

Why today spells trouble for couples

Sophie Freeman

Today is one of the busiest days for people seeking help with their relationship — or to end it altogether, according to therapists and divorce lawyers.

“The first Monday in September is often a very busy time for couple therapists because many people wait to seek help, hoping the holiday will sort out the issues,” said Susanna Abse, consultant psychotherapist and author of *Tell Me The Truth About Love*.

“But, if despite the sun and sangria you still come back angry, disappointed and alienated many couples know that it’s time to call in the couple therapist.”

People also seek out therapy at this time of the year because “September often represents a time of renewal”, she said.

Joanna Harrison, a couples therapist and author of *Five Arguments All Couples (Need To) Have* said September can be “a time of losses” that can “stir up feelings in the couple” as well.

“Whether that’s children going off to university, or kids starting school, or children going to secondary school, actually those things are a big deal and couples therapy might be a space where those feelings need to be processed.

“Because if we just pretend that we’re not feeling the losses it kind of builds up.”

Rachel Freeman, a partner in the family law team at Kingsley Napley, London, said many people try to avoid making life-changing decisions before significant family occasions, such as the summer holidays, particularly if children or elderly relatives are involved.

“In general, what I see is that people want to minimise the hurt and upset caused by their decision to divorce; most people are sensitive to timing.”

Many parents will not have the headspace over the summer to “think about the cracks in their relationship until the children are back at school”, she added.

Exams are another factor, Freeman said, and it is not uncommon for people to agree to

wait several years until their children have finished their education before separating.

David Allison, of the London law firm Family Law in Partnership, said: “Cynics might say the spike in divorce enquiries in September, like January, is because couples have spent time together, often with their children, and realise they don’t really like each other.

“However, I think it is more about people getting back to every day life and facing challenges they have been putting off.

“Whether it is the start of a new year or a new school term, it is often a time when it feels right to make changes.”