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Dr. John Gottman is best known for authoring the *New York Times* bestseller, the *Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, and developing the principles and practices behind it, widely known as the Gottman Method. Underlying the Gottman Method is the Sound Relationship House (SRH) theory, which Gottman formulated after decades of research with over 3,000 couples, some of whom were followed for more than 20 years. The Gottman Method (and other couples' therapies) has found popularity among Christian pastoral counselors and psychotherapists, and as a result, a religiously integrative approach was introduced with the publication of the *Biblical Reference Guide for the Gottman Method*. Recently, a similar book has become available for the treatment of Muslim couples, entitled the *Islamic Reference Guide for the Gottman Method*, co-written by Menahal Begawala, LMHC, and Dr. David Penner of the Seattle-based Gottman Institute.

Comprised of less than 90 pages, the *Islamic Reference Guide for the Gottman Method* is not intended as a primary nor extensive manual. Rather, it is a supportive text for couples, students, educators, and therapists who have received training in the Gottman Method and desire to blend in an Islamic perspective. However, there are brief introductions to concepts for one to develop a general understanding of the Gottman Method, and those who have not yet been trained in it may nevertheless find the publication insightful for its approach in Islamic integration in couples' therapy.

The key concept of the Gottman Method is Sound Relationship House (SRH) theory, which sees a couple's relationship as comprised of seven developmental levels: Build Love Maps, Share Fondness and Admiration, Turn Towards Instead of Away, the Positive Perspective, Manage Conflict, Make Life Dreams Come True, and Create Shared Meaning. There is a visual diagram that represents it figuratively as a house, with Build Love Maps as the foundation and Create Shared Meaning as the peak of the roof. The Gottman Method is task oriented and comprehensive in looking at relationships as stages with goals and objectives. The *Islamic Reference Guide* has a chapter dedicated to each level, followed by appendices with further information on SRH theory, additional resources for training in the Gottman Method, and references.

The approach that Begawala and Penner take to introduce Islamic integration is an uncomplicated one: there is a description of a level of SRH, immediately followed by a section in each chapter that provides verses from the Qur'an and hadith that relate to or reinforce the principles and practices of that level. In "Level Two: Share Fondness and Admiration", for example, the authors briefly discuss the importance of fondness and admiration in developing a healthy relationship, and follow this with hadith that describe moments where the Prophet Muhammad was deeply affectionate with his wives. For Muslims, the Prophet Muhammad is exemplary as the perfect human, and thus, the thought follows that a Muslim would be more inclined to adopt or change behaviors if they believe the Prophet Muhammad had either acted in the same manner or recommended it. A significant function then of religious integration in the *Islamic Reference Guide* is justifying aspects of the Gottman Method as spiritually relevant and tapping into a potential motivation for behavioral change.

The most comprehensive section of the *Islamic Reference Guide* is dedicated to "Level Five: Manage Conflict", which is divided into subcategories that describes Gottman's perspective on the nature of conflict between couples and techniques to manage conflict. The authors note that "manage conflict" as opposed to "solve conflict" is used purposely to acknowledge that not all conflicts are solvable, and that acceptance of this perspective is paramount for the development of a healthy couple relationship. For each subcategory in this chapter, the authors provide a remarkable collection of verses and hadith. "Level Five: Manage Conflict" is also the chapter where readers are introduced to the Four Horsemen (of the Apocalypse) concept, a set of distinct attitudes and actions that Gottman asserts are predictors of divorce: Criticism, Defensiveness, Contempt, and Stonewalling. The Four Horsemen is a signature concept of Gottman originally popularized in the *Seven Principles For Making Marriage Work*.

The *Islamic Reference Guide for the Gottman Method* is a pioneering work and part of a larger trend of scholars and practitioners integrating an Islamic perspective with popular treatment models such as Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Behavioral Activation, taking a similar approach in employing

passages from the Qur'an and hadith. It does an excellent job as an accessible, quick reference guide that therapists can employ with their clients, and that couples can reference on their own.

The brevity of the *Islamic Reference Guide* also means that some important issues related to accessibility are not addressed. There is no mention of cross-cultural issues in employing therapy with couples that lead to resistance or misunderstanding, and how to approach this. As a reference guide, however, the authors may not have intended to delve into this aspect of therapy.

In the introduction of the *Islamic Reference Guide*, the authors make readers aware their intention of a "more fleshed out" book with comprehensive commentary and specific instructions on application of verses and hadith, although it is unclear whether it will be another edition of the *Islamic Reference Guide* or an entirely new book. There are some instances where the *Islamic Reference Guide* provides Qur'anic verses and hadith with no commentary and it would indeed be helpful to have some commentary for each, especially if a reader has little to no familiarity with Islam. Lastly, it should be made clear that the *Islamic Reference Guide* is largely Sunni in orientation, as evidence in its use of hadith from such collections as Sahih Muslim and Sahih Bukhari, and no inclusion of hadith collections used by, for example, Shia Muslims.