
Navigating Sibling & Family Situations

Objectives

- Discuss the impact mental health has on the entire family system
- Explore skills & resources for promoting healthy family dynamics
- Converse and connect with fellow Dorm parents

What is a family system?

Family System:

A household of people who (generally) live together, interact, and depend on one another for needs and emotional support.

FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY

Family systems theory is a theory that views the family as a complex system of interconnected and interdependent individuals.

DESCRIPTION

Family systems theory understands human behavior through a complex web of emotional processes in one's family, work, and social systems. It describes how the emotional interdependence among family/society members impacts individuals' character and life choices.

ASSUMPTIONS

- 1 The family is a complex emotional unit
- 2 The family is emotionally interconnected
- 3 Familial, community, and social relationships are reciprocal

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Family System

When a loved **one** is experiencing mental, behavioral, and/or physical health challenges, it impacts the individual **and** can impact each member of their **family** as well as the family **unit** as a whole.

- When siblings are children: less/no understanding; feelings of neglect or being forgotten
- When siblings are adolescents: genetic fears; difficulty navigating complex emotions like shame, anger, frustration, resentment, guilt
- When siblings are adults: take on personal responsibility, avoid family involvement
- Partner/s: disconnection, disjointed, role confusion, loss of social activities

Ripple Effect

Impact on person: mental & physical health symptoms, loss of function, increased comorbidity with other health issues

Impact on family: resources spent towards caring for loved one, family member health challenges, relationship impact

Impact on community: mental, behavioral, physical health systems, general health of population, ability to participate

What Is A Family System Approach?

When we work with individual clients at the Dorm, we also know it's important to address the larger family system.

- Essential for **long-lasting change**
- An opportunity for **family members to examine their own issues** and opens the door for **change and healing for all**

Reflect:

- What is **YOUR** role in the family system? Your partners? Each of your children?
- On the impact of **generational roots**; a chance to **rewrite the family script**

Family Roles Worksheet

Role Descriptions and Questions to consider!

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1yvAjALHNDcXcu-OzyHFoO_fFBj4FHJjrLWtu054N5CI/edit?usp=sharing

Each Family Has Its Own Style & Equilibrium

We have to consider the **balance** that exists in each unique family which may include:

- Family members' expectations (spoken or unspoken)
- The expression of their feelings
- The management or avoidance of conflict
- Communication with the outside world and the roles which they are assigned
- Triangulated communication (involves 3rd person in dynamic)
- Balanced boundaries:
 - A closed family system where it is difficult to request or receive help
 - An overly porous family system where rules and expectations are inconsistent

Does this resonate?

Aaron Nola has thrown 10,000 fastballs in his career. 9 of them have been 96 MPH or faster. 3 of those 9 were thrown to his brother, Austin Nola.



Correcting for Imbalance in The Family

- **Educate** & encourage curiosity!
 - **Motivate** the family system for engagement while being trauma responsive
 - **Acknowledge** impact, validate
 - **De-pathologize** the family system
 - Change our language: denial as fierce protection
 - **Change** our *patterns*: use of coping skills & communication
 - **Engage** in activities to support health
- Paradigm shift
 - The younger the client or the more profound the mental illness, generally the needier the family → **connect to more resources**
 - **Address** chronic wear and tear
 - **Create** *protective* factors for individuals and the family system including *support* and *safety*
 - **Balance** between your needs & needs of the person

Model Behavior

- Young adults listen not only to our words, they listen to our actions
- Demonstrate that it is normal to feel anxiety and stress and then utilize tools like deep breathing or meditation to manage anxiety
- Practice self care activities together as a family
- Model acknowledging your partner as an individual with needs of their own, as well as your children/loved ones.
- Seek your own support, treatment model the pursuit of wellness

Discussion

- How has your loved ones challenges and triumphs impacted you or your family unit?
- How do you model caring for yourself, setting boundaries, and balancing your life's priorities?
- In which ways do you hope to see your family dynamics evolve, grow, & change?