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Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!

Family Systems Therapy

By Peggy Davis

At its basic foundation, family systems theory holds that clients with any mental health diagnosis,

addiction or substance abuse disorder, can be more effectively treated if we take their relationships with their families into consideration. The client's family system, be it functional or dysfunctional, is an important component to address when treating someone in recovery. Without information on the family history and dynamics in which an individual is a part, treatment is incomplete. While family work clinician's focus is on the family unit or system, they do not de-emphasize the importance of dealing with the internal states of the individual. Family system's approaches broaden the scope of assessment and interventions to provide best practice methods for their clients.

In assessing a client's presenting problems, a family system's oriented practitioner will be interested in a person's current living situation, life experiences and what the client sees as his/her problem. As an example, here's how therapists may initially assess from a focus on the individual versus an assessment from a family systems perspective.

Maria has come to an agency that provides services for recovering alcoholics. A counselor in individual therapy may inquire about Maria's perspective or cognitions about her alcoholism. A therapist from a family or systemic orientation would not only examine Maria's self-identifications but her cultural and intergenerational family experiences around alcohol as well. The individual- focused therapist would begin therapy with Maria alone. A family systems counselor may include the client's parents, siblings or any other person(s) Maria may want to involve. Overall, the family-oriented therapist will want to explore how systems, from a micro to macro level, may be a part of Maria's perception and hence problem with alcoholism. This enables the practitioner to find explanations beyond the client's personal identification with their substance misuse. The therapist will want to understand how Maria's alcoholism affects the family and how it is or was integrated into and is being maintained by family relational patterns. This broad look into Maria's life will enable the counselor to provide a more unified and effective intervention plan.

While there are many styles or schools of thought and practice in family systems therapeutic interventions, most experts will agree that although they may operate or approach "family work" differently, practitioners should use the approaches that best benefit the client. Clinicians should also

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consider their comfort level and expertise in choosing a method of family therapy. The psychodynamic, intergenerational and family-of-origin approaches focus almost exclusively on the client's past. Strategic, Structural, Cognitive-Behavioral and the Psycho educational modalities deal with the present and its influences on the client with little thought to the past. One of the most familiar and focused on the here and now methods of family systems therapy is the Experiential-Humanistic approach.

Experiential therapeutic methods are implemented so that a client can explore actualization, choice, freedom and growth. The focus is on the present interactions between the family and the therapist as opposed to exploring past experiences. The therapist's characteristics and sense of self is an integral component in using this approach. Growth is assumed to be a natural process and that painful experiences are a part of life. Experiential family therapists (EFT) working with clients suffering from drug addictions or substance abuse, believe that these dysfunctional behaviors are actually the failure of a person to realize their potential for personal growth.

The goal of the EFT is to assist clients towards growth of self. By working towards spontaneity, bringing their creativity to light and learning how to play again, the client will hopefully begin to realize their potential. A good place to get more information on treatment centers that practice experiential therapies is

<http://cirquelodge.com>

. The main goal of any experiential family therapy is to facilitate

individual autonomy and bring all family members a sense of inter-connection or belonging. Another goal is to help the family encourage each of the other family member's individuation. In the case of substance abuse or drug addictions, if the whole family (or as many as you can get to participate) become healthy and functional, the chances are the client will be able to maintain sobriety. At a minimum, a healthy family can become an excellent support system for the recovering addict/alcoholic. EFT relies on the use of empathy, joining, and interactions in an attempt to assess the dynamics of the family and hence to bring experiences that will lead the family to change.

Experiential therapy places a high value on the therapist being authentic and real. Since this approach relies heavily on the therapist's personal self-awareness and rarely on a rigid technique, a clinician must be willing to participate in personal therapy sessions. The professional that has done their own work (so-to speak) and has learned what they will eventually facilitate or teach to a family, can only make them more effective. I find it quite odd that many therapists or professional counselors do not agree with this. Academic training will never be enough to make us the most effective clinicians we can be.

Use of family systems therapy allows the professionals in guidance and counseling to gain a greater understanding of their client's life or current problem. Individual therapy is effective and should never be discounted. It is in engaging the families in the therapeutic process that will help you gain a better insight into your client's mental health or substance abuse disorder and guide you to employing the most effective interventions. The best we can provide for our clients is what being a professional mental health clinician is all about.

This article was written by Peggy Davis sponsored by

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located in Sundance, Utah, is a residential drug rehab facility providing a private, effective and serene pathway to sobriety. Reproductions of this article must include a link pointing back to

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The Practice Of The Therapy Profession

By Dave Lloyd

Therapy is a profession that has increased in the awareness of the general population as we've become a culture more focused on self-care and taking care of our body, mind, and soul more consistently. There are many professions that fall under the title of therapy. The most common is that of psychotherapy which encompasses grief therapy, group therapy, couples therapy, cognitive therapy, and family therapy. Individuals who offer services in these types of therapy typically are Counselors, Social Workers, or Psychologists with graduate degrees. The primary focus is on helping individuals, couples, and groups improve their quality of life through gain a better understanding of their emotional and mental health. Typically, clients visit with these professionals on a weekly basis and may meet for a short-term to resolve the immediate need or over a longer period of time to get to deeper issues limiting someone's enjoyment of life. Play therapy is a variant of psychotherapy that focuses on working with children or those with emotional trauma. Through the use of play techniques, the therapist aims to help in resolving whatever issue may be keeping the person stuck. Techniques here include acting, drawing, thought-provoking games, taking pictures, storytelling, and combining different elements like stories and drawing. The intent is to use these methods as a metaphor for assisting the child in discovering a truth or understanding about themselves.

Massage therapy and physical therapy are other professions more focused on the physical health of those who are seeking proactive or reparative health, respectively. Massage therapy is usually performed on a weekly basis – or occasionally if in a resort, salon, or spa area. Physical therapy is a restorative healing profession, typically affiliated with a hospital or outpatient clinic. Increased movement, mobility, or a decrease in pain are the typical objectives of someone seeking physical therapy.

Through the use of various forms of therapy, individuals can increase their quality of life emotional, mentally, and physically.

Dave Lloyd has created an online guide to understanding and choosing a mental health, massage, or physical therapy professional at

<http://www.therapysecrets.com>



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