

Starting Out In Couple Counselling: A Few Ideas from Paddy and Carole

Where should you begin?

It takes some courage to initiate couple counselling. But any new behaviour does. In fact, any change is strange at first (after all, you probably have not done this before) but then the fear diminishes and excitement takes its place.

That is really what couple counselling is – the excitement of new changes in behaviour and attitudes that promote greater satisfaction and security.

So here are some suggestions for how to begin.

First, write down in a long list what you love or appreciate about your marriage. You may be quite surprised on how much you like and enjoy. Then, write down your concerns or anxieties. This too might be a long list. Do this without consulting each other and then compare your lists.

Second, look on my “Tools” page and find the Marriage Questionnaire ([Marriage Questionnaire](#)). This will give you some of the vocabulary for your concerns and hopes. Share this with your partner and have him / her also complete the questionnaire.

Third, check out my blog (<http://theducklows.ca/blog/>) and other articles in the Tools section (<http://theducklows.ca/tools/>) – you may find something that is helpful to you.

Fourth, my client friends often ask about books to read. Sometimes reading is helpful but certainly not when one is the reader and the other sits passively resentful. See if you can read something together with a glass of wine or a cup of tea over a couple of weeks. Here are some books that I like: “The Good Marriage” (Wallerstein), “Family Ties that Bind” (Richardson), “Couples in Conflict” (Richardson) and there are more but this is a good start.

Fifth, watch some couple movies and take half an hour following each and ask what you are both thinking and feeling. Some research indicates that this can be as good as marriage counselling (and a lot cheaper). You can read about this here: <http://www.rochester.edu/news/divorce-rate-cut-in-half-for-couples-who-discussed-relationship-movies/>

Sixth, don’t forget to make an appointment with us. Go to www.theducklows.ca and look for the last page under “Contact” (<http://theducklows.ca/contact/contact-us/>). If we are not the best for you or you wish to see someone closer to your home, please see our recommended counsellors list (<http://theducklows.ca/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/Counsellor-Referral-List-14.pdf>).

Seventh, check out your extended health insurance. Paddy is a Psychologist and Carole is a Registered Clinical Counsellor (Registered Clinical Counsellor (RCC) and their insurance coverage depends on your insurance provider. Check out your policy.

Don’t forget to be easy with yourself. One of you is probably more interested in making change than the other, and we understand this. Also, it is awful to feel blamed for mistakes you may have made and wish that the consequences would just go away. We get that too.

I think that you will find us hospitable to you, your thoughts and your ideas. Be of good courage.