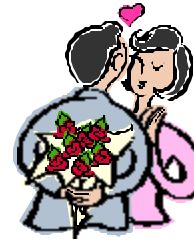


Counseling for Couples



Typically, couples wait too long before they seek professional help for their relationship problems. When should a couple seek professional help? Simply put, if a couple has a problem that they have been unable to resolve on their own and one or both partners continue to be bothered by it then they should seek counseling. More often than not if a problem runs too long then other feelings rise such as anger, resentment, sadness, mistrust etc. and by that point the relationship may not be salvageable. It is best to seek help at the first signs of trouble rather than waiting.

Many relationship conflicts stem from the lack of communication and then the inability to negotiate workable compromises. Unresolved conflicts tend to snowball and the problems compound. Sometimes problems are the result of stress from significant events such as a job loss, birth of a child, serious illness or a death of a family member. All of these events can shake up good relationships. Therefore it is crucial that both partners commit to work together on a continual basis.

What can counseling offer couples?

It is common for a counselor to ask each partner to describe the problem that has brought him or her in, and what they have done to address it. While the couple is discussing their problem, the counselor will be evaluating how the couple is communicating and how skillful they are in their negotiating and resolving skills. Counseling of this type is usually very participative as the counselor will ask the couple to try very specific exercises, either alone or together, and then discuss the results at the next meeting. It is the objective of the counselor to teach the couple how to not only resolve their specific problem but also gain some new skills for dealing with any future problems.

Not all counseling sessions result in a happy ending where the couple live happily together for ever after. In some cases the outcome of the counseling is a mutual decision by the couple to end their relationship. At this point the counselor will try to help the couple end the relationship with a minimum of pain and resentment.