

therapy are most likely when interventions are designed with three prongs: in everyday non-conflict contexts, 1) increase positive affect; and, during conflict resolution, 2) reduce negative affect, and 3) increase positive affect. The SMH theory of marriage presents a systematic approach to accomplishing success in these three areas. It integrates behavior, cognition and physiology, and also recognizes the symbolic nature of gridlocked marital conflict and the importance of creating meaning in people's lives.

The SMH theory has seven components: 1) love maps (the basement of the house), 2) fondness and admiration system, 3) the emotional bank account (turning toward vs. turning away), 4) positive sentiment override, 5) conflict and its resolution (solvable and perpetual problems), 6) making dreams and aspirations come true (avoiding marital gridlock), and 7) creating shared meaning (the attic of the house). The term Love Maps refers to the amount of "cognitive room" a spouse (particularly husbands) allocates both to developing their marriage as well as creating a roadmap of the inner psychological world of his/her spouse. The fondness and admiration system is the amount of affection (e.g., touching) and respect that is demonstrated between partners. Happy marriages are those where a culture of appreciation is nurtured and a culture of criticism is discouraged. The emotional bank account in marriage refers to the importance of keeping a large bank account during mundane everyday interactions by maximizing behaviors in which a spouse "turns toward" his/her partner (i.e., is emotionally responsive) and minimizing "turn away" behaviors (i.e., is emotionally distant).

The fourth level of the Sound Marital House is positive sentiment override. A happy marriage is one based on a deep friendship, or "a mutual respect for and enjoyment of each other's company" (Gottman, 1999b, p. 19). Moreover, each spouse knows their partner intimately and proactively tries to meet his or her special needs. Marriages based on friendship experience "positive sentiment override," i.e., positive thoughts and feelings about one's spouse and marriage that are so engrained that they readily displace negative thoughts and feelings that may arise. With respect to resolving conflict, Gottman (1999a) reports that, in fewer than one-third of couples over a four-year period, discussions about problems actually showed potential for being resolved. Remarkably, in more than two-thirds of the cases, couples repeatedly engaged in arguing over "perpetual problems." Whereas resolvable issues could be discussed using four basic skills – softened startup, accepting influence, repair and de-escalation, and compromise – perpetual problems typically would escalate to gridlocked conflict, which then led to either high levels of negative affect (i.e., criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling) or lack of affect and emotional disengagement.

Gottman's sixth level is helping to make the dreams and aspirations of one's partner come true. For example, each spouse can provide support and tolerance for the other's aspirations, or the couple can share their dream and work together to make it come true. A sound marriage, then, avoids gridlock, a situation in which neither partner can honor the other's dreams on any level. The seventh and final level of the SMH theory is creating shared symbolic meaning. Gottman argues that meaning in marriage comes from meshing individual life dreams, narratives, myths, and metaphors. The affect a couple experiences is linked to the meaning each person places on things like family rituals, people's roles, goals, and the meaning of central symbols in the marriage or family (e.g., What does "home" mean to us?). In the creation of a marriage and family, a new culture that has never existed before is actively created.

Consistent with the central theme of this chapter, Gottman (1999a) argues that the assessment of a marriage is an essential prerequisite to attempting any form of inter-

vention. Gottman's assessment strategy attempts to find answers to six different questions: 1) Overall, where is each spouse in the marriage?; 2) What is the nature of the marital friendship?; 3) What is the nature of sentiment override? (is it positive or negative?); 4) What is the nature of conflict and its regulation (note regulation, not resolution?); 5) What is the nature of their life dreams and shared meaning system?; and 6) What potential resistances exist? In the Gottman model, the first meeting is a conjoint session lasting one-and-a-half hours, in which each spouse gives a narrative of their situation and expresses their expectations for therapy. Several assessment instruments are then given to the couple to complete at home. The second session involves two individual sessions that are 45 minutes in length. Each partner is assessed for violence, personal goals, and individual psychopathology in this meeting. An important ground rule of these sessions is that there are no secrets, i.e., whatever is said between the therapist and each spouse can potentially be mentioned to the other spouse. Session three is another conjoint session in which feedback from the assessment instruments and interviews is presented to the couple.

Gottman's first area of assessment is to determine where each spouse is in the marriage. This involves administering the Marital Adjustment Test (Locke & Wallace, 1959; or Dyadic Adjustment Scale, Spanier, 1976) to evaluate marital satisfaction and the Marital Status Inventory (Weiss & Cerreto, 1980) to evaluate potential for divorce. During individual interviews, several aspects of marriage are assessed: commitment to the marriage, hope and expectations for the marriage as well as therapy, a cost-benefit analysis on remaining in versus leaving the marriage, and determining whether there is any male physical abuse and if either partner is currently in an extra-marital affair.

Second, the nature of the marital friendship is evaluated. The Oral History Interview is used to assess the first two levels of the Sound Marital House, Love Maps and the Fondness and Admiration Systems. In particular, the therapist is looking for positive affect, "we-ness," interest in one's partner, and negativity, chaos and disappointment. The overriding type of sentiment is the third area of investigation. Each spouse is evaluated with respect to negative sentiment override (e.g., perceiving neutral statements as hostile attacks) and positive sentiment override (e.g., perceiving irritable statements as important information but not as hostility). The nature of conflict and its regulation are assessed next. Two types of conflict (resolvable and perpetual) are investigated using two separate questionnaires, Solvable Problems Scale and Perpetual Issues Scale.

The fifth area of assessment is to learn about the nature and potential fulfillment of each spouse's life dreams and shared meaning system. This is accomplished primarily through the Oral History Interview and parts of the Meaning Interview. The interviewer is trying to learn about how each person is able to honor his/her partner's life dreams and how the couple attempts to create meaning in their lives as well as their relationship. The final component of the assessment involves identifying resistances to change in therapy. This includes different levels of commitment to the marriage, betrayals (past and present), psychopathology (e.g., drug and alcohol abuse), past trauma, disorders of individuation, conflict in values, a chaotic interpersonal style involving a tendency to be reactive, and so forth.

All couples receiving Gottman's marital therapy receive the following assessment instruments: Locke-Wallace (marital satisfaction), Weiss-Cerreto (divorce potential), Demographics Sheet, the Symptom Checklist-Revised (SCL-90-R; Derogatis, 1983; a 90-item scale measuring individual psychopathology symptoms on nine difference subscales), 17-Areas Scale (Gottman, 1999a; to determine potential problem or strength areas in the marriage, e.g., emotional engagement, sexual satisfaction and intimacy, spiri-