

Mrs. Doubtfire

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Introduction

Mrs. Doubtfire is a 1993 film featuring Daniel Hillard's breaking family. Daniel Hillard, a voice actor quits his job following a disagreement over a script. He has a wife, Miranda, and three children including Lydia, Chris, and Natalie. His children are 14-, 12-, and 5-year-olds respectively. Daniel disagrees with his wife Miranda leading to her proposal of divorce. Daniel loses custody of his children because he has no job. He is closely attached to his children yet he can only see them once a week. Daniel gets a job as a shipping clerk on a TV station. At the same time, he applies for the position of Miranda's housekeeper and uses his voice-acting talent and makeup to convince her into hiring him. However, his new identity is Mrs. Euphegenia Doubtfire and he becomes closer to the children. Lydia and Chris find out that he is Daniel and vow to keep it a secret (Lozovska, 2022).

The station CEO Jonathan Lundy realizes Daniel's talents and organizes a job hosting a show at the station. Mrs. Doubtfire's identity is revealed at one meeting with Miranda and the family. Miranda is horrified and at the custody hearing, the judge is not convinced of Daniel's sincerity and decides to offer sole custody of the children to Miranda. The children and Miranda get miserable in the absence of Mrs. Doubtfire. They realize that Daniel is hosting a new hit show and Miranda visits him at his place of work requesting them to talk. Miranda later offers Daniel joint custody and allows Daniel to pick up the children after school (Lozovska, 2022). This paper will provide an effective intervention plan for Hillard's family using the structural family therapy method.

Theory

Structural family therapy is a type of therapy that evaluates the boundaries, subsystems, hierarchies, and coalitions within a family (Wetchler & Hecker, 2014). The method was the brainchild of Salvador Minuchin and has recently dominated family intervention methods. This method focuses on the direct interactions between family members as the primary method of inducing positive change. Structural therapy asserts that when families are appropriately pressured to look into their family from a broader perspective, they will find alternatives to their problems around relations. Interactions between family members are a central tent of a healthy family. Where interactions are not effective, there is reduced communication and understanding. This can dent the performance of various aspects of family life making it difficult for such a family to proceed (Colapinto, 2019).

Dysfunctional family relationships create stress and mental health issues in families. Structural family therapy seeks to address the manner of relations between family members. This analysis should improve communication and relationships between family members at the individual level and as a unit. Structural therapy incorporates family mapping which records members of the family, their age, their gender, and how they relate to one another. Key aspects to be observed during the process include family rules, patterns of behavior, and the structure of the family. Each member of the family gets an opportunity to map out their idea of what the family is and how they relate with each family member. This then provides the therapist with a basis from which to make independent observations and organize what advice to give to the family progressively.

Structural Diagnosis

Daniel's family requires a structural family therapy module to assist in improving its state and making it possible to work. The family has five members including Miranda, Daniel, Lydia, Chris, and Natalie. Daniel relates well with his kids and they love his company and presence. However, Miranda does not relate well with her kids and is generally seen as not so interesting in the family. Two coalitions exist in the family. The children have formed a coalition against Miranda. The children and the father also have a coalition against Miranda. Daniel is more permissive and engaging hence favored by the kids who tend to not like strict parents. Miranda on the other hand is strict to schedule and has no time to have fun with the kids, a condition that is making her unpopular among them. Chris is not doing well in his class work and this can be attributed to the poor state of the family. His school improvement, once Mrs. Doubtfire sets, indicates that he lacks proper guidance and motivation from his parents.

There is a great communication breakdown between Miranda and Daniel. Miranda has reservations about Daniel's character and behavior but has never found time to tell him. He is resenting Daniel every day but keeps it in her heart. This deep resentment builds up over years and eventually culminates in filing for divorce without proper consultation with her family. Daniel on the other hand does not take family talks seriously and this attitude has made it difficult for Miranda to hold talks with him concerning their deteriorating family. The parents are generally not effectively communicating hence it is difficult for them to understand what might be ailing their marriage (Baroncelli, et al., 2022).

Interventions

Structural family therapy will be effective in solving the relationship breakdown in the Hillard Household and making it a more habitable home (Wetchler & Hecker, 2014). Various interventions will have to be undertaken in the process of finding out a solution for the family's problem. The first step will be to understand the nature of the family in terms of boundaries, subsystems, hierarchies, and coalitions within a family. There is a strong coalition between the father and the children. The children love the company of their father and are willing to forego even comfort in a big mansion to live with their father in a small apartment. Miranda feels as though Daniel steals the spotlight with the children, enjoys the bright parts, and leaves her with the sour parts to face. She is lonely and even though the court grants her full custody, she still cannot have an effective relationship with her kids.

Daniel on the other hand is not doing much to help Miranda stay close to the children and develop a proper rapport based on communication and mutual understanding. Daniel's not being ready to have meaningful conversations with Miranda on the key components of their lives makes it difficult for Miranda to find a coalition partner in the family. This leaves Miranda lonely and resentful toward Daniel. To redeem her relationship with the children, Miranda chooses to do away with the one obstacle she claims is preventing her from achieving her goal. The children have a strong bond among themselves. They go to one school and are friends even in their conversations. The relationships between the children are therefore not in question.

Restructuring

The Family will need restructuring to find a more workable family structure that can ensure the problems are solved (Baroncelli, et al., 2022). The restructuring will require the death of old patterns with the help of a therapist. The family wants to change but they are trapped in a format that does not permit change. Even though family members will be included to continue in

their old ways, the therapist will provide a plan in which gradual restructuring and change will be implemented. One of the most important aspects that will be improved with restructuring is communication.

Improve Communication

Perhaps the most important intervention for Hillard's family is the improvement of communication between Daniel and Miranda. There is indeed a communication breakdown between the couple. Miranda considers Daniel an individual not so keen on having candid discussions about their family. In her admissions to Mrs. Doubtfire, she claims that Daniel makes jokes about everything and will not take her demands for conversations seriously. Miranda uses this excuse to deny Daniel the right of knowing how deeply she has been resenting him for years (Lozovska, 2022). Advising Miranda to improve her communication skills will be important in solving the relationship breakdown between the two.

Daniel needs to take a more serious tone while dealing with family issues. Daniel should consider his family an important part of his life in its entirety. He should seek to patch the communication breakdown between him and his wife rather than only concentrating on communication with the children. Miranda does not consider him serious enough to strike intriguing family conversations and for that matter, Daniel is failing. The therapist must encourage communication between Daniel and Miranda as the first step towards finding a lasting solution for the family problem. Miranda needs to communicate well with her children and make them get into a relationship with her as their loving mother. Perhaps Miranda should consider a career that will provide her more time to converse with her children, do activities together, and bond. The communication breakdown between mother and children has made the children prefer the father over the mother hence making the mother feel alienated and unwanted in the family.

Enhance Family Strengths

There is little evidence of the family sharing time doing family activities. Perhaps due to the tight schedule of Miranda, the family did not find frequent time to share in games, food, and general family conversations. Spending time provides families with an opportunity to bond, share ideas and understand each other. Cases of misunderstanding will reduce if the family decides to offer much of their time enjoying quality time together. Therefore, parents should seek ways in which they can share a good time with their children and make them appreciate the value of having a family. Miranda should be not so strict in preventing his son Chris from having a birthday party. She needs to work with Daniel to organize modest parties that will make Chris feel appreciated and bring the family together in the process.

Reframing

Reframing is a key pillar of structural family therapy that assists families with seeing things from various perspectives. Linearly seeing things makes it difficult for individuals to develop informed opinions about them. For instance, Miranda could use Daniel's funny persona in a different way that would make their relationship easier. The therapist will seek different situations in the family that can be reframed and made more acceptable to all. This will be done by leading open discussions about issues with the family. For instance, if the topic is, Miranda's strict personality, family members would be asked to provide opinions on the different angles of Miranda's strict personality. These perspectives can be evaluated to come up with the most positive take. For instance, strict personalities cannot be entirely negative and difficult to deal with. Some situations require a strict personality.

Conclusion

Hillard's family has suffered separation, divorce, and disagreement on issues that can be handled with proper therapeutic sessions. Differences in parenting style and resentment between the parents have led to divorce, hence great suffering for the children who are caught in the fight. Structural family therapy is the most appropriate method of dealing with the Hillard family divorce and separation. This method focuses on the direct interactions between family members as the primary method of inducing positive change. The children are mostly suffering the consequences of parents not being in agreement on issues yet for the most part they have very little to play to effect change. The most important intervention for Hillard's family is the improvement of communication between Daniel and Miranda. While communication between all the family members would be ideal, the weakest link in the family relationship is the communication between the two parents. The family needs to participate in more activities together and try reframing to find out alternatives to ideas that they may have rigid thoughts on.

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