Mace's Book Explains New Ideas About Sex

By Roger Rollman

Sexual problems in marriage, such as impotence, are widely discussed today, but there is probably little awareness of a new approach to treating them. Dr. David Mace, professor of family sociology at the Bowman Gray School of Medicine, describes the new approach as paying attention to people's behavior rather than their psychological problems.

He said the new approach is the result of work by Masters and Johnson (now Masters and Johnson), who pioneered research into the physical nature of sex and who are now using their findings to help people with sexual problems.

 Reject Tradition

The Masterses reject the traditional approach of treating sexual difficulties by looking for such things as a childhood hatred of your mother or an affair of your father. Mace said that when people are given a detailed and comprehensive list of their sexual problems, they probably will have their root in the other two stages.

First is a pre-erotic stage of touching that has no sexual overtones, he said. Sex that does not involve intercourse is a fundamental step toward sexual fulfillment as the result of work by Masters and Johnson (now Masters and Gray School of Medicine), who pioneered research into the physical nature of sex.

Sometimes they become so deeply rooted that nothing can be done to correct the situation.

The Masterses found that sexual problems involve a person's fear of how well he can perform sexually.

This fear of sexual performance may show itself in the early stages of our lives, but they probably have their root in the other two stages.

Second is a pre-active stage of sex without intercourse builds a bond of trust and reassurance between marital partners. Mace has written a book, "Sexual Difficulties in Marriage," which he said, helps him explain the new method to people who areije.

The new method deals with the husband and wife as a team, he said. The effort is to change a person's attitude toward sex by changing his old method of thinking, which involves changing a person's attitude (that is why the psychiatrist played such a large role).

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Marriage Enrichment Rally Draws 80 Couples From N.C.

By Bill East
Staff Reporter

STATESVILLE — It was, as Mrs. Vera Mace of Winston-Salem put it, "a historical occasion."

Eighty couples from throughout North Carolina had gathered here last Friday for a two-day meeting at Trinity Episcopal Church with a single goal: "To improve and strengthen our own marriages and to say to others: 'We speak for marriage.'"

Mrs. Mace is the wife of David Mace, professor of family sociology at the Bowman Gray School of Medicine in Winston-Salem. Together they have found a new national organization: Association of Couples for Marriage Enrichment (ACME).

The gathering at Statesville was the first time one of the state organizations in the new national group had come together for a marriage enrichment rally, as it was called.

There were some reservations in the national group that couples might not want to travel so far to talk about the success of their marriages.

But when the cars started arriving at the church, all their apprehensions were put to rest.

"It's a great success," said Mrs. Anne Compere, executive officer of the national organization.

Ken Ball and his wife drove six hours to come to the meeting from Charleston, W. Va. He said, "This is real important. We want to get it going up our way."

Mace had been scheduled to lead one of the sessions, but his frequent speaking and teaching had left him without a voice. He walked around with a sign which said: "I cannot talk. I have lost my voice. But I can listen."

Mace had met only a few days ago with a group of 60 people who are interested in starting marriage enrichment in the nation's capital.

The general rule in marriage enrichment is that couples share their marriage problems and successes with others, talking specifically about what has happened to them.

"There is little or no textbook teaching," said one organization spokesman. "We believe that people can be the best textbooks in a situation like this."

The couples from 25 different communities in North Carolina spent three hours Friday night talking about how to communicate with each other.

The Rev. Ralph Underwood and his wife, Dorie, two of the discussion leaders, said, "How to communicate is more important really than what you say."

At one point, the 160 in attendance broke down in small groups to talk among themselves about how to handle critical communications problems in a couple's life.

In a session Saturday morning where the couples worked on the enrichment of their own marriages, Dr. John Compere of Winston-Salem told them that a marriage involves three faces — "intimacy, freedom and commitment."

"The intimacy involves vulnerability — it means being honest up front with our feelings," he said.

He said the real commitment of marriage is: "When you need me, I will be there — there is no more profound promise that one human being can make to another."

One of the highlights of the meeting came Saturday afternoon when the couples spent three hours talking about "Love and Sex in Marriage." The participants ranged all the way from a couple married two years to a couple married 40 years.

Tom Clark, a sociologist at Bowman Gray School of Medicine, and his wife Kathy led the general discussion and then the couples broke up in five-couple groups to talk about love and sex in their marriage.

Said one association leader:
"A personal discussion such as this was once one of the taboos of our society. But it is a problem that is destroying marriages and it is high time that people get together and solve it."

When couples were asked not to laugh while couples were discussing sex, one participant (a man) complained:
"What's wrong with laughing? I think a little humor goes rather well with sex."
Marriage Institute Plans Drawn

By BILL EAST
Sentinel Staff Reporter

Plans for a proposed national institute for marriage enrichment were outlined here last night.

Dr. David Mace, who with his wife Vera has founded the Association of Couples for Marriage Enrichment (ACME), said the institute is "very badly needed."

He said interest in the new national association has spread so rapidly that it is now "very much of a going organization less than a year after its formal organization."

But Mace, who has just finished three trips to promote the new organization, said the new group is giving impetus to the idea of the national institute.

Mace is a nationally known authority in the field of marriage. He is a faculty member at Bowman Gray School of Medicine and he and his wife have written many books on the subject.

"But we need a place where the resistance to working on marriages could be broken down," he said.

"We need a place where we can train leaders to work with couples on improving their marriages and we need a headquarters for national field work."

Mace said such a center would take a preventive approach - "constantly working on marriages to improve them and not waiting until the couple is in trouble before something is done."

"Frankly," he said, "the whole goal of marriage enrichment and it's one of the fastest-growing movements in the country is to keep marriage so good, it won't get into trouble."

Mace said, "We're hoping foundations would want to support something like this... something so completely new and so positive in such a vital field to the health of our country."

Speaking of the national institute, Mace said, "Winston-Salem could be a place where this could happen. We are particularly well equipped in facilities and in knowledgeable people and good relations with the community."

Mace also noted that Winston-Salem is the home of the first active chapter of the association.

The chapter held its quarterly meeting last night at First Baptist Church on West Fifth Street with 43 present. The members watched a film on "Sexuality and Communication" for an hour and then discussed their personal situations in small groups.

"Having the first chapter here certainly would give us an opportunity to study ideas and thoughts we have for the institute," Mace said. He said the association has many members throughout the United States and Canada but forming chapters is a slow process.

If an institute is formed, Winston-Salem's only problem would be its lack of being centrally located.

"But we're keeping an open mind about the whole matter of a location," Mace said. "We are primarily interested now in seeing what kind of foundation backing we can get. It's really exciting."

The association has set up temporary national headquarters in the Behavioral Sciences Center of Bowman Gray School of Medicine here. Mrs. Anne Compere has been appointed the first executive officer of the national association. She and her husband, Dr. John Compere, are presidents of the Winston-Salem chapter. (All offices in the association are held jointly by couples.)

The Maces' first book on the marriage enrichment movement, "We Can Have Better Marriages - If We Really Want Them," is due out on March 11.

"And the publishers are really excited about the possibilities for this book," Mace said.

He said that later a handbook for the association which will bring together all types of information about marriage enrichment will be compiled and published.

A national conference on marriage enrichment is planned for Oct. 26-28 in St. Louis. It would bring together for the first time representatives of all organizations working in marriage enrichment.

Mace said work has been going on in family enrichment for many years, "but the marriage has been overlooked until it really gets into trouble."
After a Year, Maces Conclude

Marriage Enrichment Works

By Bill East

The Maces’ brainchild — the Association of Couples for Marriage Enrichment (ACME) — is a year old and they are busy taking stock these days of where it stands.

David Mace, a professor at the Bowman Gray School of Medicine, and his wife, Vera, already have come to one clear conclusion: Marriage enrichment really works.

Our message is greatly needed at the present time," the Maces said. "We are experiencing unprecedented rates of failure and withdrawal from concern about family life. Perceptive people keep telling us that ACME’s positive, preventive approach is the best answer."

Work Together

The theory of marriage enrichment is that a husband and wife work together to strengthen and improve their partnership. Some members have even called it "preventive maintenance" in marriages.

The Maces say that most work in the marriage field isn’t done until a partnership reaches the breaking point. Too often, it is too late to do anything then.

In marriage enrichment, the goal is to take a humdrum existence and put in new life and excitement into it by strengthening the marriage ties. ACME members say:

"A year of testing has shown that the marriage enrichment idea works in practice," the Maces said. "An objectively sound of our weekend retreats shows that the couples concerned demonstrated significant change."

The weekend retreats are designed to help couples take a new look at their marriages and to join with other couples in studying ways of strengthening their marital relationships.

The Maces and the hundreds who have joined with them in the movement during the past year have found Americans "very anxious" to do something about marriage.

Problems Remain

But the Maces say they still must overcome problems.

"Most couples are at first hesitant to join us," they said. "The inter-marital taboo powerfully discourages the idea of couples working together to achieve their marital potential. This provides an illuminating explanation of our widespread marriage failures. However, we find that once couples overcome their fears, they become convinced and enthusiastic about ACME’s objectives."

With the association moving into its second year, October is going to be one of its busiest.

The Winston-Salem chapter, the largest and most active in the nation, will sponsor three lectures by Mace at Winston Hall at Wake Forest University to introduce marriage enrichment to other couples.

The lectures, at 8 a.m., will be "The Marriage Go-Bound — New Marriages for promotion of its work.

The Maces say it is their opinion that ACME will grow, "but slowly at first because our concepts are so startlingly new. A study we have made of 150 couples who declined invitations to join suggests that most of them failed to grasp what we were offering." Their conclusion is that we shall have some trouble convincing most people of the soundness of our message. It is also apparent that by far the most effective way to do this is through couple to couple advocacy.

"On the other hand, we are now convinced that it is possible to change public attitudes in marriage and that doing so is likely to have highly beneficial results in the life of our families and communities."

David and Vera Mace of ACME.


A nominal fee will be charged for the lectures and the proceeds will be used to help the Winston-Salem chapter develop its program. From the lectures here, the leadership of ACME will move to St. Louis, Mo., where the first national conference on marriage enrichment will be held Oct. 26-28. ACME, working with nine other marriage enrichment groups, will sponsor the meeting.

ACME operates out of quarters in the Behavioral Sciences Building at Bowman Gray School of Medicine, 41 S. Hawthorne Road. It has an executive officer, Anne Compere. She and her husband, John, are the leaders of the Winston-Salem chapter.

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