when a partner believes the honeymoon feelings should last forever. Couples therapy can help shift the focus from unrealistic expectations to a healthy relationship that requires compromise, commitment and hard work.

Hidden Fear: Sometimes hidden fears will interfere with a couple’s intimacy. Some examples are fear of intimacy, engulfment or rejection. Your therapist can help you identify and confront these fears.

Family of Origin: Your therapist may focus on past relationships, particularly from childhood, that are causing problems in your current relationship. You learn to empathize with one another for what you had to deal with in the past.

Unrecognized Patterns: This approach focuses on interpersonal patterns such as pursuit/distancing or demanding/withdrawal. By being able to recognize these patterns, couples may be able to respond more adaptively when they occur.

While there are no hard and fast rules to guarantee a successful marriage or relationship, there is one vital component – COMMUNICATION – the glue that holds relationships together. Being able to talk openly and honestly brings a new intimacy to any relationship and helps build a foundation for life-long happiness together.