

Characteristics of Functional and Dysfunctional Couples

(from Recovering Couples Anonymous at <http://recovering-couples.org>)

Dysfunctional: Being together and unhappy is safer than being alone.

Functional: Being together brings us joy and happiness.

Dysfunctional: It is safer to be with other people than it is to be alone and intimate with our partner.

Functional: Being alone and intimate with our partner is as safe as being with other people.

Dysfunctional: If I really let my partner know what I've done or what I'm feeling and thinking (who I am), (s)he will leave me.

Functional: When I really let my partner know what I've done or what I'm thinking (who I am), it increases our intimacy. It's met with acceptance.

Dysfunctional: It is easier to hide (medicate) our feelings through addictive/compulsive behavior than it is to express them.

Functional: We no longer need to hide and medicate our feelings through our addictive/compulsive behavior. We can express our feelings appropriately.

Dysfunctional: Being enmeshed and totally dependent with each other is perceived as being in love.

Functional: Being interdependent adds strength to the relationship.

Dysfunctional: We find it difficult to ask for what we need, both individually and as a couple.

Functional: We are learning to ask for what we need, both individually and as a couple.

Dysfunctional: Being sexual is equal to being intimate.

Functional: Being sexual enhances our relationship (increases our intimacy).

Dysfunctional: We either avoid our problems or feel we are individually responsible for solving the problems we have as a couple.

Functional: We are learning to face our problems and not to feel individually responsible for solving the problems we have as a couple.

Dysfunctional: We believe that we must agree on everything.

Functional: We believe we don't have to agree on everything.

Dysfunctional: We believe that we must enjoy the same things and have the same interests.

Functional: We believe we can have different interests and enjoy different things and enjoy being together.

Dysfunctional: We believe that to be a good couple we must be socially acceptable.

Functional: We don't have to be socially acceptable.

Dysfunctional: We have forgotten how to play together.

Functional: We can play and have fun together.

Dysfunctional: It is safer to get upset about little issues than to express our true feelings about larger ones.

Functional: We are learning to express our true feelings about larger issues, and we are learning to resolve conflict.

Dysfunctional: It is easier to blame our partners than it is to accept our own responsibility.

Functional: We are learning to accept our individual responsibility.

Dysfunctional: We deal with conflict by getting totally out of control or by not arguing at all.

Functional: We are learning to deal with conflict and to fight fairly.

Dysfunctional: We experience ourselves as inadequate parents.

Functional: We accept our limitations as parents.

Dysfunctional: We are ashamed of ourselves as a couple.

Functional: We are proud of ourselves as a couple.

Dysfunctional: We repeat patterns of dysfunction from our families-of-origin.

Functional: We are recognizing and breaking the patterns of dysfunction from our families-of-origin.