

Marriage Counseling

How many times have we heard, "marriage takes work"? It's a truism that seems self-evident, but few people can really grasp what this means until they are actually married. Yes, being married can be incredibly rewarding; it can also be as tough as any married couple will tell you.

People enter into, remain in, and often leave marriages for many reasons. Few people go into a marriage ever intending to divorce, yet almost half of marriages in the United States end up this way. Some couples stay in marriages for years, if not decades, until the resentment builds and they feel they have no choice but to divorce. These couples often have difficulty voicing their feelings of resentment. At the opposite end are those couples that acknowledge marital difficulties and try to address their issues but often without much success.

The one thing that both have in common is that they rarely seek out a third party to assist them. Of those marriages that end in divorce, I would bet that the vast majority never considered counseling before deciding to split.

If the key to marital survival was only a matter of "working harder," than we wouldn't be having this conversation. The truth is, however, that perseverance and commitment are only part of the answer. Maintaining a marriage - particularly a happy and mutually satisfying one - requires interpersonal skills that few of us naturally possess. We may think that because we are good communicators and listeners, we have what it takes to be good spouses. Unfortunately, it doesn't quite work that way. A good therapist can help a couple identify their individual needs and develop strategies for solving problems that will inevitable arise in the course of a marriage.

A therapist can assist you to resolve your conflicts in a healthier ways by effectively communicating your needs, while at the same time being able to hear the needs of your partner. Likewise, a good therapist will teach you and your partner how to be assertive (not to be confused with aggressive) so that you can discuss your issues without fear of hurting your partner. As an "objective third party," a marriage counselor can offer a safe space for you and your partner to express your feelings of unhappiness openly, knowing that a trained professional is present to help insure that both partners are heard.

While couples counseling certainly cannot guarantee marital success, it has the potential to offer you the skills you will need to get there.