



CONTEMPORARY RELATIONSHIPS 2020 ONLINE

The 4 Horsemen And Their Antidotes: How You Say What You Feel Can Make Or Break Your Relationship

Joanna Smith, LPC-S; Houston, Texas

Vagdevi Meunier, PsyD; Austin, Texas

The Gottman Institute has created a research-based approach to understanding and healing relationships. This is extremely unique in the field of couples therapy; to have data that backs up the ideas of the work. The Gottmans are scientists who have spent years looking at what makes couples stay together and what makes people break up. Vagdevi is a Master Trainer in the Gottman Method and Joanna has been studying with the Gottman Institute for the past 5 years. We asked the question, "Does this pertain to me? To us? To my queer bothers and sisters?" Our answer is, yes. In this workshop, we will:

- Present the Gottman data and research
- Explore the 4 Horsemen, and
- Learn the antidotes to these horsemen



Trailblazers & Pioneers: Wisdom From A Couple Together 47 Years

Jeff Lutes, LPC; Austin, Texas

Modeled after his Q Marriage Mentors Podcast, Jeff interviews Julie and Joanne Nemecek from Jackson, Michigan, who met in college when Julie was still "John." In addition to the clinical experience and social science presented at this conference, it is important to learn directly from those who seem to have "mastered" the relational concepts we are discussing. Come hear the vulnerability and authenticity in Julie and Joanna's story, filled with both heartache and joy, and find out what they have discovered about making relationships healthy, strong, and resilient.



- What is the secret to their success?
- What moments in their relationship have most profoundly shaped their connection?
- Was there a time when one or both thought the relationship might end? If so, how did they overcome and prevail together?
- What wisdom might this couple share with young LGBTQ+ couples and queer persons who are dating?



When Curiosity Sends The Wrong Message: Exploring Therapist Biases

Rahim Thawer, MSW, RSW; Toronto, ON, Canada

Our current political climate in the Global North has swung drastically to right. We see increasing conservatism in the United States, Canada, and Western Europe. Therapists who work with LGBTQ and racialized communities cannot ignore the political context in which our clients are seeking mental health support. This plenary is an opportunity for all therapists who work with clients from marginalized groups to explore how structural power enters the therapeutic relationship and to consider specific ways that our biases can show up in our sessions.



- Review anti-oppression theory and connect it to therapeutic work
- Examine case scenarios and clinical "curiosities" with potentially harmful subtexts
- Explore examples of racist, homonegative, and ableist biases that commonly show up in therapy
- Discuss clinical considerations for leading a more self-aware practice



Grief, Belonging, And Authenticity: Discovering What It Means To Be Faithful

**Emily Stone PhD, LMFT-S; Cedar Park,
Texas**



It has been said that when it comes to the choice between belonging and authenticity that we will choose belonging over authenticity almost every time. Attachment Theory tells us that biologically we develop strong relational connections out of our need to survive. This need has not changed since the beginning of humanity. This closeness has social and emotional implications. That is why, whether the act is subtle or obvious, religious shunning for the LGBTQ individual is a traumatic experience. For religious LGBTQ individuals, their faith community is an extension of their family of origin. Faith and spirituality is a source of comfort and support, but for LGBTQ person, their relationship to this support is complex and usually incredibly painful. Emily will share from her own story as well as the wisdom from queer clients and friends who have learned painful and beautiful lessons about belonging, authenticity, and what it really means to be faithful. Based on the content of the session, attendees will be able to:

- Describe the connection between attachment, belonging, religious shunning and trauma for the LGBTQ person
- Recognize ways relational trauma influences significant relationships for the LGBTQ individual
- Identify the post-traumatic growth journey for the LGBTQ individual who has experienced religious community estrangement

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LGBTQIA Aging: Relationships And Social Connection In A Changing Landscape

Shelly Skeen, JD, FCI Arb, LLM and Geron Gadd, JD, MTS; Dallas, Texas

AARP Foundation and Lambda Legal will host a panel presentation and group discussion regarding the impact of aging-related issues, including social isolation, caregiving challenges, financial insecurity, difficulty accessing housing and long-term care services, on LGBTQIA older adults and their relationships. Geron Gadd and Shelly Skeen will present emerging psychosocial and economic research regarding loneliness and its impact on the health and well-being of LGBTQIA older adults, the impact of stigma and discrimination experienced by LGBTQIA older adults on their social connectedness, the causes and challenges of financial insecurity among LGBTQIA older adults, and the legal protections (and lack thereof) relevant to navigating these challenges. Panelists will also identify opportunities for connections involving LGBTQIA older adults in ways that reinforce healthy relationships. Following this presentation, the group will explore the challenges faced by LGBTQIA older adults and practical solutions and resources for minimizing such challenges. Participants will:



- Understand how aging-related issues affect the relationships that LGBTQIA older adults develop and maintain
- Understand opportunities for connection and relationship development; and
- Have an opportunity to explore practical solutions to aging-related barriers and to aging-related barriers and to relationships and social connection

Touch: Through All Of Life's Stages

Susan Kaye, PhD; Fischer, Texas

The purpose of this workshop is to build upon Masters and Johnsons sensate focus exercises through education of the Triadic Model.

Bridging traditional sex therapy with certified body practitioners these sex positive tools will serve clients through all life's stages.

This presentation will the wisdom of early

pioneers such as Masters and Johnsons. Tom

Kramer and Joseph Campbell. We will then compare advanced levels of science

that are proving the positivity of sex through integrative and complementary

medicine. LGBTQIAA, CIS and Them/Those clients as well as others who identify

as nontraditional will be included in this time line of life's stages. We will explore

tools utilized by accredited somatic arts practitioners that are relevant for sex

positive potential throughout the life span. Participants will:



- Have the resources and information to construct and plan for themselves, with a partner, and with a somatic arts practitioner the best possible tools and techniques towards healthy body/mind relationships
- Be empowered to develop a full body-positive comfortability with themselves and others, and understand the importance of spoken and shared ethics and consent of somatic arts practices
- Understand the connection of integrative medicine and integrative mind/body interventions, as well as touch and sex positive communication, both verbal and physical

Mapping FOO, SOO, & ROO Buttons In Couples Therapy

Crystal Collier, PhD, LPC-S; Houston, Texas

Trauma bonds with critical/abusive parents, oppressive societies, and shaming religions can create a lifetime of negative core beliefs, intense shame, and maladaptive coping mechanisms. Mapping when these events occurred to understand what specific maladaptive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors were created offers a window into their origin and sheds light on the path of healing.

Utilizing this technique in couples work can create a deeper understanding of reactivity patterns and assist in the development of new, more adaptive methods of communicating with others. Participants will learn how:



- Unhealthy family, societal, and religious systems produce deep cognitive, affective, behavioral, and spiritual wounds
- To map these wounds into a graphic called Family of Origin (FOO) buttons including Society of Origin (SOO) or Religion of Origin (ROO), and
- To utilize FOO Button maps in a couples therapy setting to help couples come to a deeper understanding of why their partner reacts in a specific manner and create more adaptive couples communication



The Connection Between Hope And Despair In Relationships

Robert Hilliker LCSW-S, LCDC; Houston, Texas

This is presentation that covers the connection between hope and despair in relationships. Participants will be guided through the learning objectives and develop a meaningful connection to both the presenter and each other. Most importantly, attendees will learn about improving relational connection and how to apply the concepts of hope and despair to their personal relationships. Participants will:



- Discuss the literature on Hope to understand how it can improve relationships
- Compare the 5 constructs of Reasonable Hope and how to apply them with partners
- Apply, through experiential group process, the techniques of Reasonable Hope



Beyond Mommies And Daddies: Understanding LGBTQ+ Parenting Journeys

Trystan Reese; Portland, Oregon

What does the modern family look like? Join Family Equality's Trystan Reese as he shares the story of his own unique journey towards parenthood, situating his experience squarely in the context of the latest research on LGBTQ+ family-building. From transgender men carrying their own babies to three-parent households, learn about the future of LGBTQ+ families and how providers and community members can support them.



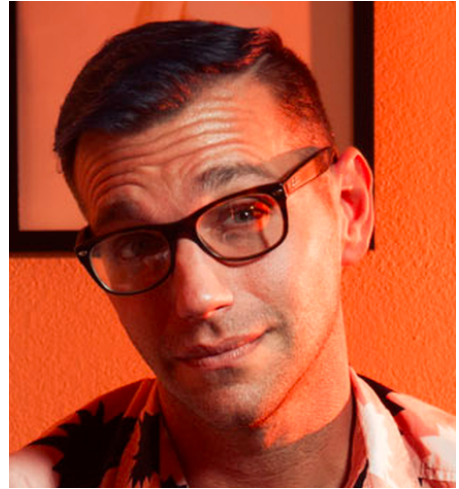
- Understand the myriad ways LGBTQ+ people can and do build their families, and how those methods intersect with issues of race, class, and gender identity
- Learn specifically about transgender parents and families, including barriers and resiliency strategies along their journeys
- Master concrete tools to build inclusive practices day-to-day in work



Being An Accomplice To Your Partner/s (Panel Discussion)

Adam Maurer, LMFT, LPC; Austin, Texas

Privilege exists in many forms in the modern world. Racism, ablism, sexism, heterosexism, transphobia, there are endless ways to be marginalized and they all have impact on our most intimate relationships. So, what does it mean to be more than an Ally to a partner, to be an accomplice. How does one hold privilege while also supporting a loved one who is oppressed in explicit and implicit ways? This dynamic panel of diverse relationship experts will explore the topic and consider how issues of injustice can create challenges within loving relationships, as well as how partners can build deeper bonds through navigating those challenges together. Attendees will learn:



- At least one tip for supporting a partner who is marginalized
- The difference between being an Ally and being an Accomplice
- How to navigate interactions with in-laws and families of origin



But I'm A Sorority Girl!

Erin Ebert, LCSW; Austin, Texas

The cult classic "But I'm a cheerleader" addresses the idea that certain things can "save" us from our queerness. I was a sorority girl at a large SEC school where greek life ran the campus. From being the standards chair, to the chaplain, leading small group Bible Study, and a worship leader in our college ministry--I flew under most radars. In this talk, I'll share about the struggle for identity, the desire to do the "right" things--and how I eventually found my most authentic self.



- Queerness can take many shapes - even those that are southern, Christian, sorority women
- The power of belonging and being seen and known
- Taking off the mantle of others expectations is freedom and the path towards your most authentic self



The Art of Negotiation: Up/Down Leveling Poly And Kinky Relationships

Ty David Lerman, LPC-S, CHt; Houston, Texas

As sexuality becomes more normalized in American culture and non-traditional relationships become more mainstream, it is crucial for educators, counselors, and therapists not just be affirming, but competent to work with clients engaging in these relationships. This session will focus on the ethical practice of polyamorous and polysexual relationships, and expand knowledge of the practice and art of negotiation of consent, boundaries, agreements, rules, relationship structures, and common clinical issues that arise in working with these populations. At the end of the session, attendees will have:



- Gained skills to identify and classify types of polysexual and polyamorous relationship structures and expand their knowledge of pros and cons around clinical concerns that may arise for this population, and
- Learned and practiced the skills to teach clients healthy negotiation skills to navigate conversations around these to topics as they arise



I Love You, This Is Perfect, Now Change

Paul Pendler, PsyD, ABPP; Chicago, Illinois

This presentation will explore current research on what makes romantic relationships successful and steps to manage conflict that can inevitably occur in interpersonal encounters. The current thinking about couples communication concerns what Gottman has labeled, "harsh start-up" and "repair mechanisms." The workshop will highlight strategies couples can utilize on their own to decrease potential conflict and also how to back up from each other once conflict has occurred. Also, the workshop will highlight the important of attachment themes (Sue Johnson) and how conflict can often be understood as missed opportunities for connection.



- Identify 3 principles for making relationships successful
- Identify strategies to de-escalate conflict and how to communicate to one another once it has occurred
- Understand important role attachment and "failed attachment bids" has in relationship conflict



BONUS VIDEO (Geared More For Therapists):
Do We Have Fantasies, Or Do They Have Us?

Sean Fitzpatrick, PhD, LPC; Houston, Texas

Are there right and wrong ways to imagine, things we should or should not feel, think, desire? Our greatest innovations, works of art, acts of compassion emerge from the human imagination. As do our horrific atrocities. How we imagine matters. But the imagination is not a tool at our ready disposal, to direct as we will. Jung suggested that “Every psychic process is an image and an imagining.” Our imaginations fill with the experiences, conscious and unconscious, of our clients, and those experiences interact with our own in ways that are mysterious and as potentially destructive as they are potentially transformative--for them and for us. Our imaginings of each other, our fantasies, come unbidden. Rather than attempting to ignore or control those fantasies, however, we can learn how to host them in ways that honor the potential for growth and healing in both therapist and client. In this workshop, we will use lecture, film, and discussion to explore the ethical dimension of the imagination in the practice of psychotherapy.



- Illustrate the role of the imagination in psychotherapy
- Describe ethical models drawn from analytical psychology and the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas
- Describe cultural and philosophical models of the imagination
- Outline key techniques for hosting fantasy with an ethical attitude in the clinical setting

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Friday, May 1

3:00pm

Do We Have Fantasies, Or Do They Have Us?

Sean Fitzpatrick, PhD, LPC

Saturday, May 2

9:00am

The 4 Horsemen And Their Antidotes:

How You Say What You Feel Can Make Or Break Your Relationship

Joanna Smith, LPC-S and Vagdevi Meunier, PsyD

10:15am

Trailblazers & Pioneers: Wisdom From A Couple Together 47 Years

Jeff Lutes, LPC

11:30am

When Curiosity Sends The Wrong Message: Exploring Therapist Biases

Rahim Thawer, Clinical Social Worker

12:45pm

Grief, Belonging, and Authenticity: Discovering What It Means to Be Faithful

Emily Stone PhD LMFT-S

2:00pm

LGBTQIA Aging:

Relationships and Social Connection in a Changing Landscape

Shelly Skeen, JD, FCI Arb, LLM, & Geron Gadd, JD, MTS

3:15pm

Touch: Through All Of Life's Stages

Susan Kaye, PhD (with guest speaker, Rae Lee Stegall)

4:30pm

Mapping FOO, SOO, & ROO Buttons in Couples Therapy

Crystal Collier, PhD

Sunday, May 3

9:00am

The Connection Between Hope and Despair in Relationships

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But I'm A Sorority Girl!

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The Art of Negotiation:

***An Overview of Polysexual, Polyamorous and Kinky Relationships
and Practical Skills in Negotiating Needs and Levels of Relationships***

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3:15pm

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