

## **The American Counseling Association's "Counseling Corner" Weekly Columns**

### **Is Your Marriage One That Could Use Help?**

from the American Counseling Association

When we marry, we all expect the relationship to last forever. Unfortunately, "forever" turns out to be fairly short for many marriages. Current studies show about 43% of marriages end in divorce (not the 50% figure often quoted), which is still a large and very painful number.

It's also a number that could possibly be lowered if more couples pay attention to the signs that a marriage is in trouble and seek out help as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, it isn't always easy for a couple to spot serious problems early on. Even in the best relationships, there are bound to be trouble spots and disagreements.

Arguing about that new paint color for the living room or what TV show to watch are not problems requiring professional help. Constant disagreements over almost everything, is an entirely different situation.

An early sign of serious marital problems is when one partner feels he or she is giving more than he or she is receiving over an extended period of time. It could be the job, outside family, children, or any of a hundred other issues that has one person feeling he or she is carrying the bulk of the load. And it's a problem that can poison a relationship unless help is found.

Frequent and severe disagreements are another serious sign when coupled with an inability or unwillingness to resolve those disagreements. While every marriage has disagreements, it's when they're not worked out but instead left to fester that permanent damage to the marriage can occur.

Seeking help for marriage problems doesn't mean that every marriage will be saved. There are many situations where the couple really is better off being apart.

But in many cases, what a professional counselor can do is help a couple see the reality of their situation and can offer techniques for working more intelligently toward resolving the problems they face.

There are many sources of professional help. Many, though not all, clergy are trained in helping couples through marriage problems. Within the counseling profession there is a counseling area specializing in relationship and marriage counseling. You can locate such counselors through the American Counseling Association website at [www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org).

If you see serious problems in your marriage, seek out counseling as soon as possible. Asking for help doesn't signal the end of a marriage. Instead, it's often the beginning of a stronger, healthier and longer lasting relationship.

*“Counseling Corner” is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to [ACAcornet@counseling.org](mailto:ACAcornet@counseling.org) or visit the ACA website at [www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org).*

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