



Ask the Therapist



By Joy Quanrud Grimsley, MFT

Q: When do I know that my problem needs outside help from a therapist?

You can benefit from therapy when you have done what you know to do, and you continue to have problems. Conflicts are pattern-oriented, such as having the same argument with someone over and over. Relationships can be a great source of joy and overall health because they help us feel fulfilled and connected with others. However, when there is conflict in a relationship, it is often a great source of sadness, anxiety, and hopelessness. Those feelings can often affect your daily functioning. Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) are relationship specialists, and they can help you improve your communication skills, sharpen your insight into the problems, and give you tools for change. When change occurs, you can start experiencing a stronger connection and intimacy (and I don't just mean sexual intimacy). Even in the first session, MFTs can give you tools (ideas/skills) that can be implemented immediately into the situation you are facing.

Q: If I'm the only one who will go to therapy, will my situation change?

A therapist addresses the client on an individual level, as well as the interactional patterns of their relationships. If one person in the family system shifts his/her way of thinking and behaving, it is possible to affect the couple or family system. For example, a terminal illness or alcoholism of one family member directly impacts the entire family. Likewise, a positive change within one person can have a direct impact on all the relationships within the family. It is common for one person in a relationship to be more motivated than the other to seek help. Therapists understand how to handle that situation.

Q: I'm on the fence about going to therapy. Should I try it?

It's not always easy to make that first call, but therapists do their best to make the process an easy one. Sometimes you need a different, outside perspective to help you sort out your problems. Therapists collaborate with you and guide you to find answers and make changes.

Q: What do I look for in a therapist?

It is important that YOU feel comfortable and safe, as well as have rapport with the therapist. You can select a therapist based on gender, age, or their expertise. However, MFTs are trained to address individual, couple and family relationships, as well as mental health

diagnoses. It's best if you call and talk to the therapist to see how you 'get along' in the first call. All therapists are bound by rules of confidentiality and privacy.

Q: What's the duration and frequency of therapy?

Each session is usually 50-60 minutes. When you're dedicated to working on something, I recommend you commit to weekly sessions. As you begin to experience change, you may opt to coming every other week, month or just once in a while to check in. Usually insurance plans cover therapy services! You drive the therapy process.

Q: I've experienced emotional traumas. Does therapy help?

Traumatic life experiences are stored in our brain differently than regular life experiences. A person can go through life being 'triggered' by nuanced events or interactions with others. Without new learning, emotions from original traumas can flood your mind and create a feeling of being overwhelmed, anxious and fearful. There is a therapeutic modality called EMDR that allows a person to make positive changes in emotions, insights, new memories and expand the understanding of life issues. I personally use this modality and have seen amazing healing occur.

Q: I think I drink too much, but don't want to tell anyone.

The good news is that you are acknowledging that you drink too much. That's the first step in making a change, which is a gradual process. Acknowledging your ambivalence about your drinking is important, and so is weighing the costs and benefits of drinking to the costs and benefits of quitting. I suggest you talk to a therapist who has alcohol, drug, and gambling counseling training.

Q: What kind of problems do therapists address?

Therapists assist people with a variety of adverse concerns, including relationship conflicts, mental health issues, anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, posttraumatic stress, and major life adjustments including struggles in blending families, just to name a few.

Joy Quanrud Grimsley, MFT is an individual, couple and family therapist who speaks both Spanish and English. She is located at the Center for Therapy & Mediation, 180 W. Huffaker Lane, Suite 302, Reno, NV 89511. You can contact her at 775-842-5669 or visit their website at www.ctmreno.com.