

Relationship Counselling

What is it?

Do we need it?

A couple's relationship does not need to be in trouble for them to attend counselling. At times, a couple may have difficulty with an issue they do not seem able to sort out by themselves. A counsellor can help them work through the issue.

Obstacles to Entering of Relationship Counselling

The counsellor will push their ideas of how a relationship should work. Many individuals fear going into couples' counselling because they are afraid the counsellor may have an agenda and will push them in a certain direction.

However, relationship counselling goes where the couple wants it to go. What is discussed comes from the partners in the relationship, not the counsellor.

The counsellor will side with my partner. Another fear may be the counsellor will take sides with one of the partners.

A good relationship counsellor will try and be as fair as possible. What the counsellor wants is not the issue.

The counsellor will criticize me. Lastly, fear may arise when one person feels blamed at home for all the problems and thinks they will also be blamed in counselling.

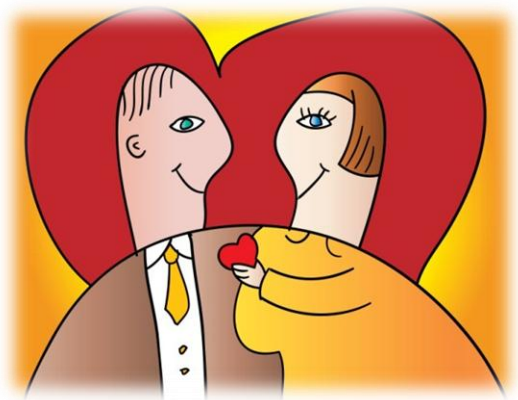
The process of counselling is not to place blame but to get individuals to hear how their actions are affecting their partner.

Having Overcome These Obstacles, What is Relationship Counselling?

Everyone talks about communication being important in a relationship. How important is it?

Communication is essential in the sense that if the couple is not talking to one another the connection between them starts to break down. There is no right way to communicate. Some couples avoid talking openly about their feelings and other couples always talk about feelings. As long as both partners are doing the same thing and still connecting with one another, the relationship can work.

Communication can be a problem when one or both partners do not feel appreciated or heard. Many problems in communication result from one individual trying to get their partner to listen to their point of view while ignoring their partner's point of view. When both do this no one is communicating. It is time to start listening to what the other partner is saying.



Communication is Not About Talking as Much as it is About Listening

Listening means hearing and giving comfort. Many individuals in hearing of their partner's pain want to fix it and make it go away. They might say to their partner, *Oh you can't rely on that person's comments anyway*, thinking this will make their partner feel better. This a **fix it** statement. Usually it does not make their partner feel better but it does make them feel unheard.

If an individual describes pain or hurt and their partner says- *Why did you say that in the first place?*, they are criticizing. This too is not helpful and makes their partner feel unheard and put down.

What is needed in both cases is a hug and *How awful for you and nothing more.*

When an individual in a relationship describes their pain and says the other partner is the cause, the partner still has to listen and not defend themselves. Saying the following is helpful and can lead to healing- *That really hurt you didn't it?*, and then something like - *My intent was not to hurt you. This is why I said that. Also, I was really out of line saying that and I'm sorry.*

Communication is not giving each other facts but talking about feelings. Individuals in a relationship often do not talk about their feelings if they think their partner is trying to fix them, criticize them, or yell at them.

Do All Relationship Issues Need to be Resolved & Do We Need a Counsellor to Help?



Any relationship has a set of irresolvable differences. There are arguments that couples have over and over again.

The couple has to decide if a particular difference is something they can live with. Often a couple will just laugh and say *Oh yeah, that one again* and drop it. This does not include any kind of verbal or physical abuse that should never be tolerated and is not an irresolvable issue. Any kind of abuse kills a relationship by destroying trust.

Most issues can be resolved by discussing the feelings underlying what the argument was about. If a couple has an argument over and over again and it is not something one or both can live with then it is time to seek intervention by a relationship counsellor.

The most important thing in relationships is to treat your partner as if they were your best friend. Words are carefully chosen when discussing feelings with a friend and words also need to be carefully chosen when discussing feelings with partners.

**To improve your relationship skills,
contact your EFAP to set up an appointment with a couples counsellor.**

Your logo here

**For confidential assistance
Brown Crawshaw 1.800.668.2055
www.browncrawshaw.com**