

# *The North Fulton Marriage Newsletter*

Volume 4 – 2010

## **Marriage and Addiction**

Folks, the North Fulton Marriage Newsletter is now three years old. Can you believe that? A lot has happened for us in three years, including the opening of our second location in Peachtree City in 2009. I would like to thank all of you that have supported us and referred to us over the past four years. As I stated in the January 2010 newsletter, we can't grow this business without you, thank you! The Peachtree City office has been a huge blessing, so much so that I am excited to announce we are opening a third location in Gainesville, Georgia, in May of this year. Hello to Hall County and Lake Lanier!

Very early in my counseling training, my supervisors taught me that marriage counseling will be simply ineffective for couples if one or both of the spouses have an untreated substance abuse or substance dependence problem. So, if a couple comes in for an initial marriage counseling session, and it becomes apparent that an addiction problem is in play, the marriage counselor must make this determination and in turn make an appropriate referral for substance abuse evaluation or treatment. This problem must be addressed and treated before marriage counseling is going to have any chance to be effective. In my practice as a marriage counselor, I have the unique experience of also having a great deal of knowledge about addiction and substance abuse. For the past several years I have done extensive work as a court related drug and alcohol evaluator. So, when couples come in for marriage counseling, I can pick up pretty quickly if addiction is part of the problem. Inherently, if one spouse has a problem with substance abuse, this is impacting the marriage relationship, whether the couple understands this or not. Some couples may just think that their marriage is flawed, and not even realize that substance abuse is a large part of the problem. One spouse may be enabling or supporting the other spouse's behavior, hence keeping a dysfunctional system working, sometime over a period of many years. Some couples come in for marriage counseling fully aware that addiction or substance abuse is ruining their marriage. They both may see marriage counseling as a way to reach out for help. This is good thing.

If you are reading this and any part of your soul or being can recognize that you may have a problem with addiction, then for the sake of yourself and your marriage, seek out help. You may have no idea how much substances are impacting your ability to be a present spouse and/or parent. I quite recently confronted a marriage counseling client with a long history of substance abuse problems by telling the client the following: "You have a relationship with drugs but not with your spouse." I hope that hits home. It should for just about anybody. The thing is, people that suffer from substance abuse problems, are just people. It does not mean that they don't love, care and think about others, though it may seem that way on the outside. They simply need some help, understanding and an opportunity to gain insight into their relationship with drugs and/or alcohol. Don't allow substances to ruin your marriage or keep you from being the parent you need to be, and more importantly, can be. I believe God wants us all to be fully present and alive in our relationships and we simply cannot do that if we are a slave to substances. There are plenty of avenues for substance abuse help out there. If you or your spouse need help, then make the call to a licensed professional. If they can't help you then they will find someone that can. Make an effort to change yourself and your marriage, forever.

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