



Dear Clinician,

A select group of clinicians that engages in spiritually integrated therapy are participating in a research study. Project Bridges is an exciting research study examining what happens in the therapy room for spiritually integrated couple counseling. It is part of a 2 million dollar large global study, funded by the Templeton Foundation. The couples research study is led by Dr. Jennifer Ripley, Professor of Psychology, Regent University, Dr. Everett L. Worthington, Jr., Distinguished Professor Emeritus, VCU and Vanessa Kent, Ph.D., of Lifecare Counseling in Raleigh NC.

If you expect to see at least 5-10 couples in 2019, we want you to invite you to join this global research study!

Why should you join this study?

- 1) Your contribution will help with an understanding of the process of spiritually integrated couple therapy.
- 2) As a small thank you for your effort, for each couple that completes the study, you will receive \$5 per session for assisting in data collection (up to \$30 per couple).
- 3) You will receive the results of your couples data every other week allowing you to track their progress and have some insight with the questions about their relationship, personal distress and spiritual functioning.

Spiritual counseling is under some threat in an era of outcomes and process data in mental healthcare. This project allows researchers and practitioners to demonstrate the value of addressing faith in counseling settings with real data in a way no one has ever done. We need a strong voice in the healthcare industry to reduce any threat to the kind of work we all do. We hope you will join us in this important work.

What is involved in participating?

- 1) **Learn more and register to join the study at bridgecouples.com.**
- 2) After each **couples counseling** session, answer a few questions online or on paper (your choice). Estimated time weekly is 2 -3 minutes per session.
- 3) Encourage couples to complete questions each week and follow up if they do not complete the data.

To participate, go to bridgecouples.com and follow the link for Therapist Registration.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions about the project at bridgecouplesresearch@gmail.com or by phone at 757-797-4015.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Loewer
Elizabeth Loewer
Director of Research

Jennifer S Ripley
Jennifer S. Ripley, Ph.D.
Principal Investigator

More information about this study

Project Bridges is a research study investigating what is happening, week to week, in spiritually integrated couple therapy. Spiritual integration could be explicit (praying in sessions as a couple, reading Scriptures, practicing forgiveness, etc.) or it could be implicit (the counselor using spirituality on their own without discussing it in sessions). We want to know about both. This research question has never been properly examined.

Our project is one of 20 research studies funded by the Templeton Foundation, through a grant administrated by BYU, at a variety of settings, such as Wake Forest Hospital, McClean Hospital of Harvard Medical School, Denver University, and University of Toronto. We are grateful to Templeton Foundation and BYU for funding our research.

The Researchers

Jennifer S. Ripley, Ph.D. is Professor of Psychology at Regent University. She is the director and clinical supervisor of the MMATE Center at Regent University, which operates a “couples clinic” where, over the past ten years, over 500 couples have received religiously accommodative couple therapy and dozens of graduate students have received extensive training. She has published dozens of articles, 2 books, and almost 100 presentations with specific expertise in religion and couple therapy. She was the recipient of over \$300,000 in grant funding to implement couple counseling through churches in China, funded by Templeton Foundation, and the Moffitt Family Foundation, with successful outcomes. She has special interest and abilities in using digital media as a means for training and informing the public of principles of healthy marriages congruent with religious virtues. Her role is principal investigator and director.

Everett L. Worthington, Jr. Ph.D. is the Commonwealth Professor of Psychology at Virginia Commonwealth University, the highest distinction granted the Board of Trustees. Worthington is nationally recognized as an expert in religion, forgiveness and couples interventions with over 35 books, 400 articles, and thousands of presentations, and has been an investigator on 27 grants (worth millions of dollars). He was the director of the Templeton forgiveness campaign that has had a major social influence throughout the world. As a co-investigator, trainer, and consultant in the project, he brings a gravitas to the team.

Vanessa Kent, Ph.D. is the Assistant Clinical Director at Life Care Counseling and Coaching, the sponsoring agency and a research site. She is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and a Licensed Professional Counselor Supervisor with over twenty years of clinical experience providing spiritually integrative therapy for individuals, couples, and families. She manages the internship program at Life Care and provides supervision for students and counselor associates. She is a recent graduate of Regent University, where she received her doctorate in Counselor Education and Supervision, integrating faith, counseling, and supervision practices. Vanessa has two publications and dozens of presentations relevant to spirituality in mental health. She has been a frequent speaker on topics of relationships, marriage, and parenting at churches and community agencies.

Elizabeth Loewer, is the Research Director. She is a psychologist in training at Regent University’s doctoral program in Clinical Psychology. She manages the data for the study.

An overview of the process with a couple:

1. Invite the couple to participate in the study at the beginning of the intake session. (If existing patients, offer at the next session). Answer any questions.
2. If yes, give them the invitation card with the website address.
3. They need to complete the online consent and intake questionnaires prior to leaving your office at that meeting. Either before or after the session is acceptable.

The couple completes an online survey each session. Encourage them to complete these surveys immediately before or after each session. Check in with them each time to make sure they are completing the surveys.

4. As the therapist, go online and complete the session checklist after the couple's session. Do this each time you meet with them.
5. Set up and keep your Tracking Sheet in a safe place (client's file or your own research study file) so you have a record of which couples are participating, their street name (which is their pseudonym for the study), and dates of sessions as the couples progress through the study. They will likely ask you which session number they are at, and you should cue when it is session 6 (end of study).
6. At Session 6 (or termination if prior to session 6), the online SurveyMonkey system will automatically give you and the couple extra questions.
7. Fax or email the completed tracking form to us, which cues us for payment of your \$5/ session honorarium.