



## Session Options

### Ethics Options

1. **Transforming MFT Practice: The Ethical Pros & Cons of AI**  
Michael Brooks, PhD & Micah Wyatt, MS, LMFT
2. **Alternative Modes of Delivery: From Practice Through Ethics**  
Lauren Selice, PhD, LMFT; Tatjana Farley, PhD, LMFT & Jon Winek, PhD, LMFT, LCMHC

### 3.5-Hour Options

1. **Embracing the Art in the Relational Neurosciences**  
Marshall Lyles, LMFT-S, LPC-S, RPT-S
2. **Building Resilient Relationships: Trauma, Attachment & Systemic Healing in Couples Therapy**  
Tabitha Westbrook, LMFT-S, LCMHC-QS, LPC-S

### 1.73-Hour Options

- A: Considerations in Gender Affirming Mental Health Care**  
Sav Raynor, MS, LMFT
- B: Fathers are Frightened: An Emotional Conceptualization of Fatherhood in Therapy**  
Jake Jensen, PhD, LMFT & Brandon Jacobs, MS
- C: Enhancing Patient Care Through Integrated Behavioral Health Practice**  
Jeff Krepps, PhD, LMFT & Dan Marlow, PhD, LMFT
- D: Beyond Just the Family: The Systemic Treatment of Divorce and Remarriage**  
Andy Brimhall, PhD, LMFT
- E: Home to Office: Utilizing Systemic Concepts to Help Develop High-Performing Teams**  
Bob Smith, MS, LMFT, CCSOTS
- F: Medical Family Therapy: Pathways to Innovation**  
Kayla Reed-Fitzke, PhD, LMFT; Andrea Trejo, PhD & Angela Lamson, PhD, LMFT
- G: Menopause & Sexuality**  
Laurie Watson, PhD, LMFT
- H: Bond Building: Using Cinematherapy with African American Couples**  
Shea Dunham, PhD, LCPC, LMFT
- I: ED and Sexuality of the Couple**  
Laurie Watson, PhD, LMFT

# Ethics Options

## **Transforming MFT Practice: The Ethical Pros & Cons of AI** **Michael Brooks, PhD & Micah Wyatt, MS, LMFT**

**Abstract:** Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to significantly impact the field of counseling and counselor education in several ways; training education and research/development can aid programs and professionals with limited resources or access. However, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations and challenges associated with integrating AI into counseling and counselor education. These include concerns about data privacy and confidentiality and the risk of replacing human empathy and intuition with algorithmic decision-making (among others). The presentation will discuss the benefits and ethical implications in the context of mental health care as AI continues to evolve.

### **Objectives:**

- Conceptualize Artificial Intelligence (AI)
  - Definitions. Introduce key terms relating to artificial intelligence (AI).
  - Prevalence (it's everywhere). Discuss the ubiquitousness of AI to normalize the phenomenon.
  - Weigh AI presence in counseling.
    - ◊ The Pros of AI in counseling
    - ◊ The Cons (or perceived threats) to AI in counseling.
  - Examine AI in practice.
  - SWOT the Ethics of AI in counseling
  - Provide resources to counsellors//therapists as we advance.
- 

## **Alternative Modes of Delivery: From Practice Through Ethics** **Lauren Selice, PhD, LMFT** **Tatjana M. Farley, PhD, LMFT** **Jon Winek, PhD, LMFT, LCMHC**

**Abstract:** In recent years, there has been an increased use of technology in the field of marriage and family therapy. Moving forward, marriage and family therapists must remain proactive rather than reactive to modern times and client needs in regard to virtual therapy modalities. This presentation will explore the use of various virtual modalities in therapeutic practice, including videoconferencing, texting, emailing, and software, with an emphasis on ethical considerations, including documentation, assessing for telehealth appropriateness, policies, confidentiality, professional boundaries, jurisdiction and legal issues. Additionally, this presentation will provide a roadmap for marriage and family therapists of North Carolina to guide ethical practice when using technologies in their practice.

**Learning Objectives:** At the end of this presentation, attendees will be able to

1. Identify virtual modalities in therapeutic practice,
2. Will be able to assess for teletherapy appropriateness, and
3. Will be able to identify ethical considerations regarding policies, confidentiality, professional boundaries, as well as jurisdiction and legal issues in virtual practice. Furthermore, attendees
4. Will be able to identify where to find current North Carolina laws and ethics regarding telehealth and virtual practices.

## 3.5-Hour Options

### **Embracing the Art in the Relational Neurosciences**

**Marshall Lyles, LMFT-S, LPC-S, RPT-S**

Relational neuroscience theories have ushered in a new era of clinical practice where providers focus attention on the importance of body-brain felt safety, intercellular connection, and layered efforts of neural integration needed to sustain a healing experience. Luckily, much of this has been intuitive for many in the field of marriage and family for several generations. However, the MFT community will benefit from continued and enhanced conversations around how piecing together the different relational neuroscience theories can be connected to establish a greater comprehension of the whole. This presentation will delve into opportunities for utilizing expressive arts approaches as a supportive element in effectively engaging the body-brain relationship in various members of a developmentally-complex system. This 3.5 hour keynote will review some prominent relational neuroscience approaches, focusing on their interconnectedness before moving to a discussion of how expressive arts can support the various body-brain healing needs of a complex family system.

Objectives:

1. Discuss the relevance of at least three relational neuroscience theories when working with couples and families
2. Describe a process for integrating multiple relational neuroscience theories into a cohesive framework
3. Discuss the impact expressive therapies can have on systems from a relational neuroscience lens

---

### **Building Resilient Relationships: Trauma, Attachment & Systemic Healing in Couples Therapy**

**Tabitha Westbrook, LMFT-S, LCMHC-QS, LPC-S**

In this closing keynote, we'll explore the connections between couples therapy and emotional well-being, focusing on how models like Gottman Couples Therapy, Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT), and other experiential approaches can help address trauma and strengthen relationships. By integrating these approaches, therapists can gain valuable insights into attachment, emotional regulation, and healing within relationships. We'll also look at how the emotional health of individuals and couples impacts larger systems, from families to workplaces, and even communities. Understanding these dynamics enables therapists to support not only personal growth but also the health and functionality of broader systems that influence clients' lives. Join us as we discuss practical strategies and research-backed approaches to foster resilience, connection, and overall well-being within couples, families, and organizations.

Learning Objectives:

1. Participants will understand and be able to articulate the core principles of Gottman Couples Therapy, Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT), and other experiential approaches, and how they can be effectively integrated to enhance therapeutic practice.
2. Participants will increase clinical competencies for trauma informed care from a relational framework
3. Participants will identify techniques that help couples improve emotional regulation during conflicts, fostering healthier communication patterns and promoting healing within their relationships.
4. Participants will evaluate how the emotional well-being of individuals and couples impacts broader systems, including families, workplaces, and communities, and develop strategies to promote resilience and overall well-being across these interconnected dynamics.

# 1.75-Hour Options

## **Session A: Considerations in Gender Affirming Mental Health Care** **Sav Raynor, MS, LMFT**

My lecture includes basic info on gender, intersex, and trans people including transitional experiences/treatments (most of which I have written letters for). I plan on including considerations when letter writing and assessing for letters and then some ethical dilemmas I have been in as a clinician in this field (ages 3-about 65) I hope to also put together a mock/basic letter outline for an adult/minor (before legislation changed) and provide insight for NC gender affirming providers and limitations/considerations when providing access to care.

### Objectives:

1. Be able to competently understand gender affirming needs, treatments and transitional experience.
2. Know what to include and be mindful of as far as gatekeeping and privacy in letters according to WPATH's SOC 8.
3. Know common ethical dilemmas and considerations that you may come across in this field and different considerations when treating or referring to concerns and intersections.

---

## **Session B: Fathers are Frightened: An Emotional Conceptualization of Fatherhood in Therapy** **Jake Jensen, PhD, LMFT & Brandon Jacobs, MS**

From infancy, men develop a view of their own self-worth and adequacy based on their conformity with male gender norms that include independence, assertiveness, and dominance (Cole et al, 2019). These norms are driven by culture, communicated to young males through social experiences, and filtered through social locations (e.g., race, ability status, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status; Wong et al., 2017). In the United States, boys are socialized to avoid behaviors that may appear “feminine” (e.g., discussing relationships, showing emotional vulnerability, demonstrating compassion). This becomes increasingly problematic as males age and begin having romantic relationship and parenting experiences that necessitate vulnerability, empathic communication, and humility.

Fatherhood is an especially challenging experience for men who have been raised in a toxically masculine culture as it stretches men to shed their assertive and independent behaviors in favor of cooperation, sensitivity, and compassion toward children. Unfortunately, most family therapy models are limited in their presentation of therapeutic techniques designed to help fathers overcome stereotypically masculine traditions. However, emotionally-focused therapy facilitates the exploration of fathers' underlying emotions (e.g., fear of incompetence/failure, debilitating anger and sadness; Greenman & Johnson, 2022) and vulnerable masculinity may also be emphasized in couples therapy (Smoliak et al., 2020). Attention should especially be given to fathers within marginalized populations including racial and sexual minorities whose intersectional identities influence fathering experiences (Hines et al., 2021). In our presentation, we will illuminate how therapy can help de-pathologize men's withdrawal, avoidant, and defensive parenting strategies and promote healthy relationships between fathers and their children.

### **Learning Objectives**

1. In this presentation, participants will be educated on how early life male socialization regarding limited emotional expression is linked with challenging emotions and behaviors accompanying parenting.
2. In this presentation, participants will become familiar with therapeutic interventions designed to enhance vulnerability and positive parenting techniques for fathers.
3. In this presentation, participants will learn how early male attachment is linked with shame, homophobia, aggression, and fear of rejection that spills over into unhealthy parenting techniques.

## **Session C: Enhancing Patient Care through Integrated Behavioral Health Practice**

**Jeff Krepps, PhD, LMFT**

**Dan Marlowe, PhD, LMFT**

Integrated Behavioral Health (IBH) represents a transformative approach in healthcare, merging mental health services with primary care to address the comprehensive needs of patients. By incorporating mental health professionals into primary care teams, IBH facilitates early identification and intervention for mental health issues, enhances patient engagement, and promotes continuity of care. This model is particularly effective in managing chronic conditions, where psychological factors significantly influence physical health. Key components of successful IBH practice—collaboration and teamwork, effective communication, shared decision-making, and coordinated care—as well as challenges—interprofessional collaboration, workflow integration, and reimbursement issues—will be addressed. Special attention will be given to the unique needs of rural and underserved populations, who often face additional barriers to accessing behavioral healthcare.

### **Objectives:**

1. Participants will be familiar with basic core competencies for integrated behavioral health practice.
  2. Participants will know key components for successful integrated behavioral health practice, as well as key challenges.
  3. Participants will be able to recognize barriers to accessing behavioral healthcare for rural and underserved populations and how IBH can create access.
- 

## **Session D: Beyond Just the Family: The Systemic Treatment of Divorce and Remarriage**

**Andy Brimhall, PhD, LMFT**

Approximately 1 million divorces occur every year (Ferraro et al., 2024). The decision to divorce and the subsequent transitions can be very difficult for families, and many seek the aid of a Marriage and Family Therapist to navigate this rocky terrain. Working with these families requires therapists to understand multiple systems and often think beyond the individuals in the room. The purpose of this presentation is to help clinicians avoid some of the common mistakes therapists make when working with divorce and remarriage. These mistakes can lead to additional transitions within the family which has been shown to decrease stability for both partners and children. From an attachment perspective, understanding the competing needs of members within the system, and how they often increase conflict and tension, is critical to intervening systemically. These needs will be emphasized, and clinicians will learn how to take them into consideration when making clinical recommendations. Some of the ethical challenges clinicians face when working with these families will also be discussed.

### **Objectives:**

1. Participants will learn about the competing needs family members experience when navigating divorce and remarriage and how these competing needs often increase conflict and tension throughout the transition.
2. Participants will learn how to form clinical recommendations using a systemic perspective that looks beyond just the clients in the room and considers multiple systems impacting the family.
3. Participants will learn to avoid some of the common mistakes, both clinical and ethical, that clinicians make when working with these families.

## **Session E: Home to Office: Utilizing Systemic Concepts to Help Develop High-Performing Teams** **Bob Smith, MS, LMFT, CCSOTS**

In today's work environment we rarely work in isolation but instead interact with teammates and colleagues. This workshop will explore how to use basic systems concepts to develop a high-performing team that produces improved outcomes. This will include the use of other tools that you can immediately implement. This workshop will have a hands-on demonstration of the tools that will be provided. This workshop is geared for upper and middle managers who have teams of people they supervise and manage.

### **Learning objectives are**

1. Participants will learn how systems theory relates to teams and management.
  2. Participants will learn the basics of developing a high-performing team.
  3. Participants will learn how to adjust their management style based on who they are managing at that time and the task.
- 

## **Session F: Medical Family Therapy: Pathways to Innovation**

**Kayla Reed Fitzke, PhD, LMFT**

**Andrea Trejo, PhD**

**Angela Lamson, PhD, LMFT**

Medical Family Therapy (MedFT) is a globally recognized field that has seen significant development in North Carolina; some of the most influential footprints in the field were either trained in North Carolina or have chosen to come to this state to establish research-informed training, practice, and policy pathways. This presentation explores the past, present, and future of MedFT, highlighting the critical role of systems training and family inclusion in healthcare. We aim to inspire practitioners who are invested in strengthening the inclusion of biopsychosocial-spiritual health into their work, while also promoting possibilities for collaboration with multidisciplinary providers. For those who identify as MedFTs or are interested in gaining more medical family therapy instruction or experience, this session will engage in professional action plans with pathways toward training and careers in MedFT research, policy, education, and practice. Regardless of our work setting, there are important frameworks that can help us to address the health and well-being of people and communities.

Interactive discussions will emphasize collaboration among patients and key stakeholders, showcasing the diverse opportunities within the MedFT workforce that have led to innovative solutions and measurable outcomes across various sectors, including academic institutions, healthcare settings, military environments, and corporate frameworks.

### **Learning Objectives**

Participants will be able to:

1. **Identify** the historical, current, and anticipated development of Medical Family Therapy (MedFT), including a sample of foundational theories and practices.
2. **Describe** the importance of systems training and family inclusion in healthcare, understanding how these elements enhance practice, research, and policy.
3. **Recognize** steps to engage with stakeholders that can enhance current or future collaborative partnerships.
4. **Create** a personalized action plan outlining specific strategies to integrate concepts from this session into their current or anticipated worksite.

## **Session G: Menopause & Sexuality**

**Laurie Watson, PhD, LMFT**

Every woman goes through menopause - greatly impacting her sexual functioning and that of her partnership. Learn the physiological changes, mental changes, developmental changes from a systems perspective. Help your couples stay in or reach secure sexual attachment during this season.

Learning Objectives:

1. List 3 symptoms common to menopause
  2. Name 1 common systemic dilemma during this season.
  3. Describe the hallmarks of a sexually securely-attached couple.
- 

## **Session H: Bond Building: Using Cinematherapy with African American Couples**

**Shea Dunham, PhD, LCPC, LMFT**

Cinematherapy is the use of movies as an intervention with clients. When done well, it is used to evoke and process emotion, psychoeducate, and increase empathy and problem-solving. However, there is no literature on utilizing movies as an intervention with African American couples. Based on literature and research about culture-informed interventions and media literacy, cinematherapy with African American couples would be more meaningful and useful if clinicians utilize Black-oriented movies.

Learning Objectives:

1. Learn how to apply cinematherapy as a culture-based intervention to build strong attachment bonds in couples therapy.
  2. Be able to utilize cinematherapy to help African American couples with issues of being emotionally reactive.
  3. Learn how to integrate movies into couples therapy with African American couples to discuss structural discrimination and oppression.
- 

## **Session I: ED Impact on Sexuality of the Couple**

**Laurie Watson, PhD, LMFT**

Certainly the prevalence of erectile dysfunction increases as men age with upwards of 52% experiencing some degree of it. And while we are at a loss to help with the physiological reasons for ED, therapists can be a great healing resources for couples to deal with the psychogenic causes and the impact on the sexual relationship. Learn how to help couples have sexual flexibility to ensure their deep connection in the body as they age.

Learning Objectives:

1. List two ways diabetes Type II causes ED.
2. Name a common misconception that partner of a male suffering ED, might tell themselves that increases their emotional escalation.
3. Describe how anxiety reinforces the negative sexual cycle for couples where one partner struggles with ED.