



Couples Counselling

Loving, caring relationships between couples have their ups and downs, but sometimes underlying issues can lead to a difficulty in communication or arguments. People take up positions and fall into a pattern of conflict where no-one wins. At this point relationships become stuck and couples find it hard to talk things through or trust each other. Where once there was love and affection, opposing interests prevent couples from finding a satisfying resolution. That's when help from a skilled couples counsellor can make all the difference. Our very closest relationships – whether marriage, co-habitation or civil partnership – rests on our ability to express intimacy and trust. When relationships stop working due to internal or external pressures, our mental health and happiness suffers. Our sense of identity and self-worth often rests on the strength of our relationships and we can fall into despair when they fail. Often the pressures of work, family, money and health take their toll on the way couples support each other or express themselves.

Whether you are feeling things aren't right or encountering serious difficulties, like conflict, I'm here to listen and provide you with support as you find a positive outcome. At Directions, my aim is to help people engage in active listening and constructive patterns of communication, as well as how to engage in more healthy conflict with each other. I can help people realise that mutually inclusive behaviours and support doesn't mean losing personal freedom or making painful compromises. We will explore how you develop insight, compassion and empathy for your partner. As well as a better understanding of how they

feel and think, we will look at how love and intimacy can be revitalised and how negative patterns of attachment learned in childhood often re-emerge in adult relationships, as we repeat patterns from our original families.

When it's appropriate to seek couples counselling:

- If there has been a betrayal of trust, an affair, debt crisis or secret
- If communication leads to conflict, confusion or anger
- If separation or divorce has been broached
- If intimacy or sexual desire is missing
- If arguments and bickering go on unresolved

At Directions, you are more likely to attend couples counselling together, unless there has been open domestic violence or fear of personal harm to one partner. Couples counselling can be undertaken with individuals if that is a more comfortable or safer option.

If couples come to explore counselling for separation and divorce, it can help to see whether trust within the relationship can be repaired. Otherwise, it may help couples to split with more understanding and less hostility. I believe it is important to find a counsellor with the right skills to help mediate and provide a safe place for exploring any of these issues.

Howard Antonio, Directions Counselling Service

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