

HOW DO YOU AND YOUR PARTNER HANDLE GRIEVANCES IN YOUR OUR RELATIONSHIP?

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When you have something to talk about, it is a good idea to make appointments with your partner for discussions, especially about grievances. Choose a mutually agreed upon time and place.

If you or your partner are conflict avoiders do not wait indefinitely for the perfect time, place or mood. You may have to actually sit down and discuss things with your partner even if conditions are not exactly right.

You need to acknowledge your feelings to your partner. For example, we often store up anger. Anger does not mean you have to act on it; however, it helps to allow yourself to feel it. Some individuals fear that admitting to anger will lead to separation or divorce. Actually the opposite is true. In fact, long term repression of anger can lead to crisis.

As you start the discussion with your partner, pay attention to your body language. You can look right at your partner and say "I am angry." in a firm calm voice. Do not look at the wall or floor. Some people smile or laugh while discussing hurts or angers. This undercuts the seriousness of their communication. Do not do this. Do remember that you are an adult with the right to express your feelings and views, and to have them heard as real concerns. Also, remember to breathe.

Work on your communication skills. Learn I messages and to reflective listen. This can really descalate hurts.

You can communicate your feelings (anger, hurt, betrayal) without assaulting your partner's personality. If you begin to blame or name call, you can control your impulse and excuse yourself. Take some time for you. For example, go to the bathroom, put water on your face, breathe, count, and remind yourself that you have the right to express your feelings with respect. Postpone the discussion for later, but do make another appointment and try again.

Never tolerate violence, initiated by you or your partner! If violence develops get help! Violence is never acceptable!

Couples counselling is useful to air grievances, to find areas of agreement, and to identify what is working in your relationship. Individual counselling si necessary if there has been any violence (past or current). Couple counselling can be a possible future goal following the individual counselling.

Interview potential therapists. Find one that you trust. Non-sexist therapists believe that each person is an expert on his or her own life. Ask about their areas of expertise, experience, and education. Discuss with them their ethics about confidentiality.

Counselling can help build up each partner (not identify inadequacies) by recognizing inner conflict, accepting the full range of feelings, and increasing tolerance for the difficult feelings of grief, anxiety, hate, jealousy, or rage. Counselling builds on the strengths and goodness of each partner. It is important that each partner gets to discuss the things that are bothering them.

No one party, male or female should be allowed to dominate the session. The counsellor needs to remain neutral and not take sides. If one partner is not getting to express their concerns or one is dominating, tell the therapist and insist on equal time.

Where ever you seek counselling be sure that the counsellor helps both partners.

You and your partner may wish to complete the following relationship satisfaction inventory and then discuss it.

RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION INVENTORY

How satisfied are you and your partner with your relationship?

RATE (least satisfied) 0 -10 (most satisfied)

1. Communication (listening and speaking up)
2. Conflict resolution skills (personal power and mutual respect)
3. Amount of affection (expressed and wanted)
4. Amount and quality of intimacy and closeness (expressed and wanted)
5. With your role and responsibilities in your significant relationship
6. With your partners role and responsibilities in your significant relationship
7. Overall satisfaction

Things to Discuss:

-Your total

-Your partner's total