

Counseling: Only For Struggling Married Couples?

Contributed by Alex Daniels
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Tony Soprano may have made counseling cool, but the fact is that there are still a lot of misconceptions about counseling, especially when it comes to couples. Many people see the act of seeking out help as a last resort, a final attempt to save a relationship on the rocks. There are actually several different types of counseling, however, and most are not solely utilized in desperate situations.

Informal Counseling

You might not realize it, but you probably have some form of counseling at least a few times a week. Our friends and family, anyone with whom we discuss our problems or hopes with, all act as informal counselors and can help us to come to solutions. Their advice might not be "expert" by way of training, but just knowing that we all encounter situations that are common in our relationships can help to ease doubts about yours.

Formal Counseling

Formal counseling in relationships occurs when a couple mutually decides to go to a person certified for the purpose. As mentioned above, formal counseling need not only take place when the relationship is in need of rescue. There are many different types of counseling.

* **Marriage Counseling.** Most couples will sign up for some sort of counseling in the weeks before tying the knot. These sessions can help the individuals to realize what type of commitment they are getting into, and the serious situation that marriage creates. This counseling is often provided by a couple that has been married for several years themselves; they know potential trouble spots and their eyes are wide open to the changing dynamics of a lasting relationship.

* **Ongoing counseling.** Ongoing counseling can be a great way for a couple to make sure that the lines of communication are always open and that any changes that occur are dealt with in an open manner. Any relationship is bound to change, and some of these changes can be mind-boggling in their scope. The arrival of a new baby, the purchase of a house, a move, or a change of job can all seriously shake up the day-to-day routine of a couple. Going to see a counselor, even when there are no serious issues that arise in the relationship, can help to ensure that major problems do not arise.

* **Problem Counseling.** This is the type of counseling that most of us think of when we hear the word. A couple is in serious trouble as far as their relationship goes, and are seeking out a means of repair. The problem with this type of counseling is that it is going in cold, with a lot to lose. The counselor must get to know the couple and their problems, as well as propose some sort of plan to work towards a solution, in a relatively short period of time.

Counseling should not be thought of as a last resort. With the number of counselors available today, there is every reason for couples to have regular sessions when their relationship is going well. These sessions can help to avoid problems that otherwise may arise, as well as strengthen an already strong bond.

About the Author: Alex consults for an online gift shop specializing in wedding favors as well as bridesmaid and groomsmen gifts. Alex is recently married.