

# A Group Therapy Format for the Simultaneous Treatment of Marital and Sexual Dysfunctions: A Case Illustration

MICHAEL E. METZ and KARIN E. WEISS

*This report describes a brief, 15-session couples group therapy format developed by a university-affiliated human sexuality clinic for the simultaneous treatment of marital and sexual dysfunctions. The major marital and sexual themes addressed in this group treatment design, an overview and description of the structure of the cognitive-behavioral approach, and a case illustration are presented.*

The achievement of various therapeutic goals through the group therapy format is now well established. Specific group formats are common for treating individuals for sex dysfunctions,<sup>1-8</sup> couples with sex dysfunction,<sup>9-13</sup> or couples with marital dysfunction.<sup>14,15</sup> However, the specific and simultaneous group treatment of couples for both marital and sex dysfunctions has not been previously described in detail.

Both marital and sex therapists have insisted on the importance of treating the relationship between sex dysfunction partners as part of conjoint sex therapy. The interaction of marital and sexual dysfunctions has been described clinically<sup>16,17</sup> and empirically.<sup>18,19</sup> Whether marital conflicts precipitate sexual dysfunction, sexual problems cause marital distress, or sex and marital domains function independently, both areas are inevitably affected by the other and merit therapeutic focus. Research suggests that marital dysfunction is clearly involved in one-third or more of sex therapy chief complaints<sup>20</sup> and sexual difficulties are present in 0-85% of couples who seek marital therapy.<sup>21,22</sup>

---

Michael E. Metz, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor and Coordinator of the Marital & Sex Therapy Program, Program in Human Sexuality, Department of Family Practice & Community Health, University of Minnesota Medical School, 1300 South 2nd Street, Minneapolis, MN 55454. He is also adjunct Assistant Professor, Marriage & Family Therapy Program, Family Social Sciences, University of Minnesota, St. Paul. Karin E. Weiss, M.H.S., is Clinical Associate, Program in Human Sexuality, Department of Family Practice & Community Health, University of Minnesota Medical School, and in private practice.

The authors wish to thank Drs. Bean Robinson and Jan Koznar for their comments on drafts of this article, and Priscilla Palm for her word processing contribution.