

Relationship support services

All couples want to have a successful and rewarding relationship. Having difficulties and challenges is a normal part of sharing your life with others. The way we deal with these challenges will affect our relationships. Sometimes, it is difficult to talk to your partner about some issues. You may need outside help to resolve problems and ensure your relationship stays healthy and strong.

Signs of relationship breakdown

Be aware of the early warning signs of relationship breakdown and be prepared to act. It can help you resolve conflict. Early warning signs of problems include:

- No longer doing things together – living parallel lives
- Recurring arguments that are never resolved
- Feeling dissatisfied and unhappy
- Being preoccupied with interests outside the relationship, leading to one partner feeling neglected
- Complaining of loss of feelings for each other
- Becoming emotionally or sexually involved with someone outside the relationship
- Feeling tired and less able to meet responsibilities at work
- Arguments over parenting
- Arguments over money.

Professional help for relationship issues

If your relationship has some of the early warning signs, it is time to seek advice. The sooner you act on issues, the easier they will be to resolve. Some relationships involve violent behaviour and abuse. If you suffer any form of violence, seek help immediately.

Types of support and assistance available

A variety of relationship support services are available through specialised counselling agencies and through private providers.

Counselling

Counsellors can help you sort out what the problems are and identify ways to mend your relationship. There is widespread agreement among researchers that counselling is effective in 60 to 70 per cent of cases. Counselling programs also help people who are separating to deal with their grief and anger and move on with their lives.

Family mediation

Family mediators are helpful when couples have decided to separate. They assist separating couples to make choices and plans regarding children, property and finance. They provide a supportive environment and help people talk to each other to sort out the issues, come up with acceptable solutions and make mutually satisfactory agreements.

Sexual advice services

There are specialist counselling services available for individuals and couples who wish to address their sexual concerns.

Relationship check-up services

These services help couples explore and strengthen their relationship and prepare for the future together – for example, pre-marriage and pre-parenthood courses.

Relationship skills

There are courses and seminars to help people learn relationship skills, get support, and explore similar experiences and responses with others. Courses are aimed at couples who intend to marry or live together, as well as those in established relationships.

Parenting skills

Family skills courses for parents of young children and teenagers are designed to improve family life and to help parents feel more confident about their parenting.

Telephone counselling

Relationships Australia provides counselling over the phone for people in Victoria who are isolated geographically or due to physical or other circumstances. The telephone number is 1800 817 569 (this is a freecall number).

Family violence interventions

Services to assist those with violence or abuse issues in their relationships include counselling for couples at risk of violence, assistance to secure the safety of victims of family violence, and therapy for those who use abuse and violence.

Separation courses

Courses can help people who have separated move forward, and can also help children deal with their feelings and experiences when their parents separate.

Lifestyle transition courses

Lifestyle transition courses are aimed at different life stages, such as looking after your relationship when you become a parent, leaving the workforce, or getting back in touch with each other when the children have left home.

Stepfamily support

Family counsellors can help people who are in stepfamilies or who may be considering joining a stepfamily.

Gambling support services

There are free, confidential counselling services available for problem gamblers, partners and family members. Individual and group sessions are available.

Counselling provided by employers

Some organisations offer programs for employees who may develop personal problems that interfere with job performance. These programs can involve a wide range of services, depending on the needs of the employee and their family.

Child Contact Service

This service provides safe and positive contact arrangements for children whose parents are separated.

Where to get help

- Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA) National Register (Family and Relationship Therapy) Tel. (03) 9486 3077
- Relationships Australia Tel. 1300 364 277
- Family Relationship Advice Line, Australian Government Tel. 1800 050 321
- Gambler's Help Tel. 1800 858 858
- National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence Counselling Service Tel. 1800 200 526
- WIRE Women's info and referral Tel. 1300 134 130

Things to remember

- Get in early. Prevention is always better than cure.
- All couples face problems and challenges in their relationships.
- There is a range of relationship support services available.
- If you are experiencing abuse or violence, seek help immediately.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

Relationships Australia Victoria

Content on this website is provided for education and information purposes only. Information about a therapy, service, product or treatment does not imply endorsement and is not intended to replace advice from your doctor or other registered health professional. Content has been prepared for Victorian residents and wider Australian audiences, and was accurate at the time of publication. Readers should note that, over time, currency and completeness of the information may change. All users are urged to always seek advice from a registered health care professional for diagnosis and answers to their medical questions.

For the latest updates and more information, visit www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Copyright © 1999/2012 State of Victoria. Reproduced from the Better Health Channel (www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au) at no cost with permission of the Victorian Minister for Health. Unauthorised reproduction and other uses comprised in the copyright are prohibited without permission.