

## **Couples' Therapy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: is it still relevant?**

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Couples' therapy is different in the 21<sup>st</sup> century than it was two or more decades ago. Not only are there more kinds of therapy available, but the shame and privacy surrounding the need for therapy in many instances no longer exists. Chances are that among the young couples seeking therapy, some have experience under their belts from the counseling they experienced as children and teens. We hear about it on television so frequently that going to a therapist can seem as natural as making a semi-annual dental appointment.

In addition, the self-help movement provides all kinds of self-directed therapy from books, articles, workshops, seminars, and support groups that previous generations did not have available. Also, religious leaders are prepared in their seminary training to provide therapeutic resources from pastoral counseling to contacts with secular therapists who can provide help for specific needs.

When seeking couples' therapy no longer carries the social stigma of yesteryear, does it lose some of its power to make a difference? Is it the answer to every problem? Who really needs to seek a therapist and who can have their troubles addressed through less expensive self-help resources?

In an era when we analyze everything to death, couples who have only been together a matter of weeks or months can find themselves inspired to seek therapy. However, bringing that level of intensity to such a young relationship is like treating a scratch with intravenous antibiotics. Friends and family who have solid relationships can be a fine source of information when a romance is young. In any relationship where deep listening occurs, therapeutic effects can take place. Most young romances do not need anything more than this.

If counseling is required in a relationship that is under a year old, this may be a yellow flag that the two individuals are not right for each other. Please note, I said "yellow" flag. It is a cautionary reality for counseling to be required at such a time, not a definite sign that you are not meant for each other.

For many people in various stages of relationships, self-help books, workshops, or small groups can be just the thing to knock the staleness out of a marriage or address more complex problems. Many people have used such things to change their lives. My wife used the title of the self-help best seller, *Feel the Fear and Do it Anyway*, to change her life! It is possible that something written on a page or uncovered at a workshop can be just the thing to turn your marriage back into a blossoming romance.

Couples' Therapy is best used when there are problems in the relationship that seem insurmountable but before either of you want to bring it to an end. For instance, when love making becomes less frequent, when one's attention begins to stray, when illness blindsides the family, when one of you is afraid he or she is falling out of love, anything that causes undo stress on one or both of you. When it feels insurmountable and before

you are ready to throw up your hands and give up, get yourself to a qualified therapist or comparable professional (such as a member of the clergy with an expertise in pastoral counseling) and give your relationship a chance to not only survive but thrive.

Another option to classical therapy but one that is a therapeutic tool and provides genuine and faster results is Systemic Family Constellations. It is a therapeutic approach that has been alive and well in Europe and has swept the United States, Canada, and South America in the last fifteen years. You can research the phrase online and possibly find a practitioner within driving distance of your location.

If there is something in your relationship that doesn't work for you, that hurts; there are numerous ways of finding help for yourself. From a well chosen self-help book to workshops and small groups to the ears and heart of a trusted friend to a couples' therapist, there is a world of help out there here in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

As long as you weigh your options and take action before either of you gives up, you cannot make a mistake. Any helpful attention you give your relationship is not only better than none, it will likely lead you to the thing that helps the most. Whether your relationship continues and thrives or is lost, you will know you did everything you could to make a difference for yourself and your family. Even if you wait until one or both of you gives up, giving couples' therapy a chance is worth it when you have so much invested in each other.

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There is a secret to relationship success that is direct, simple, and effective. We and others have used it to transform marriages that felt burdensome and hurtful into marriages filled with love and satisfaction.

You can discover this secret for yourself in the e-workbook called *Creating the Love You Want: Five Unique Steps to Improve Your Marriage*. Go to <http://www.CreateTheLoveYouWant.com> and order your copy right now. With it, you can begin making a difference for yourself tonight!