

Five sure-fire signs you need couple counselling...

Your relationship has been unsatisfying for some time. You've been toying with the idea of getting help, but just how do you know when you need to see a counsellor? Here are five sure-fire signs:

1. *No time together:*

Do you find yourself spending more time at work, with friends, family or hobbies, than with your partner? Avoidance of each other is an indicator that things aren't working well between you. It's not that we must always feel like running into each other's arms, but not wanting to be in the company of your partner says your relationship is amiss. Eventually the excuses don't work and you will have to admit that at least now, you are uncomfortable in each other's presence. Counselling may be a good choice to help get beyond the impasse.

2. *No nookie:*

Has it been some time since you were sexually intimate? Does the thought of sex with your partner, turn your stomach? Sexual intimacy is a good indicator of the health of a relationship. If trouble in the relationship is keeping you from being intimate with your partner, it shows that the problem is affecting at least this area of your life. The absence of sex leaves many couples feeling more adrift from each other. Couple counselling may be the fastest route back to the bedroom.

3. *Depression/anxiety:*

Are you overwhelmed by your relationship issues? Do you have difficulty concentrating, getting out of bed, eating? Do you have problems getting to sleep at night or turning off your worries? It may be that your relationship issues are creating mental health problems. Depression and anxiety are the most common associated mental health issues with unresolved relationship strife. If your relationship problems are of such significance that they affect your mental health, it's definitely time to seek help. While prescribed medication can ease the emotional distress, it will likely take a good dose of counselling to address the underlying issues in your relationship.

4. *Using drugs or alcohol to cope:*

Have you turned to drugs or alcohol to help you cope with a distressing relationship? Do you find yourself drinking or using recreational drugs more regularly or in greater amounts to get through the

day? While drugs or alcohol may ease your inner turmoil, these substances will do nothing to resolve your interpersonal issues. More to the point, alcohol or substance abuse will likely add to your relationship distress. It may be that you need an appropriately prescribed medication to help you cope emotionally and this would certainly be healthier than the use of recreational drugs or alcohol. These poor coping strategies signal that your relationship is in trouble and you need to see a counsellor with your partner.

5. *Stepping out:*

Do you fantasize of being with someone else? Are you flirting with cheating through social media? Are you already searching profiles of other people thinking of or looking for a fling? Have you already crossed the line and stepped into an emotional or sexual affair? Investing your energy into finding or being with another person is a very significant sign that your relationship is on the skids and may even be past the point of no return. If you want to maintain any semblance of a relationship with your partner, step back from the third party and step into counselling with your partner.

Couple counselling won't save every relationship. However, those who attend early enough, who are vested in maintaining the relationship and are open to the prospect of counselling, are apt to do well. Couples with longstanding intractable problems, where one or both are no longer determined to make it work and/or when one has a poor view of counselling, tend to have poorer outcomes.

So, when do you need couple counselling?

You need it when either person says they want it. Better to get in early for a minor problem, than have the issue get out of hand and undermine success. Couple counselling is an investment in yourself and your relationship for a more satisfying future.

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