

Benefits of Marriage Counseling: Ten Relationship Skills You Can Gain From Marriage Counseling

By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

We are not a high conflict couple but we are not really happy, either. How would we benefit from marital counseling? There are many benefits to marital counseling besides learning how to bring down the emotional level of arguments-although, this too, is a benefit.

Marital counseling with a licensed marriage and family therapist can help your marriage in many ways. It affords you a number of opportunities for change that you would not ordinarily know how to accomplish by yourself. With marriage counseling you will have an opportunity to identify the issues, feelings, and behaviors that are bothering you and to communicate them to your spouse in a safe and supportive environment.

One of the major benefits of marital counseling is the instruction, coaching, and feedback in developing new skills to make changes in your relationship. Skill development often focuses on the following skills areas:

- 1) Communication and problem solving

- 2) [Appropriate expression, disclosure, and resolution of painful emotions](#)
- 3) Effective negotiation for change within the relationship.
- 4) Acquisition of the ability to work within a partnership to achieve goals.
- 5) Development of the ability to engage in consultation and cooperation with family issues such as money management, parenting, lifestyle issues, and stage of life issues.
- 6) [De-escalation](#) of arguments before they get hurtful.
- 7) Identification and elimination of [dirty fight tactics](#).
- 8) Learning and practicing [effective problem solving techniques](#).
- 9) Learning and practicing effective ways to start a difficult conversation in a neutral manner.
- 10) Regaining the ability to perceive the positive characteristics in your partner and in your marriage.

When you participate in marriage counseling you have an opportunity to get to know your spouse again. Couples who have been together awhile have a tendency to talk superficially or about things and issues other than themselves. Partners often quit talking about the things they think and feel.

Couples counseling can guide you through your unresolved issues, including the emotional baggage from your family of origin that may be

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re-created and played out in your current relationship. You have an opportunity to identify [how your prior experiences "color" how you experience your life](#) now, and can learn how to neutralize the negative impact of your histories. In doing so, you can visualize the relationship that you want, discover how to accomplish it, and begin to work toward your relationship goals.

Your couples counseling should last long enough for you to accomplish major treatment plan goals. If you continue in counseling long enough to establish new behaviors to the point where it has become habit, you are most likely to sustain your relationship gains over a longer period of time.



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"The Honey Jar" is a conversation starter for couples. It consists of 250 sentence stems, each one serving as an open-ended prompt to generate discussion. The Honey Jar is more than a jar of sentence stems. The Honey Jar was field tested by real couples for therapeutic value. It can assist couples in restoring a sense of self-confidence in re-establishing their connection and commitment. As couples use their time, attention and willingness to take risks with each other, a close, loving connection can re-emerge.

Tags: marital counseling, problem solving, communication, relationship skills, dirty fight tactics, emotional baggage, communication skills, effective communication, relationship communication skills, improving communication, emotional baggage, verbal communication, marriage help, save my marriage

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