

Syllabus

Course Overview

This course is delivered in the GuidedPath format. Couples work is a unique specialization within the field of marriage and family therapy. It is both exciting and challenging work. Sometimes partners are not on the same page about the nature and extent of the challenges they face as a couple. During periods of uncertainty, it is not uncommon for one or both partners to question the continuation of the relationship. It is important for marriage and family therapists to understand presenting problems in the wider context of a couple's extended families, communities, and social and cultural backgrounds.

Over the last several decades, values and beliefs have evolved, and family and couple formations have changed as well. A family may be headed by an opposite-sex or same-sex couple, or an unmarried couple. This course engages couples work while being mindful of diversity and contemporary issues of society.

Seven current systemic approaches to couples and marital therapy are examined in this course. This course considers the underlying assumptions, tenets, and beliefs of various approaches to couples and marital work. Application of relationship-oriented theories and evidence-based practices within the context of the therapist role is a key component of this course's overall objectives.

Adobe Connect Activities

This course requires learners to participate in synchronous online meetings or deliver asynchronous presentations using Adobe Connect. If you require the use of assistive technology or alternative communication methods to participate in these activities, please contact DisabilityServices@capella.edu to request accommodations.

Standards and Course Competencies

MFT5273 Course Competencies	Version 12 COAMFTE Standards
1. Apply a systematic family therapy model in assessment, treatment planning, and interventions when working with couples. Assessed by:	FCA 1: Foundations of Relational/

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • u04a1 Contemporary Challenges and Cultural Awareness • u06a1 Case Study/Role Play • u09a1 Case Study Summary MFT5273 Course Competencies	Version 12 COAMFTE Standards
	<p>Systemic Practice, Theories & Models</p> <p>FCA 7: Systemic/Relational Assessment & Mental Health Diagnosis and Treatment</p> <p><i>SLO-1. Knowledge and Research: Effectively integrate and apply research and theories in the practice of marriage and family therapy, including individual, systemic and relational theories; theories of individual and family development across the life span.</i></p> <p><i>SLO-3. Clinical Practice: Clinical application and practice of systemic theory relevant to family dynamics in the field of marriage and family therapy.</i></p>

MFT5273 Course Competencies	Version 12 COAMFTE Standards
<p>2. Analyze contemporary issues that are challenging for couple relationships.</p> <p>Assessed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • u04a1 Contemporary Challenges and Cultural Awareness • u06a1 Case Study/Role Play • u09a1 Case Study Summary 	<p>FCA 2: Clinical Treatment with Individuals, Couples and Families.</p> <p>FCA 8: Contemporary Issues</p> <p><i>SLO-3. Clinical Practice: Clinical application and practice of systemic theory relevant to family dynamics in the field of marriage and family therapy.</i></p>

MFT5273 Course Competencies	Version 12 COAMFTE Standards
<p>3. Analyze how individual diversity affects the dynamics of the couple and the therapeutic systems.</p> <p>Assessed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • u04a1 Contemporary Challenges and Cultural Awareness • u06a1 Case Study/Role Play • u09a1 Case Study Summary 	<p>FCA 3: Diverse, Multicultural and/or Underserved Communities</p> <p><i>SLO-2. Diversity and Multicultural competence: Demonstrates knowledge of culturally and ethnically sensitive matters in a variety of settings integrating concepts of advocacy and social justice.</i></p>
<p>4. Apply the ethical and legal standards of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT).</p> <p>Assessed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • u04a1 Contemporary Challenges and Cultural Awareness • u06a1 Case Study/Role Play • u09a1 Case Study Summary 	<p>FCA 5: Professional Identity, Law, Ethics & Social.</p> <p><i>SLO-4. Ethics: Understand and apply the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy Code of Ethics.</i></p>

MFT5273 Course Competencies	Version 12 COAMFTE Standards
<p>5. Communicate effectively through the appropriate application of grammar, punctuation, spelling, writing mechanics, and professional tone, while adhering to APA formatting and style.</p> <p>Assessed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • u04a1 Contemporary Challenges and Cultural Awareness • u06a1 Case Study/Role Play • u09a1 Case Study Summary 	

Course Competencies

(Read Only)

To successfully complete this course, you will be expected to:

- 1 Apply a systemic family therapy model in assessment, treatment planning, and interventions when working with couples.
- 2 Analyze contemporary issues that are challenging for couple relationships.
- 3 Analyze how individual diversity affects the dynamics of the couple and the therapeutic systems.
- 4 Apply the ethical and legal standards of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT).
- 5 Communicate effectively through the appropriate application of grammar, punctuation, spelling, writing mechanics, and professional tone, while adhering to APA formatting and style.

Course Prerequisites

Prerequisite(s): MFT5270.

Syllabus >> Course Materials

Required

The materials listed below are required to complete the learning activities in this course.

Library

The following required readings are provided in the Capella University Library or linked directly in this course. To find specific readings by journal or book title, use [Journal and Book Locator](#). Refer to the [Journal and Book Locator library guide](#) to learn how to use this tool.

- Addison, S., & Coolhart, S. M. (2015). [Expanding the therapy paradigm with queer couples: A relational intersectional lens](#). *Family Process*, 54(3), 435–453.
- Blow, A., Curtis, A., Wittenborn, A., & Gorman, L. (2015). [Relationship problems and military related PTSD: The case for using emotionally focused therapy for couples](#). *Contemporary Family Therapy: An International Journal*, 37(3), 261–270.
- D'Aniello, C., Nguyen, H. N., & Piercy, F. P. (2016). [Cultural sensitivity as an MFT common factor](#). *American Journal of Family Therapy*, 44(5), 234–244.
- Doherty, W., Harris, S., & Jason, L. (2016). [Discernment counseling for “mixed agenda” couples](#). *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 42(2), 246–255.
- Giammattei, S. V. (2015). [Beyond the binary: Trans-negotiations in couple and family therapy](#). *Family Process*, 54(3), 418–434.
- Gurman, A. S., Lebow, J. L., & Snyder, D. K. (Eds.). (2015). [Clinical handbook of couple therapy \(5th ed.\)](#). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Hertlein, K., & Piercy, F. (2012). [Essentials of Internet infidelity treatment](#). *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 38(s1), 257–270.
- Karris, M., & Caldwell, B. E. (2015). [Integrating emotionally focused therapy, self-compassion, and compassion-focused therapy to assist shame-prone couples who have experienced trauma](#). *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 23(4), 346–357.
- Nasim, R., & Nadan, Y. (2013). [Couples therapy with childhood sexual abuse survivors \(CSA\) and their partners: Establishing a context for witnessing](#). *Family Process*, 52, 368–377.
- Stavrianopoulos, K. (2015). [Enhancing relationship satisfaction among college student couples: An emotionally focused therapy \(EFT\) approach](#). *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy*, 14(1), 1–16.
- Stover, C. S., Meadows, A. L., & Kaufman, J. (2009). [Interventions for intimate partner violence: Review and implications for evidence-based practice](#). *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 40(3), 223–233.
- Wachtel, E. F. (2017). [The heart of couple therapy: Knowing what to do and how to do it](#). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

External Resource

Please note that URLs change frequently. While the URLs were current when this course was designed, some may no longer be valid. If you cannot access a specific link, contact your instructor for an alternative URL. Permissions for the following links have been either granted or deemed appropriate for educational use at the time of course publication.

- American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT). (2015). [AAMFT code of ethics](#). Retrieved from https://www.aamft.org/Legal_Ethics/Code_of_Ethics.aspx?WebsiteKey=8e8c9bd6-0b71-4cd1-a5ab-013b5f855b01

Suggested

The following materials are recommended to provide you with a better understanding of the topics in this course. These materials are not required to complete the course, but they are aligned to course activities and assessments and are highly recommended for your use.

Optional

The following optional materials are offered to provide you with a better understanding of the topics in this course. These materials are not required to complete the course.

Unit 1 >> Myths & Facts About Couples: What Is a Good Relationship?

Introduction

Prior to the family therapy movement initiated in the 1950s, couples therapy was most closely associated with the early marriage therapy movement. When family therapy took hold in the 1960s and 1970s, couples work came along for the ride. Currently, our field is known as Marriage and Family Therapy. However, many theoretical models historically focused on the family as a whole and not specifically on the marital or couple unit.

We will examine seven major approaches to couple and marital therapy work in this course: Emotionally focused therapy (EFT), Bowenian intergenerational coaching, object relations couple therapy, structural couple therapy, narrative couple therapy, solution-focused couple therapy, and brief strategic couple therapy.

In this course, you will learn about working with couples in our diverse, contemporary culture. We will cover a variety of theoretical paradigms and approaches to working with couples, and also look at specific situations that couples, therapists, and therapists encounter in their caseloads.

In Unit 1, we will explore what the research has to say about several widespread misconceptions about couples and marriage, and our own thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions about what constitutes a good relationship.

Learning Activities

u01s1 - Studies

Readings

Use the Capella University Library to complete the following:

- In [Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy](#):
 - Read Chapter 1, "The Theory and Practice of Couple Therapy," pages 1–18.
- In [The Heart of Couple Therapy](#):
 - Read Chapter 1, "Introduction: Dilemmas and Choices in Couple Therapy," pages 1–17.
 - Read Chapter 2, "What Is a Good Relationship?," pages 18–30.

u01s2 - Using Adobe Connect

In preparation for using Adobe Connect to conduct synchronous (live) or asynchronous (recorded) meetings in this course, complete the following:

- If you have not already done so, install an external or internal webcam and microphone on your computer, using their instructions for setup.
- Create and access your meeting room at any time from the **My Meetings** link in the courseroom.
- Instructions and tutorials are available from the [Using Adobe Connect](#) support page.

Note: If you require the use of assistive technology or alternative communication methods to participate in this activity, please email DisabilityServices@capella.edu to discuss accommodations.

u01d1 - Relationship Quiz

Take the Marriage Fact or Myth Quiz linked in the Resources. Explore two or three myths from the quiz that surprised you the most, and the implications of your discovering these ideas are actually myths in both your personal life and in your professional life as a couple therapist.

Response Guidelines

Read the posts of other learners and respond to at least two. Comment on the implications that they discovered after taking the Marriage Fact or Myth Quiz.

Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

[Myth or Fact Marriage Quiz](#) | [Transcript](#)

u01d2 - Examining Relationships

Most people learn about relationships by observing relationships among one's own family and circle of friends. In your post, complete the following questions:

- Describe a couple relationship (family or friends) that you admire.
- What about this couple is extraordinary to you?
- How are they an inspiration to you?
- Why does it appear that this relationship works so well?

Response Guidelines

Review your fellow learners' posts and respond to two of them. In each response, include the following:

- Ask questions about the relationship to better understand why it works.
- Offer an alternative possibility for why this may be such a strong relationship.

Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

Unit 2 >> Emotionally Focused Therapy, Bowen, and Object Relations Approaches

Introduction

Susan Johnson and Lee Greenberg developed emotionally focused couple therapy (EFT) as an experiential, systemic, and attachment-based therapy that views relationship distress as a result of unmet

attachment needs (Johnson, 2015). EFT looks to change negative interaction cycles into softer and more open responses in couples (Johnson, 2015).

One negative interaction cycle commonly seen in distressed relationships is the blamer–withdrawer cycle. The blaming partner searches for proximity by pursuing and attacking a partner. In response, the withdrawn partner shuts down, becoming distant. This negative interaction cycle maintains the insecure attachment bond as well as the relationship distress (Johnson, 2015). In the EFT process, three key change events take place, leading to a reorganization of interactions between partners and allowing them to express attachment needs more easily (Johnson, 2015).

Murray Bowen was an original pioneer of family therapy who developed an elaborate theoretical approach based on natural systems, including families (Baker, 2015). His approach is based on the idea that people need to balance the opposing forces of togetherness, or family oneness, and individual differentiation, in order to be healthy people (Baker, 2015). Bowen believed that people who are well-differentiated are open, adaptable, less emotionally reactive, less anxious, and more self-aware.

For Bowen, the problem that a couple brings to therapy is not necessarily the “presenting problem.” The role of the therapist is to coach people to be more differentiated as individuals as well as in their relationship (Baker, 2015). Bowen's belief is that people with similar levels of differentiation tend to partner in relationships (Baker, 2015). Even if the outward expression of personality characteristics is very different, Bowen believed that underlying levels of differentiation from family of origin would be similar. In his approach, if people are more differentiated, they will be less likely to have therapeutic problems. As people become less reactive and less emotional, the likelihood of either partner becoming symptomatic is likewise diminished. Clearly, the Bowenian approach tends to privilege the rational over the emotional (Baker, 2015).

We also explore object relations couple therapy in this unit. Object relations is a transitional model between individual psychology and family therapy. It stresses both the importance of individual development as well as relational development (Siegel, 2015). Much of object relations theory can be linked back to the work of Freud and psychoanalytic thought. It is important, from an object relations perspective, for clients to have an understanding of their relationships with primary caregivers growing up. In short, it is believed that people unconsciously replay aspects of these primary relationships in our current relationships in ways that lead to dysfunctional interactions (Siegel, 2015). This approach is ensconced in the notion that the past remains very important, causing or influencing a person's present and future conditions.

References

- Baker, K. G. (2015). Bowen family systems couple coaching. In A. S. Gurman, J. L. Lebow, & D. K. Snyder (Eds.), *Clinical handbook of couple therapy* (5th ed.) (pp. 246–270). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Johnson, S. M. (2015). Emotionally focused couple therapy. In A. S. Gurman, J. L. Lebow, & D. K. Snyder (Eds.), *Clinical handbook of couple therapy* (5th ed.) (pp. 97–128). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Siegel, J. P., (2015). Object relations couple therapy. In A. S. Gurman, J. L. Lebow, & D. K. Snyder (Eds.), *Clinical handbook of couple therapy* (5th ed.) (pp. 224–245). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Learning Activities

u02s1 - Studies

Readings

Use the Capella University Library to complete the following:

- In [Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy](#):
 - Read Chapter 4, "Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy," pages 97–128.
 - Read Chapter 8, "Object Relations Couple Therapy," pages 224–245.
 - Read Chapter 9, "Bowen Family Systems Couple Coaching," pages 246–267.
- Read Stavrianopoulos, K. (2015). [Enhancing relationship satisfaction among college student couples: An emotionally focused therapy \(EFT\) approach](#). *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy*, 14, 1–16.

u02d1 - Interview With Brent Bradley

After listening to An Interview with Brent Bradley (linked in the Resources), answer the following questions:

- Which aspects of Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) resonate with you, and which aspects do you disagree with?
- What is something interesting that you learned from this interview? Explain it in detail.
- How could you incorporate this approach with couples?

Response Guidelines

Read the posts of other learners and respond to at least two of them who took a stand that opposes your view. Comment on their understanding of the approach, asking questions for clarification.

u02d2 - Gonzalez Couple

Scenario

Gina and George have been married for 10 years and have two children, ages 5 and 3. They married after dating for four years, and had already begun their careers. Gina is 40 and works in advertising. George is 42 and works in banking.

After 10 years of marriage, they both report feeling "bored" in the relationship and less interested in each other. They rarely communicate and state there is not much time or desire for sexual intimacy with each other. When they do talk, they find themselves arguing over minor issues. They say that they still enjoy each other's company, but they do not spend a significant amount of time together even if they both have free time. Both Gina and George work full time and their evenings consist of parenting. They are upset by what they perceive as a lack of connection to each other.

Gina and George explained that when they were dating, and even early on in their marriage, they would travel, hike, and talk for many hours. They always made sure to find time for each other even when they were busy with work.

After reading the scenario, address the following in your post:

- Identify the strengths and resources that you feel this couple possesses.
- Describe and discuss their current relationship, including any current circumstances that are leading to distress.
- Describe what your counsel would be if you had to offer this couple some well-intended yet simplistic advice.
- Explain how this sort of advice would not be useful if these were your clients.

Response Guidelines

Review your fellow learners' posts and respond to at least two of them. In each response, comment on the strengths and resources that were identified. Offer an alternative course of action rather than simply giving advice for the couple.

Unit 3 >> Structural, Narrative, Solution-Focused, and Brief Strategic Approaches

Introduction

In this unit, we look at four different approaches to couples and marital therapy, starting with the work of Salvador Minuchin, a pioneer of family therapy. Minuchin's seminal ideas on family structure, hierarchy, subsystems, and boundaries are woven into the fabric of the field. Minuchin was a master at reframing, and he went to great lengths in treating couples and families with dignity and respect. He saw traditional psychiatric symptoms as being transactional phenomena between family members, and that change could occur by strengthening boundaries and realigning family structure so that symptoms were no longer necessary (Simon, 2015). In this unit, these ideas are specifically applied to work with couples.

Narrative therapy is an outgrowth of the postmodern influence in family therapy. It focuses on clients' stories about themselves and their lives (Freedman & Combs, 2015). Cornerstones of the narrative therapy approach are privileging a client's experience and engaging in a collaborative stance with the client against an externalized problem (Freedman & Combs, 2015). Narrative therapists see the retelling of narratives as an opportunity for people to create space for growth and for enhancing and more satisfying experiences and interactions. The role of the therapist is to co-create preferred stories that focus on client resources and empowerment, and to de-emphasize pathologizing or problem-saturated stories (Freedman & Combs, 2015). Influential ideas include "The person is not the problem, the problem is the problem." Externalizing the problem and therapeutic letter writing are powerful strategies in helping clients adopt more empowering client narratives that lead to a successful battle against the problem's influence and impact on their lives.

Solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT) is another approach, yet one of the most misunderstood of the brief therapies. SFBT is rooted in the Mental Research Institute (MRI) approach to brief therapy (Hoyt, 2015). The solution-focused therapist recognizes language as the tool by which realities are constructed (Hoyt, 2015). In language, new possibilities become available. SFBT does not subscribe to the idea that you must diagnose something in order to fix it (Hoyt, 2015). Instead, a wide range of behavior can be accepted as functional even if it is not considered the norm. However, SFBT is not about being overly positive or convincing people that they do not have problems, or that they should look on the bright side of life.

The brief strategic couple therapy (BSCT) approach is based on identifying the sequences in intimate relationships, featuring partners' repeated attempts to solve a problem that actually keeps the problem going or end up making it worse (Rohrbaugh & Shoham, 2015). A central assertion of BSCT is that a problem persists as a result of persons' well-intentioned attempts to solve them. The goal of BSCT is to

resolve the presenting complaint as efficiently and quickly as possible, and often involves seeing the partners individually even in the context of couple therapy (Rohrbaugh & Shoham, 2015).

References

Freedman, J., & Combs, G. (2015). Narrative couple therapy. In A. S. Gurman, J. L. Lebow, & D. K. Snyder (Eds.), *Clinical handbook of couple therapy* (5th ed.) (pp. 271–299). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Hoyt, M. F., (2015). Solution-focused couple therapy. In A. S. Gurman, J. L. Lebow, & D. K. Snyder (Eds.), *Clinical handbook of couple therapy* (5th ed.) (pp. 300–334). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Rohrbaugh, M. J., & Shoham, V. (2015). Brief strategic couple therapy. In A. S. Gurman, J. L. Lebow, & D. K. Snyder (Eds.), *Clinical handbook of couple therapy* (5th ed.) (pp. 335–357). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Simon, G. M. (2015). Structural couple therapy. In A. S. Gurman, J. L. Lebow, & D. K. Snyder (Eds.), *Clinical handbook of couple therapy* (5th ed.) (pp. 358–444). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Learning Activities

u03s1 - Studies

Readings

Use the Capella University Library to complete the following:

- In [*Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy*](#):
 - Read Chapter 10, "Narrative Couple Therapy," pages 271–299.
 - Read Chapter 11, "Solution-focused Couple Therapy," pages 300–332.
 - Read Chapter 12, "Brief Strategic Couple Therapy," pages 335–357.
 - Read Chapter 13, "Structural Couple Therapy," pages 358–384.

u03d1 - Reflection of Self-Identity

In the context of your own personal narrative, describe aspects of your cultural self-identity (that is, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, gender, and other demographic information) that you feel comfortable sharing.

Which aspects of that description influence your sense of self, positively or negatively? How does your family's cultural narrative influence the ways that you interact with others? How will differences in cultural self-identity between you and your clients impact the therapeutic relationship?

Response Guidelines

Read the posts of other learners and respond to at least two. Compare their posts to yours, noting where your answers are similar or different. Respond to what you noticed in your peers' posts that you had not previously considered.

Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

u03d2 - Therapist's Role

Select three couple therapy models from the following list:

- Emotionally focused couple therapy (EFT).
- Bowen family systems coaching.
- Solution-focused couple therapy.
- Narrative couple therapy.
- Structural couple therapy.
- Brief strategic couple therapy (BSCT).

For each model that you selected, briefly describe the model's assumptions and beliefs regarding therapeutic processes and change, and the role of the couple's therapist. What appeals to you about each of your selected theories? Which of these approaches could you see yourself employing as a therapist, and why?

Response Guidelines

Respond to the posts of at least two of your peers. Compare their posts to yours, noting where your answers are similar or different. Respond to what you noticed in your peers' posts that you had not

previously considered.

Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

Unit 4 >> First Sessions With Couples, and Partner Aggression

Introduction

First sessions with couples can feel like a “first date” in the sense that you are meeting the two partners for the first time and deciding if you feel comfortable with one another, and then deciding if you should arrange a second session.

One of the more challenging situations for couples therapists is partner aggression, intimate partner violence (IPV), and cycles of violence in couple relationships. It is important to understand your state's laws with respect to domestic violence, and to know the exact legal definitions and responsibilities with respect to issues of lethality (a threat to the self or another person expressed by a client).

This unit examines types of partner aggression and the practice of couple therapy when partner aggression is present, as well as ethical and legal considerations for couples therapists.

Learning Activities

u04s1 - Studies

Readings

Use the Capella University Library to complete the following:

- In [Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy](#):
 - Read Chapter 14, "Couple Therapy for Partner Aggression," pages 389–413.
- In [The Heart of Couple Therapy](#):
 - Read Chapter 4, "The First Session," pages 48–76.
- Read D'Aniello, C., Nguyen, H. N., & Piercy, F. P. (2016). [Cultural sensitivity as an MFT common factor](#). *American Journal of Family Therapy*, 44(5), 234–244.

- Read Stover, C. S., Meadows, A. L., & Kaufman, J. (2009). [Interventions for intimate partner violence: Review and implications for evidence-based practice](#). *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 40(3), 223–233.

u04s2 - Role Play and Case Study Preparation

For the Unit 6 assignment, you will work with two partners to do a role play of a couple's therapy session. You will assemble into groups of three, assigned by the instructor, in which you will take turns playing the therapist and the clients. Start now, in this unit, to prepare to create and role play a hypothetical case study as a therapist working with a couple who are new clients to you (you must use a couple, not an individual).

Collaborate in discussion with your group now to decide on a famous couple whom you all know well and on whom you can base the role play and case study. Your group can choose a couple from a well-known movie, TV show, or novel, but do not use your own relationship. A description of the case, a transcription of your questions and responses as the clinician, and a self-reflection paper analyzing the interview are due as one assignment in Unit 6.

The interview will be conducted using [Adobe Connect](#); explore this process to make sure you are prepared for your role play. Each segment of the role play—with one learner playing the therapist—should be at least 15 minutes long and should not exceed 20 minutes. This will allow the exercise to be conducted in roughly 1 hour for all involved. Allow time before and after to work out technical difficulties, introduce yourselves, and share any feedback or processing among your group after each interview is complete. The role play should proceed as if it were a single session with the same couple, even though you will rotate through the roles of each client and the therapist. The role play should be recorded and the recording made available to all team members afterward.

As a group, decide on a therapeutic model to use for this assignment. You will use the role play to practice assessments and interventions consistent with your chosen model. It would be worthwhile, before your group meeting, to develop a list of questions or interventions that may be both model-specific and related to the [Glossary of Foundational Clinical Skills \[PDF\]](#). If you are not the first therapist, you will need to track what has already been said and done in the role play and adapt your questions accordingly.

For best preparation and planning, thoroughly review the description and scoring guide for the Unit 6 Role Play and Case Study assignment before starting.

Assignment Context

In your work as a marriage and family therapist, it is important to be aware of how one's identified culture, personal beliefs, and values can impact your client's view on their presenting issues and your ability to be an effective therapist. In this assignment, you will apply a therapeutic model to explore some of the contemporary issues that many couples face. You will also analyze how those issues might be perceived differently, depending on one's identified culture.

Assignment Instructions

Select one of the scenarios and therapeutic models below:

- After an incident involving a gun at a local elementary school, a couple's 10-year-old son is afraid to attend school. The couple disagrees on how to handle the situation.
- A couple is having a very difficult time dealing with the husband's employment status. The husband was recently suspended without pay for forwarding jokes to a female coworker that were deemed "insensitive" and "inappropriate" by management.
- A husband and wife are struggling with challenges as the wife's mother is currently living with them for an undefined amount of time due to multiple chronic health issues.
- After an incident involving cyberbullying and a suicide attempt of a minor attending the local school, a couple disagrees about their children's usage of social media.

Therapeutic models:

- Emotionally focused couple therapy (EFT).
- Bowen family systems coaching.
- Solution-focused couple therapy.
- Narrative couple therapy.
- Structural couple therapy.
- Brief strategic couple therapy (BSCT).

Briefly explain your selected scenario and the therapeutic model you will use to approach the scenario. Explain how the model you chose would help this couple explore their issues. Describe the basic tenets and characteristics of the model as related to the selected scenario. Explain the target of intervention and theory of change management for your selected theory. What information is missing from the current scenarios? What information would you need to uncover in order to develop an effective intervention strategy?

None of the above scenarios provide much context for the clients' identified culture, personal beliefs, or values. Create 4–5 probing questions that are related to the selected couple's identified culture, spiritual beliefs, personal beliefs, and values, as well as aligned to the selected model.

Next, consider your own culture and your reactions to the scenario you chose to explore. Describe any core values or beliefs of your family of origin that shaped your personal identity. Describe your own demographics including gender, age, disability status, religious/spiritual status, ethnicity/race, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation. Identify the categories where you hold a cultural identity that is shared with the dominant culture. For example, are you an able-bodied person? If yes, then you share this identity with the dominant culture. Provide an example of how your identified culture and values might impact your perspective on the selected scenario.

Because the scenarios did not provide any cultural context for the clients, you can be creative and provide those details for the characters in your selected scenario. Then, using the literature, identify specific cultural considerations to be aware of when working with clients in that identified population.

In this assignment, be sure to:

- Describe the basic tenets and characteristics of the selected therapy model.
- Explain the target of intervention and theory of change management.
- Describe how missing information related to the presenting problem could facilitate a more complete case conceptualization.
- Create questions that probe client's identified culture, beliefs, or values.
- Characterize identified culture through personal demographics, values, and beliefs.
- Provide an example of how the therapist's personal background can impact their perspective with the selected scenario.
- Identify cultural considerations when working with clients.

Additional Requirements

- **Written communications:** Provide a logical and well-reasoned paper with correct use of spelling, grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and current APA style citations.
- **References:** At least 4 professional, scholarly references. Using the Masters in Counseling Research Guide will help to focus your research.
- **Length of paper:** 4–6 pages, not including cover page and references.
- **Format:** Use Times New Roman font, 12 point size.

Course Resources

[APA Style and Format](#)

[Masters in Counseling Research Guide](#)

u04d1 - Legal and Ethical Obligations

Scenario

The police have been called to the Olson household on three occasions. The couple has been court ordered to attend couples therapy. During a session with you as the therapist, one partner reported, "Life is not worth living if this relationship is over. If I cannot have you, then no one can have you!"

What are your legal and ethical obligations to this couple regarding mandated reporting and confidentiality, according to your state's requirements, and the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) code of ethics? Describe those obligations and some strategies or techniques to de-escalate clients' aggressive behavior or threats.

Response Guidelines

Read the posts of other learners and respond to at least two. Compare their posts to yours, noting where your answers are similar or different. Respond to what you noticed in your peers' posts that you had not previously considered.

Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

[American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy \(AAMFT\) Code of Ethics](#)

Unit 5 >> Infidelity, and Technology

Introduction

Infidelity is more common than people might think, and it presents a challenge for therapists because it can bring to the surface their own ideas and feelings regarding trust, adultery, and forgiveness in intimate relationships. Infidelity can be conceptualized in different ways; for instance, it could be defined as physical intimacy with somebody outside of the couple relationship, or emotional intimacy with someone outside of the couple relationship.

What may be considered acceptable behavior for some couples may be unacceptable for others. Advances in technology have changed how and when partners can communicate with each other and other persons, adding a layer of complexity to couple relationships that is also explored in this unit.

Learning Activities

u05s1 - Studies

Readings

Use the Capella University Library to complete the following:

- In [Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy](#):
 - Read Chapter 15, "Couple Therapy and the Treatment of Affairs," pages 412–444.
- In [The Heart of Couple Therapy](#):
 - Read Chapter 5, "The Individual in the System: A Critical Pathway to Change," pages 77–89.
 - Read Chapter 6, "Common Underlying Relationship Issues and How to Address Them," pages 90–102.
- Read Hertlein, K., & Piercy, F. (2012). [Essentials of Internet infidelity treatment](#). *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 38(s1), 257–270.

u05d1 - Infidelity

After reading the Hertlein and Piercy (2012) article, "Essentials of Internet Infidelity Treatment," describe your personal ideas on Internet infidelity.

In your post, address the following:

- Include your thoughts on how Internet infidelity can be harmful to a relationship. Are there instances where Internet infidelity is not harmful?
- Discuss how your experiences and beliefs around infidelity in general can be helpful to you as a therapist.
- Describe how your feelings and experiences regarding infidelity might impede the therapy process with some couples.

Be certain to include your personal beliefs and feelings on the topic of Internet infidelity.

Response Guidelines

Read the posts of other learners and respond to at least two of them. Being mindful and respectful of personal beliefs, comment on how their ideas and beliefs regarding infidelity could be helpful or harmful to the therapeutic process.

Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

[Essentials of Internet Infidelity Treatment](#)

u05d2 - Partners' Roles and Expectations Over Time

Ellen F. Wachtel, author of the textbook *The Heart of Couple Therapy*, states that a basic assumption of her work with couples is that partners can and do continue to change throughout their lives. While this makes a lot of sense, many therapists and clients endorse, with or without their awareness, the notion that personality is fixed or immutable, and that partners' expectations of their partners in a long-term relationship or a marriage should remain the same without revision, even for decades.

A couple, Ben and Allison, were married 15 years ago, and distributed various roles and tasks between them according to their strengths. Ben did all the outside work (mowing the lawn, cleaning the car, taking out the trash, and other tasks), whereas the kitchen was Allison's domain. They now have three children. From both Ben and Allison's perspectives, she is a good cook and knows her way around the kitchen, but has no patience in helping the kids do their homework. The result is that Allison is doing the cooking, and Ben is doing the schoolwork supervision, especially the math and science, with neither partner ever taking a break from these traditional gender-based duties and obligations expected by society. Secretly, both partners are becoming resentful of having to rigidly perform these duties with no flexibility or "tag team" between them.

When this issue is addressed in therapy, each begins to say that they would like a change from their "original contract" with each other, but then Ben quickly retreats from this by saying, "But she is such a good cook, way better than me," and Allison says, "I do not think I would last 5 minutes with the young ones when they are doing their homework."

- Based on the readings from this unit, how would you help Ben and Allison escape the rigid roles that each finds so suffocating at this point in their lives?
- How has gender socialization affected their perceptions, as well as your own perspective as their therapist, of what each partner can or should do, and how much a marriage can or should change or evolve over time? Cite specific sources to support your positions and points.

Response Guidelines

Respond to the posts of at least two of your peers. Compare their posts with yours, noting where your answers are similar or different. Respond to what you noticed in your peers' posts that you had not previously considered.

Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

Unit 6 >> Second Sessions, and Stepfamilies

Introduction

This unit looks at second sessions with couples and explores a common population: stepfamilies, or blended families. One of the most significant challenges people face is integrating children into a new relationship. There are potential challenges for the children, the couple, and the biological parents. It is important to be clear that families have a variety of ways of navigating the blending process.

As a therapist, it is important to check your own biases and assumptions when working with blended families, especially if you have come from a similar family situation. It can sometimes be challenging to remain neutral to every part of the system when you have had blended family experiences yourself.

Learning Activities

u06s1 - Studies

Readings

Use the Capella University Library to complete the following:

- In [Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy](#):
 - Read Chapter 17, "Therapy with Couples in Stepfamilies," pages 467–488.
- In [The Heart of Couple Therapy](#):
 - Read Chapter 7, "From the First to the Second Session: Clinical Illustrations," pages 103–135.

- Read Chapter 8, "The Genogram: A Window into the Psyche," pages 136–155.

u06s1 - Learning Components

- Explain the couple's presenting problem.
- Identify issues that affect the client relationship

u06a1 - Role Play and Case Study

As described in Unit 4, you will work with two partners to role-play a couple's therapy, using Adobe Connect to record the sessions. Choose one of the following models:

- Emotionally focused couple therapy (EFT).
- Bowen family systems coaching.
- Solution-focused couple therapy.
- Narrative couple therapy.
- Structural couple therapy.
- Brief strategic couple therapy (BSCT).

Your group can select a famous couple in a movie, television show, or novel from 2013 until the current day.

You will be placed into groups of three, assigned by the instructor. You will each take turns in the role of the therapist and clients. Before the group meeting, you should collaborate with your team to decide which couple/case you will be using so you are all familiar with the features of that couple on whom you can role-play and base the case study.

Conduct the interview with each client, using Adobe Connect. Each segment of the role play should be at least 15 minutes long and should not exceed 20 minutes. This will allow the exercise to be conducted in roughly 1 hour for all involved. Allow time before and after to work out technical difficulties, introduce yourselves, and share any feedback or processing you want after each interview is complete. The role play should proceed as if it were a single session with the same couple, even though you will rotate through the roles of clients and therapist. The role play should be recorded and the recording made available to all team members afterward.

You will use the role play to practice using the model. In this role play, you will develop questions based on the model chosen, assessments, and interventions consistent with your group's chosen model. Before the role play, you will develop a list of questions that are model-specific to use for your role play. You might also want to start thinking about appropriate interventions and assessments according to your model as well. If you are not the first therapist, you will need to track what has already been said and done in the role play and adapt your questions accordingly.

To complete this assignment, you will submit your case study and a reflection paper. Your case study and paper for this assignment should include the following sections:

Apply model-specific terminology and concepts to describe the case study.

- Which case study did you select?
- What is the current life situation of the family?
- Describe the current couple relationship and, if appropriate to your model, its history.

Assessment questions and interventions strategies align with selected clinical model.

- How do your assessment questions and intervention strategies align to the selected model?

Analyze how individual diversity affects the dynamics of the couple.

- What are the specific demographics and sociocultural influences that might impact the family system? (Including, but not limited to, influences of: gender, age, socioeconomic status, cultural background, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical ability, religious identity, immigration status.)

Analyze both the explicit and implicit issues that are challenging for this couple.

- What is the identifying issue or issues that led this couple to therapy?
- What implicit factors might impact the identified issue or problem?
- What are the transitions that the couple are undergoing or anticipating?

Create a plan to address or prevent any potential ethical issues in accordance with professional standards.

- What are the potential ethical issues?
- What methods or measures do you plan to put in place to prevent or mitigate any ethical issues?

Evaluate the ability to apply the selected therapy model to the case study.

- What worked well and what was challenging in using the selected model?
- What would you do differently next time?

Note: Keep in mind that what you focus on in your case study and the language you choose to describe your clients will be contingent on the therapy model you have selected to apply. You should relate your case study to concepts from your model.

If you require the use of assistive technology or alternative communication methods to participate in these activities, please contact email DisabilityServices@capella.edu to request accommodations.

Additional Requirements

- **Written communications:** Provide a logical and well-reasoned paper with correct use of spelling, grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and APA style citations.

- **References:** At least 4 professional, scholarly references. Using the Masters in Counseling Research Guide will help to focus your research.
- **Length of paper:** 4–6 pages, not including cover page and references.
- **Format:** Times New Roman font, 12 point size.

Note: Your instructor may also use the Writing Feedback Tool to provide feedback on your writing. In the tool, click on the linked resources for helpful writing information.

Course Resources

Glossary of Foundational Clinical Skills [PDF]

[APA Style and Format](#)

[Using Adobe Connect](#)

[Masters in Counseling Research Guide](#)

[Disability Services](#)

[Writing Feedback Tool](#)

u06d1 - Stepfamily Case

Scenario

Bill was married for 12 years to his wife Debbie, and they had three children together. Debbie passed away two years ago from cancer. She is survived by husband Bill, eldest daughter Cassie, age 11, middle son Daniel, age 9, and Vicky, age 7. Debbie's close friend Emma, whom Cassie knows well and calls "Auntie Em," became romantically involved with Bill about a year and half after Debbie died. Bill has proposed marriage to Emma and she has accepted. Vicky is okay with it and ready to call Emma "Mom" instead of "Auntie." Cassie and Daniel feel this is happening too fast and they regularly express their loyalty to their biological mother, saying that there is "no way" that they will ever call Emma "Mother." They fear that their father and Emma's marriage will inevitably begin the process of erasing their mother's memory from the house and their lives.

Based on this week's readings on stepfamilies and blended families, help Bill and Emma negotiate the formation of a couple relationship that is sensitive to the children's needs in accordance with their

respective feelings and developmental life cycle stages.

Response Guidelines

Read the posts of other learners and respond to at least two. Compare their posts to yours, noting where your answers are similar or different. Respond to what you noticed in your peers' posts that you had not previously considered.

Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

Unit 7 >> Legacies, Intercultural Couples, and "Mixed Agenda" Couples

Introduction

In the past four decades, social demographics have shifted dramatically in the US, and the trend toward marrying persons outside of one's own ethnic or racial group is on the rise (Karis & Killian, 2008; Killian, 2013). Differences or distinctions can stem from a variety of origins and social locations; nationality, culture, religion, and race are just a few of the ways that partners in intercultural relationships can distinguish themselves from each other.

Healthy intercultural couples do not subscribe to the notion or principle that partners need to be the same or similar in backgrounds for the relationship to succeed. Instead, "love can flourish wherever there is inclusion of crucial aspects of partners' cultural histories and identities, and a positive valuing of difference" (Killian, 2013, p. 515).

There is a great diversity of opinions regarding the role of religion and spirituality in psychotherapy. At one extreme are those who believe that religion and spirituality should have little or no role in the therapeutic process. Others would argue that if religion and spirituality are important to their clients, then it is their duty to join in, as this makes them part of the therapeutic process. Still others, at the other extreme, would see spiritual or religious issues as the center of most therapeutic presenting problems. Therapists should be aware of their own beliefs and biases around spirituality and religion, and work hard to not impose them on clients.

References

Karis, T., & Killian, K. D. (Eds.). (2008). *Intercultural couples: Exploring diversity in intimate relationships*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Killian, K. D. (2013). *Interracial couples, intimacy, and therapy: Crossing racial borders*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Learning Activities

u07s1 - Studies

Readings

Use the Capella University Library to complete the following:

- In [Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy](#):
 - Read Chapter 19, "Couple Therapy and Intercultural Relationships," pages 512–528.
- In [The Heart of Couple Therapy](#):
 - Read Chapter 9, "'The Things They Carry': Working with Legacy Issues," pages 156–187.
- Read Doherty, W., Harris, S., & Jason, L. (2016). [Discernment counseling for "mixed agenda" couples](#). *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 46(2), 246–255.

u07d1 - Religious Perspective in Therapy

Choose a religious or spiritual perspective that you know nothing about, and do some brief research on the Internet about this perspective. In your post, complete the following:

- Provide a short summary or overview of the religious or spiritual perspective.
- Imagine a couple comes to you, who embraces this same religious or spiritual perspective. Discuss how your newfound knowledge would be helpful in your work with this couple, as well as how it might be a deterrent. Be specific and provide examples.

Response Guidelines

Evaluate and assess the various ways that religion and spirituality can be part of the therapeutic process. Read the posts of other learners and respond to at least two of them. Comment on how their

understanding of this religious or spiritual perspective could be helpful or harmful to the therapeutic process. Please be respectful of others' beliefs when responding to this discussion post.

Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

u07d2 - Interracial Couple Case

Listen to the presentation **Interracial Couple Case Study Part 1** linked in the Resources, and review *Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy*, Chapter 19: “Couple Therapy and Intercultural Relationships” (pp. 512–528).

Regarding the case of Mary and Howard, in the role of therapy consultant or clinical supervisor, respond to the following questions about the therapeutic system formed by Denise the therapist, and Mary and Howard, in Part 1:

1. What is and is not being talked about in the therapy room? Why or why not?
2. How do Denise’s worldview and assumptions influence the therapeutic conversation?
3. As a supervisor, how might you intervene to increase Denise’s consciousness around her own racial and cultural identity, and any pride or shame issues?
4. How would you suggest the therapeutic system deepen the conversation and move into “uncharted waters”?

Response Guidelines

Respond to the posts of at least two of your peers. Compare their posts to yours, noting where your answers are similar or different. Respond to what you noticed in your peers' posts that you had not previously considered.

Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

[Interracial Couple Case Study Part 1](#) | [Transcript](#)

[Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy](#)

Unit 8 >> Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues

Introduction

The concepts of gender identity and sexual orientation are frequently confused and conflated by lay persons and by helping professionals. This unit works to help therapists understand and successfully differentiate these concepts, and become more comfortable working with gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, and queer (GLBTQ) partners in therapy. Therapists should be sensitive to homophobia and other oppressive cultural attitudes toward same-sex couples in society as well as examine their own biases.

Learning Activities

u08s1 - Studies

Readings

Use the Capella University Library to complete the following:

- In [*Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy*](#):
 - Read Chapter 18, "Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Issues in Couple Therapy," pages 489–511.
- Read Addison, S., & Coolhart, S. M. (2015). [Expanding the therapy paradigm with queer couples: A relational intersectional lens](#). *Family Process*, 54(3), 435–453.
- Read Giammattei, S. V. (2015). [Beyond the binary: Trans-negotiations in couple and family therapy](#). *Family Process*, 54, 418–434.

u08d1 - Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

Differentiated gender identity and sexual orientation are sometimes presenting issues in therapy. Summarize the current research on gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer (GLBTQ) issues. What are some considerations for therapists when working with clients that self-identify with these groups?

Response Guidelines

Respond to the posts of at least two of your peers. Compare their posts to yours, noting where your answers are similar or different. Respond to what you noticed in your peers' posts that you had not previously considered.

Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

u08d2 - Couple With Transgender Child

Scenario

Mark and Liz have been married for 17 years. Their 15-year-old son Michael has just announced to them that he is trans. They ask him, “Do you mean *gay*?” He shakes his head no and asserts he is trans and wants to explore transitioning to become a woman. The couple disagrees on whether or not they should let the extended family know about this, and are seeking information about trans persons and sexual identity from you.

Provide Mark and Liz an introduction to the topic of transgender identity and present three important questions for them to reflect on and consider as they move forward as a family.

Response Guidelines

Respond to the posts of at least two of your peers. Compare their posts to yours, noting where your answers are similar or different. Respond to what you noticed in your peers' posts that you had not previously considered.

Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

Introduction

This unit explores common challenges that therapists encounter in the course of couple therapy. It also examines ways that we can work with military couples. Persons who have been deployed to combat zones are at greater risk for developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and can experience increased rates of anxiety and depression following deployment (Monk, Ogolsky & Bruner, 2016).

Military personnel can present with both negative mental health outcomes and relational difficulties in therapy. Therefore, treatment is more likely to be effective when clinicians utilize a systemic perspective, and take social and family support into consideration when conceptualizing and planning interventions (Monk, Ogolsky, & Bruner, 2016).

Reference

Monk, J. K., Ogolsky, B. G., & Bruner, V. (2016). Veteran couples integrative intensive retreat model: An intervention for military veterans and their relational partners. *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy*, 15(2), 158–176.

Learning Activities

u09s1 - Studies

Readings

Use the Capella University Library to complete the following:

- In [The Heart of Couple Therapy](#):
 - Read Chapter 10, "Deepening Connections," pages 188–225.
 - Read Chapter 11, "Troubleshooting Common Challenges," pages 226–244.
- Read Blow, A., Curtis, A., Wittenborn, A., & Gorman, L. (2015). [Relationship problems and military related PTSD: The case for using emotionally focused therapy for couples](#). *Contemporary Family Therapy: An International Journal*, 37(3), 261–270.

Multimedia

- Complete [Interracial Couple Case Study Part 2](#), a continuation of Mary and Howard's therapy session with Denise in Unit 7. Listen in on this dialogue in preparation for creating your own therapeutic dialogue for the Unit 9 case study report assignment.

u09a1 - Case Study Report

For this assignment, you will demonstrate your understanding of how to apply a therapeutic model to a couple's session through a case study report. There are three parts of this assignment.

Part I: Selecting the Therapeutic Approach

After reading and selecting one of the two case studies in the Unit 9 Assignment Case Studies linked in the Resources, you will select a therapeutic model to complete the assignment. **You must select a different therapeutic model from the one you chose for previous assignments:**

- Emotionally focused therapy (EFT).
- Bowen family systems coaching.
- Solution-focused couple therapy.
- Narrative couple therapy.
- Structural couple therapy.
- Brief strategic couple therapy (BSCT).

In the description of the therapeutic model, include the following information:

- Analyze the couple's contemporary issue through the lens of the therapeutic model that you chose, including an explanation and application of the model's history, basic tenets, assumptions, beliefs, theories of change, and theory specific interventions, relevant to the presented issue and case study couple.
- Justify your the selection of therapeutic model for this couple.

Part II: Implementation Plan—Therapeutic Dialogue

In the second part of the assignment, you will create a 2–3 page therapeutic dialogue. A therapeutic dialogue format is similar to how a drama script is written, as it shows the conversation between characters. A therapeutic dialogue features a conversation among the therapist and the clients. The dialogue should showcase the specific questions, observations, and interventions that are accurate representations of the approach of the chosen model. A therapeutic dialogue is similar to the transcription of a portion of a therapeutic session.

Part III: Reflective Analysis

For the final part of this assignment, you will provide an analysis of the how your own personal beliefs, culture, and social factors might impact your work with this particular couple. In addition, address any considerations that would help to prevent or mitigate any potential ethical or legal issues when working

with the couple. Explain how your methods to help prevent ethical or legal issues align with professional standards for the field:

- Justify selection of a specific therapeutic model for couple intervention.
- Analyze the couple's contemporary issues through the lens of a selected therapeutic model.
- Apply appropriate questions and intervention strategies that align with a selected therapeutic model.
- Analyze how personal beliefs, culture, and social factors could impact the dynamics of the therapeutic relationship.
- Develop methods to prevent or mitigate any ethical and legal issues with alignment to professional standards in the field.

Additional Requirements

- **Written communications:** Provide a logical and well-reasoned paper with correct use of spelling, grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and APA style citations.
- **References:** At least 8 professional, scholarly references. Using the Masters in Counseling Research Guide will help to focus your research.
- **Length of paper:** 10–12 pages, not including cover page and references.
- **Format:** Times New Roman, 12 points.

Note: Your instructor may also use the Writing Feedback Tool to provide feedback on your writing. In the tool, click on the linked resources for helpful writing information.

Course Resources

[APA Style and Format](#)

Unit 9 Assignment Case Studies [PDF]

[Masters in Counseling Research Guide](#)

[Writing Feedback Tool](#)

u09d1 - Military Couple

Scenario

Jason, a 30-year-old white male, has returned from three tours of duty in the Middle East to his wife of 6 years, Christina, a 28-year-old white woman. They were married before his first deployment to Afghanistan. During the majority of their marriage, Jason has been stationed overseas, and they have communicated via Skype and gotten together for brief periods between deployments. Jason will be stateside for at least 2 years. Christina sees him as emotionally remote, quite nervous at times, and having trouble sleeping. She is not sure if he is experiencing traumatic stress, but it is possible.

Based on the readings for this unit, discuss three treatment objectives and accompanying interventions to help this couple's reintegration to life back at home.

Response Guidelines

Read the posts of other learners and respond to at least two of them. Comment on the treatment objectives that they chose to help this couple's reintegration to life back at home.

Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

Unit 10 >> Couples and Depression, Sexual Problems, and Medical Issues

Introduction

There are several ways to conceptualize sexual problems in couples therapy. One way is to assume that the sexual problems are the result of problematic relational dynamics. From this perspective, if you improve the relationship, the sexual issues tend to resolve themselves, which is pretty convenient, if or when that happens.

A second perspective holds that sexual problems can be seen as contributing to problematic relational dynamics. From this perspective, if you improve a couple's sex life, their relationship will improve. It is important to realize that because these two perspectives offer an "either/or" way of looking at people and couples, neither is necessarily true.

A "both/and" approach is probably best, acknowledging that sexuality is a crucial component in the couple relationship, and that sexual issues and interactions can impact a couple's sense of emotional intimacy, and vice versa. Many therapists feel comfortable addressing sexual problems in therapy because they view the sexual problems like any other symptom. Others view sexual problems as symptoms requiring more specialized treatment. Hence, therapists may make a referral to another helping professional such

as a doctor specializing in sexual and medical issues so that a physiological/medical problem can be ruled out. As therapists, rather than referring whenever we think we may become uncomfortable or anxious with a case, we should push ourselves to grow more comfortable working with a variety of presenting issues, including sexual ones.

Shame can be a difficult consequence of trauma, particularly when perpetrated cruelly and systematically by other human beings. “The default setting for insidious emotional trauma” (Cates, 2014, p. 45), shame is considered a key emotion that can exacerbate symptoms of traumatic stress and is a crucial emotion for therapists to address. This unit examines approaches to helping clients overcome feelings of shame so that they can begin to be comfortable in their own skin and with their sexuality.

Reference

Cates, L. B. (2014). Insidious emotional trauma: The body remembers.... *International Journal of Psychoanalytic Self Psychology*, 9(1), 35–53.

Learning Activities

u10s1 - Studies

Readings

Use the Capella University Library to complete the following:

- In [Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy](#):
 - Read Chapter 24, "Couple Therapy and Sexual Problems," pages 635–656.
 - Read Chapter 25, "Couple Therapy and Medical Issues," pages 659–680.
- Read Nasim, R., & Nadan, Y. (2013). [Couples therapy with childhood sexual abuse survivors \(CSA\) and their partners: Establishing a context for witnessing](#). *Family Process*, 52, 368–377.
- Read Karris, M., & Caldwell, B. E. (2015). [Integrating emotionally focused therapy, self-compassion, and compassion-focused therapy to assist shame-prone couples who have experienced trauma](#). *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 23(4), 346–357.

u10d1 - Sexual Issues in Therapy: Problems Versus Symptoms

Reflect on your reading on couples and sexual problems from Chapter 24 of the *Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy* text. In your post, consider the following scenario and make a case for one of the two perspectives.

Scenario

Consider a couple who comes to therapy and who have not had sex in two years. They also present with problems communicating, constant arguing, and a general feeling of being disconnected from one another.

- **Perspective 1:** In terms of case conceptualization, the lack of sex is the main problem and, if resolved, then the relationship will naturally improve. Therapy should focus on resuming sexual and nonsexual intimacy and, once improved, most if not all relationship issues (for example, communication, problem solving, trust) will also improve.
- **Perspective 2:** In terms of case conceptualization, the lack of sexual connection is only a symptom of underlying relationship issues. If you address and resolve the relationship issues (for example, communication, problem solving, trust), the frequency of sex and intimacy will naturally improve.

In your post, describe how each perspective could be valid in understanding the couple's situation.

Response Guidelines

Read the responses posted by other learners and respond to at least two. Comment on their efforts to embrace either Perspective 1 or 2. Ask questions and request clarifications for responses that are unclear. Was there anything in their posts that caused you to re-think your choice of perspective?

Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

[Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy](#)

u10d2 - Reflection on Theory and Practice

Scenario

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