

COUPLE THERAPY PRACTICE

This section contains four chapters that are devoted to the explication of the phase-oriented couple therapy approach. This practice model is grounded in a synthesis of social, family, trauma, object relations, and attachment theories, which have been reviewed separately in Section II (Theoretical Foundations). Throughout this third section, our effort is to demonstrate the coherence of this case-specific model, drawing from different theoretical perspectives that are useful at a particular phase of the work or in response to a specific presenting issue.

In Chapter 8, we focus on the biopsychosocial assessment. Because any assessment functions as an integral part of treatment, we initially provide a clear contextual frame by summarizing the salient features of the practice model. Then, we review the relevant institutional, interactional, and intrapersonal factors that contribute to a thorough biopsychosocial assessment.

In Chapter 9, we describe how the biopsychosocial assessment guides the creation of a treatment plan. Then, we discuss ways to build a facilitative therapeutic alliance, setting the stage for a detailed review of the therapy phases (i.e., Phase I: Safety, stabilization, and establishment of a context for change; Phase II: Reflection on the trauma narrative; and Phase III: Consolidation of new perspectives, attitudes, and behavior). Finally, we address specific practice themes that are central with all traumatized couples in therapy.

They include: (1) the composition of a “couple,” (2) the role of violence, (3) parenting, (4) sexuality, (5) affairs, (6) dual diagnoses (i.e., substance abuse/addictions and complex posttraumatic stress disorder), and (7) dissociation.

Chapter 10 focuses on the clinician’s responses in working with traumatized couples in a couple therapy frame. We explore the influences of vicarious traumatization, racial-identity development, countertransference phenomena, and the realm of intersubjectivity.

Finally, in Chapter 11, we feature a case example, the couple therapy with Rod and Yolanda, which illuminates the use of a phase-oriented couple therapy practice model. Our attention now turns to the crafting of a complete biopsychosocial assessment.