



## Counseling-II Elective: Intimacy Therapy

### Basic underlying beliefs/presuppositions for counseling/caregiving/mentoring

1. Mankind made up of spirit/soul (mind, will, emotions)/ and body.
2. Mankind's basic motivation is to be intimately related with God and significant others.
3. Abundant life (joy, peace, fellowship, wholeness) is experienced as we remain rightly related to God and others.
4. Right relationships are established and maintained through the meeting of intimacy needs valid ways ordained by God.
5. When sin entered the world, mankind turned to counterfeit means to try to get relational (and other) needs met. These counterfeit methods ultimately and inevitably fail to satisfy.
6. Problems, issues, and "pathologies," unless physiologically induced, result from relational breakdown manifested in unmet relational needs
7. Problems/issues/"pathologies" have typically developed in the following sequence, repeated over and over again:
  - relational needs went unmet.
  - thinking related to self and others was impaired or distorted
  - feelings were evoked that were painful some way
  - behaviors were influenced which were unproductive
  - outcomes developed that were unhealthy
  - problems/issues/"pathologies" resulted

### The Intimacy Therapy Model: Theory

1. Intimacy Therapy is a **biblically-based paradigm** for understanding humankind and discerning the source of problems or dysfunctions that limit joy, contentment, and abundant life, and a methodology for effective intervention.
2. Whereas most counseling models do not even include a **theory of human motivation**, Intimacy Therapy points to people's innate need for relationship with God and others as the basic force that defines human behavior. Other Christian models typically assume that humans are driven by their fallenness. Intimacy



Therapy expects fallenness to influence a person's response to unmet relational or other needs.

3. Intimacy Therapy **relates to the whole person**--spiritual, emotional, intellectual, volitional, and physical.
4. The pre-existing theory about human nature and behavior that is most consistent with Intimacy Therapy is **object relations psychology**. This theory holds that people are motivated by a need to relate to others ("objects"). The secular proponents of this theory would not typically include God as an "other," however.
5. Intimacy Therapy considers **the source of healing, reconciliation, and positive change** is God. Family systems theorists say that relational units, such as families, that are not receptive to outside input ("closed systems") experience entropy, a process of continuing decline eventually ending in collapse. This theory suggests a need for all relationships to have an unlimited supply from outside to sustain and pump life into each relational unit. Intimacy Therapy holds that humans will inevitably become exhausted or fail due to their fallen nature. The only source of such unlimited love and power is God. The secular theorists would not be able to identify a viable, reliable, unlimited source.

### **The Intimacy Therapy Model: Methodology**

1. If there is a **central counselling technique** in Intimacy Therapy, it is to help people experience relevant biblical truth that heals, resolves, or eliminates unhealthy symptoms, dysfunctions, or "pathologies." Therapeutic success involves clients exercising faith in order to pursue godly ways to meet needs, "putting off" sinful counterfeits that provide only temporary satisfaction. In spiritual terms, this means walking in the Spirit rather than in the (fallen) flesh.
2. The **role of the counselor** is that of a facilitator and equipper, one who "walks alongside" and mentors others within the context of a healthy, godly, therapeutic relationship. The goal is to enable the person or persons being helped to understand and implement godly ways to respond to unmet needs in themselves and others with whom they are related
3. Although **the therapeutic relationship** often involves the therapist at first, the counselor's goal is to foster therapeutic interaction in the marriages, families, or friendships of the clients as soon as possible, even during the first session. Therefore, whenever possible, Intimacy Therapy is applied within the context of a relationship. This most often involves group therapy or counseling friends, couples, or families together.



4. A healthy **counselor/client relationship** includes appropriate self-disclosure on the part of the therapists as they "impart their very lives" throughout the counseling process. Such transparency is a powerful aid for fostering ownership and trust when it is used ethically and in the client's interests rather than to benefit the therapist in any way.
5. The **focus of counselling is on unmet needs** that produce symptoms, rather than the symptoms themselves. Of course, the presenting problems and issues need to be understood thoroughly and validated. The counselor needs insight and discernment to determine the motivation behind the clients' symptomology. In other words, "Why is he/she doing that?" Thus, Intimacy Therapists seek to resolve underlying issues rather than manage symptoms.
6. The client and therapist may need to **examine the past in order to effect change in the present**. The assumption is that past life experiences can impact the present if they have not been understood, faced, and resolved. This often requires an examination of intergenerational (family- of-origin) experiences that contribute to present day hindrances to healthy relational intimacy and life functioning.
7. Intimacy Therapy uses **experiential processes** to replace unhealthy relational patterns and dynamics with those that produce genuine relational intimacy with God and others. These processes include emotional responding, confession and forgiveness, mourning and comforting, affirmation of character and personal value, responding to fear with perfect love, "leaving" one's family of origin in order to "cleave" to one's spouse, and examining thoughts in the light of revealed truth.
8. Once they have used active listening to gain an understanding of the presenting problems and underlying issues, Intimacy Therapists employ **active, directive techniques** to help the client(s) experience positive change during the counseling session itself. However, Intimacy Therapists do not impose their own beliefs upon their clients or try to coerce their behavior.
9. **Homework assignments** are commonly given to encourage further experiencing of healthy intimacy dynamics. The client's response to the homework assignment is diagnostic and helps counselor know what direction and further intervention is indicated.

**Techniques employed in the counseling process** (explain what these looks like)

1. Experiential versus cognitive or behavioral
2. Actively relational rather than distant/disengaged (e.g., emotional responding versus didactic)



3. Demonstrate, model, teach, coach, and then, help clients experience relevant biblical truth

## Stages and Process Flow for Intimacy Therapy

### Stage 1: Assessment

#### 1. Basic Questions to Be Answered:

- a. what **relationships** need to be examined?

Since unmet relational needs are often the source: of problems or symptoms on the surface, the counselor needs to assess which relationships are, or been, problematic. This could be a marriage, parent-child, or family-of-origin issues, even with deceased relatives.

- b. what **scriptures** need to be experienced?

Since God has not left us without instruction for life, the counselor should determine which biblical principles apply to the problems at hand. An example of such principles are reflected in the following texts:

Problem/Issue	Principle to be Applied	Verse to be Experienced
Unhealed Hurt	Comfort for those hurting	Rom. 12:15b; II Cor. 1:3-4
Unresolved Anger	Face the pain and forgive	Eph. 4:31-32
True Guilt	Confession and godly sorrow	James 5:16; II Cor. 7:10
False Guilt	Clarify truth from God's perspective	John 8:32
Shame	Receive acceptance from God/others	Rom. 15:7
Fear/Insecurity	Displace/Cast out fear	I John 4:18
Anxiety	Cast anxiety upon God	I Peter 5:7
Stress	Trust God and apply His ways	Phil. 4:4-9

- c. what **giving** needs to be encouraged?

A counselor is often in a position to "get some of God's grace into circulation" by offering empathy, encouragement, acceptance, comfort, etc., to his/her clients. As the clients are able to "freely receive" some of God's grace through the ministry of the counselor, they are in better position to begin "freely giving" to others. This might look like a wife being increasingly appreciative of her husband's efforts to plan for their



future. Or, it might look like a single parent becoming more attentive of his sons whom he sees only periodically. Developing one's ability to give to others reduces an unhealthy tendency to become preoccupied with the behavior of others or obsessive about one's own needs.

d. what **obstacles** need to be eliminated?

Intimacy is often blocked by obstacles that rob abundant life from us. These include:

**Self-reliant denial** of need for others (rather than humility that relies upon God)

**Selfish** taking from others to meet our needs (rather than faith that God will provide)

**Self-condemning rejection** of available help (rather than receiving with gratitude)

Increased awareness of these tendencies and strategies to build the healthy attitudes are part of the growth process facilitated by the counselor.

## 2. Approach

- 1) Model genuine empathy, comfort, and **good emotional responding skills**.
- 2) Chart a **genogram** or obtain a **psycho-social history** to help you discern possible sources of pain/conflict/symptoms and other relevant background information.
- 3) Use **emotional cup** concept/illustration to identify unresolved feelings and pain.
- 4) Introduce concepts of **aloneness** and **neediness** to help client(s) understand their pain.
- 5) Use **genogram** again to determine who & how needs were met/not met
- 6) **Homework** might be further defining-and discussion of needs or confession and forgiveness preparation.

### First Session Outline:

- Establish rapport & make self-disclosures relevant to the client
- Identify interests & spiritual background
- Define desired changes, outcomes, goals
- Solicit history of any prior counseling experiences
- Solicit identification of symptoms/sources & patterns of conflict
- Chart genograms in session--background relevant to the above
- Empathize with the pain/stress/etc he/she/they are experiencing
- Use emotional cup illustration and identify their pain
- Communicate hope by sharing some of God's processes for emptying pain from our cups



- Assign homework related to increasing personal or inter-personal knowing, such as identifying priority needs, or the confession & forgiveness preparation for couples

## **Stage 2: Stabilization**

**A) Phase 1:** Identifying unmet needs, unhealthy accumulations emotion, and identifying, comforting, and healing hurt and pain

The focus of this phase is to better understand and intervention for unresolved hurt, anger, or whatever painful emotion is present within the client(s). For couples and families, we typically begin by facilitating the healing of hurts each person feels that were prompted by wrongful or negligent behavior of the others. The process for healing this pain is **confession and forgiveness** that includes full ownership of the wrongful or negligent behavior by the one responsible. It also includes expressions of sincere godly sorrow wounded person by the one who acted inappropriately or inconsiderately..

For individuals, particularly single adults, you may begin with unresolved pain that was prompted by the actions of a person who is no longer present or even alive. The process for healing such pain begins with **mourning and comfort**. The client must grieve and the counselor, spouse, and/or journey-mate can minister comfort.

### **Second Session Outline:**

- Ask about the homework assignment, assessing where: to focus now
- See if there are positive outcomes from previous meeting
- Take the counselees' "emotional pulse" by asking each person to share what feelings are present for them right now as you begin the session
- Based upon the responses to the above, discern whether it is necessary to review the principles of aloneness, neediness, and unhealthy accumulations of painful emotions, using the illustration of the Emotional Cup
- Teach appropriate intervention processes for emptying the pain out of one another's cups--confession & forgiveness or mourning & comfort
- For a couple or family, coach the process, then leave complete the process privately. Be sure to exercise wisdom and discernment to assure adequate safety (emotional as well as physical) for all persons involved.
- When you return, ask the counselees to share what their experience was like as they sought to confess & forgive or mourn & comfort. The counselees' responses will be very diagnostic for the counselor to determine what to do next If the clients had difficulty, you may want to challenge them to try again after some



additional coaching and encouragement, or, if necessary, stay with them during their next attempt.

**B) Phase 2:** Understanding the ingredients of healthy, intimate relationships and experiencing intimacy in the present

The focus of this phase is to increase understanding and continue to build responding skills to help the individual, couple, or family experience healthy intimacy. This phase of the process may take more than one session, depending upon the nature and degree of the counselee's issues.

The concepts and processes to be understood and experienced include the connection between relational needs (e.g., attention, approval) and either pain or happiness, depending upon the degree to which the needs are met. This phase also needs to ensure that the counselees are learning to identify the emotions they are experiencing in the present, and learning to respond well to the emotions of others. They may also need to be coached in the experiencing of Ephesians 4:15 -- learning to speak the truth in love in order to increase deep knowing without provoking anger or defenses. Processes for expressing appreciation for others and communicating needs in healthy, non-threatening ways are included in this stage.

**Session Outlines:**

- Ask about the homework assignment, assessing where to focus now
- See if there are positive outcomes from the previous meeting
- Based upon the responses to the above, discern whether it is necessary to continue to help the counselees empty pain from their cups that has been caused by one another.
- When that work has been completed, explain how the pain within is really the product of unmet needs, but how their is unlimited potential for healing and intimacy as relational needs are being met more and more consistently.
- Use the following tools to help the counselees experience additional healing and blessing both in the sessions themselves or between sessions as homework assignments:
  - Potential and Pain diagram
  - Thanks/Wish List worksheet
  - Emotions... How Do You Feel? handout
  - Emotional Responding diagram
  - Marital Strokes worksheet
  - Power and Potential of Appreciation handout



### **Stage 3: Leaving Family-of-Origin** **Identifying, grieving, and healing childhood pain**

The focus of this stage is to help identify, face, heal and resolve any pain (hurt, loss, fear, etc.) from the counselee's childhood. Such resolution of childhood issues is directly related to the amount of freedom experienced to fully and healthily engage in meaningful adult relationships. Failure to resolve childhood issues often results in unproductive behavior that may be unconsciously motivated.

The concepts and processes to be addressed during this stage include "leaving and cleaving," and a significant amount of mourning and comforting. Counselees need to continue to practice healthy emotional responding skills and speaking the truth in love, rather than threatening or demanding.

#### **Session Outlines:**

- Ask about the homework assignment, assessing where to focus now
- See if there are positive outcomes from the previous meeting
- Take the counselees' "emotional pulse" by asking each person to share what feelings are present for them right now as begin the session
- Based upon responses to the above, discern whether it is necessary to continue to help the counselees focus on their skills for emotional responding and meeting needs, or to move forward to address some of the childhood pain that may be at root of their present day conflict and pain.
- Review the Potential and Pain diagram and relate it to pain from the counselees' childhood.
- Invite the counselees to review the Top Ten Intimacy Needs and to evaluate how well these needs were met in childhood.
- Convey the concepts of drawing genograms for the purpose of gaining additional insight and experiencing additional healing and freedom through mourning and comfort. You may wish to share and discuss a portion of your own genogram in order to demonstrate the principles.
- Help the counselees process their family of origin pain (and rejoice -with any positive experiences or meeting of needs that is presented), making sure that the focus to experience healing rather than only gain insight and understanding. Childhood Questionnaires, Genogram construction, or Therapeutic Letters may be assigned. as homework and then presented in the session with a spouse, friend, or group.
- Tools for this stage include:
  - Childhood Questionnaire
  - Intimacy Needs Met or Unmet by Caretakers





- Therapeutic Letter Writing worksheet
- Genogram Symbols and Construction
- The Need to Leave Father and Mother worksheet

Counseling sessions for Stages 2 and 3 may be augmented by group programs such as retreats where couples or individuals share their genograms in a loving, secure environment, assisted by a leader team well-trained in Intimate Life principles. Another resource particularly useful to counselees who are in serious crises or who simply want to heal and grow as rapidly as possible are Intimate Life Intensive Retreats. These experiential programs are limited to 8 or 10 participants who are guided through the relational processes included in Intimacy Therapy. In these Intensives, couples, families, or singles meet together for 3 to 4 days. Discussions and sharing times are facilitated by a highly trained pastoral/professional counselor team accredited by the Intimate Life Enrichment Center.

#### **Stage 4: Developing Intimate Life Disciplines**

Meeting Needs, developing healthy thinking, building an intimacy lifestyle, setting goals.

The focus of this stage is to move beyond the transitional stages that helped the counselee(s) heal unresolved pain and conflict, restore and reconcile relationships, to implementing the intimacy principles into their lifestyle in order to continue the blessings and begin to pass them on to others. This approach further reflects a discipleship methodology within Intimacy Therapy.

This stage encourages proactive goal-setting that touches all major segments of life--spiritual, social, intellectual, physical, and emotional. The underlying principle for such goal setting is intentionality--living with a purpose. This is God's nature and therefore should be reflected in ours. This stage also concentrates on building reinforcing rational skills so that intimacy with God and others will continue to grow.

Concepts that are introduced or reinforced at this point include the Four Intimacy Ingredients (affectionate caring, vulnerable disclosure, joint accomplishment, and mutual giving) as applied to the various stages of life. In addition, counselees are encouraged to become more aware of their partner's or friends' specific relational needs in order to care and give effectively, to develop further their abilities to be vulnerable and to speak the truth in love, and to examine their own thinking and behavior patterns in order to experience Romans 12:2, "...do not conform any longer to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."



## **Session Outlines**

- Ask about the homework assignment, assessing where to focus now.
- See if there are positive outcomes from the previous meeting.
- Take the counselees' "emotional pulse" by asking each person to share what feelings are present for them right now as you begin the session.
- Based upon the responses to the above, discern whether it is necessary to continue to help the counselees focus on emptying pain from their emotional cups that has been put there in present-day relationships or from childhood experiences. If not, help the counselees continue their healing and growth by working on disciplines that become a part of their new lifestyle of intimacy.
- Address various areas of growth that are applicable to the counselees' life situation. For example, administer the Unhealthy Thinking Questionnaire and determine if any thinking patterns need to be replaced by more godly ways of regarding self, others, or life situations. Or help them develop better ways of speaking to others using the Speaking Words That Edify handout.
- Encourage the counselees to enroll in a church-based Intimate Life course such as Intimate Encounters for married adults, Parenting with Intimacy for dual- or single- parent families, or Discovering Intimacy for single adults. Such classes or small group fellowships will provide additional encouragement and support for counselees to continue to learn and grow.
- Tools for this stage include:
  - Speaking Words That Edify handout
  - Unhealthy Thinking Questionnaire
  - Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships chart
  - Journal of Gratefulness
  - A Woman's Need for Security worksheet (married couples)
  - A Man's Need for Comfort worksheet (married couples)
  - Love Map (worksheet for married couples)
  - Goal Setting worksheet with sample goals



## **Counseling Ministry In Your Church**

### **Suggested Processes and Tools**

#### **Stage One: Assessment**

##### **Understanding Issues, Discerning Real Needs, & Establishing Goals**

Emotional Cup Concept

Life Script--Adult Issues

Marriage/Journey-mate Staff Meeting Overview

#### **Stage Two: Stabilization/Phase 1**

##### **Identifying unmet needs**

##### **Identifying unhealthy accumulation of emotion**

##### **Identifying, comforting, and healing hurt**

Top 10 Intimacy Needs worksheets

Emotions...How Do You Feel? handout

Intimacy Needs Assessment Tool

Emotional Capacity diagram

Five-step process of confession/forgiveness

Healing Emotional Hurts worksheets

#### **Stage Two: Stabilization/Phase 2**

##### **Understanding ingredients for healthy, intimate relationships**

##### **Experiencing intimacy**

Potential and Pain diagram

Marital "Strokes" worksheet

"Thanks"/"Wish" List worksheet

Emotions...How Do You Feel? handout

Emotional Responding Diagram

Power and Potential of Appreciation handout

#### **Stage Three: Leaving (Family-of-Origin)**

##### **Identifying, grieving, and healing childhood pain**

Childhood Questionnaire (4 pages)

Intimacy Needs Met or Unmet by Caretakers

Therapeutic Letter Writing worksheet

Genogram Symbols and Construction

The Need to Leave Father and Mother handout

#### **Stage Four: Intimate Life Disciplines**

##### **Meeting needs, healthy thinking, setting goals**

A Woman's Need for Security worksheet

A Man's Need for Comfort worksheet

Love Map (worksheet for married couples)

Unhealthy Thinking Questionnaire

Goal Setting worksheet/Sample Goals

Journal of Gratefulness

Speaking Words that Edify handout

Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships