Family Therapy Helps All

Exploring mental and social aspects of your family while mapping relational elements can enhance the wellbeing of individuals, couples, and families. Relationships have functions and patterns. Family therapy can address behavioral processes such as regulation, feedback, information management, adaptation, self-organization and reproduction.

Call 253.299.6556 for an appointment.

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The premises of systems theory are based on the insight that a system/family as a whole is qualitatively different, and "behaves" differently, from the sum of the system's individual elements/family members. Rules are â€œrelationship agreements" controlling individual choice of behaviors over a wide variety of content areas, organizing their interaction into a reasonably stable system.

Because families interact in repetitious sequences, rules serve to maintain and/or establish redundant family patterns; however, such default familial maneuvers diminish the potential value of otherwise useful management of information, thus compromising the integrity and value of truthful expressions and constricting potential individual and system outcomes.

Adaptability is the ability of a system, for example, an individual or a family, to survive and maintain its coherence under changeable internal and external conditions. The term adaptation implies an outcome at a given point in time, an adjustment that is a state of relatedness, whereas adaptability is an ongoing process of relatedness.

These terms refer to the ability of systems to change their structures under conditions of changes in the environment, often achieving a higher level of complexity in the process and thereby potentiating their chances of survival. Structural changes in this order both maintain the stability of the system and provide the impetus for the development of more complex organizational forms (coevolution).

The concept of self-organization is usually used as a generic term that includes the concepts of self-repairing systems, learning systems, and self-reproducing systems. Such systems include living organisms as well as families, social groups, and societies. The essential aspect of this self-organization is a striving for balance in a constantly changing environment; but this is only possible if the system constantly remains able to create the elements that constitute it. Strategy is a plan of action, a modus operandi in more or less predictable situations that allows one to make decisions likely to facilitate reaching a specific goal.

Systems therapists are a multifaceted lot, many of whom practice their own integrated approach to family treatment that draws from more than one of the major theories rather than advocating just one of the following methods:

Intergenerational Family Therapy is so closely identified with Murray Bowen it is sometimes known as Bowen-Intergenerational Theory. Bowen believes that tension in the family system will be resolved by the presence of a neutral third person who can avoid emotional participation in the family system. The therapist usually works with one member utilizing the format of a multi-generational family map, or genogram as he/she presents it.

Structural Family Therapy, as developed by Salvador Minuchin, is a systems approach that views the family as an organism undergoing transformation. The therapist is an actively intervenes, challenging the "family reality."

Strategic Family Therapy, sometimes known as Problem Solving Therapy, is primarily associated with Jay Haley and Cloe Madanes. The focus is on working with the family to define a problem, and then helping the family relate to and solve that problem. Similar to the role of the therapist in Structural Family Therapy, the therapist here is active and interventive.

Systemic Family Therapy, sometimes identified as the Milan Model, emphasizes a prescriptive and paradoxical approach based on systems theory. Mara Selvini-Palazolli and her associates in Milan, Italy are credited with developing this method that utilizes a team interview with two members of the team conducting the interview while others observe. The work of Virginia Satir and Carl Whitaker are included under this heading. These two pioneer family therapists are unique and distinct; however, they both pay particular attention to communication in the family, emphasizing the experiential aspects of the therapeutic process.