Marriage as a Search for Healing, by Jerry M. Lewis (New York: Brunner/Mazel Publishers, 1997).

Intimate relationships, such as marriages, have captured the imagination of writers, artists, scholars, and scientists throughout the ages. Publications, in this regard, range from popular "how to" approaches to complex theoretical and scholarly studies. With this book, Dr. Jerry Lewis, a well-known family therapist and researcher, provides one of the most comprehensive studies of theory, assessment, and therapy of marital relationships. Case discussions, interspersed with theoretical explanations and substantiated with excellent research data, form the basis of the book. The result is a valuable resource for both the advanced scholar and the general practitioner.

In the first chapter, Dr. Lewis provides a lengthy and well-formulated case discussion, introducing the reader to thoughtful processing of clinical material. This sets the stage for a conversational style throughout the book. Marriage, as a search for meaning, is the focus of chapter 2. The author discusses aspects of healing, the role of significant relationships, and relevant issues related to physical health. He emphasizes "the potential rewards of studying the psychophysiologic aspects of relationship structures and processes" (p. 44).

In chapter 3, "Enduring Interactions and Collective Illusions," a perspective on the value and importance of the empirical tradition in understanding marital relationships is given. His account of the dialectic between empiricism and constructivism (including social constructionism) reflects the author's balanced approach. Through the use of clinical vignettes, he illustrates the incompleteness of the separate paradigms, explaining at the same time the relevance of both these theoretical positions and the value of understanding their interrelatedness.

A key aspect of the book, and often a neglected area in publications on marital therapy, is pondering the question, What constitutes a marriage or family that functions well? Following the research on competent marriages and healthy families by the Timberlawn Research Foundation, the author provides a useful discussion and diagram of the continuum of marital competence.

The core of Dr. Lewis's theory of marital systems is formed by 15 basic premises. These premises provide a structure for assessment, dyadic formulation,

and treatment planning. Readers will find excellent practical guidelines for conducting interviews and developing therapeutic plans. On page 175, there is a summary of core aspects for developing a dyadic formulation: presented in a useful diagram are the interactional structure of the couple, family-of-origin memories, mate selection and construction of relationships, shared or conflicted value systems, characteristic interactional processes, transference and counter-transference possibilities, and the strengths of the dyadic system.

The model for assessment of marital dynamics developed by Dr. Lewis is an important contribution. He provides a unique longitudinal view for assessing the complexities of marital relationships. This complete model undoubtedly would prove to be most useful to clinicians.

In the last part of the book, Dr. Lewis focuses on themes such as initial considerations for marital therapy, the therapeutic effects of assessment as a "holding environment," some guidelines for dealing with violence, and the value of educational approaches and skills training when working with couples. Toward the end of the book, the author discusses a useful summary of relevant publications that influenced his work. This provides an interesting overview of important developments in the couples therapy field.

This book is filled with the facts, wisdom, and ideas of a clinician and researcher that reflect years of experience. In my opinion, it is a publication that will serve the needs of a broad range of professionals, including primary care practitioners, since marital and relationship issues so often are discussed first in the physician's office. It is a book worth reading and should serve as a valuable reference.

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