



**CASEBOOK**  
*Structured Enrichment  
Programs for Couples  
and Families*

by Luciano L'Abate  
and Linda Young



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## INTRODUCTION

This casebook has been designed to accompany *Structured Enrichment Programs for Couples and Families* (L'Abate & Weinstein, 1987), which contains the guidelines on how to conduct a structured enrichment (SE) program. These cases have been selected from the hundreds of couples and families that have been seen at the Family Study Center of Georgia State University in the past 15 years. In most of these couples and families, one member was a student who participated to earn part of the experimental credit needed for introductory psychology courses. Other couples and families volunteered to help the graduate students who needed couples or families for laboratory credit in a graduate course on enrichment. With few exceptions, these cases were the first experiences these graduate students had with a couple or a family. The first author supervised most of the cases (supervisors of the remaining cases are identified in the text); the second author selected the case reports for this casebook. (Other case studies have been published in L'Abate, 1977, and in L'Abate and Rupp, 1981.)

As you will soon find out, one of the most frequently selected programs was Negotiation (or similar programs relating to issues of negotiating, problem solving, and decision making). This frequency tends to support the first author's contention that negotiation is one of the two basic sets of skills that families need. The other set of skills is the ability to love and be intimate (L'Abate, 1986b). We hope that if we teach functional or even semifunctional families both sets of skills, we can help them prevent the future mishandling of inevitable traumas and conflicts.

These cases illustrate the application of SE to specific couples and families, a process in which the watchword must be *flexibility*. There is no need to continue a program if the couple or family (and the enrichers)

are not getting much out of it. In these cases, if a program did not suit a particular couple or family, the enrichers switched to another program or used lessons or exercises from other programs. Sometimes, depending on the specific needs of the family at that particular time, a specific exercise was written for that family.

These cases also illustrate that SE is first and foremost diagnostic. If you want to know how families work (or fail to work), just try to change them! Most of these families were, by definition, nonclinical; that is, they fulfilled the two basic requirements for SE: they were not currently in professional treatment with anybody else, and they did not perceive themselves as being in need of professional help. As you will see throughout these cases, being nonclinical does not necessarily mean being functional. Even though we have tried to apply SE to as many families as were willing to be enriched, we had to drop a few families that were too dysfunctional (under too much stress, in crisis, or chaotic) to be enriched. To be enriched, families require a modicum of stability and functionality. We (Kochalka, Buzas, McHenry, L'Abate & Gibson, 1982) have found, though, that SE can be administered right after the termination of family therapy, by volunteer intermediaries or paraprofessionals who possess the personal qualifications of responsibility, warmth, and caring but who do not have paper credentials (L'Abate, 1973).

SE should be applied to families—with their written informed consent—who want it and need it and who can profit by it. All the families described in these case studies gave written consent after SE was explained to them. Names, ages, geographical locations, and other identifying information have been changed to protect the confidentiality promised them. On the consent form, the families granted permission for their records to be used for research purposes.

Most of the cases presented here were evaluated before and after SE. However, different tests were used at different times. First, the evaluation batteries for couples are different from the evaluation batteries for families because children have to be included in family evaluations. Second, we have used different test batteries during the 15 years of applying this approach, striving to improve the evaluation process by changing the composition of the batteries over time.

One shortcoming of the cases presented concerns long-term follow-up. To guarantee candid responses from the families, we asked for and received anonymous follow-ups (some at 3 months after SE). We thus cannot tell how each family has fared years after SE took place. At least a 1-year follow-up is needed after SE (see L'Abate, 1986b, for a follow-up form). After all, long-term effects are the proof of the pudding in preventive approaches (L'Abate, 1986a).

## ASSESSMENTS USED IN CASE STUDIES

- Dyadic Adjustment Inventory (Spanier, 1976)  
Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales (FACES) (Olson, Sprenkle & Russell, 1979)  
Family Adjustment Inventory (L'Abate & McHenry, 1983)  
Family Environment Scales (FES) (Moos, 1976)  
\*Family Information (18-item) (L'Abate & McHenry, 1983, Appendix F; L'Abate & Rupp, 1981)  
\*Family Information (10-item) (Egan, 1973)  
†Family Life Questionnaire (also known as Rochester Scales)  
Holmes-Rahe Schedule of Events (Holmes & Rahe, 1967)  
Marital Evaluation Battery (L'Abate & Wagner, 1985):  
    Marital Questionnaire (complete assessment will be available in L'Abate, L. [in preparation], *Research manual*, Atlanta: Georgia State University)  
    Likeness Grid (LG)  
    Priorities Inventory  
Marital Happiness Scale (Azrin, Naster & Jones, 1973; also in L'Abate & Rupp, 1981)  
Primary Communications Inventory (Navran, 1967)  
Semantic Differential (available in L'Abate & Rupp, 1981)  
Sexual Happiness Scale (Gottlieb & L'Abate, 1974; also in L'Abate & Rupp, 1981)

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\* Also known as Family Satisfaction Scales

† Reference to this instrument could not be located. The authors will appreciate information on its source.



Visual Family Evaluation Battery (L'Abate & Wagner, 1985):

Bell-Fagan Family Symbols (B-F)

Description of Feelings in the Family (DFF)

Family Situations Picture Series (FSPS)

Animal Concepts Picture Series (ACPS)

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SECTION I  
*Couples*





# 1

## A Dating Couple

*John Lutz and Steven E. Weinstein*

Mac, aged 18, and Edie, aged 20, are not married but have been dating each other for 6 months. Both are college students, Edie a junior and Mac a freshman. Edie said that, starting this summer, she will be taking time off from school so that she can work full-time. She is currently employed as a secretary.

During the interview, Mac was much more vocal than Edie, who often smiled and giggled and seemed somewhat shy. Mac said that this was his first "adult" relationship and reported that his last "serious" relationship had been when he was 13 years old. Edie stated that she is more experienced in relationships because she has had three previous "long-term" relationships, two of which lasted 1 year and one of which lasted 6 months. Mac noted that because he is less experienced and younger than Edie, he sometimes uses Edie as a "surrogate" mother. Mac said, however, that he does not want to use Edie in this way.

Both reported that they currently live with their parents but that they are thinking of moving out and living together this fall. Mac identified his mother's decreasing attachment, her separation from him, and his moving out of the house as issues between him and his mother.

Mac's parents were divorced when he was 2 years old. Since then, his only contact with his father was when Mac was 13. Mac has two stepbrothers (aged 29 and 35) from his father's first marriage.

Edie, the oldest of three children, also indicated difficulty in her relationship with her mother, as well as in leaving-home issues. In talking about her 18-year-old sister, who has been married for 3 years, Edie observed that although her sister married to get out of the house, she lives across the street from her parents.

In this first meeting, we explained the concept and the format of SE. We told them that we are graduate students (not therapists) fulfilling