

## **Counseling Corner**

### **How To Tell When A Marriage Needs Professional Help**

from the American Counseling Association

Everyone who walks down the aisle expects the relationship will last forever, but as the grim divorce statistics tell us, this isn't always the case. No matter how compatible or in love two people are, every marriage faces times when problems arise.

Some problems might be simple differences of opinion, while others may be much more serious disagreements over money, children, relatives or a thousand other issues of daily life. But the specifics aren't as important as how ready and willing couples are to deal with and overcome these problems.

Pre-marriage counseling is one way to prepare for potential problems. Such counseling can help a couple better understand each other's feelings and thoughts, and offers opportunities to explore areas of potential problems and to plan for handling those problems if they occur.

Many marriages, however, will encounter situations that can't be easily resolved in a manner where both partners feel they are being treated fairly and getting exactly what each wants. When this occurs, it doesn't mean that the people involved are selfish, self-centered or bad people, nor that the marriage should end. But it is a time when outside counseling can offer help before the situation deteriorates too badly for the marriage to be saved.

One common sign help is needed is when one partner feels he or she is giving more than he or she is receiving over a long period of time. Or it can be persistent and severe disagreements, with an unwillingness or inability to resolve these arguments.

Professional counselors specializing in family and marriage counseling are trained to help couples facing such problems. They can teach a couple how to disagree without being disagreeable, or help them learn to level the playing field so that one of the partners doesn't feel he or she is always losing. Your local phone book or mental health center can help you locate a marriage counselor.

No counseling is going to save every marriage. But for a couple who truly care for each other and wish to stay together, professional counseling can help partners sort-out those long-standing disagreements and discover ways to cope with problems in a healthy way.

Seeking help for a marriage is not a sign of weakness, nor a signal that a marriage is going to end. Instead, in many cases it is the beginning of building a strong, healthy and long-lasting relationship.

*"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcorner@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at counseling.org*

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397 words

*The American Counseling Association is the nation's largest organization of counseling professionals with more than 53,000 members in all 50 states and 80 other countries.*