

**Clients' Views Regarding the Inclusion  
of Religious Issues in Couple Therapy**

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### (ABSTRACT)

Despite the critical role that religion plays in the lives of many clients, therapists often do not ask about or address religious issues in therapy. Argument is given for why religious issues should not be excluded from therapy as well as why religion has historically been avoided by many therapists. To understand what clients' views are on this issue, eight couples who had participated in marital therapy were interviewed. The stratified sample included two Catholic, two Protestant, and two Latter-day Saint couples, as well as two couples in which spouses differed in their religious affiliation. Most couples were interviewed in their home for the initial interview, and then by phone for a brief follow-up interview. Qualitative analysis revealed themes centered around the therapist's role, assessment and joining, tapping into religious resources, and addressing problems associated with religion. Findings revealed that all sixteen participants believed that therapists should routinely inquire about religious issues. Beyond assessment, therapists should give permission for couples to explore religious issues in therapy. Numerous examples are given for how religious issues may be related to or serve as a resource in overcoming presenting concerns. Participants provide numerous suggestions for how therapists might respectfully work with religious issues. Moreover, including religious leaders in the marital therapy sessions was generally seen as uncomfortable and unhelpful to the participants. Issues associated with the therapist's religious affiliation are also addressed. Clinical and theoretical implications as well as suggestions for future research are highlighted.