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Best Careers 2011: Marriage and Family Therapist

As one of the 50 Best Careers of 2011, this should have strong growth over the next decade

By [HENRY CLAY WEBSTER](#)
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The rundown:

While some counselors focus on the behavior of an individual, marriage and family therapists go a step further, addressing mental-health issues within the context of the family. By counseling couples, families, or individuals, marriage and family therapists tackle a host of problems: adult schizophrenia, substance abuse, anorexia, and marital conflict. Today, marriage and family therapy is considered a "core" mental-health profession, alongside social work, psychiatric nursing, psychology, and psychiatry. More than 1.8 million people are now receiving treatment from a marriage and family therapist.

[See a list of [The 50 Best Careers of 2011.](#)]

The outlook:

As this field matures, the number of marriage and family therapists has surged. Demand is expected to increase in the future, with employment in this profession expected to rise 14 percent from 2008 to 2018, according to the Labor Department. Fueling part of the growth is a more widespread acceptance of the field, which makes people in need more willing to seek out such counseling.

Money:

Marriage and family therapists' median annual earnings were \$46,920 in 2009, the Labor Department reported. The top 10 percent made more than \$73,610 a year, while the lowest-paid 10 percent earned less than \$29,270 annually.

Upward mobility:

Marriage and family therapists with doctorates are in better position to advance in the field. The advanced degree makes it easier to assume managerial positions or become teachers or researchers.

Activity level:

Marriage and family therapists work in prisons, universities, inpatient facilities, and private practices, as well as other settings. Flexible hours can be important because working families often need to make appointments during the evening or on the weekends. Counseling is often conducted in a

private office.

[See a list of [the best social service careers](#).]

Stress level:

The stress level will vary depending on the specialty and the patients, but it can be quite high.

Education and preparation:

To enter the field, candidates can obtain a master's degree, a doctorate, or complete a postgraduate clinical training program. Two years of supervised clinical work is typically required before a therapist takes a licensing exam.

[Find [online degree programs in social services](#).]

Real advice from real people about landing a job as a marriage and family therapist:

Those interested in this vocation need interpersonal skills such as team-building abilities, "relational skills, an interest in being in a helping profession, and [must] be somebody that can be personable but also doesn't have to dominate conversations," says Larry Barlow, executive director of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy's Florida division. "You have to listen to clients most of the day, so someone who is too extroverted might not be good at that."

Suggested job searches: [Counselor jobs](#) | [Clinical Therapist jobs](#) | [Therapist jobs](#) | [Mental Health Therapist jobs](#) | [Social Worker jobs](#) | [Senior Therapist jobs](#)

EDITOR'S PICKS

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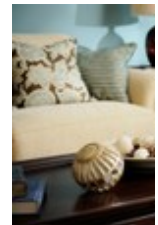
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