

# Marriage & Family Therapy Report

Creating Deeper and More Fulfilling Relationships

ISSUE 1



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## Couples Therapy Philosophy

My philosophy when working with couples is that I am not on the side of either of the individuals in the couple but I am on the side of the relationship. Neither side is taken during therapy but the work is geared toward resolving relationship issues that interfere with having a fulfilling relationship. My first goal is that everyone in the family or relationship is safe and my second goals always to preserve the relationship unless someone is not safe in the relationship as in the case of Domestic Violence or other issues that cause safety to be the number one issue. As I work with couples I work toward mutual respect and freedom for each person in the relationship to be who they are.

To accomplish these goals we increase communication between partners, Identify the issues that are causing dissatisfaction in the relationship, assist the partners in learning to negotiate difficult situations and build mutual respect between them. We also introduce practices help build a deeper more loving relationship.

Sometimes during couples work the couple may be asked to do individual work to resolve personal issues that seem to interfere with their ability to have the relationship they want. Also, they may be offered the opportunity to attend a couples retreat that is designed to take their relationship to deeper levels with powerful group processes, dyad work, and hypnotherapy sessions.

## Serve Your Partner

Rather than worry about what you are getting from them. So many people have a relationship in which they are waiting for their partner to get something about them or give them before they give to their partner. This sets up a kind of waiting game where both partners are waiting and waiting. I say act now, show your partner love. Don't wait, don't hold back. Be the one who invites their partner to a deeper, loving and fulfilling relationship.

And do it every day. Do not wait, do not keep score but give your fullest open heart without reservation, without doubt. You receive love only to the degree you give it and you are open to it. Be open and free. The freedom in relationship comes from new kind began to occur. This sets up a kind of waiting game where both partners are waiting and waiting. I say act now, show your partner love. Don't wait, don't hold back. Be the one who invites their partner to a deeper, loving and fulfilling relationship.

# Marital Distress

## Identifying the Issues that Cause Distress

Marital distress is one of the most frequently encountered and disturbing human problems. Everyone who is married experiences difficulties, but for some of these troubles reach the point that partners become profoundly disappointed and upset about their marriages and may even come to question whether they want to continue to remain married. Marital distress is very unsettling and the ways marital problems often progress make it easy for things to go from bad to worse. However, in most situations, this flow in a negative direction can be altered. Most marriages can return to being satisfying. Sometimes people can make these changes on their own, but frequently help from a couple or family therapist is needed.

No one has a perfect marriage, and almost every couple can benefit from some help at times with their marriage. Pre-marital preparation and marital enrichment programs such as our Couples Retreats are available and most people find them helpful regardless of how well their relationship is going. And many people seek couple counseling with a trained therapist to improve their marriages are not unduly distressed. You don't need to be in a distressed marriage to be in marital therapy. Many people with very solid marriages choose this path to enhance their relationships.

Experiencing marital distress, however, represents a different state from the ups and downs of life in marriage that most people experience. In distressed marriages, people feel

fundamentally dissatisfied with their marriages. Disappointment in the relationship doesn't just come and go; it is a constant companion. Most frequently, couples with high levels of marital distress fight a good deal and their fights don't lead to resolution, but simply a sense of being worn out. Or they may not fight, but simply feel completely disconnected. People stop doing nice things for each other, they stop communicating, and things tend to go from bad to worse. Frequent arguments that don't get resolved, loss of good feelings, and loss of friendship, sex and vitality are other signs that a marriage is distressed. Other signs, such as contempt, withdrawal, violence, and a complete loss of connection signal that a marriage is in desperate trouble and that it is at high risk for divorce. You need not be legally married to have "marital distress." Serious, long-term, committed relationships can experience these kinds of major problems, too.

Sometimes marital problems are purely about problems in the relationship such as communication, solving problems, arguing, intimacy, and sex. These kinds of problems often begin with partners simply not having a good sense of how to be married and how to communicate and provide support. Other times couples may do well for a while, particularly in the earliest stages of their romance, but they are not ready for the long-term tasks in marriage. Studies of couples show that while the risk for marital distress and divorce are highest in early marriage.



## Marital Distress Continued

These risks also grow just after the transitions that occur when couples begin to have children and when the children reach adolescence.

Other times, marital problems are directly the result of individual problems, such as substance abuse. And marriages can even seem to be going well, but one shattering event like an extramarital affair will throw a marriage into distress.

Marital distress has powerful effects on partners; often leading to great sadness, worry, a high level of tension, and problems such as depression. If prolonged, it even has been shown to have direct effect on physical health. The effect on families is also profound, especially when conflict is high. Children raised in high conflict homes tend to have many more problems than other children. And once marriages are distressed, a progression begins that easily becomes a cascade downward, ultimately leading to the ending of a marriage.



## Children and Divorce

Many families in the United States are touched by divorce. The current divorce rate is calculated to be between 40 and 60% for those recently married and up to 10% higher for remarriages. A majority of divorces occur in families with children under the age of eighteen.

Divorce propels adults and children into numerous adjustments and challenges. While great diversity exists in children's adjustment to divorce, and a majority of children weather the transition and become competent adults, up to a quarter of children whose parents divorce experience ongoing emotional and behavior difficulties (as compared to 10% of children whose parents do not divorce).

Spouses divorce each other, but they do not divorce their children. A majority of former spouses are able to establish a relatively conflict-free parenting relationship, even years after the divorce.

In research on divorcing parents different types of post-divorce parenting relationships were identified: "perfect pals," "cooperative colleagues," "angry associates," "fiery foes," and "dissolved duos." However, even

when parents are "angry associates" or "fiery foes," there are ways they can develop cooperative or business-like relationships for the sake of their children. Parental conflict can hinder children's adjustment and good co-parenting skills are very important to a child's adjustment.

Most parents who have a difficult relationship with their e-spouse but who want to co-parent start out with "parallel parenting." In this arrangement, each parent assumes total responsibility for the children during the time they are together; there is no expectation of flexibility and little contact with the other parent. As time goes on anger dissipates, parents may develop some version of "cooperative parenting." In this arrangement, parents communicate directly and in a business-like manner regarding the children and co-parenting schedules. Marriage and family therapist can be helpful to families as they formulate or define their post-divorce parenting relationships.

During separation and divorce, family members experience uncertainty, emotional upheaval and changes in their family roles and rules. Family therapists can assist in the process of redefining relationships and needs.

## Couples Treatment

The good news is that there are effective treatments for marital distress. Given a willingness to work on a marriage, most people can make their marriages satisfying again.

No one begins as a perfect partner. Marriage depends on a number of skills, such as being able to understand yourself, understand your partner, fight well, problem solve, and negotiate differences. Sometimes patterns we learned in our families growing up aren't effective, but are carried over to a marriage. And sometimes the stresses of life make it difficult to stay happily married.

Treatment for marital distress is in part building or rebuilding skills that work in marriage, such as learning to communicate and problem solve, and how to fight without engaging in too much hurt. Partly, marital therapy is about partners working to see each other as people, to understand where they are coming from, and to negotiate those differences that can be negotiated and accept those differences that cannot. Couples all have issues that stay with them; the key is to build a process that can help find a way to talk about those issues, to find solutions, and not have the problems that emerge in life become overwhelming.

Some people with marital problems won't seek help even when it is essential. If your partner won't go to therapy, try to encourage them. It's hard to fix a distressed marriage on your own. Still, if they won't go, you can begin to do some things yourself. The therapist will have some useful ideas about how to improve the relationship without both of you getting into therapy and about how to find better ways to approach your partner about the idea of entering treatment together.

We also offer Couples Retreats that are designed to take couples even deeper into communication, respect, trust and love.



## Upcoming Events

### Dyad Nights

These nights are an introduction to the Enlightenment Intensive and a way for those who have attended Intensives to continue their practice.

### Enlightenment Intensives

The Enlightenment Intensive is a modern answer to the question, "Where can I go to directly experience the true nature of life, others and myself?" With one foot rooted in the ancient tradition of Rinzai Zen and the other in the modern dyad process of communication, the Enlightenment Intensive is a three-day retreat capable of producing deep spiritual awakenings at the core. Tell Me Who You Are?

### Life Transformation Intensives

This is an EXPERIENTIAL WORKSHOP designed to give you the answers you have been looking for. It meets for six weekends over a six-month period, providing a loving and accepting environment for the challenge of profound personal growth.

The Life Transformation Intensive supports you in your spiritual path, whatever that is. Through the use of a variety of Heart-Centered trance techniques, you will learn to open up to Soul Work and to discover a much broader aspect of who you really are and what your purpose is at this time on earth.

### Couples Retreats

Take your relationship to the depths of love, trust, respect and sexual fulfillment. These retreats are experiential and sometime spontaneous – and will provide couples tools to continue this work even after the retreat is complete. (See our Couples Retreat Newsletter).

## Weekend Workshops

Our Weekend workshops are designed to help people grow and expand in the areas of body, mind, emotions and spiritually.

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