

A National Conference on **Changing Fabric of Intimate Relationships - Challenges to** **Theories and Practices in Mental Health**

The Department of Psychology, Christ University, Bangalore is organizing a two-day National Conference on February 13 and 14, 2009.

The last two decades have witnessed rapid transformations in globalization and the ensuing social structure. The advent of technology has strongly impacted intimate relationships – within and without marriage. With an ever-increasing competitive Indian social scenario, one can locate intimate relations on a dynamic continuum. While the end goal of ‘settling down’ still remains a priority among majority of the Indians, the process and nature of marital and familial relations is undergoing a sea-change. Besides the changing conceptualization of ‘normative’ relationships, there is an ever-widening lens to view a variety of intimate relations. The national conference would focus on the challenges thrown up for psychotherapists/counselors/social workers by this evolving dynamics of intimate relations.

Within the broad theme of the conference, (i) an attempt would be made to closely engage with understanding the shifts in the macrosystem which have impacted the family, marital, and couples relations – how changes in the larger social system have percolated to the individuals and rippled to the subsystems of intimate relationships. Changing economies, wide-exposure to Western & technological lifestyle, erratic work-life balance, etc are making in-roads in such a way that the traditional family structure is becoming malleable to adapt itself in order to keep abreast of the times. In continuation with this, (ii) the conference would attempt to capture stories of mental health professionals from the field, who had to re-negotiate their pre-conceived notions of marital/family therapy, and in the process, learnt valuable lessons while engaging with difficult clients/families. These would be stories of experiences of psychologists/ therapist/ counselors/social workers who might have had success/failure in terms of outcomes of therapy, but gained insights into renewed ways of conceptualizing intimacies. (iii) The conference would also focus on and give voice to relationships that remain in the margins of social systems, like gay & lesbian intimacies, live-in and cyber relationships. In this context of the social system being in a state of flux, (iv) the conference would also like to address the challenges faced by young mental health professionals in making a radical paradigmatic shift from individual therapy to a systemic framework. In consonance with a systemic framework, a young trainee also needs to grapple with the larger issues of gender, power, and socio-politico-cultural processes. In such a scenario, it becomes important to closely look at psychotherapeutic training in the Indian context, and how it can be garnered to meet the future challenges in this field.

Against this backdrop, this conference will attempt to explore the changing fabric of intimate relationships in order to engage with the challenges that contemporary mental health disciplines face in both the domains of theory and practice.

Conference Themes

- Family structures in transition
- Culture and Diversity Issues in Intimacy
- Challenges to Parenting
- Emerging contexts of intimacies –Work and Cyber space
- Alternative Sexualities
- Current challenges to mental health practice
- Evolving training needs in mental health
- Intimacies in therapeutic relationship
- Information technology and changing human relationships

The conference will include keynote address, various theme symposia, panel discussion, and free paper and poster presentations around the themes of the conference.

Deadline for submission of abstracts (500 words) for paper/poster presentation is December 7, 2008.

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Conference Secretariat

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