

Preface

Cognitive and Rational–Emotive Behavior Therapy with Couples: Theory and Practice is a book that is intended for practitioners working with couples, including marriage and family therapists, psychologists and psychiatrists, mental health counselors, relationship coaches, and social workers. As the reader will note in the first chapter, counseling couples can be very challenging for a number of reasons, and practitioners should find that this publication is a comprehensive guide to working with couples who present in therapy with a variety of issues. Students doing master’s or doctoral-level coursework should also find this to be a very useful resource, in particular because they will enter the professional field with a “toolbox” of techniques that will enhance their work with couples.

This book is unique in that most of the authors are, or have been, clinicians as well as scholars. As such, not only they are better able to address their topic from a review of current or relevant literature and research, but they can also focus on the practical application of concepts by providing readers with pertinent case studies that illustrate the principles of theory as well as practice. Practitioners working with couples need such examples in order to most effectively direct their work with this client population.

A significant feature of this book is that it addresses topics relevant to couples across the life span, as well as challenging issues that couples may have to contend with in the course of their relationship. Chapter 1 is an introduction to couples counseling from a cognitive and rational–emotive behavior perspective, which is the theoretical foundation of this publication. This chapter highlights the main tenets of the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Rational–Emotive Behavior Therapy as well as the major contributions of Albert Ellis and Aaron Beck, both pioneers in the field of CBT with regard to counseling couples. Chapter 1 also touches briefly on several “third wave” cognitive behavioral approaches, including Mindfulness, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

The third chapter provides readers with an explanation of marital myths and other self-defeating behaviors that sabotage couple relationships, with practical interventions practitioners can use to help couples overcome these negative beliefs and practices. The next five chapters address specific problems that many couples

present with: dealing with relationship ambivalence, anger and conflict, stress and adversity, intimacy and sexuality, and betrayal and affairs. These chapters all contain case studies and practical application of concepts as well as specific interventions to help couples deal with these issues that may be quite complex and challenging.

Chapters 9–13 focus on specific issues that can present major challenges in some couple relationships. Chapter 9 deals with same-sex couples, which is especially relevant given President Obama recent endorsement of gay marriage. Chapter 10 discusses how to deal with cultural and religious differences, another important topic given the religious and cultural diversity in this country, as well as other countries throughout the world. In each of these chapters, challenges unique to these populations are addressed, as well as strategies for dealing with problems that arise over the course of the relationship. The next chapter focuses on problems that develop when addiction impacts a couple's relationship, and Chapters 12 and 13 both deal with difficult issues that arise when a spouse or child has a chronic physical or mental illness, or when a partner is diagnosed with a terminal illness. Each of these three chapters provides a review of the current literature with an emphasis on the role of distorted cognitions in contributing to the problems couples experience when faced with these issues. Case studies and practical interventions will help practitioners in their work with couples presenting with these serious problems.

Chapters 14 and 15 deal specifically with issues facing couples at different phases of the adult life cycle: the challenges of parenting and grandparenting, as well as dealing with aging. The authors address various dimensions of these topics, and through case study illustrations, present practical ways that practitioners can intervene with couples facing problems during these distinct phases of the life cycle.

Because all of the authors have emphasized practical application of theory to practice, this book should enhance readers' understanding of each of the topics covered in this book from a cognitive behavioral perspective. In addition, they should have numerous cognitive, emotive, and behavioral interventions to employ when working with couples. Students doing masters or doctoral-level coursework will enter the field with a "toolbox" of techniques to enhance their work with couples.

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