

Counseling for Couples

Understanding & Improving Love Relationships

Course Description

There is no question that relationships change with time. The more time a couple spends together, the more they start to take each other for granted if they're not proactive in maintaining their relationship. The majority of couples who stay together rate their relationships as "unsatisfactory" or "unhappy". Some people look at this statistic and say, "There's something wrong with commitment and long-term relationships!" However, what is needed is a deeper understanding of the complexity and unconscious strivings present when two people fall in love.

This workshop presents a very positive view of marriage and all intimate, committed relationships, but one that is not well understood by couples and many therapists. Participants will see that the source of conflict is closely related to the unconscious aspects of the attraction to "this particular person" and that the love connection that follows and ultimately results in conflict also contains the potential for significant growth, passion, love and healing.

The skilled couple's therapist must be a good educator, motivator and trainer. Participants will gain skills and tools to motivate couples to actively participate in understanding their frustrations and in developing relationship skills. Walk away with the knowledge to guide couples in a step-by-step manner to learn what the sources of their struggles are and how to separate these sources from the everyday triggers with kindness and empathy.

Course Objectives

- Identify how to help couples reframe their understanding of their relationship to see the positive strivings in their conflicts and in their mate selection process.
- Discuss how to use a simple form early in the therapy experience to help couples see their unconscious contributions to the power struggle and to their relationship conflict.

- Identify how to help couples understand the paradox of the need to feel and give acceptance in relationships and the need to grow and change to create the best possible relationship.
- Discuss how to outline a process to help couples early on in the therapy experience to focus on practicing and building positive, loving interactions and not just work on the problem.
- Identify an interview process to help couples separate ?triggers? of upset from the activation of old hurts or sensitivities, build an action plan to deal with them separately and to also take responsibility for their part in the conflict.
- Discuss how to assist couples in seeing how culture and family of origin values contribute to misunderstandings and to learn the communication skills to deal with these issues.

Course Leader – Dr. Gary Brainerd, LMFT

GARY BRAINERD, PhD, LMFT, is a licensed Clinical Psychologist and licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in California. He works primarily in private practice in Southern California, with offices in Pasadena and Encino. Dr. Brainerd is one of the few psychologists who has specialized in working with couples. Eighty to ninety percent of his practice is with couples. Dr. Brainerd received his doctorate degree in clinical psychology from the Fuller Graduate School of Psychology in 1976. He also has a Master of Arts in clinical psychology from Pepperdine University. Dr. Brainerd is a certified Imago Relationship Therapist and workshop presenter for the Institute of Imago Relationship Therapy and is also a CEU provider in California.

He frequently presents one and two-day workshops for couples and therapists including the nationally known, "Getting the Love You Want" workshop. He is the founder and administrator of the Couple's Workstation, a web membership area for couples and therapists who work with couples. He is also the founder of the Couple's Garden, a "smart date night" program for couples. Dr. Brainerd is a member of the American Psychological Association, the California Psychological Association and the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists. He served with distinction on the national Board of the Association for Imago Relationship Therapists and wrote *Basic Marriage Communication Training: A Program Text* as well as *Instructor's Manual*.

Course Overview

I. Introduction

- Definition of *couples*
 - heterosexual/homosexual
 - married/living together
 - remarried/stepfamilies
 - cross cultural/mixed religions

II. Understanding the Sources of Conflict

- Learn the six most common things couples fight about
- The importance of understanding the source
- Dealing with the source(s)

III. Brain Physiology & Emotional Reactivity

- The primitive brain and “time”
- The primitive brain and Mr. Magoo
- Cuts and scabs

IV. Accentuate the Positive

- Creating safety
- The four critical moments in each day
- The language of love

V. Understanding Stages in Relationships

- The enchantment stage
- The power struggle
- The crossroads

VI. Helping Couples Understand, Analyze, & then Create an Action Plan for Growth & Healing

- The Revised Restructuring Frustrations Interview
- Case histories
- The sharing process

VII. Couples & Communication

- Premarital communication
- The Conscious Dialog Process
- When communication and therapy don't work