

Plymouth Couples Therapist Renee Segal Explains Gray Divorce and Marital Quiet Quitting on Health Chatter Podcast

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Evolve Therapy founder outlines why long marriages unravel after the children leave home, and how couples can repair the connection.

Renee Segal, MA, LMFT, founder of Plymouth-based Evolve Therapy, appeared On October 23, 2026 as a featured guest on the Health Chatter podcast to discuss gray divorce, the rise in divorce among adults 50 and older. Segal, a couples therapist certified in Emotionally Focused Therapy as both a therapist and supervisor, also addressed "quiet quitting," a pattern in which long-married partners stay together but emotionally withdraw from the relationship.

The conversation comes as later-life divorce draws growing attention from researchers. Sociologists at Bowling Green State University's National Center for Family and Marriage Research found that the divorce rate among adults 50 and older doubled between 1990 and 2010. By 2010, roughly one in four divorces in

the United States involved someone in that age group.

During the episode, Segal described the trend through the lens of Emotionally Focused Therapy, which evaluates whether partners are accessible, responsive and engaged with one another. She explained that the demands of raising children often mask emotional distance in a marriage, and that the gap becomes visible once couples reach the empty-nest stage.

"When you're raising kids, people get a lot of emotional needs met from their kids, the sports, all of the other things," Segal said. "What happens at midlife is that they turn toward each other. And if their partner hasn't been there, they might decide after all this time, I don't want to do this anymore."

Segal identified three leading drivers of gray divorce from her clinical experience: a sustained lack of emotional engagement, a decline in the cultural stigma once attached to divorce, and affairs that one partner chooses not to work through. She also pointed to women's greater financial independence, a factor the Bowling Green researchers likewise associate with rising later-life divorce. Quiet quitting, she said, often occurs when a spouse decides divorce is too difficult, or conflicts with religious commitments, and instead remains in what she called an empty-shell marriage.

Segal emphasized that conflict alone does not predict divorce. The distinguishing factor, she said, is whether couples return to an argument and repair it.

"Every couple has conflict. It's normal," Segal said. "What secure couples do well is they repair. They come back and they say, 'Hey, I was out of line there,' or 'I didn't handle myself well and I'm sorry.' What couples are really asking is, 'Are you going to be there if I need you?'"

The discussion also covered how adult children and grandchildren navigate family gatherings after a later-life separation, the loss of shared friendships that often follows a divorce, and the strain of caregiving as spouses age. Segal noted that most couples who enter couples therapy at her practice remain together. For younger couples, she recommended premarital counseling and "Hold Me Tight: Seven Conversations for a Lifetime of Love" by Dr. Sue Johnson, the developer of Emotionally Focused Therapy.

Health Chatter is a podcast focused on community and personal health topics, hosted by Dr. Stan Shanedling and Clarence Jones with medical advisor Dr. Barry Baines. The show is sponsored by HUEMAN Partnership. The gray divorce episode is available at healthchatterpodcast.com and on major podcast platforms.

Evolve Therapy offers couples counseling, discernment counseling and affair recovery services at its

Plymouth office and through online sessions for clients across Minnesota.

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Evolve Therapy

Evolve Therapy is a couples counseling practice in Plymouth, MN, serving the Twin Cities in person and online. Specializing in Emotionally Focused Therapy, Evolve offers couples counseling, affair recovery, premarital counseling and individual therapy.

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