

WEISE WORDS

WORDS OF WISDOM FOR HEALTHY LIVING

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY: When Is It Time To Seek Help?

Every marriage and family has problems, but sometimes those problems seem so difficult that it seems impossible to address them, at least with your knowledge and in your own power. This article will help you evaluate your issue to help you determine if professional counseling is needed.

LEVEL ONE: BASIC ISSUES OR PROBLEMS

Are you facing issues in your family that stem from things like selfishness, pride, or lack of knowledge about how to make a marriage relationship work or how to raise children?

Here are some examples:

- ◆ Difficulty in resolving conflicts in marriage.
- ◆ Consistent lying in a young or pre-teen child.
- ◆ Young child repeatedly throws fits to get their way.
- ◆ Sibling rivalries.
- ◆ Little or no communication with spouse.
- ◆ Misunderstandings about your sexual relationship in your marriage.
- ◆ Poor habits in handling finances.

This is not a complete list, just examples of basic issues. If problems like these describe your situation, then you can begin right now seeking answers. One of the best places you should consider is your pastor or elder in your church. Often, these leaders can give you Godly guidance and are familiar with books or other resources like classes offered at the church that can help meet your needs. I believe God wants to use the leaders of your local church to meet the needs of those under their watch-care. Check with them first.

You may also have Christian friends who can assist you with Godly advice in dealing with basic issues. Don't forget to check with other couples in your church who have successfully raised children or have been married for decades. They have a wealth of wisdom to share.

Remember that family problems are the norm, not the exception. Don't get frustrated because your children are not always listening and obeying you; or your spouse does not seem to understand you. It happens to every couple or family at some point. Be encouraged that you are not alone and seek answers to these issues before they get out of hand.

WHEN IS IT TIME TO SEEK HELP? (Continued)**LEVEL TWO: MORE SERIOUS PROBLEMS**

Do you feel your problems go beyond the basic issues but are not yet out of control?

For example:

- ◆ The communication breakdown between you and your spouse is acute.
- ◆ Not sure that the two of you are still in love.
- ◆ Other things seem more important to one or both of you than your marriage or family-jobs, hobbies, etc.
- ◆ One of you handles most of the discipline of children.
- ◆ A teenager is becoming more and more difficult to handle.
- ◆ Frustration is a prevailing emotion over issues in your family life.

If these examples cause you to say, "Yes, that is exactly what I have been thinking," then there is help for you! Often, a few sessions with a Christian counselor addressing these issues, can turn the situation around before it becomes desperate and serious damage takes place.

LEVEL THREE: DESPERATION

You may feel like you are at your wits end and don't think your marriage or family is going to survive unless something drastic happens. You may feel a sense of desperation that things will never change in your family or marriage.

For example:

- ◆ All or most communication between you and your spouse ends in anger or hurt feelings.
- ◆ Physical intimacy is non-existent or nearly so.
- ◆ The routine of life keeps you going, not being fulfilled or full of joy.
- ◆ One or both of you think about separation or divorce.
- ◆ A child is in full rebellion.
- ◆ Issues of sex, drugs, or alcohol touch your teen's life.
- ◆ You feel like a single parent even though you are married.

These and other serious issues indicate that problems are chronic. The issue or issues may have been growing in your family for months or years. You may feel your problem is your constant companion. At times, you think the situation is hopeless.

If you are a believer, you are never without hope. Our hope rests in Jesus Christ who is alive and interceding for us. Gather a small group of trusted friends around you and ask them to pray for you begin the Christian counseling process. Knowing that people are praying will bring peace and hope back to your soul. A Christian counselor is professionally trained and committed to helping people like you that honestly don't know where to begin. Through God's love and power, they will help you to restore your hope and rebuild your life.

WHEN IS IT TIME TO SEEK HELP? (Continued)

If you do not believe your spouse or child will talk to a counselor, consider coming alone. Also, consider the option of a Marriage Intensive Weekend. These multiple hour, weekend sessions with your counselor, often produce great results in a short period of time, helping to jump start the healing process in your relationship.

LEVEL FOUR: CRISIS

If you have already filed for separation or divorce, and one or both of you has completely given up on the marriage, I consider that a crisis and you should contact a counselor immediately.

Any of these factors should move you to seek counseling quickly:

- ◆ Separation or divorce in process.
- ◆ An affair is active or recently ended.
- ◆ Pornography has a hold on your life or spouse' s life.
- ◆ A teen talks of suicide.
- ◆ You have lost control of your teen.
- ◆ You are sure your teen is abusing drugs and/or alcohol.

If you truly believe you are at this point in your marriage or family, I urge you to seek help. Call a Christian counselor and explain your situation to them and get an appointment as soon as possible. There is hope and help in Christ, but you must make the first move. This is a crucial time in your life. Do not face it alone.

For more information about short-term marriage and family counseling or Marriage Intensive Weekends or if you have questions about this article, please contact me through pwcounseling.com or call 813.643.2600. I am here as a resource for you.

FamilyLife Web Page. 2013, *"Do You Need Counseling?"* Available at <http://familylife.com/articles/topics/marriage/troubled-marriage/counseling-issues/do-you-need-counseling#.UVNMzBeG2pl>