

# Marriage and Family Therapy Conference

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## 2020 Marriage and Family Therapy Conference - Virtual Presentation Experience

To be accepted to present at the annual conference for the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) is a great honor. Originally, I was not planning to present when COVID-19 restrictions caused the 2020 AAMFT conference to move to an online platform and the number of presenters was cut back. Many of my colleagues and I all got disappointing emails informing us that our presentations that were originally accepted for the in-person conference earlier that year did not make the final cut. I was pleasantly surprised when a couple of months before the conference I received an email saying that another presenter had dropped out and they wanted my co-presenters and me to fill that forum slot with the presentation of my thesis: "Common Factors of Couple Recovery from Problematic Pornography Use". Dr. Ryan Seedall, my graduate advisor, and Alex Theobald, my friend/colleague and USU MFT graduate, agreed to present with me. While I have had several experiences with presenting at national conferences, I had never done a virtual presentation, especially an hour-long forum. We were asked to pre-record our forum, which took us a little over 2 hours to record the 50-minute presentation.

With it being a virtual conference, more students and professionals were able to attend this conference than ever before. The best part of course was being able to attend the conference from the comfort of my own home, sweatpants and homemade popcorn included.

Once it came time for us to present, we were stunned to see that over 900 professionals were attending our session, making it one of the most attended break-out sessions of the conference. Problematic pornography use is a common presenting problem that marriage and family therapists see in their practice, however the research on how to effectively address that issue is very limited. My thesis project addressed this gap in the research directly by interviewing 11 couples that had successfully recovered from problematic pornography use in their relationship. Each couple was asked about their recovery experience, specifically what they did and what their therapists and support system did to help them be successful in their recovery. Five main themes emerged from the interviews: Catalysts for Recovery, Foundation of Support for Recovery, The work of Recovery, Healing Perspectives of Recovery and Meaning Making, and Hindrances and Recovery Cautions. Each of these themes had several subthemes that gave powerful insight into the common factors of successful treatment for problematic pornography use in couple relationships. If you are interested in learning more about these findings, then visit the link below for the full published thesis.

[Full published thesis](#)

I definitely couldn't have done this presentation without my patient and always positive advisor Dr. Ryan Seedall. Additionally, the presentation was greatly strengthened by the contributions of my friend and colleague Alex Theobald. His experience in this area was vital for our presentation. This virtual forum presentation at our flagship national conference was to me a culmination of all our hard work with this project and an opportunity to share this knowledge so that it might make a difference. My hope is that the hundreds of MFTs that attended will feel better informed and prepared to treat the couples and families they see that are afflicted with problematic pornography use.