

# Introduction

This book provides a practical introduction to relationship counselling for members of the family and the whole family. As counsellors in our private practice we have focused for many years on counselling children, young people, and their parents. This work has encompassed whole family therapy together with individual and subgroup counselling. As a consequence of our counselling work, we saw the need for an introductory textbook which would be useful for new counsellors who were inexperienced in relationship counselling. Our hope is that this book will also be useful for experienced counsellors who wish to use it as a reference and source of practical ideas.

We believe that this book is different from other textbooks in the area as its focus is not only on family therapy, and is not limited to couple relationship counselling, but describes an integrative practical relationship counselling approach. The approach described in this book stresses the importance of Communication, Awareness, Choice, and Outcomes, hence the acronym CACHO. The CACHO model, is useful when working with individuals, subgroups within a family, and the family as a whole. Additionally, we believe there is a need for a text describing the practical application of those skills which are most suitable for producing relationship change. In this book, we have placed considerable emphasis on describing specific practical counselling strategies and techniques for addressing relationship issues.

Throughout the book we stress the importance of a clearly defined theory of change as being central to any integrative model of counselling. Consequently, we have explained the basis for the theory of change which underpins the CACHO model and which, we believe, best suits an integrative approach to relationship counselling.

By using an integrative approach based on a single, well-defined theory of change, we are able to take advantage of using a number of strategies taken from a variety of counselling approaches in order to promote change over a short period of time. As explained by Street (2006), it has been found that positive results from all types of interactive and systemically based therapies typically occur in treatments of short duration, that is less than 20 sessions. In our experience, the practical strategies described in this book are generally effective in producing change within a limited period of time.

The book is divided into five parts. The first of these gives an overview of relationship counselling, describing established models and explaining the integrative CACHO model. Also in Part one, we describe the use of co-therapists and reflecting teams as part of the counselling process and discuss the counselling skills useful when practising relationship counselling. Subsequent parts of the book address relationship counselling issues specifically for different members of the family.

Theory and practice are sequentially described as the reader progresses through the book. However, we have also made each chapter complete and useful in itself, so that the book is user-friendly as a reference. In order to do this, we have cross-referenced from one chapter to other chapters where necessary so that when reading a particular chapter the reader can easily access relevant material which may have been discussed elsewhere in the book.

As counsellors, we are interested in people's perceptions of the differences between counselling and therapy, and counsellors and therapists. Cynthia Reynolds (2005), when discussing Gestalt therapy with children, writes about her training with regard to differentiating between counselling and therapy. Counselling was viewed as a more short-term, educational approach and therapy as a long-term remedial approach. However, Reynolds goes on to say that in working with children in schools she has found the boundary to be blurred and indistinct. We recognize that there are many different points of view with regard to the issue. We take the view that counselling is therapeutic, it may be short-term and educational, or it may be long-term and involve psychotherapeutic processes. Consequently, in this book we do not differentiate between counselling and therapy or counsellors and therapists; we use these words interchangeably.

We hope that you enjoy reading this book and will find it useful as an introduction to relationship counselling and a source of practical ideas for counselling a family and its members.

Kathryn and David Geldard

