

# Does My Family Need Family Counseling and Where Can We Go to Get It?

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A healthy family life can bring joy to every family member. In hard times, family members support each other. They work toward common goals and enjoy leisure time together. Being a part of a family isn't always easy, though. Sometimes, individual concerns meld together to create family dysfunction rather than support. Even so, it may be difficult to know when to get help in family counseling. How do you know whether you are just going through a rough patch or your family is in a more serious downward spiral?

[If you are wondering whether it is time to call in a counselor](#), a good first step is to find out more about family counseling and how it can help you.



Source: [pixabay.com](#)

## Definition of Family

Years ago, society considered a family to consist of a married couple and their children or all the descendants of an older adult or ancestor. Today, the standard definition of family is more inclusive. A family is a basic social unit. In addition to its earlier meanings, a family can also mean a single

adult and their children, an unmarried couple and their children, a same-sex couple and their children, or any group of adults and the children they care for. For many people, friends are as much or more important than their biological family members. However, unless friends live together, they don't meet the definition of a family.

Sometimes, a family lives together under the same roof. They may also live apart but be closely related. For example, a parent who does not have custody of a child would still consider the child as a family member. Or, separated parents may live apart but share custody of their child. In that case, the child would be considered a part of each parent's family. Family therapy for such a family sometimes includes both adults – not because they still consider each other family, but because they are still co-parenting. Usually, members of a family are either biologically related, living together, or both.

Each family has a unique **structure** and communication style. What affects one member of the family usually affects other members as well. If two people in the family are at odds, life can become more stressful for everyone in the family. When changes happen within the family unit, all members must adapt to the new situation.

### **Issues Addressed In Marriage And Family Counseling Sessions**



*Source: rawpixel.com*

Families that have never developed a beneficial structure or a healthy communication style may quickly fall into turmoil when something goes wrong. Even a family that once functioned well can become dysfunctional when it is under unusual stress. If you see any of the following within your family, consider getting help through family counseling.

### **Children's Behavioral Problems**

If a child is misbehaving, chances are there is dysfunction in the family. Perhaps unhealthy family dynamics are at the root of the issue, the child's misbehavior is causing stress within the family, or both. Addressing the child's behavior is an important part of arriving at a place of peace within the family.

Child and teen behavioral concerns may include:

- Acting out at school
- Failing at school
- Skipping school
- Difficulty controlling emotions
- Bullying or being bullied
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Rebellious attitude toward school faculty and parents
- Sexual activity
- Teen pregnancies
- Intense sibling rivalry
- Throwing tantrums
- Telling lies constantly
- Mental or physical illness

### **Troubles In The Marriage Or Other Adult Partnership**

Children do not have the monopoly on dysfunctional relationships. When adult relationships are troubled, the entire family can suffer. Perhaps you have a hard time resolving conflicts within your partnership. Maybe one partner is responsible for childcare and discipline.

If you don't communicate with your partner, the household can become fractured as well. Sexual concerns within a marriage can lead to larger challenges in the family, too. When these types of difficulties are present in a marriage, marriage and family counseling can help you renegotiate the relationship in a way that decreases family conflict and improves family functioning.

### **Parent-Child Relationships**

Parents and children share a special bond that is more profound than in almost any other type of relationship. However, parents and children don't always get along well. Sometimes, it is because of the child's behavior, but other times, the parent causes the strain by how they behave toward their children. Some common Parent-Child dysfunctions include:

- Child abuse or neglect
- Obvious favoritism toward one child
- Being too strict or too permissive
- Sheltering the children too much
- Expecting a young child to take on adult responsibilities and roles
- Inconsistent discipline
- Being uncommunicative
- Not providing emotional support or nurturing
- Unrealistic expectations
- Disrespecting the child or their privacy

### **Sibling Rivalry**

**Sibling rivalry** is so common that most people assume it's okay. However, sibling rivalry can be a form of bullying. The children are not competing against one another as they would in a sport, but instead, they're hurting each other out of their emotional distress. Many parents have little hope that they can ever help their children overcome sibling rivalry, but there is hope! Children and family counseling can help them learn how to cooperate, have compassion for each other, and get along better than you might ever expect.

## **Shared Problems**

When a family lives together, they may face shared life challenges, such as:

- Death of a loved one or family pet
  - Financial challenges such as low income, debt, foreclosures, reports
  - Illness of a family member – physical or mental alike
  - Natural disasters such as floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, etc.
  - Criminal attacks such as a break-in in the family home, home invasion, assault
  - Social conflicts with friends, neighbors, extended family
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- Separation or divorce
  - Intense sibling rivalry
  - Constant fighting
  - Drugs and/or alcohol abuse
  - Physical, mental, verbal, or sexual abuse

## **Benefits Of Family Counseling**

### **What Happens In Family Counseling?**

It's common for people to be apprehensive about their first family therapy session. Commonly, before the first session begins, family members all get a chance to fill out paperwork that includes their personal histories, individual medical and mental health histories, and possibly a questionnaire about what happens within the family from each of their perspectives.

During the first session, the counselor explains the process of family therapy and how confidential statements will be handled. The counselor then takes time to get to know each family member, what brought them to therapy, and the stressors each is facing. The family therapist also asks a lot of questions and observes the family members communicate, who takes on different roles, and where conflicts lie. The counselor usually talks with the entire family first and possibly with one or more family members individually.



Source: rawpixel.com

In later sessions, the therapist, having gathered significant initial information, may focus on the most serious concerns in **communication and family functioning**. The counselor may choose certain family members to attend sessions together, sometimes seeing the entire group and sometimes working with an individual or only a few family members. They may spend more time with those who are having the most difficulty or in the best position to make changes for the better.

The counselor may assign homework to complete between sessions. The homework may be a new behavior to practice, a journal-writing topic, or a request to come up with solutions to a problem. At the next session, family members get to talk about what happened when they did the homework.

### **Types Of Family Counseling**

Therapists use one or more family counseling types to help a family learn to function in more healthy ways. The following counseling types can stand alone or be used together with a wide range of counseling techniques.

- Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy – A therapy in which thoughts are assessed and changed to create changes in behavior.
- Communication Therapy – Therapy that focuses on improving verbal and nonverbal communication skills.
- Narrative Therapy – A therapy in which family members share stories from their lives to solve their problems via wisdom gained through their own experiences.
- Psychodynamic Therapy – This therapy uncovers unconscious thoughts to find the roots of family challenges.
- Relationship Therapy – Therapy that addresses strains within the relationships between family members, especially in the relationships between the adults in the family.
- Strategic Counseling – A 5-stage counseling method that includes a social stage, a problem stage, a goal-setting phase, and a task-setting stage.
  
- Structural Therapy – A therapy that examines and works to change the structure of the family.

- Supportive Family Therapy – Supportive therapy is usually used in conjunction with other therapies. Its purpose is to provide a safe environment where family members can express themselves and be heard.
- Systemic Counseling – Family therapy that focuses on interactions between family members. It recognizes personal identities, family structure, how families respond to needs, and how dysfunctional growth patterns can be changed.
- Transgenerational Therapy – A type of therapy that examines the behaviors of past and current generations and how they have dealt with challenges and behaved appropriately or inappropriately.

### Where Can I Get Family Counseling Near Me?

Are you ready to explore the question of “How do I find family counseling near me?” Finding the right family counseling services for you may require a bit of research and consideration. After all, you are a unique family. You have your own unique set of strengths, challenges, and family history that no one else shares.

You may choose to go to a therapist who has a private practice in your city or who works within the community mental health system. Before you choose a family counselor, it is important to give them a summary of your concerns and ask them what kind of therapy they recommend. This will give you a basic idea of their approach.

Some family counseling services are especially well-equipped to address cultural differences within the family and within the community they live. Family Tree Counseling, for example, is a branded therapy that includes marriage and family counseling. Therapists have experience working with non-traditional families and the LGBT community.



Source: [lakenheath.af.mil](http://lakenheath.af.mil)

Online therapy can be an effective way to learn ways to strengthen your family relationships. A [recent study](#) indicates that couples who work with an online counselor (as opposed to a therapist in a traditional brick and mortar office) find the format conducive to sharing their feelings in a way

that left them feeling less judged. Participants went on to say that video-based therapy allowed them to focus more intently on the therapeutic process and offered a greater sense of control and comfort than traditional face-to-face therapy.

<https://www.betterhelp.com/advice/family/does-my-family-need-family-counseling-and-where-can-we-go-to-get-it/>

## **Professional Experience**

Writing has always been a passion for Nadia, but it was something she viewed as a hobby but six years ago when the company she was working for decided to shut down, she decided to take the plunge and pursue a career in freelance writing. She has since built an impressive portfolio of short stories, novellas, blog posts, and research articles.

In the last year and a half, she has turned her attention to more serious writing and has a special interest in mental illnesses and disorders, after coming face to face with it unexpectedly and shockingly.

As she dealt with the family issues, Nadia began to research and read up on mental health first in an attempt to better educate herself and then to help her family members understand and cope with what was happening.

## **Education**

Nadia is an Honours Graduate from the University of McGill. She studied Social Sciences and instead of getting a Masters, she decided to start working and earn a certificate in Creative Writing on the side. Life, marriage, kids took over soon after and writing was placed on the back burner until a few years ago.

## **“My Philosophy On Mental Health & Wellness”**

Mental health.

Depression.

Psychological Disorders.

Abuse.

None of these words (to name a few) should be taboo nor should they be stigmatized. People should be able to speak of these issues openly, without shame; they should share their experiences without the fear of being judged by their neighbors or family members. And that acceptance can only come through education and an openness of mind of spirit.

My hope is anyone reading these articles realize they are not alone, they have nothing to be ashamed of and above all, to realize how important it is to get help at the right time before its too late. If something I wrote helps even one person pick up a phone or reach out for help, it is going to make all the difference.