Introducing a New Instructor: Hope Andreason Allred

As a new instructor at the University of Utah, I am eager to engage in discussions about this online course. My own life has been influenced by divorce. Because of this I have a vested interest in increasing knowledge and lessening the detrimental short- and long-term effects of divorce on all family members. Divorce touches virtually everyone in some way. Even if there has not been a divorce in your immediate family, understanding and increasing knowledge can benefit families and the professionals who work with them.

Nature of the Course

Students will study the newest findings from national studies about the long-term effects of divorce on adults, children and young adults from divorced families. The course also provides information about resilience to help families reduce some of the detrimental effects of divorce.

Research on some of the negative effects of divorce on adults, such as that by Amato found “divorced people more frequently experience lower levels of well-being, including less happiness, poorer self-concept, and more health problems” (2000). In addition, comparative studies have shown that divorced people report feeling more socially isolated (Atchley, 1977; Joung et. al, 1997; Marks, 1996; Mastekaasa, 1997), experience more negative life events (Kitson, 1992; Lorenz et al, 1997), and have a lower standard of living (Hao, 1996; Marks, 1996) than married people.

Research on children and adults from divorced families has shown that one in four or “twenty-five percent of children affected by divorce” are at risk for severe damage, compared with only one in ten children in “continuously married families” (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002).
This course is designed to provide information that can help adults to reduce some of these negative effects. In this course, students will learn how to apply “posttraumatic growth” (PTG), “stress-related growth” (SRG), and resilience concepts to their experiences and to others’ experiences. They will learn how to reframe the past and practice transforming “negative bonds” to more “neutral bonds” (Snyder & Yamlhure-Thompson, 2002). They will discuss their progress in applying advanced positive psychology interventions like the REACH method (Worthington & Scherer, 2004). Students will practice and evaluate specific PTG strategies (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004) such as benefit-finding (Helgeson, Reynolds & Tomich, 2006), “re-storying loss” (Neimeyer, 2006), and “transformative self-forgiveness” (Dillon, 2001). Students will also learn several effective resilience models/techniques that may be applied to the aftermath of divorce and discover damage-mitigating strategies.

Course Description

The course is an academic study of the effects of divorce featuring required reading of research on the effects of divorce, personal case studies of resilience following a divorce, professional analysis of the risk and resilience factors in divorce, and exercises for building personal resilience in family members. Presentation of course material is made in multimedia formats. Work required of students includes writing assignments in various formats (including some interviewing), completing a project related to divorce resilience, practicing and evaluating resilience exercises, evaluating guest speakers’ recommendations, participating in online discussions with fellow students and completion of an open-book quiz. Resources for families dealing with the effects of divorce will also be provided.

This course does not provide counseling or therapy. The U Counseling Center (801-581-6826) offers brief therapy, group therapy, and support groups. The U Counseling Center has a crisis counselor on call during the weekdays. If you need immediate help in a crisis, call an emergency room at a local hospital.

Prerequisites: N/A

Course Objectives

At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to evaluate resilience concepts and techniques on the basis of effectiveness to their lives and/or to the lives of others in promoting growth in six dimensions of psychological well-being (Ryff & Singer, 2002):

1. Self-acceptance or “positive regard for one’s self”
2. Purpose in life or “meaning and direction in one’s experiences”
3. Personal growth or “the capacity to continually realize one’s talent and potential”
4. Environmental mastery or “the challenge of managing one’s surrounding world”
5. Autonomy or “the capacity to follow personal convictions and beliefs”
6. Positive relations with others or “close contact with others, deep intimacy, & abiding love”
Course Requirements

TEXT:

There are no required textbooks for this course. All readings are provided online through the Marriott Library E-Reserve. Some E-Reserve readings are excerpts or summaries from the following books that can also be found in local libraries and online booksellers:


All students will be required to read the materials as outlined in the lessons, as well as other articles and chapters from books which will be outlined in your lessons and assignments each week. Additional readings are made available through Course E-Reserve — links are provided in the lessons. You will have a fairly heavy reading schedule in this 3-credit course.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Students will

1) Read selected pages from textbook chapters about three landmark national studies described in Between Two Worlds, The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce, and For Better or For Worse in Lesson 1.

2) Read journal articles and selected pages from chapters about posttraumatic growth, resilience, and stress-related growth (in lessons/E-Reserve).

3) Interview a divorced person and summarize the findings that relate to the landmark studies in Lesson 1. Choose topics of interest to you. This is an informational interview. Summarize the interview in at least 2 double-spaced pages and organize the interview summary with a paragraph under each topic. Include a list of interview questions.

4) Engage in weekly class discussions (a paragraph of comments posted online) by midnight on Wednesdays. These discussions are forums to share progress in applying resilience/growth techniques and discussing ideas from readings and videos. Reply to another student’s post by midnight on Fridays. A minimum of eight replies is expected by the end of the semester. You’ll also post to a discussion about your project during finals.

5) Choose and evaluate two interventions in a 1-page journal entry after practicing techniques during the semester. After viewing course videos, evaluate two guest speakers’ recommendations that may help to mitigate damage from divorce in a 2-page journal entry.
6) Students will complete a final project from a choice of five options:

   #1) Document two interviews: one with a young adult who grew up in a divorced family AND the other with a young adult who lost a parent because of an early death. Students will note differences in the experience of divorce and bereavement.

   #2) Materials provided through the course will be used to teach two divorced adults about growth and resilience. Students will work with a classmate and submit participant disclaimers, evaluations, and a 1-page reaction paper after the presentation.

   #3) Two students will choose a real case study (from a choice of two case studies provided in the Project file) and find options for growth and resilience.

   #4) A student will work with a classmate to compile information from course readings, lecture material, and videos to create a PowerPoint presentation: “Resilience after Divorce.” Find appropriate techniques, interventions, and concepts to promote transformation and growth. You may use the graphics from course materials or create your own model. If no one else is available, this project may be completed on your own.

   #5) Write a research paper on interventions that have been used with families to lessen the detrimental effects of divorce on family members.

7) At the end of the semester, students will share insights from their projects in our last class discussion.

8) Take an open-book, open-note quiz after finishing the reading assignments at the end of the semester.

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING PAPERS

All research papers need to comply with APA style. Minimum paper length for undergraduate papers is 10 pages (15 pages for graduate papers). Before beginning your paper, please send us a description of your topic and a brief outline for approval.

EVALUATE 2 TECHNIQUES/2 RECOMMENDATIONS IN 3 PAGES OF JOURNAL ENTRIES

You’ll find resilience/growth strategies in the lessons, and you’ll watch one course video each week. Guest speakers provide recommendations to mitigate the negative effects of divorce. Evaluate 2 strategies in 1 page and 2 recommendations in 2 pages according to their effectiveness in promoting growth in six dimensions of psychological well-being (Ryff & Singer, 2002). See the Course Objectives to read about the six dimensions of well-being.

QUIZ

You will take an open book comprehensive quiz when you have completed all readings. The quiz consists of multiple choice, true/false and fill in the blank questions. You may use your readings and notes. The exam will be offered online and will have to be completed within a time limit.
Grade Scale:
Grading in this course is based upon the following activities and assignments. Since all graded assignments are related directly to course objectives, failure to complete any assignment will result in an unsatisfactory course grade.

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<tr>
<th>ASSIGNMENTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>*OPTIONAL: Introduction &amp; final course evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Post one paragraph each week in a total of eight class discussions</td>
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<td>2. Reply to one student’s discussion post each week</td>
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<td>3. Interview Summary</td>
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<td>4. Final project</td>
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<td>5. Share insights from your project in a final online class discussion</td>
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<td>6. One-page journal entry about your personal experience applying 2 resilience or growth techniques found in the lessons</td>
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<td>7. Final quiz, open-book, open-note, covering assigned reading</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. View course videos: Describe and evaluate 2 guest speakers’ recommendations to mitigate the negative effects of divorce in 2 pages</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>9. Extra Credit: One-page interview summary with a divorce professional</td>
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**TOTAL** 100

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<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>93-100</th>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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<td>70-72</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>86-89</td>
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<td>C+</td>
<td>76-79</td>
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<td>49 and below</td>
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Planning Time:
Successful students (those that get A, B, and C grades) use their time wisely. Just like a face-to-face course, the standard formula for college coursework is that every hour of class time will result in three to six hours (and sometimes more) of homework; so a three-unit course will require an average of 9 or more hours of homework (reading, research, studying) per lesson. As a result, successful students plan their time wisely so that they keep up with
assignments by maintaining a pace that fits the course schedule. They also communicate with the instructor often so that they can receive much needed feedback on their work.

**Online Course Responsibilities:**

This course requires significant self-motivation. Some lessons take a considerable amount of time to complete. Please note that not all lessons are created equal. Some may take a bit more time than others. Some people believe this to be a much easier way to study this subject than in the on-campus framework. Others may feel very intimidated at first. Be patient as you work your way through the first few lessons. If you are serious about the material, you will learn as much, if not more, than most on-campus students about this subject and develop reading and communication skills that are vital to the workforce of the 21st century.

The following is a list of general notes as they relate to the course:

- All course communication with the instructor should be completed using the WebCT email tool.
- Assignments are to be submitted in Word format .doc, pdf, or PPT.

**Online Courtesy & Communication Policy:**

Extreme consideration for the feelings of others is expected. People cannot see you smile and may not know when you are joking. Do not tell people they are stupid or wrong. Do explain why you believe differently. If someone has the facts wrong, direct them to the source of accurate information or politely offer your alternative “facts.” Use of profanity or direct/indirect insults which defame a person’s character, race, ethnicity, religion, etc. are inappropriate and will not be tolerated.

**Academic Dishonesty & Plagiarism:**

Cheating will not be tolerated in this course. Anyone caught cheating will fail the course and will be reported to the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, in accordance with the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities.

Successful students always make sure that their work is original. This is important because the instructor must be able to gauge what the student has learned. Therefore, copying the work of another person, whether an essay, answers on your assignments or during a test, is considered plagiarism.

Plagiarism is a form of cheating. Any time a student uses someone else’s work and does not give that person credit, it is plagiarism. Anyone who plagiarizes will receive a failing grade on the assignment. If this is repeated, the student will fail the course and can be expelled from the university. If you are “suspected” of plagiarism, you will bear the burden of proof. You must be able to present rough drafts or related materials and discuss the topic intelligently. Refer to the University of Utah Plagiarism Policy for more details and/or the University of Utah - Policy and Procedures Manual.
University Policy for Incomplete Grades

University policy states that the “I” grade may be given—at the instructor’s discretion—whenever a student has satisfactorily completed at least 80% of the coursework, but is unable to complete the remainder due to extenuating circumstances beyond the student’s control. The instructor will stipulate the particular work to be completed before a new, replacement grade can be submitted. If the work is not completed within one calendar year, the “I” grade will change to an “E” (failing) grade.

General Information:

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the instructor and to the Center for Disability Services, http://disability.utah.edu/ 162 Olpin Union Building, 581–5020 (V/TDD) to make arrangements for accommodations. This information is available in alternative format with prior notification. Please provide the instructor with a letter from the Center for Disability Services as soon as possible.

All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disabilities.

THE INSTRUCTOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO CHANGE/MODIFY THE CONTENTS OF THIS SYLLABUS

COPYRIGHT NOTIFICATION

Copyright notice to students taking online courses:
Notice to students that materials used in connection with the course may be subject to copyright protection.

TEACH Act Copyright Notice
The materials on this course Web site are only for the use of students enrolled in this course for purposes associated with this course and may not be retained or further disseminated.