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Recent Research Abstracts

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COUPLES THERAPY

Riehl-Emde, A.; Thomas, V. & Willi, J. (2003) Love: An important dimension in marital research and therapy. *Family Process*, 42 (2), 253-268.

How do men and women describe and assess their relationship? What themes are decisive for its quality and stability? To answer such questions, we investigated a random sample of 204 married couples (reference sample) and 31 married couples undergoing psychotherapy (clinical sample) using a newly developed questionnaire. The participating couples were asked to evaluate a total of 19 themes with respect to their importance for the couple's connectedness. Although only rarely directly addressed in couple therapy and investigated in couple research, the theme 'Love' proved to be the decisive factor for quality and stability. The results of the present study, therefore, indicate that 'Love' should be investigated more thoroughly in couple research and included more actively in diagnostic and therapeutic procedures.

Epstein, N. (2001) Cognitive-Behavioural therapy with couples: empirical status. *Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy*, 15 (2), 299-310.

This article briefly summarises the behavioural, cognitive, and affective factors that have been implicated in couples' relationship problems, describes representative interventions for those factors, and reviews the current status of outcome research on cognitive-behavioural therapy for couples. Although the initial studies have provided encouraging findings concerning the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioural treatment for distressed couples, limitations in the number and scope of the studies leave many unanswered questions. In particular, studies have not assessed the impact of cognitive-behavioural couples therapy as it is conducted in clinical practice. Additional research is needed to address issues such as the relative efficacy of different cognitive restructuring interventions and the impact of integrating interventions targeting cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects of relationship problems.

Sells, J.N. (2001) Purpose, process and product: a case study in marital intervention. *The Family Journal*, 9 (2), 186-190.

Transtheoretical metaphors of purpose, process and product can prove helpful to counsellors in organising and focussing therapy, and to clients in conceptualising current marital patterns and creating alternative relational habits. Therapy involves exploring with a couple their historic, current and aspiring perceptions of the marital relationship, as well as labelling its manifestations and outcomes. Important issues such as abandonment, enmeshment, structure and flexibility can be assessed and addressed through the paradigms of process and purpose. Couples must continually refocus on the intent of their relationship as new dimension of life are encountered. A case study is used to illustrate the constructs of purpose, process and product.