

Marriage and Relationship Counseling

Whether you've been married two years or 25 years, there will be times during your marriage when misunderstandings, conflicts and assumptions sneak in when you least expect them. The truth is that every marriage faces times of adversity, challenges and bumps in the road.

At Lutheran Counseling and Family Service of Wisconsin, many of our professional counselors are Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs), specially trained in relationship dynamics to help both parties in a marriage work through conflicts. They help couples to improve upon skills such as listening, conflict resolution, seeing the other's point of view and learning the art of compromise. We offer Christian based counseling, respecting each person's individual relationship with his or her faith and integrating God's word into the therapy process. We believe it is strength, not weakness, to reach out and acknowledge the need for help. *"Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed."* – Proverbs 15:22.

When is it time to consider marriage counseling? Here are some key questions to consider.

- You are not growing in a positive direction in your relationship.
- You feel you are staying together because of external reasons – children, image, families or finances.
- You are not talking, or only one of you is talking, and discussions are only negative.
- There is excessive disagreement on important issues or even around day-to-day life.
- One partner feels or acts emotionally or physically disconnected.
- There is verbal, physical or sexual abuse. There is fear.
- There is a lack of forgiveness.

Talking about your problems with a marriage counselor is not often easy and is often uncomfortable at first. That is okay. The counselor will act as a fair and non-judgmental mediator, whose responsibility is to the relationship.

Your counselor will ask about your history and will work to identify issues and areas of concern. Depending on the situation, he or she might talk to each person individually for portions of the appointment or in separate appointments altogether. Everyone has their own issues and patterns which play into the relationship. The counselor can help individuals to understand how conflicts may be accidentally (or intentionally) triggered and how each person contributes to both the distresses and the joys in the marriage.

The goal is to resolve underlying issues and areas of conflict, teach skills that can be used for mutual understanding and to help individuals find and rejoice in what attracted them to their partner in the first place.

What if only one person believes counseling is necessary? Come anyway. It is strength, not weakness, to acknowledge the need for help. You will grow in your understanding of yourself and your relationship. In time, your partner may agree to join.

Will marriage counseling help? Yes, it will. If each person is willing to look within and are willing to make changes individually and as a couple. It may be a challenge to resolve deep rooted issues, but using the tools which counseling provides, success and happiness can be achieved.

Lutheran Counseling and Family Services of Wisconsin is a community, family, and faith based organization that provides outpatient mental health and adoption services to all people without discrimination.