

2023 Master Clinician Program Season 2, Session 7 - Couple's Therapy Part 1 Course Outline

Course Description

The Epic Master Clinician Program offers a comprehensive exploration of couples counselling, covering essential theoretical models and practical applications. Participants will gain skills in managing high-conflict cases, addressing common issues such as communication, intimacy, and trust, and creating safe spaces for clients. The course includes an in-depth study of Gottman Method, Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT), Attachment Theory, and other modalities, providing a rich understanding of relational dynamics and effective therapeutic strategies.

Course Topics in Brief

Below is a list of the course topics in brief:

- Introduction and Course Overview
- Creating a Safe Space
- Common Issues in Couples Counselling
- Considerations in Couples Counselling
- Theoretical Models in Couples Counseling
- Attachment Theory in Couples
- Gottman Research Summary
- Normal Marital Sadism
- Couple's Goals for Therapy
- Communication Basics
- Additional Resources and Handouts
- Resource Reflection

Method of Delivery

This course will be delivered simultaneously in person and via synchronous video-conferencing. It may also be recorded for future students to access.

Instructors



Instructor - Dr. Cory Hrushka, Registered Senior Psychologist, Clinical and Forensic Psychologist, PhD, CCS, DST, AASECT Certified Sex Therapist, (He/Him)

Description: Dr. Cory Hrushka is a Senior Clinical/counselling and Forensic Psychologist. He is also an AASECT certified (Diplomate) Sex Therapist/ and Supervisor, an Associate in Sex Education and a Clinical Sexologist.

Cory provides psychological/forensic assessment services and counselling to adolescents, adults, couples, and families. Although he uses numerous psychological approaches to achieve client success, his foundation is in client-centered, cognitive behavioral therapy within a systemic model that focuses on pushing through issues for growth and success.

As a psychologist, Cory specializes in couples and sex therapy-related issues and assessment services (primarily looking at parenting psychological assessments, custody and access assessments, and forensic components). He also supervises many of the professionals here at Insight. This includes supervision of the Master's level practicum student therapists, provisional psychologists, as well as consulting with the registered and senior psychologists. This comprises the majority of his work. Cory also works with the Management Team to support, develop, and investigate new projects that are up and coming, provide content for projects, and address inquiries regarding our services. Occasionally, he is asked by the media to comment or provide support on current topics or to give presentations in the community.

Insight is very important to Cory – it's his life's work, and he is particularly proud of the current family-oriented sense of community that the Insight team has grown into over the last few years. The breadth and quality of services offered are unique to Insight. It was great to be recognized by Canadian Business as one of Canada's fastest growing companies in 2018.



Instructor - Brandi Enns, Registered Provisional Psychologist, Assistant Director of Clinician Engagement, MACP, B.Ed, (She/Her)

Description: Brandi joined the Insight Psychological team in May of 2020, as a Registered Provisional Psychologist, and works most often in the areas of sex therapy, trauma, and

assessments. She also supervises practicum students during their practicum, co-hosts the podcast “Up the Rabbit Hole” with owner and CEO of Insight, Dr. Cory Hrushka, as well as recruit future practicum students with Insight’s Open Houses and onboard the students before they start their practicum.

Before joining Insight, Brandi was a teacher with Edmonton Public Schools for 18 years. She worked primarily with special needs students at the junior high school age, coached Volleyball for a few years, and mentored new student-teachers as they started their new exciting career paths.

As the Assistant Director of Clinician Engagement, Brandi looks forward to helping practicum students realize their potential and complete their practical hours in a safe, empowering, and supportive atmosphere. She is also excited to be a part of propelling Insight into the top tier of psychological development training centers in the province.

As a psychologist, Brandi’s goal is to assist clients in overcoming the obstacles that are interfering in their everyday lives. She is compassionate, nonjudgmental, and an empathetic person who creates trust and a safe and comfortable space for clients to disclose information and explore their experiences. Brandi looks forward to helping clients reach their desired goals and outcomes.



Instructor - Sabrina Brady, Registered Provisional Psychologist, Manager of Clinical Programs and Community Relations, MC (She/Her)

Description: Sabrina has been working in the area of mental health and wellness for the past 15 years. She joined Insight Psychological in 2020, after completing her Master of Counselling (MC) through the University of Calgary. To date, her work has included clinical practice, program development, and teaching, as a sessional instructor. In her clinical practice, Sabrina carries a generalized caseload with subspecialties in sex and

forensics. She has developed programs for neurodiverse individuals, contributed to the development of addictions programming, supported the expansion of group programming for forensic populations, and provided feedback on curriculum development. Sabrina also sits on several boards, including the Edmonton Violence Prevention Centre and the Diverse Voices Steering Committee, and she volunteers with her local Special Olympics. Sabrinas believe strongly in community connection and lifelong learning!

As the Manager of Clinical Programs and Community Relations, Sabrina looks forward to supporting Insight as they grow their clinical (area) specializations and work towards meeting

the needs of the community. Helping Insight to achieve its aim of being the most trusted and sought-after psychological care provider in every single community it serves.

As a psychologist Sabrina likes to bring empathy and compassion into her work. She views counselling as a collaborative process between herself and you (the client). It takes strength and courage to attend therapy, and Sabrina's goal is to create a safe and supportive environment for you to explore your experiences, gain understanding, and make desired changes. Using a client-centered and integrative approach, Sabrina draws on multiple theoretical orientations, tailoring an approach to best fit your needs.

Course Objective

Participants will develop advanced skills in couples counseling and psychotherapy. They will understand and apply diverse theoretical models, enhance reflective practices for personal and professional growth, manage high-conflict cases and power differentials effectively, and improve communication and intimacy in relationships. The course will emphasize the importance of creating safe spaces for clients to share and explore their issues. Participants will also learn to handle common issues such as betrayal, trust, and parenting dynamics, applying their knowledge through case studies and practical examples.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- 1) ...
AASECT Core Knowledge Area:
- 2) ...
AASECT Core Knowledge Areas:
- 3) ...
AASECT Core Knowledge Areas:

Key Competencies Related to Sex Therapy

1. *Key to AASECT Core Knowledge Areas:*
 - A. Ethics and ethical behavior.
 - B. Developmental sexuality from a bio-psycho-social perspective across the life course.

- C. Socio-cultural, familial factors (e.g., ethnicity, culture, religion, spirituality, socioeconomic status, family values) in relation to sexual values and behaviors.
- D. Issues related to sexual orientation and/or gender identity: heterosexuality; issues and themes impacting lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, asexual people; gender identity and expression.
- E. Intimacy skills (e.g., social, emotional, sexual), intimate relationships, interpersonal relationships and family dynamics.
- F. Diversities in sexual expression and lifestyles including, but not limited to, polyamory, swinging, BDSM and tantra.
- G. Sexual and reproductive anatomy/physiology.
- H. Health/medical factors that may influence sexuality including, but not limited to, illness, disability, drugs, mental health, conception, pregnancy, childbirth, pregnancy termination, contraception, fertility, HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infection, other infections, sexual trauma, injury and safer sex practices.
- I. Range of sexual functioning and behavior, from optimal to problematic including, but not limited to, common issues such as: desire discrepancy, lack of desire, difficulty achieving or maintaining arousal, sexual pain, penetration problems and difficulty with orgasm.
- J. Sexual exploitation including sexual abuse, sexual harassment and sexual assault.
- K. Cyber sexuality and social media.
- L. Substance use/abuse and sexuality.
- M. Pleasure enhancement skills.
- N. Learning theory and its application.
- O. Professional communication and personal reflection skills.
- P. History of the discipline of sex research, theory, education, counseling and therapy.
- Q. Principles of sexuality research and research methods.

In Addition To The Core Knowledge Areas - Sex Therapy Training:

2. Key to AASECT Sex Therapy Training Areas:

- A. Theory and methods of sex-related psychotherapy, including several different models.
- B. Techniques of sex-related assessment and diagnosis of the 'Psychosexual Disorders' described in the current edition of the *DSM*.
- C. Theory and methods of approach to intervention in relationship systems experiencing sex and intimacy problems. Therapists with no documented graduate or post graduate training in couples counseling must acquire 16 hours of couples counseling training as part of the 60 hours of Sex Therapy Training (Section VI). Couples therapy is psychotherapy which focuses on the couple and views the couple as the client. Clinical skills such as: attending to the interaction with each partner, knowing the power dynamic/struggle that may occur, teaching effective, authentic communication, understanding and bringing awareness to deeper, hidden unmet needs and childhood wounds, psycho education of couple's skill such as active listening, validation, empathy, asking for what they want and need, and negotiating differences are imperative. Suggested options to gain

couples therapy skills and training are: Imago Relational Therapy, Gottman, Schnarch, Bader & Pearson, and Emotional Focused Therapy as possible examples. ** This training may be done online.

D. Theory and method of approach to medical intervention in the evaluation and treatment of psychosexual disorders.**

E. Principles of consultation, collaboration, and referral.

F. Ethical decision-making and best practice.

Course Outline

Introduction (5 mins)

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- Welcome to the Epic Master Clinician Program
 - Overview of Couples Counseling Part 1 and Part 2
 - Year 1 introductory courses and Year 2 advanced programs
 - Speaker Introduction
 - Dr. Corey Haruska, Registered Psychologist, CEO of Insight Psychological, Certified Sex Therapist
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Creating a Safe Space

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- Importance of a safe and inclusive environment for sharing thoughts and asking questions
 - Generalizations based on gender and research
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Common Issues in Couples Counseling

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- Communication and micro skills
 - Intimacy, sexuality, and sensuality
 - Breach, betrayal, and trust
 - Relational navigation
 - Parenting dynamics
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Considerations in Couples Counseling

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- Advanced competency required
 - Managing high conflict cases
 - Navigating power differentials
 - Handling wounded duck and alligator tears scenarios
 - Managing gender and sex expectations and standards
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Theoretical Models in Couples Counseling

- Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT)
- Imago Relationship Therapy
- Gottman Method
- Narrative Therapy
- Solution-Focused Therapy (SFT)
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

Break 1: 10 minutes

Attachment Theory in Couples

- Understanding different attachment styles
- Triggering and flooding responses
- Managing conflict based on attachment styles

Break 2: 5 minutes

Gottman Research Summary

- Flooding and men's emotional response
- Sound Relationship House model
- Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Criticism, Contempt, Defensiveness, Stonewalling
- Strategies to counteract the Four Horsemen

Normal Marital Sadism

- Concept by David Schnarch
- Examples of emotional mayhem and playful tormenting
- Managing sadistic behavior in couples

Couple's Goals for Therapy

- Identifying clear goals for therapy
- Assigning homework to ensure progress
- Monitoring and updating goals throughout the therapy process

Communication Basics

- Verbal and non-verbal communication
- Importance of non-verbal cues
- Common patterns and pitfalls in communication

- Strategies to improve communication skills

Additional Resources and Handouts

- Access to additional materials and handouts for further learning
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Closing AND Resource Reflection (5 mins)

References

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