

## Is it Time to Meet the Parents?

By Kelly Strick, BA, Therapist Intern



If family is important to you, then it is probably important that they like your boyfriend or girlfriend. The first meeting between your family and your significant other can be stressful for everyone.

**As a member of a couple,** your role is to help your partner feel comfortable. Here are a few tips to help.

Teach your boyfriend or girlfriend about your family. If your family uses teasing to show affection, gives hugs for hellos, or says a traditional prayer for a meal, let your significant other know. Preparing your partner for your family's traditional tackle football game can allow for proper training.

Also, know your new love's personality. If your boyfriend or girlfriend is introverted,

placing them in the spotlight may cause stress. If your partner is outgoing, restricting their social interaction may make them feel ignored. Think about what you know of your love's family so you can determine what your partner expects from family interactions. If your partner is used to quiet formal dinners and your family typically fights for the last dinner roll, some early preparation may help your significant other feel more comfortable.

### *There are reasons why you love your boyfriend or girlfriend and reasons why you love your family.*

Differences between the two are completely normal. You may have to become a figurative (and sometimes literal) referee to have an enjoyable experience.

Finally, include your significant other by making introductions, facilitating conversations, and explaining family stories. It can be uncomfortable enough being the outsider, so make sure to express your love and appreciation. Show your partner that you support them, espe-

cially if your brother decides this event is a good time to vocalize his controversial political opinions.

The responsibility of a new significant other feeling comfortable does not rely solely on the couple. Family members can help make the time enjoyable too.

**If you are a member of the family** meeting a new significant other, here are a few things you can do to help.

As a family member, you have (at least) two tasks: get information about the new person and make the new person feel comfortable. Limit embarrassing stories about your family member. Sure, you want to make sure everyone remembers when Susie ran into the glass door, but maybe this dinner is not the best moment. The story can lead to hurt feelings, anger, and all around unpleasantness. Limit comparisons between the new girlfriend or boyfriend and the ex. You may think the ex-partner was the most amazing person you ever met because they got you free tickets to the game, however, your family member disagreed.

The natural desire to ask questions will likely kick in. It is great to show interest in the new girlfriend or boyfriend,

however, try not to be overwhelming or ask questions that are too personal. Asking about employment status is fine, but underwear style is not.

The last tip here is essential to positive interactions but may be the most difficult to follow: keep an open mind. You likely have expectations of who your family member should date. Differences between your expectations and reality may be scary, but they do not have to be negative. Try not to judge on a whim or be dismissive due to differences.

While these tips may help partners and family members come together in a positive experience, be aware that family interactions can be much more complex. If deeper issues arise, further work may be needed to help everyone be welcoming of the new relationship.

### **Recommended Reading**

**"The Seven Principles of Making Marriage Work"**

by John Gottman

**"The Relationship Cure"**

by John Gottman

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**Our Mission**

To promote healthy relationships, personal growth and healing through counseling, education and consultation from a Christian perspective.

**What's "New" at New Leaf**



**Lisa Postma** as New Leaf's new **Marketing Communications Director**. In her work, Lisa will help spread the word about the mission, vision, and impact of New Leaf Resources through a variety of communications channels.

Lisa comes to New Leaf with 17 years of marketing, communications, and development experience within a variety of Christian organizations.

"The work done at New Leaf Resources is so important in the lives of those served here," Lisa explains. "We want to ensure everyone knows that help is available at New Leaf for those traveling through difficult times. I look forward to proclaiming that message of hope in my work."

We are excited to welcome some fresh faces to New Leaf Resources! **Connie Brott** joined our staff in September as the new **Director of Development**. In her position, Connie will build relationships with churches, schools, and constituents.

Connie joins us after a 35 year career at Southwest Chicago Christian Schools. During her time there, she served as faculty and both Business Manager and Director of Mission Advancement.

"I believe that God has called me to use my gifts to further His Kingdom," Connie recently shared. "After 35 years in the school environment, I'm excited to develop relationships in a new Christian environment. I believe in the importance of New Leaf's mission, and I'm eager to bring awareness to the essential work that's happening here."

**Margo Knapp** joined the

New Leaf team in August. A **licensed clinical professional counselor**, Margo works in the Lansing and Crown Point Offices. Her areas of interest are children, adolescents, womens' issues, cognitive and/or developmental concerns, relationships issues, self-esteem, grief, and loss.

Margo has 25 years of experience working in the mental health field. She approaches therapy from a cognitive-behavioral perspective. Her passion is facilitating all clients' abilities in self-exploration to discover their God-given strengths, freeing them up to develop healthy coping skills.

Margo loves to impact people's lives in positive ways and is excited to jump into her work saying, "It is a privilege to help clients discover and apply God's healing truths in their lives."

New Leaf also welcomed

**Special Gifts**

**Contributions to New Leaf Resources can be made in memory or in honor of a loved one or friend. Thank you to the following donors:**

**In Memory of Ralph Troller**

Clarence & Marlene Vos

**In Memory of John Scanlan**

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## New Leaf Benefits Pastors and Churches

by Joel Sheeres, Pastor of First CRC in Crown Point



As a pastor, I have some training in pastoral counseling, I can walk alongside people in times of difficulty or struggle, and I can bring the word of God and prayer to the situation. Because of this, often, when I have individuals or couples come to me with a crisis or in need of some kind of counseling, I will sit down with them and talk through the issues. I will try to identify the spiritual issues involved, I will try to bring them to the redemption and grace we have in Christ, and sometimes I will make observations or give practical advice on how to live out the life we are called to.

However, I make it policy not to meet with individuals or couples more than two or three times for counseling, because if they need to meet more than that, their counseling needs are generally greater than my training and ability. Many times, those one or two or three

sessions of just having a pastor to listen to, offer some advice, and pray with them is enough to help get them back on track or work through the crisis or difficulty. But sometimes it is not. Sometimes individuals or couples need more in-depth counseling.

This is where New Leaf is such a tremendous resource to me as a pastor. I know I can refer to New Leaf therapists who are clinically trained, licensed and who are Christians. Knowing we are approaching the task of offering hope, help, and healing out of a shared faith not only gives me a confidence in New Leaf Resources' counselors, but also offers opportunities to work on different aspects of a person's life towards a common goal.

Consider a person who struggles with anxiety and panic attacks. The therapist may work on identifying some of the deeper causes of the anxiety, and perhaps, on developing some practical tools for identifying the onset of a panic attack and how to cope through it. As the person's pastor, I may continue to meet with the person and talk about issues of trust and a God

who is sovereign and loving. Together we can work towards helping a person move towards both spiritual and emotional health.

In addition to that, one of the things that I have always appreciated about New Leaf Resources is the commitment to make sure that clients, who do not have the financial resources to pay, do not get turned away. Often I have people say to me, "Pastor, I know I need counseling, but my insurance won't cover it, and I can't afford it." I am always grateful to be able to say, "Don't worry. That is not an obstacle."

The Marty Doot Client Assistance Program represents a commitment on the part of New Leaf Resources to ensure that those who need counseling get counseling, even if they don't have the financial resources. This reflects the true Christ-like nature of this organization in trying to bring dignity, community, and blessing back into people's lives regardless of whether they are financially well off or in financial need. To, me as a pastor, that reflects a great resource to our churches and community!

### How Can New Leaf Help Your Church?

New Leaf's highly-trained Christian therapists offer much more than just counseling services!

New Leaf's therapists provide consulting services, hold educational seminars, and will speak with your church congregation.

#### Areas of expertise include:

- Premarital counseling
- Pre-engagement counseling
- Marriage counseling
- Family Conflict Resolution
- Parenting
- Blended Families
- Life Transitions
- Grief
- Addictions
- Youth Pastoring
- Leadership
- Team Building
- Anxiety
- Depression

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**“Most of the shadows in our life are caused by standing in our own sunshine.”**

-Ralph Waldo Emerson



**Kass' Quotes**

A compilation of Therapist Kass Cooper's favorite quips & quotes, humorous & inspirational.



## Support New Leaf Today!

Are you a person that found hope at New Leaf Resources? Do you have a friend or family member who experienced healing through New Leaf's counseling services?

Many of our clients require financial assistance. Will you consider blessing them through a life-changing gift?

Simply return your gift in the enclosed envelope or visit [www.NewLeafResources.org](http://www.NewLeafResources.org) to impact a life today!

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 hope. help. healing.

**New Leaf Resources is...**

A **professional mental health agency** which provides counseling and consultation services to individuals, families, couples, children, churches, schools and businesses.

A **ministry** which brings the best possible care to those we serve, striving to reflect God's grace and love to all who seek help.

A **community resource** offering educational services, prevention programs, training, support and coaching.