

It's the Most Important Decision You'll Ever Make.

Choosing a mate sets the tone for every dimension of the rest of your life. It determines the harmony you'll feel in your family life; the support you'll give and receive in your work; sexual fulfillment; spiritual practice; and more.

Ninety percent of Americans marry, but fifty percent end in divorce. In fact, the average marriage in California lasts just seven years. Seventy-five percent of those who divorce remarry, but sixty-five percent of those marriages also end in divorce.

The truth is that a successful marriage is based on both partners having good *skills*: to manage inevitable conflicts; to express admiration and appreciation; to accept influence from the other person; and to nurture love and romance. They have realistic expectations of each other and understand how to interact to keep love coming back.

The best way to ensure you beat the odds and ensure a long and satisfying marriage is to explore all the issues and get the skills and training you need together, before you marry. Pre-marital counseling can help you chart the course.

Most health insurance policies cover the service of MFTs so long as the services are "medically necessary." This typically includes coverage for face-to-face sessions for a diagnosable mental health problem. Such coverage may be limited. Please contact your health insurance company for detailed information about the coverage available to you and your family.



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ARE YOU READY FOR MARRIAGE?

How Pre-Marital Counseling Can Help



Brought to you by the
California Association of
Marriage and Family Therapists



ENSURING A HAPPY MARRIAGE

Happily married couples are skillful at sharing dreams, handling conflict, nurturing love, and repairing damage to the relationship.

When You Should Seek Pre-Marital Counseling

- 1 When you are young and have never been married. In fact, California law requires that individuals under age 18 complete pre-marital counseling before they can file for a marriage license. Mutual expectations, cultural and religious differences and feelings about children should be discussed *before* you marry, not after.
- 2 When you have been too long in a courtship. If you have been engaged for more than nine years, plan on marrying, but haven't, it's time to understand what's going on.
- 3 When one partner is "commitment-phobic." Find out what lies at the root of the fear so you can move forward in your relationship or move on.
- 4 When you can't resolve significant issues. The number one predictor of divorce is the habitual avoidance of conflict. If you aren't yet married, but already disagree about issues related to money, children, chores, work, sex or a host of other things, now is the time to learn how to address differences.
- 5 When you have failed at a marriage and want to try again. Every happy, successful couple has as many as 10 areas of "irreconcilable differences," but they accept and respect them as part of their relationship.

WHAT YOU CAN DO RIGHT NOW

- ❑ **Don't believe "marriage myths."** Popular myths include: "Good luck and romantic love are the keys to a good marriage;" "Having children brings a couple closer together and makes for a happier marriage;" "It's unrealistic to expect people to stay in a marriage throughout a lifetime because we live so much longer today;" "Married people have less sex—and less satisfying sex—than single people do;" and "Living together is just the same as marriage." Studies show these are all untrue.
- ❑ **Educate yourself about how healthy relationships work.** Churches, synagogues, and continuing education programs at local colleges can all recommend books, classes or DVD learning on key topics.
- ❑ **Examine differences in "family of origin."** They will provide clues to potential areas of conflict to discuss. Since our own approaches to relationships derive from what we learned from our parents, talk with your partner about how his or her parents handled conflicts, showed affection and respect, and shared child-raising responsibilities. Ask about their belief systems with respect to money, sexuality, and religion.
- ❑ **Remember love is a verb.** Do you make an ongoing effort to nurture your love for your partner by paying attention to his or her needs?

OFFERING EXTRA SUPPORT About Marriage and Family Therapists

Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) are relationship experts. They work with individuals, couples, families, children, adolescents, and the elderly, providing support and perspective as patients struggle with life's challenges.

Licensed by the State of California, MFTs are psychotherapists who are uniquely trained and credentialed to assess, diagnose, and treat a wide range of issues so individuals achieve more adequate, satisfying and productive relationships and social adjustment.

The California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (CAMFT) is an independent statewide non-profit organization made up of over 28,000 practicing Marriage and Family Therapists. CAMFT is dedicated to advancing marriage and family therapy as a healing art, science, and mental health profession. In fact, CAMFT sponsors TherapistFinder.com so Californians can gain access to qualified local experts who can help.



Seeking a Marriage and Family Therapist or other mental health professional to assist with life's difficulties is a sign of courage and a step in the right direction. Always ask about a therapist's special areas of expertise (e.g. grief counseling, children's issues, relationship counseling) before you engage them to ensure it's the right fit for you.

TherapistFinder is a California-wide interactive, online directory that is user-friendly and searchable by name, location, and area of expertise. It's your introduction to one or more qualified psychotherapists who hold a California license.

