



**Institute of Contemporary Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis**

**COUPLES THERAPY TRAINING PROGRAM**

**2022/2023**

Chair: Michael Wannon, PhD

Associate Chair: Catherine Bernard, PhD

*MEMBERS IN TRAINING ARE ASKED TO PURCHASE THE FOLLOWING BOOKS:*

Dana, D. (2018) The Polyvagal Theory in Therapy: Engaging the Rhythm of Regulation, New York/London: W.W.Norton & Company.

Fishbane, Mona DeKoven (2013). Loving with the Brain in Mind: Neurobiology and CoupleTherapy, New York: W.W.Norton & Company, Inc.

Morin, J. (1996). The Erotic Mind: Unlocking the Inner Sources of Passion and Fulfillment, New York: Harper.

Ringstrom, P. A. (2014). A Relational Psychoanalytic Approach to Couples Psychotherapy, New York: Routledge.

Scuka, R.F (2005). Relationship Enhancement Therapy: Healing Through Deep Empathy and Intimate Dialogue, New York: Routledge.

Siegel, J. P. & Solomon, M. (2004). Countertransference in Couples Therapy, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Shaddock, D. (2000). Context and Connections: An Intersubjective System Approach to Couples Therapy, New York: Basics.

Sharpe, S. S. (2000). The Ways We Love: A Developmental Approach To Treating Couples, New York: Guilford.

Solomon, M. and Tatkin, S. (2011). Love and War in Intimate Relationships, NewYork: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc.

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\*\*A Continuing Education certificate will be awarded for each Unit where there is 100% attendance. Partial credit is not possible.

\*\*The class meets from 11:30 – 2:30 in the office of the faculty member.

## UNIT 1

Faculty: Angela M. Snyder, PsyD  
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### **PHASES OF THE COUPLE TREATMENT THROUGH THE LENS OF ATTACHMENT, PSYCHOBIOLOGY, SELF PSYCHOLOGY, RELATIONAL THEORIES, CULTURAL CONTEXT, AND CLINICAL PRACTICE.**

This unit will illustrate the phases of couples therapy (beginning, middle, and end) in relation to developmental themes, relational wounds, and underlying core dynamics. We will explore how cultural variables and context, basic principles of neurobiology, empathic attunement, and related interventions can help couples negotiate their different perspectives, needs, and desires. Students will be encouraged to think of their own couple therapy cases when reading the assigned articles and participating in class discussions.

#### **September 7, 2022**

We will discuss essential considerations for beginning couple treatment. Specifically, we'll begin to understand developmental themes through listening to the current complaints of the couple, consideration of cultural factors, and attachment styles. We will track and comment on how the couple works toward sharing and empathizing with the others' vulnerabilities. Finally, we will assess the couple's ability to negotiate needs and desires.

Learning Objectives – Participants will be able to:

1. Identify how to begin a course of couple treatment from the first phone call through the first three sessions, including how to set-up expectations and boundaries for the couple treatment.
2. Describe goals of self-psychological couple therapy.
3. Articulate critical intake questions, including the George, Kaplan & Maine (1996) Adult Attachment Interview. Identify how they, along with their current complaints, provide an excellent tool for history taking and a preliminary assessment of their underlying needs and relational patterns that developed in their family of origin.
4. Identify two ways to build skills to intentionally address race-related stress and trauma in therapy with Black couples.

Solomon, M. & Tatkin S. (2011). Forward. In Love and War in Intimate Relationships. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company. pp. ix-xi.

Solomon, M. & Tatkin S. (2011). Introduction. In Love and War in Intimate Relationships. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company. pp.xiii-xxii.

Solomon, M. & Tatkin S. (2011). Chapter 1: Connection and Disconnection. In Love and War in Intimate Relationships. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company. pp. 3-18.

Solomon, M. & Tatkin S. (2011). Chapter 2: The Battlefield. In Love and War in Intimate Relationships. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company. pp. 19-33.

Solomon, M. & Tatkin S. (2011). Appendix B, The Adult Attachment Interview. In Love and War in Intimate Relationships. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company. pp. 233-235.

Kelly, Shalonda; Jeremie-Brink, Gihane; Chambers, Anthony L., and Smith-Bynum, Mia S. (2020.) The Black Lives Matter Movement: A Call to Action for Couples and Family Therapists. *Family Process* 59:1374-1388.

## **September 14, 2022**

We will explore additional factors important to the beginning phase of couple treatment, including guiding each person to deepen emotional awareness and expression, become more conscious of narratives and assumptions, and understand how this links to early losses, disappointments, and neglect. In addition, we'll begin to look at foundational psychobiological concepts and interventions.

Learning Objectives – Participants will be able to:

1. Explain how the empathic process can be a mutual process between therapist and patient(s) and how it can facilitate connectedness and healing.
2. Understand the importance of helping each partner to improve their ability to identify and express their emotions and narratives and begin to see how this connects to early attachment experiences and wounds.
3. Describe to couples how their early attachment injuries become superimposed on their current romantic relationship.
4. Identify how understanding basic principles and interventions of interpersonal neurobiology can support effective psychodynamic treatment and help improve the security of the couple.

Solomon, M. & Tatkin S. (2011). Chapter 3, Healing Wounds. In Love and War in Intimate Relationships. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company. pp. 34-42.

Geist, Richard, ED. (2013). How the Empathic Process Heals: A Microprocess Perspective. *International Journal of Psychoanalytic Self Psychology*.

## **September 21, 2022**

We will explore what can be expected when a couple settles into treatment and more of their struggles, conflict, and early needs become expressed. Interventions to help individuals deescalate in order to lay a foundation of compassion for themselves and empathy for their partner will be highlighted.

Learning Objectives - Participants will be able to:

1. Describe elements common to the mid-phase of treatment, including an increase in regression, authentic expression of the self, conflict, and attachment to the therapist.
2. Discuss the dynamics and interventions when working with a spouse who withdraws into a trauma state.
3. Discuss the neurobiological intervention of interpreting “survival anxiety,” thus diminishing the “vulnerability cycle” of the couple.
4. Explain two major types of self-object transferences and how they are essential to a child’s development.

Solomon, M. & Tatkin S. (2011). Chapter 7, Attachment. In Love and War in Intimate Relationships. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company. pp. 87-97.

Fishbane, M.D. (2013). Chapter 7, Working with Couple Reactivity. In Loving with the Brain in Mind. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company. pp. 123-143.

Baker, Howard S., M.D., Baker, Margaret N., Ph.D. (January 1987). Heinz Kohut's Self Psychology: An Overview. *The American Journal of Psychiatry*. 144:1.

## **September 28, 2022**

In this unit we will look at how the therapist synthesizes intersubjective theory and self psychology into a conceptual structure that is exemplified by clinical material. We will begin to understand how to identify powerful themes underlying projective identification and disidentification. We will consider how cultural differences between individuals of a couple can be understood, respected, and appreciated as a vehicle of illuminating differing subjectivities. Finally, we will explore how the mode of listening stabilizes the couple so that an exploration of their subjective wishes, fears, and vulnerabilities can develop.

Learning Objectives - Participants will be able to:

1. Describe two self-psychological functions that a couple might serve for each other, how to listen for yearnings of those unmet needs, and why this is important for healthier couple functioning.
2. Discuss the intersubjective perspective of intervening on unresolved aspects of development triggering tension in the couple.
3. Explain the difficulty in working with spouses who struggle with predominant feelings of shame and the interventions utilized to diminish such feelings of humiliation and inadequacy.
4. Identify two ways to explore and empathically illuminate any unconscious cultural differences between partners in order to help heal ruptures created by those differences.

Siegel, Judith P. (2004). Identification as a Focal Point in Couple Therapy. In *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*. (24)(3):406-419.

Shaddock, D. (2000). Chapter 3, Hopes, Needs and Disappointments: The Self Object Dimension of Couples Experience. In Context and Connections: An Intersubjective Systems Approach to Couples Therapy. New York: Basic Books. Pp. 33-48.

Shaddock, D. (2000). Chapter 6, The *I* in the *Thou*: The Empathic/Introspective Mode of Listening.. In Context and Connections: An Intersubjective Systems Approach to Couples Therapy. New York: Basic Books. Pp. 109-126.

Waldman, Ken Ph.D., and Rubalcava, Luis Ph.D. (2005). Psychotherapy with Intercultural Couples: A Contemporary Psychodynamic Approach. *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, Vol. 59, No. 3.

**October 5, 2022.** Yom Kippur. No class.

## **October 12, 2022**

We will discuss the couple's readiness to move towards termination. We will explore how the therapist's accurate mirroring of the couple helps to provide a corrective experience so that the couple can provide healthy self object functioning to each other, contain affect, tolerate intersubjective differences, and enhance corrective developmental experiences. We will discuss neuro-biological behavioral methods that the couple can learn and practice to reinforce intimacy.

Learning Objectives – Participants will be able to:

1. List therapeutic action that provides deeper emotional stability in the couple.
2. Describe how a couple's neurobiological behavioral action toward each other can promote a positive cycle of care seeking and caregiving.

3. Discuss how to explore and locate a couple's expectations of intimacy given their particular culture and subculture, while attending to the differences and similarities between them.
4. List two additional characteristics of healthy, nurturing relationships that therapy can help to develop and that can guide assessing readiness to terminate.

Shaddock, D. (2000). Chapter 7, Process and Cure in Couples Therapy. In Context and Connections: An Intersubjective Systems Approach to Couples Therapy. New York: Basic Books. pp. 109-126.

Fishbane, M.D. (2013). Chapter 9, Nurturing the Relationship. In Loving with the Brain in Mind. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company. pp. 164-186.

Scheinkman, M. (2019). Intimacies: An Integrative Multicultural Framework for Couple Therapy. *Family Process*, 58:550-568.

## UNIT 2

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### THE COUPLE FROM THE LENS OF SELF PSYCHOLOGY AND OBJECT RELATIONS

This unit will integrate concepts from Object Relations and Self Psychology in order to help participants develop an analytically comprehensive theory of couple therapy. First, we will explore how both these theories understand personality development. Then we will examine how these unconscious forces explain why couples struggle, and how they can guide the couple therapist's interventions. We will discuss topics like the

role of fantasy in partner choice, projective identification, self-regulation, narcissistic vulnerability, cultural and racial factors, and hetero and non-hetero sexuality.

### **October 19, 2022**

We will review key concepts from drive theory, and then examine how object relations theory evolved from it. The class will highlight the important similarities and differences that are particularly relevant to couple therapy.

Learning Objectives - Participants will be able to:

1. Articulate general theoretical similarities and differences between drive and object relations theory as they apply to personality development.
2. Articulate general theoretical similarities and differences between drive and object relations theory, as they apply to couple therapy.
3. Describe specific concepts from object relations, including projective identification, mature dependence, and core conflict.

Bacal, H. A. (1990). W.R.D. Fairbairn. H. Bacal & K. Newman, (eds.). *In Theories of Object Relations: Bridges to Self Psychology*, pp. 135-157.

### **October 26, 2022**

We will review key concepts from self psychology and examine important similarities and differences between self psychology and object relations theory, particularly as they are relevant to couple treatment.

Learning Objectives - Participants will be able to:

1. Explain specific concepts from self psychology including: mirroring, narcissistic needs and injury, self objects, self regulation, and mature and archaic relating, rupture-repair sequence.
2. Articulate how we can conceptualize the couple, including their emotional attraction to each other, from an object relational and self psychological lens.
3. Describe the unique importance of empathy as it relates to individual personality development, and as key therapeutic focus – between couple therapist and the couple, and between partners in the couple.

Magid, Barry. Fosshage, James. Shane, Estelle (2021). The Emerging Paradigm of Relational Self Psychology: An Historical Perspective, *Psychoanalysis, Self and Context*, 16:1, pp. 1-23.

## **November 2, 2022**

We will begin the process of integrating the concepts of object relations and self psychology into our treatment of the couple. We'll examine the couple's capacity for intimacy in communication, play, and physical/sexual areas of their lives ("the three legs of the stool"). We will look at several clinical situations that couple therapists face, including common countertransference impasses. We will consider multiple clinical interventions that address our emerging theoretical understanding of the couple from an object relational and self psychological perspective.

Learning Objectives - Participants will be able to:

1. Explain how both object relational and self psychological perspectives help us conceptualize, indeed even predict, inevitable conflicts that emerge from couples

striving for intimacy in the communication, play, and physical/sexual life.

2. Discuss countertransference reactions as one means of understanding the struggle of the couple - "You Are the Couple."
3. Begin to utilize therapeutic interventions that stem from object relations and self psychology to the treatment of couples.

Solomon, M. (2009). Attachment Repair in Couples Therapy: A Prototype for Treatment of Intimate Relationships. In *Clinical Social Work*, 37:214-223.

Leone, C. (2008). Couple therapy from the perspective of self psychology and intersubjectivity theory. In *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 25:79-98.

Solomon, M. (1988). Treatment of narcissistic vulnerability in marital therapy. In A. Goldberg, (ed.), *In Learning from Kohut: Progress in Self Psychology*, Vol. 4. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Analytic Press, pp. 215-230.

## **November 9, 2022**

We will consider the couple in the context of culture, race, sexual orientation, majority-minority status, and how these identificatory factors influence the couple in their relationship to each other, to their community and to the couple therapist.

Learning Objectives - Participants will be able to:

1. Consider the role that cultural, racial, sexual orientation and other identity factors play in the couple's emotional experience, both in the present and developmentally.
2. Explore countertransference reactions to the couple regarding race, religion, culture, sexual orientation, class, and how these reactions can be used

therapeutically to strengthen the trust between the couple therapist and the couple.

3. Describe specific interventions that empathically address identity differences between the couple therapist and the couple, and that invite mutual challenge and exploration.

Moran, P. (2017). Somewhere (There's a Place for Us): A Cross-Cultural Approach to Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy with Cross-Cultural Couples. *Couple and Family Psychoanalysis*, 7:153-167.

Addison, S. & Coolhart, D. (2015). Expanding the Therapy Paradigm with Queer Couples: A Relational Intersectional Lens. *Family Process*, 54:435-53.

Rubalcava, L. A. & Waldman, K. M. (2004). Working with Intercultural Couples: An Intersubjective-Constructivist Perspective. *Progress in Self-Psychology*, 20:127-149.

## **November 16, 2022**

We will examine the pervasive and multidimensional issue of sexuality for the couple. We'll explore how and why to conduct a comprehensive sexual history of each member of the couple, common sexual difficulties couples have, and hetero & non-hetero-normative similarities and differences between couples.

Learning Objectives - Participants will be able to:

1. Assess the couple's sexual history and sexual functioning.

2. Explore with the couple non-heteronormative experiences, preferences, and conflicts.
3. Identify the most common sexual dysfunctions couples struggle with, their multiple causes and possible treatments.

Scheinkman, M. (2019). Intimacies: An Integrative Multicultural Framework for Couple Therapy. In *Family Process*, 58:550-568.

Iasenza, S. (2010). What is queer about sex?: Expanding sexual frames in theory and practice. In *Family Process*, 49:291-308.

Morin, J. (1996). The Erotic Mind: Unlocking the Inner Sources of Passion and Fulfillment, New York: Harper.

**November 23, 2022.** No class for Thanksgiving.

### **November 30, 2022**

We will examine why sexual difficulties can be seen as “developmental inevitabilities,” and how and why they often become “sexual impasses.” A specific clinical framework will be presented for use in helping couples work through such impasses, and the framework will integrate the ideas of object relations & self psychology taught earlier.

Learning Objectives - Participants will be able to:

1. Explain how a couple’s sexual issues can be seen as “developmental inevitabilities,” how they can become sexual impasses, and how the couple therapist’s countertransference reactions to sexuality are critical to providing the couple with a containing therapeutic space to work through sexual impasses.
2. Explain the ABC model, and how it can be used to explore the intrapsychic and interpersonal dynamics that are making a “responsive” sexual life impossible for

some couples.

3. Articulate some of the reasons affairs occur, and how to work through the traumatic impact of an affair on the betrayed, while also helping the couple to make meaning of the betrayal.

Wannon, M. (2022). The ABCs of working through Sexual Impasses in Couples' differing Desire for Sex: A Self Psychological & Object Relational Perspective. Paper presented at the International Self Psychology Conference & National Conference of the Academy of Psychotherapists.

Perel, E. (2017). Why happy people cheat: A good marriage is no guarantee against infidelity. In Atlantic Magazine, October issue.

Leone, C. (2013) Helping Couples Heal from Infidelity: A Self Psychological, Intersubjective Approach. In International Psychology Journal of Psychoanalytic Self, 8:282-308.

Caruso, N. (2003) Object Relations Theory and Technique Applied to Sex and Marital Therapy. In Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies 5:297-308.

### **UNIT 3**

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### **COUPLES AND INTERPERSONAL NEUROBIOLOGY**

Welcome to four weeks of exploring the profound impact couples have on each other's nervous systems. The relatively new field of "interpersonal neurobiology" has taught

us that the brain is constantly rewiring itself based on daily life. All of our relationships change our brains, but it is in our closest, most intimate relationships that the most important changes happen. There can be positive or negative changes—fostering growth or triggering failure. Couples can react to one another in ways that are very dysregulating or in ways that are soothing and life-giving to each other. Attention to the autonomic nervous system is key to helping couples get to healthy interaction patterns and emotional engagement.

### **December 7, 2022**

We will explore what is happening to couples neurobiologically when they are caught in cycles of distress. We'll see that much of emotional life runs on automatic rather than thoughtful decision-making. The class will highlight the ways each partner can learn to read his/her own physical state and emotional arousal cues, and learn to be attuned to the partner's arousal states too.

Learning Objectives - Participants will be able to:

1. Describe the unique power an intimate partner has with his/her spouse and what this has to do with neuroplasticity.
2. Explain how fast-acting automatic mechanisms “run the show” in primary relationships.
3. Explain how well-worn automatic patterns and associated neural processes can be interrupted to make way for the development of “new dances.”

Fishbane, M.D. (2013) Loving with the Brain in Mind, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, pp. 3-58.

### **December 14, 2022**

We'll befriend the nervous system through the lens of polyvagal theory. The class will learn the three pathways of autonomic nervous system response to sensations in the body and signals from the environment. We'll discuss neuroception and co-regulation. We will go beyond talking about trauma to discussing racial trauma in People of Color and Indigenous individuals (POCI).

Learning Objectives - Participants will be able to:

1. Describe the vagal nerve and its three pathways of response to sensations in our bodies and signals from the environment.
2. Describe what the term neuroception means and how this detection system helps us.
3. Explain what makes co-regulation a biological imperative.
4. List at least five ways racial trauma is distinct from general trauma.

Dana, Deb (2018) The Polyvagal Theory in Therapy: Engaging the Rhythm of Regulation, New York/London: W.W. Norton & Company, pp. 3-65.

Comas-Diaz, L., Hall, G. N., Neville, H. A., (2019) Racial Trauma: Theory, Research, and Healing: Introduction to the Special Issue. *American Psychologist*, 74: 1-5.

## **December 21, 2022**

We'll explore the autonomic nervous system as a relational system where reciprocity is foundational. Frequent ruptures are inevitable - and when repaired, can be catalysts for change. Trauma survivors characteristically have a history of relational ruptures, leaving couples in states of dysregulation since repair experiences are uncommon and unfamiliar. African Americans experience more severe and chronic PTSD symptoms

than other racial groups. We will explore many resources for helping couples heal and repair ruptures.

Learning Objectives - Participants will be able to:

1. Explain how the therapist can assist a couple in the rupture/repair process, using the skills of repair.
2. Discuss how important it is for clinicians to assess racial discrimination and racial trauma for African American clients even when racial trauma is not identified as a presenting problem.
3. Explain how breath, sound, prosody, touch and movement can be used in the service of helping couples move toward good habits of co-regulation.

Dana, D. (2018) The Polyvagal Theory in Therapy: Engaging the Rhythm of Regulation, New York/London: W.W.Norton & Company, pp. 121-163.

Mekawi, Y., Watson-Singleton, N., Kuzyk, E., Dixon, H.D., Carter, S., Bradley-Davino, B., Fani, N., Michopoulos, V., Powers, A. (2020) Racial discrimination and post traumatic stress: examining emotion dysregulation as a mediator in an African American community sample. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 11:1-10 .

**December 28, 2022.** No class for winter break.

**January 4, 2023**

We will explore empathy as a physiological as well as mental experience.

We'll see that insecurity and dysregulation in a couple fuels the stress hormone cortisol. Empathy between partners and loving touch elicit the

hormone/neurotransmitter oxytocin. We'll consider cultural assumptions that are at odds with our biology.

Learning Objectives - Participants will be able to:

1. Describe the neurobiology of empathy, including the four separate processes.
2. Discuss ways that we can foster empathy and good bonding between partners.
3. Discuss how our culture's privileging of autonomy, independence and competition is often at odds with our needs to connect intimately with each other.
4. Reflect on the vulnerabilities that can contribute to the relational impasses partners encounter (i.e. old family wounds, gender issues, experiences of racism, homophobia, immigration, poverty, etc.).

Fishbane, M.D. (2013) Loving with the Brain in Mind, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, pp. 59-75, 97-119, 210-226.

Fishbane, M.D., Goldman, R., Siegel, J., (2020) Couple Impasses: Three Therapeutic Approaches, *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 48: 301-312.

## UNIT 4

Faculty: Mary O'Farrell, Ph.D.  
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## **WORKING WITH DIFFICULT COUPLES USING SELF PSYCHOLOGICAL CONCEPTS**

This unit explores therapeutic interventions in working with “difficult” couples who are embroiled in combat or disengaged, blaming and distrustful—couples affected by trauma. Using self psychological concepts of empathy, self object transferences and narcissistic vulnerability, we will focus on how to attune to each partner’s subjectivity and how to cultivate a climate of safety to repair historical and present trauma. We will discuss how to foster development of understanding, accessibility and responsiveness in both partners. Emphasizing how curiosity fosters a deeper understanding of couples’ individual histories, we will work on strategies to promote partner awareness of listening and regulating affect in the co-created, interactive aspects of the relationship. We will also describe techniques to help couples translate what is experienced as demands or attacks into messages of needs, vulnerability and thwarted self object yearnings. Using several theoretical models, we will examine ways to conceptualize, manage and resolve impasse in couple therapy.

### **January 11, 2023**

We will discuss the term “difficult” couples and assess these couples from a self psychological and relational model. We will be including borderline/schizoid couples, pursuer/avoider couples, oppositional/aggressive couples and abuser couples. We will discuss how empathy and curiosity are used to help couples diminish anger, shame and guilt. We will also discuss how the therapist’s attunement to each partner’s subjectivity instills hope, perspective and new possibility.

Learning Objectives—Participants will be able to:

1. Understand Ringstrom’s use of conceptualizing couples’ organizing principles and bidimensional transferences to establish attunement to each partner’s subjectivity (Step One of his relational model).
2. Describe how partner’s self object longing (both primary and secondary) trigger partner’s repetitive self object transferences to create “vicious circles” of pain and unmet needs.
3. Understand Ringstrom’s proposal of “perspectival realism” (Step 2 in his relational model) such that the therapist believes that none of the three participants, therapist and two partners has a more correct view of reality than any of the others.

Ringstrom, P. (2014). “Step one” (Chapter 2). In A Relational Approach to Couples Psychotherapy Psychoanalytic , pp. 37-64.

Ringstrom, P. (2014). “Step two” (Chapter 3). In A Relational Psychoanalytic Approach to Couples Psychotherapy, pp. 65-88.

### **January 18, 2023**

We will continue to discuss “difficult” couples, employing a developmental model to help understand “difficult” couple dynamics. We will describe aspects of therapy relationship that are like mother’s care of the infant. The therapist creates a “good enough holding environment” by demonstrating empathy, understanding, reliability, maintenance of appropriate boundaries and protection of partners from injury.

Learning Objectives—Participants will be able to:

1. Describe and utilize Sharpe’s long term developmental approach to treating couples, including seven central relationship patterns that are subject to

derailment in a love relationship.

2. Explain Sharpe's position that a couple's difficulty integrating disappointments regarding need for nurturing causes considerable psychic pain and interpersonal conflict.
3. Describe therapeutic interventions to cultivate a climate of deep empathic engagement with each partner's experience.

Sharpe, S. (2000). Introduction. Foundations of loving (Chapter 1). In The Ways We Love: A Developmental Approach to Treating Couples. pp.1-29.

Sharpe, S. (2000) The development of nurturing: Common treatment problems (Chapter 3). In The Ways We Love: A Developmental Approach to Treating Couples. pp. 37-72.

### **January 25, 2023**

Continuing to explore the "difficult couple, we will take a closer look at what has been traditionally called personality disordered couples. We will work to understand the "borderline state" in conceptualizing and assessing "difficult" couples. Several therapeutic interventions will be discussed.

Learning Objectives—Participants will be able to:

1. Utilize McCormack's object relations approach to describe and understand dynamics of "difficult" couples who display communications indicative of borderline dynamics.
2. Understand and utilize McCormack's technique of alternating separate dyadic interactions to allow time and space for partners to be with his/her experience.
3. Understand and utilize McCormack's interventions of trial identification, successive approximations, rejectable interpretations, non-directive questioning

and following the affect.

McCormack, C. (2007). An object relations approach to the treatment of personalitydisordered marriages. Paper presented at ICP&P Fall 2007 Conference.

## **February 1, 2023**

We will explore how “difficult” couples often have family histories of trauma. We will discuss attachment theory and dyadic systems theory to understand couples’ dynamics. The dynamics of therapeutic impasses will be described. In addition, within the safe holding environment, the concepts of vulnerability and rupture repair cycles will be examined.

Learning Objectives—Participants will be able to:

1. Understand Feld’s position that the therapeutic holding environment is not just part of the relationship with the couple but is a change agent (element of therapeutic action) for couples with trauma histories.
2. Understand Livingston’s conceptualization of “vulnerable moments” as pivotal moments of change and crucial to the development of intimacy as partners enhance each other’s self development.
3. Explain how therapist helps couple using avoidant, ambivalent or disorganized strategies of stress regulation to neutralize past childhood trauma by developing listening skills and empathizing with partner’s experience.

Feld, B. (2004). Holding and facilitating interactive regulation in couples with traumahistories. In *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, Vol. 24, #3. pp. 421-437.

Livingston, M. (2004). Stay a little longer: Sustaining empathy, vulnerability and

intimacy in couple therapy. In *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, Vol. 24 #3, pp. 438-451.

## **February 8, 2023**

Continuing to understand dynamics of “difficult” couple, it is likely that two childhood experiences of abandonment and intrusion are prone to be repeated in marriage and especially with couples with trauma histories. It is also important that the therapist use self experience as well as countertransference feelings in the assessment and treatment phases. In addition to the awareness of countertransference, the therapist must also be aware of diversity issues related to gender, race, ethnicity, culture, age, sexual orientation when conceptualizing and treating couples.

Learning Objectives—Participants will be able to:

1. Understand and articulate Shaddock’s discussion of five developmental issues related to couples: structural deficits, trauma, the fear not to repeat, shame and narcissistic rage.
2. Understand cultural sensitivity when working with partners’ differences in gender identity, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, age, and socioeconomic status.
3. Understand how to help a couple negotiate a therapeutic impasse by attending to individual and relational issues.

Shaddock, D. (2000). Overlapping contexts: Childhood trauma and Repetitive dimensions of couple’s experience (Chapter 4). In Context and Connections: An Intersubjective Systems Approach to Couples Therapy. pp. 33-49.

Nightingale, Marjorie, Christina Ibilola Awosan & Katherine Stavrianopolous (2019) Emotionally Focused Therapy: A Culturally Sensitive Approach for African American Heterosexual Couples, *Journal of*

Family Psychotherapy, 30:3, 221-244.

Holmes, Dorothy Evans, (2016) Culturally Imposed Trauma: The Sleeping Dog Has Awakened. Will Psychoanalysis Take Heed? Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 26, 641-654.

Tseng, Chi-Fang, Morgan Pettyjohn, Patricia Huerta, Debra Miller, Juan Agundez, Andrea Witten. (2021) Representation of Diverse Populations in Couple and Family Therapy Intervention Studies: A systematic Review of Race/Ethnicity, Sexual Orientation, Age and Income in the United States from 2014 to 2019, Family Process, 60:424-440.

## UNIT 5

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### **The Experiential Healing Process in Dyadic Therapy**

Successful couple therapy includes the opportunity for the couple to develop a healthy two-person system. Treating the dyad as a system unlocks the potential of individual growth in each partner. Students will learn to recognize, appreciate, and develop unique experiential opportunities throughout the process of relational therapy. The corrosive power of trauma and triangulation as it works against the two-person system will be explored. The benefits of setting up empathic dialogues to reinforce skillful relatedness through therapist-directed encounters will be taught. Students will also learn how to identify and “pass” transference tests as each member of the couple actualize preconscious desires to transcend traumatic relational experiences. Special

attention will be placed on the development of cultural, racial, and socio-political sensitivity of the therapist to encourage parallel development in the couple.

### **February 15, 2023**

Students will review relevant psychodynamic theory and utilize clinical examples to understand the strong likelihood of witnessing triangulation and trauma in their relational work.

Learning Objectives- Participants will be able to:

1. Articulate the power of triangulation in relational therapy.
2. Identify the defensive and discordant triangle.
3. Articulate how trauma and guilt are associated with one another

Karlbeg, A. (2018). The Geometry of intimacy: Love triangles and couple therapy. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*. Vol 35 (1), 2018, 70-82.

Fimiani, R., Gazillo, F. Fiorenza, E., Rodomonti, M., and Silberschatz, G. (2020). Traumas and Their Consequences According to Control-Mastery Theory. *Psychodynamic Psychiatry*, 58(2), 113-139.

O'Conner, L., Berry, J., Weiss, J. (2000) Survivor guilt, submissive behaviour and evolutionary theory: The down-side of winning in social comparison. *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 73, 519-530.

### **February 22, 2023**

This class will focus on the necessity of developing attunement to cultural, racial, and oppressive traumas for each member of the couple and the opportunities that psychotherapy can provide to encourage a healing didactic experience.

Learning Objectives- Participants will be able to:

1. Articulate the importance of identifying cultural impasses in relational therapy.
2. Identify challenges one partner may have with supporting the work- through process of their partner.
3. Articulate the therapeutic relevance of utilizing appropriate terminology to signal approval and support of partners struggling with an oppressed sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Motter, B.L., Softas-Nall, L. (2012). Experiences of Transgender Couples Navigating One Partner's Transition: Love is Gender Blind. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, Vol. 29 (1) 60-71.

Dermer, S.B., Smith, S.D., Barto, K.K. (2010) Identifying and Correctly Labeling Sexual Prejudice, Discrimination, and Oppression. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, Vol 88(3) 325-331.

Gaztambide (2012). Addressing Cultural Impasses with Rupture Resolution Strategies: A Proposal and Recommendations. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, Vol 43 (3) 183-189.

Bracero, W. (1994) Developing Culturally Sensitive Psychodynamic Case Formulations: The Effects of Asian Cultural Elements on Psychoanalytic Control-Mastery Theory. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*. Vol 31(3) 525-531.

### **March 1, 2023**

Students will review the necessity, process, and skills associated with developing empathic dialogues in sessions with couples. The use of “deep empathy” and how to encourage therapeutic dialog will be taught. Self-as-subject and self-as-object

relatedness will be discussed.

Learning Objectives- Participants will be able to:

1. Describe the concept of deep empathy.
2. Identify self-as-subject expressions in session.
3. Discuss three relational enhancement techniques to use in session with couples (i.e. Becoming, Trouble Shooting, and Appreciations).

Scuka, R.F (2005). Deep Empathy as the Foundation of Relational Enhancement (Chapter 3). In Relationship Enhancement Therapy: Healing Through Deep Empathy and Intimate Dialogue, New York: Routledge, pp. 47-62.

Scuka, R.F (2005). Introduction to Relationship Enhancement Therapy with Couples (Chapter 1). In Relationship Enhancement Therapy: Healing Through Deep Empathy and Intimate Dialogue, New York: Routledge, pp. 3-23.

Ringstrom, P. A. (2014). "Step five" (Chapter 6). In Relational Psychoanalytic Approach to Couples Psychotherapy, New York: Routledge, pp. 146-176.

### **March 8, 2023**

This class will introduce the core concepts of control-mastery theory as a guide that aids the couple's therapist in developing their experiential work. Psychological safety, the etiology of pathogenic beliefs, and passive into active transference testing will be explored. The key concept of psychological safety and the corresponding growth through relational work will be emphasized.

Learning Objectives- Participants will be able to:

1. Discuss the development of pathogenic beliefs.

2. Describe passive into active and transference tests as it relates to Control-Mastery Theory.
3. Identify common shifts in feelings during therapy that signal a transference test is being enacted.

Kanofsky, S. & Lieb, R. (2007). Control mastery theory and family therapy. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 44, #3. 316-332.

Zeitlin (1991). Control-Mastery Theory in Couples Therapy. *Family Therapy*, Vol 18 (3) 201-230.

Rodomonti, M., Crisafulli, V. Angrisani, S., De Luca, E., Mazzoni, S., and Gazzillo, F. (2022) Description and First Steps Toward the Empirical Formulation Method for Couples. *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy*.

### **March 15, 2023**

This class will continue the exploration of the experiential nature of Control Mastery Therapy. Students will focus on the preconscious “plans” that each member of the couple will present throughout therapy. Students will learn how to understand these plans as a preconscious attempt to transcend pathogenic beliefs. We will also discuss the development of in-session experiences to help each member of the couple “pass the test” that their partner is struggling to disavow.

Learning Objectives- Participants will be able to:

1. Articulate the development of a preconscious plan as a fundamental concept in Control-Mastery Theory.
2. Describe the relationship between testing behaviors and preconscious plans.
3. Identify the therapeutic benefits of helping each member of the couple develop a “pro-plan” set of behaviors in session.

Rodomonti, M., Crisafulli, V., Mazzoni, S., Curtis, J. T., & Gazzillo, F. (2019, May 9). The Plan Formulation Method for Couples. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*. Advance online publication. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pap0000246>.

## UNIT 6

Faculty: Adrienne Simenhoff, MSW, PsyD  
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### COUNTERTRANSFERENCE ISSUES FROM A RELATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

This unit explores countertransference issues as a tool for insight into the dynamics of the couple and how countertransference evokes the therapist's awareness of their own internal issues. The focus will be on utilizing countertransference to process information central in determining treatment outcome. The unit will explore countertransference material as the basis for understanding each partner's unconscious communications of impulses, affects, fantasies and conflicts that determine how we internally hold each partner and the couple in our minds during the therapeutic encounter. Use of countertransference in this way leads to the therapist's dynamic formulation of the couple's relationship and is the path toward intimacy between partners. The unit will incorporate cultural and racial factors and explore how they are manifested in the countertransference process.

**March 22, 2023**

## Applying Countertransference Theory to Couples

Learning Objectives – Participants will be able to:

1. Articulate three types of countertransference – classic, total and cultural/racial and utilize them in the therapeutic encounter.
2. Describe how these types of countertransference can help with case formulation in couple therapy.
3. Discuss and reflect on hidden racial transferences that can occur in mixed-race dyads and how that can manifest in couple therapy.

Siegel, J. P. (2000). Applying countertransference theory to couple treatment (Chapter 1). In J. P. Siegel & M. Solomon (eds.), Countertransference in Couples Therapy, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, pp. 3-23.

Mendez, T. (2015). “My sister tried to kill me”: Enactment and foreclosure in a mixed-race dyad. *Psychodynamic Psychiatry*, 43(2)229-241.

### **March 29, 2023**

#### Intersubjective Perspectives

Learning Objectives: Participants will be able to:

1. Discuss the concept of unconscious organizing principles as it relates to the couple and the therapist.
2. Articulate how developmental longings inform behaviors of both therapist and

couple and interaction between them.

3. Discuss complexities of interactions when therapist and couple are a mixed-race dyad.

Trop, J. (2000). An intersubjective perspective in countertransference in couplestherapy (Chapter 6). In J. P. Siegel & M. Solomon (eds.), Countertransference in Couples Therapy, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, pp. 99-113.

Knight Z.G. (2013). Black Client, white therapist: Working with race in psychoanalytic psychotherapy in South Africa. *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 94(1)17-31.

**April 5, 2023.** No class for Passover.

**April 12, 2023**

Countertransference and Empathy

Learning Objectives: Participants will be able to:

1. Discuss process to help guide therapist to unconscious countertransferential responses related to empathy and blocks to empathy.
2. Articulate ways to work with shame when it is present in the therapeutic encounter.
3. Utilize countertransferential reactions as a tool in the therapeutic relationship and explore from same sex couple perspective.

Solomon, M. (2000). Countertransference and empathy in couples therapy (Chapter 2). In J. P. Siegel & M. Solomon (eds.), Countertransference in Couples

Therapy. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, pp. 23-38.

Milton, M., Coyle, A., & Legg, C. (2005). Countertransference issues in psychotherapy with lesbian and gay clients. *European Journal of Psychotherapy, Counselling and Health*, 7:181-197.

## **April 19, 2023**

Countertransference with high and low conflict couples

Learning Objectives: Participants will be able to:

1. Assess a couple's level of ego strength and stability through therapist's awareness of transference and countertransference.
2. Identify countertransference responses to high and low conflict couples, and utilize empathy and curiosity to safely explore the process with the couple.
3. Explain how a couple therapist's awareness of own racial identity and role as stable object can serve as a container to undo oppression from society that has interfered with the integration of self.

Goldstein, E. (2000). Countertransference reactions to borderline couples (Chapter 4). In J. P. Siegel & M. Solomon (eds.), Countertransference in Couples Therapy, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, pp. 72-87.

Nielsen, A (2019) Projective Identification in Couples. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 67:593-624.

Bononvitz, C (2009). Mixed race and the negotiation of racialized selves: Developing the capacity for internal conflict. *Psychoanalytic dialogues*, 19(4), pp. 426-441.

**April 26, 2023**

Countertransference of the oedipal triangle and loss.

Learning Objectives: Participants will be able to:

1. Describe how moving away from the therapy, or specific therapeutic issues may mask avoidance of the oedipal conflict.
2. Identify ways in which intimacy can be diffused in the therapeutic encounter.
3. Utilize countertransference reactions for case conceptualization with a departing/departed couple.

Myers, T. & Long, C (2015) Is three a crowd? A perspective on countertransference challenges in psychoanalytic couple psychotherapy. *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy* 29:399-415.

Mann, K. (2000) Love's labor's lost: Countertransference with a terminating relationship (Chapter 10). In J. P. Siegel & M. Solomon (eds.), Countertransference in Couples Therapy, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, pp. 155-165.

Karlbelnig, Alan Michael (2018) Vol. 35 (1). The Geometry of intimacy: Love triangles and couples therapy. In *Psychoanalytic Psychology*. 35:70-8.

**Unit 7**

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## INTEGRATION AND INQUIRY

These sessions are meant to begin the process of integrating the substantial material of the curriculum with your own developing framework for working with couples. We touch on key integrative concepts, and explore “what comes next...”

### May 3, 2023

We will explore together the key concepts and areas that class members have found particularly useful or confusing. In the process we will review some areas of the that class members still find unclear. The focus will be on integrating theoretical concepts.

Learning Objectives - Participants will be able to:

1. Discuss and clarify key concepts taught throughout the program.
2. Articulate a psychodynamic understanding of the development of a couple, and of the predictable struggles the couple therapist confronts.
3. Begin to express their own clinical framework with couples, including articulation of what “they know” and “what they don’t know.”

Leone, C. (2021) The Application of Contemporary Self Psychology to Couple Psychotherapy. *Couple and Family Psychoanalysis*, 11:170-186.

Ringstrom, P. (2012). A relational intersubjective approach to conjoint treatment. In *International Journal for Psychoanalytic Self Psychology*, 7:85-111.

## **May 10, 2023**

We will review various therapeutic interventions presented throughout the program and explore class member's experiences with them. We will have an opportunity to examine again how these interventions address psychodynamic themes, while facilitating important behavioral changes. We'll also examine class member's countertransference reactions to interventions and clinical moments that have been particularly challenging. The focus will be on integrating technique and theory.

Learning Objectives - Participants will be able to:

1. Describe therapeutic techniques that “constructively challenge” the couple to break destructive patterns of communication, and engage a process based on empathy and curiosity.
2. Articulate one's own countertransference issues in working with different kinds of couples.
3. Articulate how an individual's developmental history impacts “what they will protest,” their capacity to tolerate disappointments in the couple, and the “narratives” that influence their particular needs and challenges in creating an intimate couple.

Livingston, M. S. (2007) Sustained Empathic Focus, Intersubjectivity, and Intimacy in the Treatment of Couples. *International Journal of Psychoanalytic Self Psychology* 2:315-338.

Ringstrom, P. (2018). Relational Psychoanalytic Perspective on Couples Psychotherapy. In *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 38:399-408.