

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 we really let our partners know what we have done or what we are feeling and thinking (who we are), we will be abandoned.
4. It is easier to hide or medicate our feelings through compulsive behaviors than it is to express them.
5. Being enmeshed and totally dependent on each other is perceived as being in love.
6. We find it difficult to ask for what we need, both individually and as couples.
7. Being sexual is equal to being intimate.
8. We either avoid our problems or feel we are individually responsible for solving the problems we have as couples.
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 good couples 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 individual responsibilities.
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 couples.
18. We repeat patterns of dysfunction from our families of origin.

RCA Tools of Recovery

We find these recovery tools useful for restoring and sustaining the commitment, intimacy, and joy in our coupleship:

1. Attending and sharing at meetings
2. Calling a Meeting of Two
3. Calling a Moratorium or "Time-Out"
4. Conflict resolution contracts and written agreements
5. Developing a support system within and outside of RCA
6. Using "I" statements
7. Listening and communicating
8. Reading and working the steps
9. Reading recovery literature
10. Doing service
11. Sponsorship
12. Using the Safety Guidelines

Details on these tools are in the RCA basic text: *Recovering Couples Anonymous: A Twelve-Step Program for Couples* at page 106.

For more information:

1. Visit our Website: www.recovering-couples.org
2. Call RCA at: 1-877-663-2317
3. E-mail RCA at: info@recovering-couples.org
4. Write RCA at RCA, 15 Sea Bridge Way, Alameda, CA, 94502, USA

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Recovering Couples Anonymous

Outreach Pamphlet



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Who We Are

We are couples committed to restoring healthy communication, caring, and greater intimacy to our coupleships. We suffer from many problems, 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 coupleships and seek to build intimacy together. We have all sought healing in Recovering Couples Anonymous (RCA).

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

Our History

Recovering Couples Anonymous was founded in the fall of 1988 in Golden Valley, Minnesota. Several couples completed a seminar which focused on working the Twelve Steps in intimate relationships. RCA groups were formed independently in California at about the same time. Couples from the groups discovered over time that the same Twelve Steps that had helped them recover individually from different addictions also helped to build the health of their coupleships.

Our Philosophy

From the Fourth Edition of the RCA basic text:
Recovering Couples Anonymous: A Twelve-Step Program for Couples at page 6 (Our Philosophy in a Group Reading Format).

In RCA, we believe that a 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 or progress of the coupleship, and furthermore, that both recognize their own individual development and recovery as essential factors for couple recovery.

In RCA we think of our lives in coupleships as being represented by a three-legged stool: commitment, communication and caring. All are important “legs” to the serenity, stability, and intimacy we each seek. The legs can also represent our individual recovery, our partner’s recovery, and our coupleship recovery.

We all have family-of-origin issues and a history of past relationships. We may not have gotten what we needed—emotionally, physically, mentally, or spiritually—when we were growing up. There may have been physical, sexual, spiritual, or emotional abuse. There may have been abandonment or neglect. We bring “baggage” to the coupleship.

Thus, we deal with memories of past hurts, misbehavior, and perhaps vows violated. Blaming our partners is likely the most devastating aspect of dysfunctional relationships. Blaming becomes so second nature that we are often unaware when we do it.

We are each responsible for the absence of intimacy between us. As soon as we accept responsibility, we are ready for RCA recovery. Each person must act as if that individual carries 100% of the responsibility for intimacy in the coupleship, since the only thing we can change is ourselves, certainly not our partner.

Without help our anger, hurt, and mistrust are too great for us. At RCA meetings we learn how the program works, how to practice the Twelve Steps together as a couple, and how to replace old unhealthy behavior patterns with healthy ways of relating. The Steps teach us how to look at our “baggage” and how to reverse the process of blame.

RCA Membership

The only requirement for RCA membership is a desire to remain in a committed relationship.

Ultimately, we feel it is important for both members of a couple to be involved in individual recovery, or other spiritual work, for real progress to be made in the coupleship. It is not, however, a requirement to get started in couple recovery. RCA is a safe place to begin that healing process, and it offers support for continued individual work. We refuse no couple who wishes to recover.

Each partner needs to take responsibility for the dysfunction of the coupleship. We do not seek to blame our partners. Our partners may have chosen to medicate the pain of their loneliness with various addictions. We do not seek to take responsibility for these behaviors. As two people, however, we both bring family-of-origin messages, abuse experiences, expectations, abilities, and individual coping mechanisms (including addictions) into the relationship. We must take responsibility for these behaviors and learn new ways to deal with them.

Many of us had discovered that we expected our partners to solve our own family-of-origin or other individual issues. We were often angry with our partners because they didn’t resolve feelings that actually belonged to us individually. Unless our individual recoveries are strong, and we can take ownership of our “baggage,” couple recovery will be difficult. In many ways, *couple* Twelve-Step work depends on and accompanies *individual* Twelve-Step work.

This requires a strong commitment to the Twelve-Step process. We strongly suggest that both members of the coupleship be in individual Twelve-Step programs. Both members are encouraged to be open to the Twelve-Step process and be willing to learn more about it.