



The Institute of Family Living

COUPLE AND FAMILY THERAPY

Couples typically seek help for their relationship around issues of communication, intimacy, sexual functioning, parenting styles, anger, and conflict management. Families usually present themselves for therapy as units and define their problems in family terms. In most cases, however, involvement of the whole family, when it occurs, happens at the therapist's initiative.

At IFL, persons in relationship therapy are assisted in acquiring an understanding of how their family system has affected them and how they, as individuals, have affected their family system. This can be complicated, since what is "normal" to one family-of-origin may seem strange to another. Such contrasts are intensified when partners come from different ethnic or cultural groups. Effective couple and family therapy must take such differences into account. This is especially true in premarital counselling.

Many people marry without really understanding what they are committing themselves to for the rest of their lives. The glow of romance may conceal issues on which they either disagree or have different styles of expression. Marriage preparation with an IFL therapist can help couples approach their great adventure consciously and responsibly.

Working with the therapist, a couple is alerted to the potential difficulties that need to be addressed either before or after the wedding. Sometimes they discover that they have different beliefs or value systems; this suggests that major challenges lie ahead. Some couples conclude that the marriage should be called off. Other couples find that their commitment to each other has grown even stronger as a result of their "reality check."

But despite every care, prayer, and preparation, sometimes separation and divorce occurs. When it does, the hurt people experience often leads to anger, depression, and loneliness.

Divorce Care is a weekly support group for divorced or separated people who are experiencing such pain. The 13-session Divorce Care program approaches divorce from a spiritual perspective and includes videotapes featuring acknowledged experts on pertinent issues. Each session follows viewing of that week's videotape, encouraging discussion of its contents and personal sharing among group members.

Sometimes, just the knowledge that one is not alone and that others have "been there," may provide support and insight and can help wounded people going through a difficult time. Through Divorce Care, despite the real pain of separation or divorce, both situations are opportunities for spiritual growth.



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