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39	☐ A	☐ B	☐ C	☐ D	☒ E

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Association of Marital and Family Therapy Regulatory Boards (AMFTRB)

MFT

Marital and Family Therapy National Examination

EDITION

Demo

QUESTIONS

9

FORMAT

Limited Edition PDF

Before you begin

What this is

9 practice questions for Association of Marital and Family Therapy Regulatory Boards (AMFTRB) **MFT**, each with its answer key and an explanation. Answer a question before you read its key — the explanation is worth more once you have committed.

If something looks wrong

Send us three things and we will check it:

- the exam code, **MFT**
- the question number
- the email address on your order

Write to **support@mometrix.net**. We reply within one business day.

QUESTION 1

SINGLE CHOICE

A couple reports escalating conflict in which each partner's attempt to de-escalate actually intensifies the argument. The therapist conceptualizes this as a 'complementary' pattern embedded in their interactional system. Which theoretical tradition most directly emphasizes interactional sequences and patterns maintained by circular feedback loops?

- ☐ A Bowenian multigenerational therapy, which emphasizes differentiation and triangulation across generations.
- ☐ B Structural family therapy, which emphasizes reorganizing family subsystems and boundaries.
- ☐ C Strategic family therapy, which emphasizes directives and paradoxical interventions.
- ☒ D Systems/cybernetic theory, which emphasizes communication patterns, homeostasis, and circular causality.

ANSWER D

WHY Systems and cybernetic theory focuses on interactional patterns, feedback loops (both negative and positive), and homeostasis in the family system. The scenario describes a circular feedback process (each partner's behavior triggers the other's reciprocal response), which is the hallmark concept of systems/cybernetics rather than Bowen's differentiation focus, structural boundary work, or strategic directive techniques.

QUESTION 2

SINGLE CHOICE

A family therapist working with a blended family notices that the stepfather repeatedly criticizes the biological mother's parenting in front of the children, while the mother responds by aligning with the children against him. The therapist's primary assessment focus is most likely on which of the following?

- ☐ A Identifying an Axis I disorder in the stepfather.
- ☒ B Mapping the family's subsystem boundaries, particularly the parental subsystem.
- ☐ C Administering an individual intelligence test to each child.
- ☐ D Determining which parent should have legal custody of the children.

ANSWER B

WHY The pattern described (parental subsystem undermined by cross-generational coalitions) is the classic concern of structural and systems-oriented family assessment: whether the parental/couple subsystem is sufficiently differentiated from the child subsystem. Individual diagnosis, psychometric testing of the children, and custody determination are outside the family therapy assessment focus.

QUESTION 3

SINGLE CHOICE

A marital and family therapist is conducting couples therapy and learns from one spouse that the other is having an ongoing affair. The spouse disclosing the affair explicitly forbids the therapist from telling the partner. Which ethical principle most directly guides the therapist's response?

- ☐ **A** Absolute confidentiality, because the disclosure was made in the context of couples therapy and must be kept from the other partner under all circumstances.
- ☒ **B** Confidentiality with the limits of foreseeable serious harm, with clarification that the therapist will not keep secrets between partners in conjoint work.
- ☐ **C** Mandatory reporting to child protective services, because infidelity implies risk to children in the home.
- ☐ **D** Tarasoff duty to warn, because the affair constitutes a serious threat of violence to the identified partner.

ANSWER B

WHY MFT ethics (consistent with AAMFT Code of Ethics and AMFTRB expectations) treat conjoint work differently from individual work: therapists clarify at the outset that confidentiality within couples/family therapy is shared and that the therapist will not hold secrets from one member that affect the others. Absolute confidentiality (A) is incorrect because confidentiality has limits; mandatory CPS reporting (C) is not triggered by adultery absent child maltreatment; and Tarasoff (D) applies to credible threats of violence, which infidelity is not.

QUESTION 4

SINGLE CHOICE

According to Bowen's family systems theory, the concept of 'differentiation of self' refers primarily to which of the following?

- ☐ A The developmental stage at which a child first separates from the primary caregiver.
- ☒ B The degree to which a person can distinguish between intellectual functioning and emotional reactivity while maintaining stable autonomy within the family system.
- ☐ C The legal and financial separation of family members through divorce or individual ownership.
- ☐ D The ability of a couple to engage in sexual activity independent of emotional intimacy.

ANSWER B

WHY Bowen's differentiation of self describes the capacity to separate thinking from feeling (intellectual vs. emotional functioning) and to maintain a stable sense of self in emotionally charged family relationships. It is not about developmental individuation in childhood, legal/financial separation, or sexual functioning.

QUESTION 5

SINGLE CHOICE

In structural family therapy, which intervention is the therapist most likely to use to strengthen the boundary of the parental subsystem?

- ☐ A Giving a paradoxical injunction to a disengaged adolescent to gain control of his parents.
- ☐ B Genogram construction to clarify multigenerational transmission patterns.
- ☒ C Restructuring the family around enactments that draw parents together in a leadership position with the children.
- ☐ D Assigning reflective listening homework to enhance communication between spouses.

ANSWER C

WHY Minuchin's structural therapy emphasizes 'enactments' and active restructuring to modify boundaries and hierarchy in-session. Strengthening the parental subsystem is achieved by orchestrating enactments in which parents are drawn together in their leadership/parental role. Paradoxical injunctions (A) are characteristic of strategic therapy; genograms (B) are a Bowenian/McGoldrick technique; communication homework (D) is more typical of behavioral or Gottman-style couples therapy.

QUESTION 6

SINGLE CHOICE

An MFT is seeing a recent immigrant family who immigrated six months ago. The therapist notices that the eldest son is rapidly acculturating while the parents cling to their native traditions, producing conflict at home. Which culturally informed conceptualization best fits this pattern?

- ☒ **A** Differential acculturation, which can produce intergenerational value gaps and role reversal in immigrant families.
- ☐ **B** Attachment disorder in the eldest son, indicating a failure of the parental bond.
- ☐ **C** Parental narcissistic personality disorder, evidenced by their inflexibility regarding heritage.
- ☐ **D** Oppositional defiant disorder in the eldest son, requiring individual behavior management.

ANSWER A

WHY Differential acculturation among family members is a well-documented phenomenon in which children adopt the host culture faster than parents, creating intergenerational gaps, role reversal, and conflict. Pathologizing the family with individual diagnoses (B, C, D) misapplies an individual lens to a culturally patterned, systemic phenomenon.

QUESTION 7

SINGLE CHOICE

A family therapist is working with a family in which the identified patient is a 9-year-old boy who meets DSM-5-TR criteria for Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Combined Presentation. From a relational/systemic perspective, the therapist's formulation should most often also consider which of the following?

- ☐ A That the diagnosis is solely a neurobiological deficit and family dynamics are irrelevant.
- ☒ B That coercive family interactional patterns, parental inconsistency, and sibling subsystems can maintain or exacerbate symptoms.
- ☐ C That the ADHD diagnosis must be rescinded if family stressors are present, because family stress rules out the disorder.
- ☐ D That treatment must be limited to stimulant medication prescribed by a psychiatrist.

ANSWER B

WHY A systemic/relational formulation of childhood ADHD recognizes that coercive cycles, parental monitoring capacity, and sibling/school subsystems can maintain or amplify symptoms, and that multimodal treatment typically involves both individual and family-level intervention. Family stressors do not rule out the diagnosis (C), and biopsychosocial formulations do not exclude the neurobiological contribution (A). Treatment is rarely limited to medication (D).

QUESTION 8

SINGLE CHOICE

An MFT practitioner wants to evaluate whether a 10-session solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT) protocol produces greater improvement in couple satisfaction scores compared with a treatment-as-usual couples group at a community agency. Which research design is most appropriate for determining this causal question?

- ☐ A A naturalistic case study with detailed process notes on three couples.
- ☐ B A pre-post within-subjects design with no comparison group.
- ☒ C A randomized controlled trial (RCT) with random assignment of couples to SFBT or treatment-as-usual conditions and pre- and post-measures.
- ☐ D A qualitative thematic analysis of exit interviews with participating couples.

ANSWER C

WHY Causal claims about treatment efficacy are best supported by randomized controlled designs with random assignment, a comparison condition, and pre/post outcome measurement. Case studies, single-group pre-post designs, and qualitative interviews can generate hypotheses and describe experiences but do not permit causal inference about differential treatment effects.

QUESTION 9

SINGLE CHOICE

According to Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) as developed by Johnson, the negative interaction cycle that couples become stuck in is most accurately described as:

- ☐ A A complementary pattern of mutual accommodation in which each partner adjusts behavior to meet the other's stated needs
- ☒ B A reciprocal, escalating pattern in which each partner's reactive behavior draws a predictable, secondary response from the other
- ☐ C A structural misalignment of subsystems in which one partner assumes the parental role while the other remains disengaged
- ☐ D A generational reenactment of attachment styles transmitted unconsciously from each partner's family of origin

ANSWER B

WHY EFT conceptualizes couple distress as a negative interaction cycle characterized by rigid, reciprocal secondary emotions and behaviors (e.g., pursue-withdraw). The therapist's task is to identify and de-escalate this cycle before restructuring attachment bonds. Option A describes accommodation processes more aligned with other models, C reflects structural family therapy concepts, and D reflects Bowen's intergenerational focus rather than EFT's here-and-now cycle formulation.