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Marriage and Family Therapy: When To Go/How To Find One¹

Donna Davis and Suzanna Smith²

For better or for worse, in sickness and in health . . . the words are familiar. Today, when, according to the US Census, approximately 50% of all marriages end in divorce, there's another phrase that's becoming widely spoken... It's, "I want us to see a counselor."

There are still many people who don't understand or resist counseling – thinking that therapy is for crazy people. Yet, according to one study, at any given time, Marriage and Family therapists are treating 1.8 million people in the U.S. Another myth about the field is that it's just for marriage counseling. You don't have to be with your partner for marriage and family therapy. In fact, couples and families make up less than half of the clients in this field of therapy. Some individuals seek counsel for relationship issues, behavioral issues, pre-marital guidance, or for help in working through divorce. Typically, marriage and family therapy is a short-term, results oriented form of treatment, which maintains a family orientation, considering the family to be the most important influence on an individual. Therapists are trained to circumvent problems, strengthen relationships, and prevent problems from getting out of hand.

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This field of therapy enjoys a pretty good track record. In a report to the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy Research and Education Foundation Doherty and Simmons, of the University of Minnesota, found that 98% of the marriage and family therapy clients they surveyed rated services as good or excellent, 97% got the kind of help they were looking for, and 98% indicated that they felt they had been helped in dealing more effectively with problems.

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Reference

A Consumer's Guide to Marriage and Family Therapy, American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. Retrieved May 2006 from <http://www.amft.org>