

# BRIERCREST

## CO 713 Topics in Marriage and Family Therapy: An Emotionally Focused Approach to Couples Therapy Winter 2023

Professor: Tony Schnare, M.A., R.M.F.T.-S., C.C.C.-S., C.P.C.S.  
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Course Dates: January 9-13, 2023  
Delivery Method: On Campus modular course

3 Credit Hours

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on advanced family systems theories and interventions. Students will have the opportunity to gain substantive understanding of specific systems theories and the specialized applied practices related to these theories.

Emotion Focused Therapy (EFT) is a short-term approach to the treatment of distressed couples based on a clear conceptualization of relationship distress and adult attachment. The course presents both theory and practice through lecture, video viewing, and practical exercises. It will help students understand relationship distress in an attachment context, the assessment process and specific interventions, how to create change events in therapy, and how to address common impasses and difficult issues.

*Prerequisite: CO 603 Foundations of Marriage and Family Therapy*

### COURSE INTEGRATION:

This course is in keeping with the mission, goals and objectives of Briercrest Seminary. It integrates an empirically validated approach to marital therapy with the biblical understanding of marriage. Learning how to create a loving, secure relationship is essential for physical, mental, and spiritual health. Focus is on the affective experience that can influence the disintegration and re-creation of intimate bonds. Students will develop a greater awareness of their own emotional experience and areas of growth, develop sensitivity to cultural and individual differences, and cultivate the skills necessary for effective ministry.

### COURSE TEXTS

Johnson, S. (2013). *Love sense: The revolutionary new science of romantic relationships*. Little Brown and Company, New York.

Johnson, S. (2019). *Attachment theory in practice: Emotionally focused therapy (EFT) with individuals, couples, and families*. Guildford: New York

MacIntosh, H. (2019). *Developmental Couple Therapy for Complex Trauma: A Manual for Therapists*. Routledge: New York

**RECOMMENDED READING**

Johnson, S. (2008). *Hold me tight: Seven conversations for a lifetime of love*. Little Brown and Company, New York.

Johnson, S. (2019). *The practice of emotionally focused marital therapy: Creating connections* (3rd. ed.). Routledge, New York.

Furrow, J., Johnson, S. M., Bradley, B., Brubacher, L., Campbell, T.L., Kallos-Lily, V., Palmer, G., Rheem, K., & Wooley, S. (2022). *Becoming an emotionally focused couple therapist: The workbook*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Routledge, New York.

Johnson, S., & Sanderfer, K. (2016) *Created for Connection: The "Hold Me Tight" Guide for Christian Couples*, Little Brown and Company, New York.

Kallos-Lilly, V. & Fitzgerald J. (2014). *An emotionally focused workbook for couples: The two of us*. Routledge, New York.

Students are expected to refer to Briercrest Seminary's Format and Style Guides and Guide for Writing Research Papers, available as PDF documents here: <https://www.mybriercrest.ca/seminary/documents/>.

These texts are available in store and online at the Briercrest Bookstore: <http://briercrest.ca/bookstore>.

Students are responsible for course materials and communication on Canvas (<https://briercrest.instructure.com>; cf. <http://briercrest.ca/online/canvas>) and their myBriercrest.ca email account.

**COURSE OUTCOMES**

1. Thinking
  - a. To provide a clear theoretical orientation of adult intimate relationships and the phenomenon of relationship distress within an attachment context.
  - b. To provide an opportunity for students to learn how attachment processes that constitute adult intimate relationships are involved in negative cycles of marital distress.
  - c. To provide students with the opportunity to think about difficult issues and relational impasses that may arise in working with couples.
2. Valuing and Feeling
  - a. To develop a non-blaming stance when working with distressed couples.
  - b. To explore person-of-the-therapist dynamics in developing a more differentiated therapeutic posture in working with couples.
  - c. To gain an appreciation of individual and cultural differences.
3. Skill
  - a. To familiarize students with the assessment process and identify specific interventions.
  - b. To provide students with the opportunity to apply what they have learned about adult relationships to current problems facing couples today.

**COURSE OUTLINE AND CONTENT**

1. Introduction to the Emotionally Focused Therapy
2. Attachment/bonding and the role of emotion
3. Assumptions of EFT and the therapist's main focus
4. The Nine Steps of EFT
5. Assessment and interventions
6. Working with Traumatized couples
7. Integrating EFT and Sex Therapy
8. Resolving attachment-related injuries

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

Evaluation of the student's achievement will be based on the following:

**1. PRE-COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

Read Johnson, S. (2013). *Love sense* and Johnson, S. (2019). *Attachment theory in practice*. Write a five-page critical review of each text. More than a summary, a critical review engages the material, identifies the main thesis of the text, and evaluates whether the author achieved the stated outcomes. A critical review will address strengths of the author's approach and reflect on those areas where there might be room for further development in the model. The review will also reflect areas where the model integrates well with a biblical perspective as well as those aspects that prove more challenging to incorporate.

Due: Submission to Canvas by Monday morning, January 9, 2023 at 9:00AM. (20%)

**2. MID-COURSE ASSIGNMENT**

Working in groups of 3-4, students will prepare a 30 minute presentation on some aspect or intervention related to the EFT model. Insight into the model, creativity, and demonstrated clarity will serve as the assessment rubric.

Presentations will be done on Thursday to allow groups sufficient time during the week to prepare. (20%)

**3. POST-COURSE ASSIGNMENT**

Students will write a 12-15 page paper consisting of four components:

- a. A literature review of an issue (e.g., childhood abuse, living with a chronically ill child, depression, conflicting Christian values, life cycle transitions, infidelity, etc.) that interferes with creating and/or maintaining close relationship and that may escalate into marital distress. Please note that your topic must be pre-approved.
- b. An assessment report of a fictitious couple referred or requesting therapy for the problem that you have chosen. The report should include the level of distress, the negative cycle clearly indicated, male partner's perspective, female partner's perspective, information on each partner's family of origin, and goals for therapy.
- c. A transcript with you, as an EFT therapist, working with this couple. The transcript may be an excerpt from anywhere in the assessment or therapy process. You must introduce the excerpt (i.e., state what step in the EFT process you are at and what you did to get there).

- d. A discussion of the interventions used in the transcript and justification for their usage, how you helped the couple shift from a negative interactional pattern to a more accessible and responsive posture toward one another, what your couple looked like at the end of therapy, and some specific challenges therapists may face when working with this particular issue.

The purpose of this paper is to have you think critically and apply creatively the material you have read and learned through the class interactions. Papers will be graded according to writing style (i.e., presentation, clarity), thoroughness, and how accurately the interventions are implemented.

Due: Submission to Canvas by March 10, 2023.

(60%)

## SEMINARY CALENDAR

Students are expected to be aware of the policies that govern course work at Briercrest Seminary, all of which are published in the current Seminary Calendar:

<https://www.briercrestseminary.ca/academics/calendar/>.

### ***Attendance Policy***

In order to benefit fully from a seminary education, to be good stewards of time and finances, and to be considerate of their classmates and faculty members, students must be in class at every opportunity.

### ***Modular Courses***

Students are expected to attend 100 per cent of each modular for which they register. If this is impossible due to extenuating circumstances, arrangements must be made with the course professor before the first day of class. If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending class, a maximum of one (1) full day of class can be foregone. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

### ***Online Courses***

If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending scheduled meeting times, then up to 20% of meeting time can be foregone. Students missing scheduled meeting times should make every effort to inform the course professor prior to any time missed. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

### ***Semester-Based Courses***

All students missing more than two full weeks of a particular course from registration to the last day of classes will receive an automatic fail (0%). A student may appeal a course failure due to excessive absences. Successful appeals will be granted only in rare cases where all absences are clearly beyond the student's control. Appeals must be made through the Academic Appeal Process.

### ***Course Schedules***

Classes begin at 9:00 a.m. on Monday morning and run a minimum of 30 hours through the course of the week. The schedule is determined by the course professor. Students should check the syllabus for specifics. When the syllabus does not state class times, students are responsible to check with the professor prior to making travel plans.

**Assignment Submission**

All assignments must be submitted no later than eight weeks after the last day of class as stated in the syllabus. The correct due dates will be clearly noted in the syllabus and each faculty member will state in their syllabus how assignments should be submitted. Assignments submitted within a week after the due date will be accepted with a 10 per cent penalty. For additional information refer to the late assignment policy or the extension policy in the [academic calendar](#).

**Return of Graded Assignments**

Professors are expected to return graded assignments within six weeks of the due date. If they fail to do so, students may submit an inquiry to the [Seminary](#). If an extension is granted, the professor is no longer obligated to meet this deadline.

**Academic Honesty**

Students are accountable to perform each task according to principles of academic honesty. Please refer to pages 24-25 in the [academic calendar](#) for more information.

**Academic Accommodations**

Any student with a disability, injury, or health condition who may need academic accommodations (permanent or temporary) should discuss them with the course instructor after contacting the Academic Resource Centre Coordinator in person (L234 in the Library) or by email ([ntooke@briercrest.ca](mailto:ntooke@briercrest.ca)). Documentation from a qualified practitioner will be required (i.e., medical doctor, psychologist, etc.).

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Allan, R., Wiebe, S.A., Johnson, S.M., Piaseckyj, O., & Campbell, T.L. (2021). *Practicing Emotionally Focused Therapy Online: Calling all Relationships*. *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy*, 47(2), 424-439.
- Bankoski, M. E. (2001). *Pulling on the heart strings: An emotionally focused approach to family life cycle transitions*. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 27 (2), 177-187.
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- Brubacher, L. L. (2017). *Emotionally focused individual therapy: An attachment-based experiential/systemic perspective*. *Person-Centered & Experiential Psychotherapies*, 16(1), 50- 67.
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- Gordon-Walker, J., Manion, I.G. Cloutier, P.F., & Johnson, S. M. (1992). *Measuring marital distress in couples with chronically ill children: The dyadic adjustment scale*. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, 17 (3), 345-357.
- Gottman, J. (1994). *Why marriages succeed and fail*. Simon Schuster: New York.
- Gregoire, S.W., Gregoire-Lindenbach, R., Sawatsky, J. (2021) *The great sex rescue: The lies you've been taught and how to recover what God intended*. Baker Books: New York.

- Hirschfeld, M.R. & Wittenborn, A.K. (2016). "Emotionally focused family therapy and play therapy with children whose parents are divorced." *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 57(2), 133-150.
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- Kleinplatz, P. (2012) *New directions in sex therapy: Innovations and alternatives*. Routledge: New York.
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- Schnarch, D. (1997). *Passionate marriage: Sex, love, and intimacy in emotionally committed relationships*. W.W. Norton: New York.
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Zeytinoglu Saydam, S., & Nino, A. (2019). *A Tool for Connection: Using Person of the Therapist Model in Emotionally Focused Therapy Supervision*. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 45(2), 233-243.

Extensive bibliographies on EFT scholarship are available at <https://iceeft.com/> under “Therapist Resources”.