

FORWARD

It seems like a very long time ago that I sat with a small group of people around a table in Washington, DC, puzzling over how to develop an examining process that would best serve the field of Marriage and Family Therapy. It was 1988, and we wanted to design a fair process for assessing whether family therapists were prepared to offer state-of-the-art care to those who came to them for therapy. As a member of that first Advisory Committee to the American Marital and Family Therapy Regulatory Board, I remember being daunted by the task of deciding what people in our field really needed to know – how we could test their knowledge and approach to practical therapy skills. We wanted to be fair to those with many years of experience as well as to newcomers who were just graduating from their masters and doctoral programs. After much deliberation, we decided that the exam would test candidates to see that they fully met the minimum standards of practice. We also wanted to honor the history of the field, demand a thorough grounding in the major models and concepts, and attempt to ensure astute assessment and wise clinical decision-making. Our dream that one day MFT would take its place among the other mental health professions has come true. The exam is now well accepted in the field, and the majority of states regard it as the standard.

This progress has been aided, in no small way, by the vision of a group of experienced marriage and family therapists from the Family Solutions Institute. These pioneers were committed, not only to excellence in their own practices, but also to sharing with colleagues their enthusiasm for improving the field as a whole. Starting in 1992, their Study Guide has rigorously kept abreast of our fast-growing field. It has provided many aspiring licensees with the solid background and practical self-tests to prepare them for the MFT exam. It has also done an excellent job of ensuring that they can, indeed, maintain the minimum standard of MFT practice. It covers everything that anyone could possibly need to know in order to be able to write the Board exam, to serve the needs of the family therapy consumer, and to maintain the standards of our field, as set by AAMFT.

The editors of this newest version of the Study Guide do a magnificent job of providing that minimum, and then go beyond, for those who choose to follow. They have thoughtfully divided the Guide into three major parts that cover the origins and primary conceptual development of the field, its theoretical foundations and state-of-the-art practices, ethics, and additional resources. The bibliography will guide the student through additional readings for a number of months or years beyond the exam itself, and serve as a stimulant for the enthusiastic. The structure of the guide is well chosen, as it follows the guidelines and outline of the exam with accuracy and thoroughness.

Students will have the pleasure of truly enjoying their reading, since many of the sections are written either by the original developers of the concepts, or their close disciples. Each author has been chosen with care and attention to ensure that every component of the guide is comprehensive, providing an overview of the history, and an update of the most current practices.

For all those wishing to be licensed in Marriage and Family Therapy, this Study Guide is a must. This invaluable work will ensure that each student has not only acquired the knowledge necessary to pass the examination itself, but is also ready to venture into the MFT field, well equipped to put this knowledge into practice. The Study Guide will also serve as a guide for those who wish to revisit their chosen field to ensure that they are truly abreast of all its history and developments, the current state of the art, and all that goes in between.

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Linking Human Systems™

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