

Stay Happily Married

A resource for married couples.

Creating a happy marriage is possible and this site is dedicated to providing resources to help couples who want to stay together. By providing information about qualified marriage counseling, we hope to encourage couples to get the help they need. The site also features articles, other websites, books, and workshops which offer the tools needed to create happy, lasting marriages.



## Marriage Counseling: For Us?

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*Welcome to Stay Happily Married, your source for weekly updates on the latest tips and advice to build a happy and healthy marriage.*

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Why do people think twice about calling a marriage counselor when they don't hesitate to call other specialists for professional services? Tax advisers, interior designers, home inspectors, doctors, dentists, all stand ready to provide advice and consultation services when requested. There's no need for any admission of failure when you call a tax adviser; you just shop for the best adviser for your issues. Just as there is no shame in calling a tax adviser, there should be no embarrassment about calling a marriage counselor. In fact you should feel proud to call a therapist to provide professional services for your most valued assets, your marriage and family. You can call for marriage counseling assistance as prevention, intervention or crisis management.

We care for our cars by checking oil levels, inflating tires and scheduling tune-ups to keep the automobile running smoothly and prevent future problems. Similarly, a

marriage counselor can provide preventive maintenance services. Prenuptial counseling is frequently discussed but seldom utilized as the couple's romantic bliss obscures all but the most serious impending problems. Most couples don't even consider marriage counseling as the relationship begins to settle down into daily life issues and as stresses and strains start to erode the "live happily ever after" myth. In this article I'm asking you to consider a round of marriage counseling before typical marriage concerns (such as finances, parenting, division-of-labor, in-laws, or sexual compatibility problems) take over. After an initial consultation, the couple and therapist step back for an informal "evaluation" of the marital issues and begin a plan of sessions sometimes with "homework" to practice new skills. Far from being just a clinical analysis of conflict management issues, the prevention plan will often focus on new ways for the couple to have fun together such as date nights to preserve or improve love and intimacy.

When emerging problems harden into ongoing frustrations and then into conflicts, and when problems keep recurring without resolution, the intervention of marriage counseling will often put the marriage back into balance. Some issues can be resolved during the sessions, while the couple can learn to live with other problems. Marriage counseling services provide a retreat from everyday stress and a place to focus on the marriage with an experienced adviser to mediate disputes and teach new skills. While conflict resolution skills are important at this stage, the couple will also learn about the need to prioritize positive interactions to build up a "love bank" to protect the marriage from the wounds of hurt and anger. Far from feeling guilty that they "need" marriage counseling, husband and wife should be proud of their accomplishments in

taking steps to face the tough issues and improve the quality of their relationship and their lives.

Crisis intervention marriage counseling is needed when thoughts of escape from the marriage surface in the form of conflict behaviors such as withdrawal and stonewalling, violent arguments, extramarital affairs, thoughts or talk about separation and divorce. Such problems often follow a phase of "pretend everything is all right." Rather than deny or bury the pain, marriage counseling will help the couple focus on resolving the problems and can often turn the crisis into an improved marriage. Marriages can be saved even when extramarital affairs are discovered, although the process is slow and painful. If your marriage is in crisis, don't wait! It can be too late.

What if your spouse won't participate in marriage counseling? Then you will need to take action yourself. Even when both husband and wife agree to the marriage counseling, you can only change yourself, not your spouse. Marriage counselors are also individual therapists and often tackle marriage problems with the willing spouse.

Even if your marriage is headed toward separation or divorce, most marriage counselors are also experienced in handling these issues. Friendly support and advice can feel like life savers at this time of crisis. It can be a mistake for husband or wife to try to hang on to the marriage because of fear of exiting into a lonely, loveless existence. Separation and divorce can be a chance to build a new and improved life in the face of irreconcilable differences.

Dr. Phillips holds a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from Harvard University and is certified by the National Register of Psychologists. She specializes in relationship and marriage counseling, including helping couples deal with the challenge of recovering from infidelity. Her office is located at 466 Eagle Point Rd. Pittsboro, NC 27312. You can find out more about Dr. Phillips practice, as well as other articles she has written on her website, [www.BettyPhillipsPsychology.com](http://www.BettyPhillipsPsychology.com), or by contacting her at (919) 967.1860.