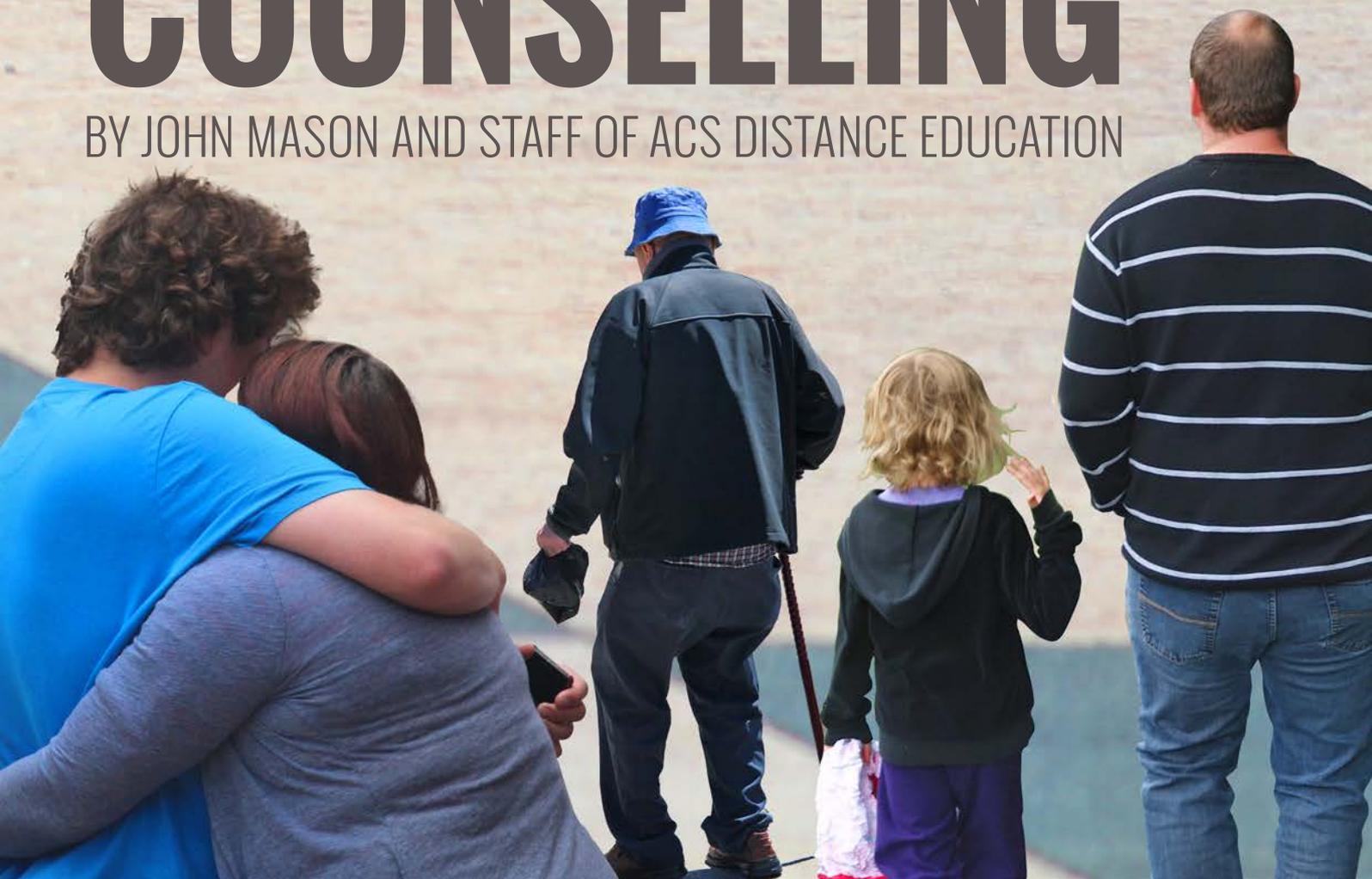




# FAMILY AND RELATIONSHIPS COUNSELLING

BY JOHN MASON AND STAFF OF ACS DISTANCE EDUCATION



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# CREDITS

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**Written by**

John Mason & Staff of ACS Distance Education

**Photos:**

John Mason  
Leonie Mason  
Stephen Mason

**Layout**

Stephen Mason

**Contributors:**

John Mason *Adv.Cert.App.Mgt, Supn.Cert, Dip. Hort.Sc, FPLA, MACHPER*  
Gavin Cole *B.Sc., Psych.Cert., M. Psych*  
Tracey Jones *B.Sc. (Hons) (Psychology), M.Soc.Sc (social work), Dip. SW (social work), PGCE (Education), PGD (Learning Disability Studies).*

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ACS Distance Education

P.O. Box 2092, Nerang MDC,  
Queensland, Australia, 4211  
admin@acs.edu.au  
www.acsbookshop.com

P O Box 4171, Stourbridge, DY8 2WZ,  
United Kingdom  
admin@acsedu.co.uk  
www.acsebooks.com

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# PREFACE

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Relationships are the social interactions which bind us as humans and underpins how society functions. This book discusses those human relationships - what they are, how they evolve and develop, as well as what can go wrong and the ending of relationships. It draws on research in the field to provide the reader with a broad understanding of how relationships can impact on their own lives and it should prove a useful companion to anyone with an interest in relationships and communication, family counselling, child, developmental or lifespan psychology, as well as counselling and psychology more generally.

# CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION: THE DIVERSITY OF RELATIONSHIPS

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Relationships may be simple or complex, intimate or social, open or private. Relationships are very much a reflection of the age. In the recent past, normal relationships would have constituted the nuclear family. Prior to that, it was the extended family. Nowadays, relationships have morphed into many different forms.



## THE EVOLUTION OF RELATIONSHIPS

Interpersonal relationships have evolved compared to what they used to be like

even just 100 years ago. The rules and etiquette of relationships have also changed. Research in 2013 found that social media was being cited in more and more divorce cases. Because of social media, how we conduct our relationships

has also changed. Most people now have a wider range of relationships. Traditional relationships include:

- Parent/children
- Siblings
- Grandparents/grandchildren
- Aunts and uncles/nieces and nephews
- Other extended family relationships, such as stepbrothers/sisters/step-parents,
- Boyfriend/girlfriend
- Husband/wife
- Friends
- Colleagues
- Acquaintances

In Western society, as attitudes towards relationships and social norms have changed, other forms of intimate relationship have become more acceptable:

- Cohabiting couples
- Homosexual couples
- Gay, lesbian and bisexual relationships
- Transgender and gender diverse relationships
- Multiple partner relationships (polyamory)
- Open relationships

Other forms such as polygamy (having more than one marriage partner at the same time - typically, one man with several wives) may not be legally acceptable, but is often tolerated as societies become more multicultural.

We often do not have just one role within our relationships, but many. Fulfilling roles and juggling relationships can be very time-consuming and exhausting. If you also add to the mix “friends” on social media, keeping on top of our relationships becomes more complicated still.

## Case Study

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*Bill is in a relationship with Simon. His mother and father are still alive. He has one sister, who also has two children, so Bill is an uncle and brother-in-law to his sister's husband. Bill has several aunts and uncles, who also have children – Bill's cousins. When Bill was younger, he married Jane. Jane and Bill had three children together before Bill realised that he was homosexual and started a relationship with Simon. Jane remarried Niall, who also had two children. So Bill's children have step-siblings. One of Bill's children has just married and had their first child. So Bill is also a father-in-law and a grandfather. Simon and Bill also have a number of friends together. They also work together in their own business and have numerous employees and work colleagues. Both Simon and Bill are also heavily involved in social media and have a number of friends via social media.*

This is a “simple” outline of Bill's relationships. If we start to move out from relationships with his family and friends, we can start to examine