
AUDIO REVIEW

A Research-Based Couples Treatment for Domestic Violence

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BT16-K01 AUDIO

Available at: www.erickson-foundation.org (click Store)

One hour and 15 minutes; 25 minutes of Q & A

This audio download of a keynote from the 2016 Brief Therapy Conference in San Diego is co-presented by John and Julie Gottman. It addresses a pervasive social issue present in most societies, and offers both a deeper understanding of the nature of the problem, as well as research and information relevant to treatment.

The audio recording begins with John providing an overview of information regarding the nature and incidence of domestic violence. While accuracy of such statistics is inherently biased by the limiting factors associated with surveys and with shame, John does credit to his research orientation by exploring available information. He then went on to introduce two distinctly different types of domestic violence revealed in an earlier study (*When Men Batter Women*, by Neil Jacobson, John Gottman, 1998). That nine-year longitudinal study identified two divergent profiles of violence: “situational violence” and “characterological violence.” Gottman discussed the qualities associated with each. This distinction is relevant, as the Gottmans’ research focused on situational offenders, excluding the characterological group. John compared and contrasted the two groups with fascinating descriptions of the salient features of each.

Julie then took the stage and began discussing the challenges associated with

working with low-income couples. Difficulties with the services offered, particularly as they relate to gathering follow-up data for interventions, were discussed in an open manner. Julie then described a study exploring the treatment of situational violence that was initiated at the Gottman Institute. The study was performed in seven states and included more than 3,000 couples. With the information gathered from the initial programs, the Gottman Institute in Seattle developed a longitudinal research protocol that included an intervention group and control group to test the material that they had developed. Julie described the development of their program, which involved a manualized series of 22 treatment intervention sessions. Julie described these sessions in such clarity that her descriptions offer reflective thought to clinicians everywhere. The ideas and ways of working with this target group are relevant to problems that individuals and couples may experience in a multitude of situations. The descriptions provided are specific enough to provide a good understanding of the methodology and findings of this important research.

John concluded the presentation with findings and recommendations for further work in this critical treatment area. The study was useful in terms of better understanding the problem of domestic violence and how it relates to other problems that may be heard in any clinician’s office.

The quality of this audio download is excellent...so much so that it sounds as if the Gottmans are in the next room. Although the handouts, illustrative slides, and video clips were not readily available, their absence did not significantly interfere with my appreciation of this program. Overall, I am grateful to the Gottmans for the work they do in exploring treatment for this pervasive concern. The general approaches used, including self-awareness and skill-building in ways to resolve conflict, goes far beyond the problems identified in the title, and is relevant to a broad swathe of clinical situations. The information presented in this audio can enhance the practice of any serious therapist in a multitude of ways.