

Family Systems Therapy: Ordinary People

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Family Systems Therapy is based on the notion that an individual is best understood in the context of his or her family system, and individuals can be helped by changing the family's dysfunctional patterns of communications and behaviors. Therefore, the therapy calls for evaluating not only the individual, but the family dynamics as a whole. The interactions and behaviors amongst the members of a family unit will give information about the development of the client, and it may be revealed that problematic behaviors serve a purpose in the family, be maintained by the family, and be indicative of dysfunctional patterns handed down from prior generations. (Corey, 2015).

A family systems therapist operates from a place of interest and curiosity towards the family in order to promote understanding. There are four processes involved to move towards that purpose. The first step is forming a collaborative client-therapist relationship. Next is conducting a formal assessment with the help of genograms. The third is to hypothesize and share meaning in a collaborative manner to direct conversations. The final step is to facilitate change by creating a plan of action with the family's agreement.

If I were to employ Family Systems Therapy with Conrad, I would want to understand Conrad's thoughts and behaviors through the lens of his family system dynamics. I would start by inviting his parents to join the sessions. I would address each member of the family individually with openness and warmth, and allow each person to express his or her concern. The focus on the information would be less on content and more on the dynamic. I would next create a genotype of Conrad's family, which would include his deceased brother, indicated by an X on the box. I would make note of the strained relationship between Conrad and his mother, indicated by a squiggly line, and the strong relationship he has with his father, indicated by a double line. I would use relational questioning to find a point of entry into the family's life such as how they feel about Conrad quitting the swim team. Next, I would share my hypothesis and meaning about my observations and invite their feedback. My final step with Conrad and his family would be to facilitate change collaboratively. In helping the family understand the goals of

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their behaviors and thoughts, we could make a plan to facilitate a more functional way of interacting, which would ultimately benefit Conrad.

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References

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