

Family Therapy Interventions

Interventions

Family therapy interventions are diverse, reflecting family systems' complexities and their challenges. These interventions are rooted in various therapeutic approaches, each offering unique tools to address issues, enhance communication, and foster healthy relationships within families.

Structural and strategic family therapy

Both structural and strategic approaches are foundational in systemic family therapy. There is a focus on identifying and altering intergenerational family dynamics that maintain, create, or exacerbate issues (Wampler et al., 2020).

- **Structural:** Recognizes the importance of understanding the individual within their social context. It emphasizes how individuals do not exist in isolation but rather about the family, which helps to drive productive change. Hence, problems in families are typically distributed and often a result of a dysfunctional hierarchy or poor functioning within subsystems.
- **Strategic:** It suggests that change happens before understanding. For lasting change to occur, there needs to be an understanding of the family interactional patterns and shifts in perception within these.

Psychodynamic/psychoeducational therapy

This focuses on exploring family members' past relationships and experiences to gain insight into present issues. It can be used to educate families about mental illness and other challenging behavior patterns, with a continued focus on the family as a whole (Metcalf, 2011).

Narrative family therapy

This type of therapy is prevalent today. It allows family members to share their stories in a respectful manner, assuming that everyone is an expert in their own life. Issues are looked at from a different angle, and individuals are encouraged to support other family members and unite against the issue together (Goldenberg, 2017).

Systemic/systematic family therapy

It recognizes the connectedness between family members, highlighting how individual issues are influenced and embedded within the family structure (Goldenberg, 2017). This approach helps identify dysfunctional patterns within the family that contribute to individual problems, offering suggestions on how to make the family unit more substantial and more supportive.

Bowenian family therapy

This considers family issues by looking at both past relationships and the family as a unit (Goldenberg, 2017). Eight interlocking concepts are considered: differentiation of self, triangles, family projection process, multigenerational transmission process, societal regression, nuclear family emotional system, emotional cutoff, and sibling position.

Behavioral and cognitive-behavioral family therapy

These cognitive interventions encourage individuals to identify aspects of their thinking that contribute to negative behavioral and emotional responses within the family (Wampler et al., 2020). They also test the validity of cognitions and swap unhelpful thoughts with helpful ones.

Emotionally focused therapy (EFT)

This approach addresses couples and families by addressing their internal emotional experiences and interactions with one another. It aims to help individuals identify what holds emotional significance for them while using the therapeutic relationship to support their self-discovery and behavioral shifts (Goldenberg, 2017; Sutton, 2017).

Rather than concentrating on individual traits, EFT practitioners prioritize the relational dynamics between people. They encourage clients to explore their immediate emotional responses and the key moments shaping their relationships.

Techniques

Family therapy employs various techniques to address the unique needs and dynamics of families facing challenges. These techniques are grounded in distinct theoretical frameworks, each offering specific tools and approaches to foster understanding, improve relationships, and resolve conflicts within the family system. Below, we explore some of the most effective techniques in family therapy (Varghese, et al., 2020):

Psychodynamic

This technique seeks to understand the dynamics between family members and their interrelationships. It interprets the family's ego defenses to its members, aiming to foster emotional insight and facilitate the development of healthier defense patterns. It is recommended that this last for 15-30 sessions; hence, the time required and high motivation levels can be a restraint.

It is important that this technique is used only on psychologically sophisticated people. This method is particularly useful in couples with marital discord from upper-middle-class backgrounds.

Behavioral

This involves techniques such as psychoeducation, communication skills training, and problem-solving for families with low dysfunction. Role plays and modeling are useful for parenting skills in relation to disturbed children. This technique is appropriate for a wide range of therapies and conditions.

Structural

This involves techniques focused on balancing and boundary-making within family members, which are applicable to many different types of clients.

Strategic

Techniques include reframing, positive connotation, and paradoxical (symptom) prescription. These techniques are typically used when other methods have failed, hence, they can be handy for families that are resistant or having change issues.

References

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