

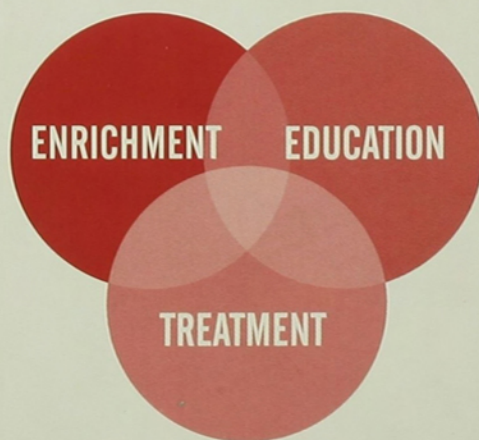
EDITED BY RITA DeMARIA & MO THERESE HANNAH

BUILDING


INTIMATE

RELATIONSHIPS

BRIDGING TREATMENT, EDUCATION, AND
ENRICHMENT THROUGH THE PAIRS PROGRAM



Building Intimate Relationships



Building Intimate Relationships **Bridging Treatment, Education, and** **Enrichment Through the PAIRS Program**

EDITED BY
RITA DEMARIA AND MO THERESE HANNAH

WITH LORI GORDON,
CREATOR OF THE PAIRS PROGRAM,
AND PAIRS LEADERS

Brunner-Routledge

New York and Hove

Published in 2003 by
Brunner-Routledge
29 West 35th Street
New York, NY 10001
www.brunner-routledge.com

Published in Great Britain by
Brunner-Routledge
27 Church Road
Hove, East Sussex
BN3 2FA
www.brunner-routledge.co.uk

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Brunner-Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group.
Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper.

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Building intimate relationships : bridging treatment, education, and enrichment through the PAIRS program / edited by Rita DeMaria and Mo Therese Hannah, with Lori Gordon and PAIRS leaders.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-58391-076-X (alk. paper)

1. Marriage counseling. I. DeMaria, Rita. II. Hannah, Mo Therese.
III. Gordon, Lori Heyman.

HQ10 .B84 2002

362.82'86—dc21

2002010828

*Dedicated to Morris Gordon, who has gently,
persuasively, and persistently nurtured the seeds
of PAIRS, enabling it to blossom into a spiritual
environment that transforms intimate
relationships, and thus creating a safer, saner,
more loving world for all to live in*

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Foreword

MO THERESE HANNAH

The brilliantly integrative PAIRS program ought to bring welcome news to today's weary cohort of therapists—and I am among them—who struggle daily to breathe life into almost dead romantic relationships. When I first learned about the vast array of strategies that PAIRS incorporates, I made a quick mental list of couples I was treating whom I hoped to deliver, and immediately, to the doorstep of the nearest PAIRS trainer. That's because PAIRS, more so than most other approaches, makes no pretense that what makes a romantic relationship work is precisely that, work. In essence, PAIRS delivers the sobering truth, which is that partners need to bring to their partnerships a good deal more than the optimism and ardor that flow so naturally in the beginning. If couples aspire to survive, not to mention thrive, the sum total of what they need is simple—enough knowledge, a certain amount of skill, a lot of practice, and a great deal more goodwill than most of them have so far managed to muster—but it's not easy. PAIRS gives couples what so many of them are asking—no, begging—for: explicit instructions on what to do and how to do it, *before* their relationship goes southward.

As adroitly described in this book, PAIRS programs are emotionally cathartic, uplifting, and inspiring. But PAIRS also delivers to participants a wallop of discomfort, and rightly so. The road to relationship disaster, traveled by about half of all married couples is, after all, quite smooth and comfortable to travel, since it feels “natural” to most of us, whereas the path to relationship stability and satisfaction, to a “real relationship,” is straight and narrow, unnatural and, thus, uncomfortable, although probably more comfortable than the disastrous alternative.

As in the field of medicine, which once relied heavily upon palliative and cure but now holds itself at least partially responsible for helping people

stay well, the field of couples interventions has measurably broadened its once-thin front line of offerings. Most noteworthy has been the casting, during the past decade or two, of invasive therapeutic (i.e., last-ditch) strategies in the form of workshops, trainings, and psychoeducational programs to “enrich” relationships. Among other effects, “getting help for your relationship” was rendered a more benign connotation, thus persuading a portion of the therapy-rejecting crowd that going to a workshop didn’t mean your relationship was on the rocks, even if it was.

Paralleling another shift in the medical care field, which eventually gave its nod toward holistic health (as per its grudging recognition of “renegade” physicians and alternative medicine approaches), mainstream couples therapy gradually shifted away from an emphasis on changing units of interactive behavior *or* increasing emotional expressiveness *or* modifying systems dynamics to dealing with the relationship as a unique living and breathing entity, an “in between” that is greater than the sum of its two partners. Viewed in this light, it becomes eminently clear that a healthy relationship requires as many different forms and avenues of nourishment as does a healthy body.

Enter PAIRS which, to my view, stands head and shoulders above other approaches in paying proper heed to the multitude of ways in which relationships either flourish or deteriorate. PAIRS’ eclecticism combines the best of the best, with its semester-long program (I remember briefly becoming short of breath upon hearing of its length) conveying upon couples the equivalent of a bachelor’s degree in romantic relating (a good prerequisite to a marriage license if I ever heard of one).

I was honored when I, a non-PAIRS trainer, was invited by Rita DeMaria to assist her in presenting PAIRS to the world in the form of this text. I have been equally honored to write its foreword. In this context, I am keenly aware of my presence among the luminaries of the PAIRS movement and, by extension, the field of couples therapy: Lori Gordon and Rabbi Morris Gordon, Rita DeMaria, and the PAIRS master trainers who contributed to this volume after having dedicated their careers to casting light into the darkness for couples who have become lost on their own painful path.

PAIRS is the program I wish all my clients would take before even attempting to go into couples therapy with me. This program could put me out of business as a couples therapist. Since I have plenty of other things to do, I hope that one day PAIRS will do just that.

Preface

DIANE SOLLEE

This is an important book, and it arrives at an important time. Marriage education is now not only being recognized, it is increasingly in demand. Lori Gordon and I remember a time when that was not the case. She and I go back some 19 years, back to the time when “everyone” knew about marriage therapy and counseling. A few had heard of “psychoeducation,” but mainly as it applied to the treatment of families with a schizophrenic member. No one had even conceived of the term *marriage education*. Lori and a few others were beginning to practice it, but no one knew what to call it or even what to think of it.

In 1983, when I was newly arrived at the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT), I was directing my first annual AAMFT conference. Lori was busy creating and refining something called PAIRS, which was based on a concept so new that to the world of marital therapy, it was beyond the beyond. PAIRS didn’t fit into any of our diagnostic or treatment categories. If anyone paid any attention at all to PAIRS, it consisted of snickering.

Then along came Lori’s new husband, Rabbi Morris Gordon, “Mr. Make Things Happen.” It was Morris who brought Lori and I together. PAIRS was a program that Lori believed could teach couples the skills and understanding they must have in order to build successful, loving, sustainable, intimate relationships. Lori made a believer out of Morris. And once Morris believes in something, watch out.

Lori wanted to present PAIRS at the AAMFT conference. I explained that AAMFT was a *therapy* organization. We weren’t interested in teaching skills; we were about diagnosing disorders, coming up with treatment plans, and fixing people. We marriage and family therapists (MFTs) were focused on spending our members’ dues to fight for parity with the medical professions for insurance reimbursement and for licensure as a profession. We

needed to establish ourselves as being just as good as the psychiatrists and psychologists. The last thing we wanted to be identified with was a simplistic approach based on teaching exercises for couples. This was a serious image and turf issue.

In early 1984, Morris sat in at AAMFT. An immovable object, he planted himself between my office and the bathroom. Eventually, Mother Nature came to his aid, at which point he prevailed upon me to consider, "just consider" having the PAIRS application presented as a workshop at the AAMFT conference. And the rest, as they say, is history, and a major part of the beginning of a whole new approach to turning around the runaway epidemic of divorce and family breakdown.

PAIRS was first presented as a workshop at an AAMFT conference in 1984. In 1985, Morris prevailed upon me to come to the PAIRS headquarters and observe, "just observe," a PAIRS class. Later that year, Lori presented a full-day PAIRS institute at the AAMFT conference. Then, in 1988, she presented a keynote session on the PAIRS program at the AAMFT conference.

In 1989, I took the PAIRS training for trainers. Through the persistent and patient efforts of the people involved with PAIRS, I began to see things—research, stats, reporters' calls, policy inquiries, the realities piled on my desk—in a new light. I remember clearly my defining moment.

At AAMFT, as the associate executive director for professional education and public information, I was in something of the catbird's seat, a position from which to overview the profession. I flew all over this country and throughout the world to see who were the best and the brightest in family therapy. It was as if I were on a kind of perpetual scouting mission to sniff out the next new thing, to identify the cutting edge of the marriage and family field—Narrative Therapy, Invariant Prescription, structural, systemic, psycho-this or -that. At the same time, part of my job was to increase the numbers of marriage and family therapists and to increase the demand for our services. Grow the field. Talk to reporters.

In 1989, talking to one of the major papers, I explained that we'd licensed marriage and family therapists (MFTs) in yet another state. The reporter said, "Diane, I don't get it. You're licensing more and more marriage therapists, and the divorce rate stays at 50%. It hasn't budged in 20 years. What gives?" Supposedly, we were the marriage savers, yet we appeared helpless. In fact, I knew the terrible secret: No one inside the field was even asking marital therapists if they were saving marriages. No one was charting our batting averages. Marital therapists were basically operating on the premise of making people happy. If people came to us because their marriages were making them miserable, well, that was simple: Help them to figure out how to extricate themselves from the bad marriages, from their dead-on-arrival love. But this thinking didn't make sense to Lori

Gordon. She couldn't help it; she just happened to be ahead of the curve.

Eventually, I left AAMFT. In 1995, I founded the Coalition for Marriage, Family and Couples Education and began organizing the annual Smart Marriages/Happy Families conferences. It was at the first Smart Marriages conference in 1997 that I wept while introducing Lori Gordon at a keynote session. Here's some of what I said in that introduction:

In addition to creating the PAIRS program, Lori Gordon is the founder of the Family Relations Institute, the Center for Separation and Divorce Mediation, The PAIRS Foundation, and the PEERS Program for Youth. She is a former graduate faculty member of American University. She is the author of three books, *Love Knots*, *Passage to Intimacy*, and *If You Really Loved Me*. But, let's face it, it's all about PAIRS. It's all about realizing that there are certain skills, or practices—or, as she puts it, “emotional intelligences” or “understandings”—that can help couples navigate the shoals. That can help them maintain the love they rode in on. Or, if they've lost it—if they've fallen all out of love—to reconstitute it. She figured out—and she can teach others—that the way you feel about someone is based on how they treat you and how you treat them. She can show couples through an ingenious series of finely-honed exercises how to treat each other better and in so doing how to create—or recreate—and then, how to maintain, and continually increase, *love*.

We honor her today for her creation of the PAIRS program. I have come to call it the Rolls Royce of programs because it offers couples such a rich combination of tools, resources, and learning experiences—a true Rolls luxury package, so carefully crafted by Lori. I always think of her down in her basement somewhere, late into the night, arranging and rearranging as she was developing PAIRS, adding, subtracting, putting all the pieces together, figuring out in what sequence to put things and then watching her outcome data—her couples—and seeing if they really learned the lessons, and moving the pieces around until she got it right. She figured out it was in the doing, the practicing, the rehearsing of new behaviors that they “got it.”

PAIRS is the acronym for Practical Application of Intimate Relationship Skills. And it is so practical, and it is so applied. She tackles intimacy and is very focused on relationship, and you walk out with just this huge number of skills and your heart full of hope, knowing you've cracked the code—the mystery of love—and that, by damn, you can do this. Her course is the longest (extending that Rolls Royce stretch limo metaphor), but she has lately focused on several shorter versions—the VW Bug versions—and has developed a weekend- and a 1-day version and various other combinations and adaptations and applications—always working to get the tools to more people in more settings.

Perhaps you've noticed that Dr. Marty Sullivan's Healing the Heart Program at Duke and Lynn Gold-Bikin's ABA Partner's Program for high schools—both being introduced at this conference—are based on PAIRS.

It was also adapted this year by Michelle Goss and Norman Jones into the Takes Two Program for African American couples. And it's also PAIRS that has been adapted into yet another exciting program for schools—a program Lori and Morris have been incubating for a long time and which they are launching in several locations. It's called PEERS and it is moving forward under the support of the Marriott Family Foundation.

Lori likes to say that PAIRS draws a lot on the humanistic teachings of Virginia Satir. Virginia was her primary mentor. It's interesting that in her own time, Virginia, Lori's beloved friend and mentor, was the one woman among many men—among the acknowledged pioneers of family therapy, Bowen, Whitaker, Haley, Minuchin—the only woman in that group to create her own family therapy model. Just as Lori is the only woman among many men—among the pioneers of Marriage Education, Markman, Guerney, Olson, Miller—who has created a major marriage education model.

That was my introduction of Lori Gordon in 1997. In 2003 I'll introduce her again at another Smart Marriages conference keynote session. This time I'll be presenting her with a Smart Marriages Impact Award. In describing her impact, her contribution to the field, I'll cite her creativity, determination, and pioneering, puzzle-solving spirit. But what I'll emphasize is the very thing that gives Lori the greatest satisfaction—the fact that the PAIRS program has legs, can stand on its own, and is not dependent on her. She's proud that almost anyone can learn how to teach it, can follow the manual and the lesson plans and go forth and begin changing marriages and lives. She's proud that it can be taught to couples at any stage of relationship, of any class or culture, using a variety of formats and settings.

All of this is powerfully documented in this book. This collection of the experiences and stories of those who are teaching, adapting, refining, and applying PAIRS and taking it to the far corners of the earth is a far better testimony to Lori's impact, and to her vision, genius, and generosity, than any award anyone could give her.



Introduction to PAIRS (Practical Application of Intimate Relationship Skills)

RITA DEMARIA

The PAIRS program is an exciting new opportunity to help couples rekindle the sparks of love that brought them together in the first place. This book is a special project of the Council of PAIRS Leaders (COPL), designed to educate the professional community about the PAIRS semester course and its adaptations. In this book you will learn about the PAIRS program's history and structure, as well as the experiences of colleagues who are using the PAIRS model in their practices. Both experienced and beginning therapists will benefit from material presented in this text.

PAIRS is based on the concept that our primary intimate relationships have a unique role in shaping our sense of self-esteem and our way of responding to the world around us. PAIRS teaches the affective, behavioral, and cognitive skills needed to establish healthy intimate partnerships, while at the same time recognizing and validating our individual differences. Living together and reconciling differences through compassion, communication, and love creates an atmosphere of goodwill and trust. These elements, combined, create a powerful loving force—transformative, stabilizing, and energizing for the individuals within the relationship. Jung suggested this possibility in his writing about the potential of intimacy for personal development and growth (Jung, 1925/1971, 1946/1954).

Lori Gordon, who developed PAIRS, incorporated and integrated work by many leaders in the fields of human relations, family therapy, and communications theory who called attention to the need for attitudinal, behav-

ioral, and emotional change by individuals in committed, intimate relationships. The PAIRS course forms a gestalt that provides a structure within which clinicians can consolidate their knowledge and practice to help couples develop habits that support and nurture love, passion, and intimacy.

WHY PAIRS?

Research on marital satisfaction conducted since the early 1940s suggests that the benefits of a satisfying intimate marriage include better health, a more active sex life, higher income, better adjustment among offspring, and greater work incentive (Dawson, 1991; Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 1987; Lillard & Waite, 1995; Waite & Lillard, 1991). Concomitantly, research documents deleterious physical, emotional, financial, and social effects of divorce (Beach & O'Leary, 1986; Bloom, Asher & White, 1978; Coppotelli & Orleans, 1985; Glenn & Kramer, 1987; Martin & Bumpass, 1989; O'Leary & Curley, 1986; Sotile, 1992).

Couples today are facing new challenges as they struggle to create a new form of marriage and intimacy. Although the viability of marriage in contemporary society is questioned by some (see, for example, Coontz, 1992; Stacey, 1990), support for marriage is growing (Waite & Gallagher, 2000; Glenn, Nock & Waite, 2002). Luquet (2000) goes beyond this debate to suggest that the model of marriage and intimate partnership appears to be evolving. Luquet suggests that we are moving from the traditional role-bound marriage structure toward partnership marriage and, eventually, spiritual marriage. Despite criticism of his work, Gray's (1992) unprecedented success in writing about relationships suggests that people are hungry for ways to enhance their relationships.

Why do marital and couples' therapists need to know about PAIRS? Unfortunately, current reviews suggest that marital therapy is effective in only 30% of cases (Jacobson & Addis, 1993). Although not dismal, this rate simply is not good enough when one considers the potentially devastating effects of divorce and family break-up (Amato & Booth, 1997; Heatherington & Kelly, 2002; Wallerstein, 2000). Justifiably, the field of marriage and family therapy is encouraging research-based practice to ensure the effectiveness of interventions.

With the emergence of the marriage movement (Gallagher, 2000), PAIRS has taken on an important position among marriage and relationship education programs because of its comprehensive and versatile format. The PAIRS program and its community of leaders have been active in the Coalition for Marriage, Couples, and Family Education (CMFCE; see www.smartmarriages.com), an organization of diverse relationship educa-

tors, and PAIRS also provides its services to a wide range of communities, including the military, clergy, African American couples, youth programs, and gay and lesbian couples throughout the United States, Canada, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East.

Since 1976 PAIRS has been taught by mental health professionals. During this same period, mental health services for couples have grown while the mental health field has been resurfaced by managed care. Research by Gottman (1979, 1994, 1997); Guerney (1977); Guerney, Brock, and Coufal (1986); Hahlweg and Markman (1988); Jacobson and Margolin (1978); Johnson and Greenberg (1987, 1994); Markman, Stanley, and Blumberg (1994); and others has created the foundation for delivering more effective services to couples. The concept of marital therapy has been expanding to include all couples in intimate relationships, mirroring shifts in social mores and attitudes toward marriage, cohabitation, and divorce. The PAIRS program exists within this nexus of relationship and marriage interventions as a group-based model that incorporates approaches from enrichment, treatment, and education programs for couples at all stages of a relationship. With its strong ties to social work practice, many of those in the PAIRS network of mental health professionals are also concerned about the needs of the disenfranchised—a daunting task, especially given the lack of public or private funding for programs like PAIRS.

Although, as described in this book, the PAIRS program teaches relationship skills, PAIRS goes beyond the typical conceptualization of listening and problem solving. The PAIRS course is set apart by being built around the framework of the Relationship Road Map, which was first called the *Road to Happiness* by Daniel Casriel (1983) and was then expanded by Lori Gordon. The Relationship Road Map, described in chapter 4, organizes the application of numerous activities in the PAIRS program and is conceptually structured by an affective-behavioral-cognitive model that suggests that emotions have logic to them. If emotional pain is anticipated, we do everything we can to avoid it. If emotional pleasure is anticipated, we seek it. In PAIRS, we teach that emotional pleasure, achieved through bonding, has two essential elements: confiding (emotional openness) and physical closeness. This core theoretical base is congruent with recent findings in research on intimate relationships (Gottman, 1997; Johnson & Greenberg, 1994).

PAIRS provides an option for couples who want to improve their relationship, as well as a significant option for clinicians. Although PAIRS leaders who contributed to this volume may have begun using PAIRS in the hope of diversifying their practices, many now find themselves consulting with attorneys, judges, and clinicians on the most difficult cases. Even very distressed and devitalized couples (DeMaria, 1998) are finding that PAIRS

concepts and skills can help them to improve their communication, reduce conflict, meet expectations and needs, and regain the loving feelings that brought them together in the first place.

HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANIZED

Edited books are a collection of chapters on topics that typically are predetermined by the book's editors. This book is unique. Although its theme is the PAIRS semester-long course, the chapter contributors, all of them PAIRS leaders, wrote about PAIRS from their particular vantage points. These authors, who in combination have taught PAIRS to thousands of couples, are as diverse as the couples that take PAIRS. Despite their differences, the authors are bonded by their experiences in teaching the PAIRS program.

PAIRS leaders are mental health practitioners who use the PAIRS program as an important component of their services to individuals and couples. This book, written by the most experienced PAIRS leaders, who come from the fields of psychiatry, psychology, social work, medicine, counseling, and pastoral counseling, will closely examine the elements comprising the PAIRS course, as well as the theories on which PAIRS is based. In addition, the application of the PAIRS model to conjoint couples' therapy will be discussed in a few of the chapters in this book (in particular, see "Voices of the Leaders," chapter 3, and "Sensuality and Sexuality," chapter 9).

This book is not intended to be an exhaustive description of the lectures, activities, and exercises that take place throughout the PAIRS program. Readers who would like this kind of detail are referred to Gordon's (2000) revised edition of *Passage to Intimacy—Uniquely Effective Concepts and Skills From the Dynamic PAIRS Program*. However, the reader is provided with a comprehensive look at the PAIRS program as seen through the eyes of PAIRS leaders.

The book is organized into four parts. In part one we describe the context of PAIRS, including the history, core concepts, and contemporary issues within the fields of education, treatment, and enrichment for couples. Lori Gordon personally describes the history of the PAIRS program, which she began to develop in 1969. Her chapter is followed by "Voices of the Leaders," by Barbara Bogartz, who outlines what she learned by interviewing 10 of the most experienced PAIRS leaders about how PAIRS has affected their clinical work with couples.

In part two, the PAIRS program is described by PAIRS leaders, including chapters on:

The Relationship Road Map
Emotional Literacy

Communication and Conflict Resolution
Family Systems
Bonding and Emotional Reeducation
Sensuality and Sexuality
Contracting: Clarifying Expectations and Needs
Spirituality
Research on the PAIRS Program

In these chapters, Robin Temple, Ann Ladd, Thomas and Joyce DeVoge, Marc and Bonnie Rabinowitz, Carlos Durana, Don Adams and Don Azevedo, Ellen Purcell, and Teresa Adams discuss core PAIRS concepts, such as Emotional Allergies and the Negative Infinity Loop, as well as introduce tools for establishing intimacy and resolving differences, like the Dialogue Guide and the Daily Temperature Reading. Teresa Adams underscores the spiritual dimension that emerges in PAIRS and the community of PAIRS participants. Carlos Durana summarizes the available empirical research on the PAIRS program. Although PAIRS is a practice-based intervention model, the PAIRS professional community recognizes the importance of ongoing research and program evaluation. As marriage educator David Olson (1977) suggested, theory, practice, and research are an essential triumvirate for developing effective services for couples.

In part three, Special Populations and Adaptations, leaders discuss how PAIRS is being applied with stepfamilies (Bill and Linda Wing), as well as with programs for youth (the PEERS program—Eisenberg). Kelly Simpson describes various adaptations of PAIRS programs and the Short Programs.

In the last section, part four, Practical Realities, we describe how the PAIRS program addresses gender differences (Elaine Braff). Based on their medical interests, Christine and David Hibbard explore the interplay between intimacy and health. Finally, we offer the Ethical Standards that were developed by the PAIRS Foundation to guide clinicians in their work with PAIRS participants. This chapter on Ethics (Thomas DeVoge) demonstrates the dedication of the PAIRS leaders to sound professional practice.

We end the book with a message and closing from Rabbi Morris Gordon, the husband of Lori Gordon, who founded the PAIRS Foundation and who is a beloved member of the PAIRS community.

After more than 10 years of experience employing the PAIRS model within my own practice, I believe that clinicians need to know about this important resource for couples. The arbitrary distinctions that have been drawn between treatment, education, and enrichment have kept us too narrowly focused on the clinical interview as the primary means of helping couples. When I began to teach PAIRS, I believed that I would reach a generally mildly distressed population of couples. Not so. My clinical prac-

tice and intervention strategies for problems with intimacy have been transformed by my experience as a PAIRS leader. So have all of my personal and professional relationships.

Traditional conjoint and individual treatment for relationship problems provides an important format in which couples can explore personal needs and issues. Certainly, the therapeutic relationship formed within the traditional treatment venue provides an intensive relational experience for corrective emotional experiences (depending, of course, on the model of treatment). However, the group format that PAIRS provides offers some unique advantages: it normalizes couples' experiences, gives couples supervised practice of the relationship skills they've learned in the office setting, offers knowledge and information that many couples are unfamiliar with, and offers a peer support network. I have found the two interventions—couples therapy and PAIRS—to be complementary. When PAIRS is used in tandem with couples therapy, I find that treatment is more effective and more efficient. My clinical experience suggests that the length of treatment is dramatically decreased for most couples that participate in both interventions. Combining these elements—treatment, education, and enrichment—provides a secure foundation for couples as they choose the path for their lives, together or apart.

So, together, with my PAIRS colleagues, we have spent several years creating this volume. We hope that you will be intrigued by our enthusiasm and take the time to learn about the PAIRS program and how your work with couples can be enhanced.

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PART **0** NE

The PAIRS Program in Context

CHAPTER 1

An Overview of the PAIRS Program

RITA DEMARIA

PAIRS can be best understood within the structure of the history of the field of marital and couples therapy. This chapter will position PAIRS in the context of behavioral health services for couples, as well as discuss how PAIRS contributes to the practice of couples education and therapy. A detailed description of the PAIRS program is provided that includes a discussion of group composition, methods, the role of the PAIRS leader, and the influence of Daniel Casirel, MD, as well as an exploration of the psychodynamic, behavioral, and systems theories that undergird the PAIRS program. This chapter, along with others in part one of this text, will help the reader in the journey of exploring the PAIRS program and in determining how the PAIRS program can be applied to the practitioner's unique practice needs.

A historical perspective is helpful as we explore overlaps between treatment, education, and enrichment. As marital therapy was being recognized as a viable treatment for couples during the 1970s and 1980s, a few clinicians and researchers examined the overlap between group programs and marital therapy. In 1976, P. G. Schauble and C. G. Hill called for a skills-based marriage lab to supplement traditional marriage counseling. As opposed to viewing enrichment as a separate service, they believed that marital treatment should take a variety of forms, with the laboratory approach to communication skills training providing a valuable treatment component. One of the earliest studies of marital therapy suggested that group methods could be effective with couples at high risk for divorce (Fahs-Beck, 1976). These studies, however, received little attention.

Guerney (1977) was one of the first to discuss an educational model

as treatment. Although Guernsey used the traditional one-on-one model in his development of Relationship Enhancement (RE; 1977), PAIRS adapted RE-like concepts for use in a group model. Similarly, Gershenfeld (1985) emphasized the importance of a microlab (a group training model) for couples. She suggested that microlabs, which used professionals as leaders, differed from marriage enrichment programs, which were led by laypersons. L'Abate and McHenry (1983) also suggested that marital interventions fall along a continuum, ranging in structure from preventive skill-training programs to unstructured remedial therapies.

Despite the innovations that PAIRS provides in the delivery of clinical services for couples, Lori Gordon was not alone in her effort to develop a course on intimacy. Although marriage enrichment flourished in the 1960s and early 1970s, in the mid-1980s a new generation of programs began to emerge. In contrast to earlier marriage enrichment programs, which had been developed primarily by and for religious denominations, social workers, psychologists, and family therapists like Gordon based the newer generation of programs on behavioral, psychodynamic, developmental, cognitive, and emotion-focused therapeutic models and practice methods (i.e., the Imago Relationship Workshop, "Getting the Love You Want," Couple Communication [CC], Relationship Enhancement [RE], and Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program [PREP]). (See Berger & Hannah, 1999, for a comprehensive review of these programs.)

Through such programs, marital therapy reconnected with its early roots (1930s) in education for marriage, and, as Meador (1991) pointed out, marriage enrichment (the term *education* was not being used at that time) emerged as a specialty within the field of marriage counseling. Confirming this emergence, in 1996 the Coalition for Marriage, Family, and Couples Education (CMFCE) held its first annual conference, with presentations by representatives of over 100 programs along the entire spectrum of marital interventions, ranging from premarital prevention approaches to therapeutic workshops for highly distressed couples. Thus, marriage education, in contrast to marriage enrichment, arose as a coherent model of practice.

PAIRS is a contemporary relationship intervention program that incorporates elements of enrichment (group process), education (instruction), and treatment (affective, behavioral, and cognitive changes). Hoopes, Fisher, and Barlow (1984) were the first to distinguish these interventions in this manner. As yet unaware of the nascent educational movement that would form, David Mace, a pioneer in both the marriage counseling and the marriage enrichment movements, repeatedly called for greater attention by the professional community to the marriage enrichment model because he believed in prevention (Mace & Mace, 1986). Mace believed that a group model offered several advantages: skill-building, greater public access and lessened stigma, group process for modeling and support, and suitability

for research. Although the PAIRS program delivers all of these elements, many practitioners continue to believe that group support and educational models are useful with mildly distressed couples and are, at best, an early intervention. The experience of PAIRS leaders and the impact of the PAIRS program for couples suggest otherwise.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF PAIRS TO THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF COUPLES THERAPY

Although PAIRS is designed as an educational program with ties to enrichment models in its use of peer support and modeling, this program is also an effective option for distressed couples. Mainstream clinical belief holds that individuals must be relatively healthy to benefit from a program like PAIRS (Hof & Miller, 1981) and that marriage enrichment (and education) programs are used by couples in relatively stable and satisfying marriages (Riehlmede & Willi, 1993). However, a number of studies have suggested that many participants are, in fact, seriously distressed (DeMaria, 1998; Wampler, 1982; Zimpfer, 1988) and can benefit from these programs (Durana, 1993; Giblin, 1985; Hawley & Olson, 1995; Mattson, Christensen, & England, 1990). Giblin's (1986) meta-analysis, in particular, revealed that distressed couples participating in marriage enrichment programs experienced positive effects. Unfortunately, an updated meta-analysis of contemporary marriage education programs has yet to be completed.

Current marital/couple intervention theories are working toward the integration of psychodynamic, interpersonal, intergenerational, and socio-cultural models (Shackelford & Buss, 1997). The Intersystem model (Weeks, 1989), for example, combines intrapsychic, interpersonal, and intergenerational perspectives. Hendrix's (1988) intrapsychic model combines object relations and other depth theories with a psychospiritual perspective on the healing nature of marriage. Other models (e.g., Bader & Pearson, 1988; Johnson & Greenberg, 1994; Schnarch, 1991) emphasize the advantages of the marital relationship in fostering individuation and differentiation, as well as in promoting personal satisfaction and meaning in adulthood. In addition, increasingly there are efforts to integrate sex and marital therapies (Weeks & Hof, 1987; Schnarch, 1991).

Although there has been no meta-theory guiding the development of marital interventions, several unified theories have provided an understanding of marital distress and of the variables that improve marital relations (see, for example, Stuart's [1980] social-learning approach and Johnson's [1996] emotionally focused model). Many recently developed marital and couples therapies are eclectic, focusing attention on diverse aspects of marital interaction, including affective, behavioral, and cognitive components. Likewise, with its focus on multiple forms of intimacy, such as empathy,

communication skills, bonding, sexuality, and the use of group process, PAIRS represents an integration of diverse theoretical perspectives. In developing PAIRS, Gordon incorporated conceptual advancements from various models of marital interaction. By this eclectic integrating of various theories, some marriage education programs, but PAIRS in particular, have blurred the distinctions between relationship education, enrichment, and therapy.

Theoretically, the PAIRS program integrates affective, behavioral, and cognitive models. The conceptual strength of PAIRS comes from its emphasis on bonding—defined as emotional openness and physical closeness. In this model, bonding is considered essential for establishing and maintaining both emotional literacy and secure attachment for individuals, which frees them to explore important cognitive/attitudinal shifts, behavioral change, and emotional maturity. Although a comprehensive, theoretical delineation of the theory of PAIRS is beyond the scope of this chapter, in a previously published case study (DeMaria, 1998), I explored four dimensions of the PAIRS program from a clinical vantage point: psychodynamic influences (Casriel), object relations theory, systems theory, and behavioral methods. The PAIRS program model is comprehensive and inclusive.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PAIRS PROGRAM

PAIRS (Practical Application of Intimate Relationship Skills) was designed by social worker Lori Gordon, who first developed and taught it in 1975 as a graduate course in marriage and family therapy at American University. As she describes in detail in chapter 2, in 1977 Gordon transformed the curriculum into a course in intimate relationships, which she began to teach to couples in her professional practice through the Family Relations Institute (Gordon, 1993). Incorporating the work of leaders in the family and individual psychotherapy and human potential fields, including Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy, George Bach, Daniel Casriel, and Murray Bowen, PAIRS was strongly influenced and supported by social worker Virginia Satir.

In 1984, Satir helped Gordon and her husband, Rabbi Morris Gordon, establish the PAIRS Foundation and the Professional Training program. Since the establishment of the PAIRS Foundation, over 800 mental health professionals have taken the PAIRS Professional Training Program. To become certified as a PAIRS leader, one has to be a mental health professional and complete a three-week professional training program. Currently, more than 150 active PAIRS leaders are teaching the course throughout the United States, Canada, France, England, Russia, Israel, Australia, Costa Rica, Italy, Taiwan, and South Africa. More than 20,000 people have taken the PAIRS course since the program began.

The PAIRS semester-long program consists of 16 weeks of classes, totaling 120 hours. The course provides information, as well as experiential exercises designed to generate attitude reassessment, skill development, and emotional release. Each class session includes discussions of theory, experiential exercises, and opportunities for group and individual processing and sharing. The leader serves as a nurturing and structuring guide and role model. Gordon's description of the course underscores its focus on nurturing and mutual appreciation: "The objectives of the course are to know and nurture oneself and one's partner, to enjoy differences rather than see them as a threat, and to learn to view one's relationship as an ongoing source of mutual pleasure" (1993).

GROUP COMPOSITION IN PAIRS

PAIRS classes range in size from as few as 10 to as many as 40 participants. Prospective members attend a PAIRS preview, where a PAIRS leader also briefly interviews them. Follow-up phone calls are made to all prospective participants, further screening is conducted through informal interviews, and referring therapists are also consulted at this time. However, because only experienced and certified marital and family therapists teach the semester course, no formal screening instruments are considered necessary. Seriously troubled individuals or couples are not accepted into the course. For such persons, therapy is recommended or specific recommendations are given to enable their future participation. Generally, groups are heterogeneous in terms of age, stage of relationship, needs, and problems. A mixed group composition contributes to greater learning, because a wide variety of issues are likely to emerge during the course. The reasons that participants cite for enrolling in PAIRS vary; some have always wanted to take an enrichment course, whereas others have already tried many forms of therapy or have attended other enrichment programs. Goodwill and a positive attitude toward working to better one's relationship are the key criteria used to determine whether or not a couple should register for the course. Some participants also continue their ongoing therapy, either individually or as a couple, for the duration of the course.

Although designed for couples, PAIRS has enabled many single persons to address their relationship difficulties while learning from the couples in the group. Many singles report that the PAIRS course was their first opportunity to observe the resolution of conflict by a couple. The PAIRS course thus can provide singles with an important corrective emotional experience, especially if they did not witness intimate relating by their parents.

Group support evolves during the PAIRS course. Initially, group mem-

bers are generally reserved with one another. During the first few weeks, communication skills are emphasized and practiced, and as participants begin leveling with each other, a sense of trust begins to develop as couples recognize the universal nature of their issues and struggles. As the course builds upon these skills, a variety of exercises creates opportunities for participants to work in same-sex groups and in small teams. A sense of community develops among the members by the end of the course, and many participants establish ongoing social relationships. The extended time frame in the PAIRS course encourages group cohesion. Post-PAIRS opportunities are available to PAIRS graduates to maintain group cohesion and provide a forum for refreshing and updating relationship skills. The chapter on research, chapter 12, highlights these impacts on participants.

PAIRS METHODS

The PAIRS course provides a comprehensive structure and a set of tools and language couples can use to address their individual needs and problems. PAIRS offers a wide variety of methods to allow for different learning styles among participants. The combination of weekly classes and intensive weekends maximizes the opportunity for attitude and behavior change. Designed to enhance personal awareness, to effect attitude change, and to develop communication and conflict-resolution skills, PAIRS methods include lectures, role-play, small group sharing and task work, guided emotional expression, guided imagery, and homework assignments like readings, journal-writing, and practice sessions. In addition, the PAIRS course includes four intensive weekends, which are key to the effectiveness of PAIRS. The first weekend focuses on conflict management, using peer support and professional guidance. The second weekend addresses bonding as a biologically based human need and provides opportunities for emotional expression and reeducation. This focus on bonding distinguishes the PAIRS course from most other enrichment and psychoeducational programs, as well as from many models of therapy. The third weekend, which highlights issues related to sexuality and sensuality, includes discussions of sexual needs, desires, and conflicts. The fourth and final weekend addresses the need for conscious agreement between partners, using clarifying expectations and contracting as primary methods.

A variety of homework assignments helps to promote the attitude and behavioral change and skill development that is begun during class sessions. For example, one assignment is the “Letting Go of Grudges” letter and the letter of response that is written by one partner to the other. In this exercise, partners identify a problematic issue and explore the assumptions and feelings associated with the problem. Here, partners share the thoughts

and feelings, needs, and expectations of which they have become aware. This type of homework assignment helps couples to ground relationship tools into their day-to-day lives, increasing the likelihood of changes in habitual patterns.

THE ROLE OF THE PAIRS LEADER

Teaching the PAIRS course is a demanding professional activity. The *PAIRS Teaching Manual* (Nissen, 1989) specifies the four roles of the PAIRS leader: class administrator, lecturer, exercise facilitator, and role model, and group facilitator and processor. The leader continually shifts between playing the roles of a workshop leader, an educator, and a therapist, meanwhile engaging in the modeling of the skills that PAIRS emphasizes. Both instrumental and affective leadership skills are vital for creating an atmosphere of trust and safety within the group. Maintaining an emphasis on the educational nature of the classes is essential to keeping the course focused.

The structure of the PAIRS course provides a format for skills practice that is not readily available in a clinical setting. At the same time, the group support and cohesion provide a holding environment that also cannot be replicated in the office setting.

THE INFLUENCE OF DANIEL CASRIEL ON PAIRS

As you will hear described in several chapters, the New Identity Process (NIP), which was developed by Daniel Casriel, MD, and is rooted in adaptational psychodynamics, is a dynamic affective, behavioral, and cognitive reeducation technique. As adapted by Lori Gordon for use in couples therapy, the NIP component of PAIRS is called *bonding*. The bonding theory that Gordon (1993) calls the “Relationship Road Map” is a central concept of the PAIRS model. The tools of the NIP, as outlined in the PAIRS curriculum guide (Gordon, 1986), are bonding, physical closeness with emotional openness; screaming, for discharging historic intensive emotion and for preparing the person to incorporate new messages; confrontation of behavior; and information about the ABCs of personality—affect, behavior, and cognition. The NIP is explained in more detail in *A Scream Away From Happiness* (Casriel, 1972) and differs in many ways from Primal Scream Therapy, developed by Janov (1970).

Casriel’s New Identity Process is intended to promote evocation and satisfaction of the nonsexual need for bonding. Fundamental to this bonding theory is the interconnection between emotions, behavior, and attitudes. The goal of the NIP is the reeducation of behavior and attitudes through