

How do we know if we need help?

“Characteristics of Dysfunctional Couples” are listed below to help couples identify problem areas in their relationships. A couple does not have to relate to all of these characteristics to admit that the relationship is suffering, or to seek help. These Characteristics serve to identify relationship issues. They help us know “we are not alone” in our struggle to find healthy intimacy.

Characteristics of Dysfunctional Couples

1. Being together and unhappy is safer than being alone.
2. It is safer to be with other people than it is to be alone and intimate with our partners.
3. If I really let my partner know what I've done or what I'm feeling and thinking (who I am), he/she will leave me.
4. It is easier to hide (medicate) our feelings through addictive/compulsive behavior than it is to express them.
5. Being enmeshed and totally dependent with each other is perceived as being in love.
6. We find it difficult to ask for what we need, both individually and as a couple.
7. Being secure is equal to being intimate.
8. We either avoid our problems or feel we are individually responsible for solving the problems we have as a couple.
9. We believe that we must agree on everything.
10. We believe that we must enjoy the same things and have the same interests.
11. We believe that to be a good couple we must be socially acceptable.
12. We have forgotten how to play together.
13. It is safer to get upset about little issues than to express our true feelings about larger ones.
14. It is easier to blame our partners than it is to accept our own responsibility.
15. We deal with conflict by getting totally out of control or by not arguing at all.
16. We experience ourselves as inadequate parents
17. We are ashamed of ourselves as a couple.
18. We repeat patterns of dysfunction from our families of origin.

The Twelve Steps of R.C.A.

Adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over our relationship and that our life together had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to commitment and intimacy.
3. We made a decision to turn our wills and our life together over to the care of God as we understood God.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of our relationship together as a couple.
5. We admitted to God, to each other, and to another couple the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character, communication and caring.
7. We humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it to our partner and to others we had harmed.
11. We sought through our common prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to other couples, and to practice

Recovering Couples Anonymous



What is Recovering Couples Anonymous?

We are couples committed to attaining healthy communication, caring, and greater intimacy in our relationships. We suffer from many addictions and co-addictions; some identified and some not, some treated and some not. We also come from different levels of brokenness. Many of us have been separated or near divorce. Some of us are new in our relationships and seek to build intimacy as we grow together as couples.

Our primary purpose is to stay committed in loving and intimate relationships and to help other couples achieve freedom from addicted and destructive relationships.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to remain committed to each other and to develop new intimacy. There are no dues or fees for membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.

Our History

Recovering Couples Anonymous (RCA) was founded in the fall of 1988. Several couples completed a seminar which focused on working the 12 Steps in relationships. These couples discovered over time that the same 12 Steps that had helped them recover from different addictions individually also helped to build the health of their relationships.

The 12 Steps, 12 Traditions, and Principles of RCA are based on, and adapted from, those of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Our Philosophy

RCA is a tool for recovery and not an end in itself. It exists to promote caring, communication and intimacy. A quite successful formula of RCA is; my individual recovery plus your individual recovery plus our couple recovery equals a healthy recovering relationship.

We believe a relationship, or coupleship, is like an infant, needing constant nurturing and care from both partners. It is important that each partner accept mutual responsibility for the problems and/or progress of the relationship. We also believe it is helpful if each person recognizes his/her individual recovery as an important factor for couple recovery.

The symbol of RCA is a three-legged stool. These legs can represent either; our individual recovery, our partner's recovery, and our relationship recovery. Or; communication, commitment and caring. Or; me, my partner and our Higher Power. Each leg provides important support for the stability, serenity, and intimacy we seek.

We define sobriety as the ability to remain in commitment to the relationship. We believe that we achieve sobriety by working the 12 Steps of RCA *together*.

Slips or relapses occur when we question our commitment, refuse to accept mutual responsibility for our problems, get into blaming behavior, and/or stop working the program together.

Usually we will know when slips occur because we become distant from our partner, going into that land of escape or numbness in a variety of ways we have probably known since childhood. This distance may lead to slips in our individual recovery as we revert to old ways of coping with our loneliness. Slips in our individual addictions affect our relationships, obviously, but may not be slips in a couple recovery if we are honest about them with our partner and admit our personal responsibility for them.

Who May Come?

Any couple seeking to establish and/or restore commitment, communication, and caring, thus developing new intimacy in their relationships, may consider themselves members of RCA.

It is not a requirement that either one, or both, members of the coupleship already be involved in an individual 12 Step program. However, frequently one member is working their own 12 Step program, and often both are.

Regardless of either partner's previous experience with any other 12 Step Program(s), working the Steps *together*, as a couple, in RCA is a unique experience.

RCA is a safe place to begin a healing process and offers support for continued individual work.

We believe each member of the couple needs to take responsibility for the dysfunction of the relationship. We do not seek to blame our partner. Our partners may have chosen to medicate the pain of their loneliness with various addictions. As two people, however, we both bring family-of-origin messages, abuse experience, expectations, abilities, and individual coping mechanisms (including addictions) into the relationship. We must each take responsibility for our own part.

We are not saints, our love is not perfect, our energy not unbounded, nor our relationships ideal. There is no such thing as the ultimately caring and nurturing partner or perfect intimacy.

The point is that we are willing to grow together along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection. In our spirituality we claim the goal of greater caring, communication and intimacy.

LOCAL MEETING CONTACT INFORMATION

For More Information about R.C.A. and more meeting locations Call (510) 663-2312 or visit our web site at <http://www.recovering-couples.org/>