

Case-Specific Symptom Prescription

A therapeutic technique of the strategic model, in which symptomatic or other undesirable behaviors are paradoxically encouraged in order to lessen such behavior or bring it under conscious control.

Center for Disease Control - CDC

The U.S. Government agency that, among other things, tracks the incidence of communicable diseases and defines criteria for diagnosis of AIDS.

Central Ego

From object relations theory, one of three parts of the ego. The Central Ego is conscious, adaptable, and free to deal with future experiences with attachment figures in reasonable ways. The central ego maintains its own object, the *ideal object* (see *Rejecting Ego & Exciting Ego*).

Centrifugal

Defined by Beavers as part of the Beavers-Timberlawn Model, a family system dynamic in which members are expelled or encouraged to operate at the outer periphery and seek gratification outside the family.

Centripetal

Defined by Beavers as part of the Beavers-Timberlawn Model, a family system dynamic in which members are tightly bound to one another emotionally and encouraged to seek gratification from one another.

Change

1) From structural family therapy, perspective change is the process by which elements of a system are transformed to new states or levels of organization.
2) developmental system change refers to the family life cycle and the transition of the family from one stage of development to another. Strategic models see change as occurring suddenly and resulting from shifts in beliefs (*discontinuous change*); whereas the structural and transgenerational models see change as occurring through a gradual learning process (*continuous change*).

Circularity (Circular Causality)

The notion held by the Milan systemic group that causality in families cannot be thought of as a simple, single cause and effect relationship (*linear causality*). Instead, events, behaviors, and interactions are seen in a more complex way, as mutually influencing one another (*feedback loops*). Each is the effect of a prior cause and in turn influences future behaviors. Family system events create an endless (and beginning-less) circular chain. In this model it is meaningless to identify an individual as having caused or started a problem. Instead, all elements of the problem coexist and are reciprocally reinforcing. The problem could not be maintained if any one element were to be removed.

Circular Questioning

A technique for interviewing and hypothesis validation designed by the Milan systemic group, based on Bateson's idea that people learn by perceiving differences. In this technique, each family member comments on the behavior and interactions of two other members. It is hoped that beliefs will become less rigid when members are exposed to different perspectives.

Circumplex Model

A graphic model for observing and assessing families designed by Olson, which measures the family's levels of cohesion and adaptability. Families with too much cohesion tend to function as enmeshed, and those with too little can be disengaged. Too much adaptability can result in excessive and unpredictable change, while too little can result in rigidity and failure to transition through the life cycle. Healthy families will be balanced, having neither too much nor too little of either quality. Olson's evaluation tool, *FACES* is used to apply the Circumplex Model to family assessment.

Classical Conditioning

A learning paradigm studied and practiced in a laboratory or other controlled environment in which a stimulus called the *unconditioned stimulus (US)* which naturally elicits an *unconditioned response (UCR)*, is paired with a neutral stimulus that does not initially elicit a response. Through the repeated pairings, the neutral stimulus (now the *conditioned stimulus - CS*) begins to elicit the desired response (now the *conditioned response - CR*).

Closed System

A self-contained system with impermeable boundaries which resists change and operates with minimal interactions with its outside environment, thereby increasing its dysfunction.

Coaching

In Bowenian therapy (used by other models as well), the use of an objective person, such as the therapist, to guide a family member to interact with other members in new ways and prevent the family from seducing the person back into older, dysfunctional behaviors. The therapist takes an educative role, rather than an emotional one.

Coalitions

A concept described by Minuchin (structural model) in which two family members form a covert alliance, either temporary or durable, against a third. Coalitions usually form across generational boundaries, for example, between one parent and a child against the other parent or another child. Coalitions create power blocks in families, which serve either to balance another coalition or establish control.

Coding Schemas

Used in information management and research, these systems establish an

organized and consistent approach to identifying and counting clinical phenomena.

Coercion (*Aversive Control*)

From behavioral family therapy, one person uses aversive stimuli to control the behavior of another.

Cognitive Behavior Family Therapy (CBT)

Therapies based on both behavioral techniques, which grew out of scientific, laboratory experiments, and on the cognitive therapy models. People learn to modify behaviors both by altering the reinforcement contingencies and/or changing the cognitions that influence their behaviors and interactions.

Cognitive Maps

Mental models by which incoming information is perceived, understood, transformed, and stored, together with a corresponding repertoire of behavioral options. Maps are based on the integration of experiences. Each part of the cognitive map – i.e., input and output – forms the individual's internal representation of reality. Cognitive maps shape actions and communication. They may be flexible, able to change and expand cumulatively with new information and experiences, or they may be rigid and limiting. Maps have both language and spatial aspects with a private vocabulary and imagery that determines how incoming communication is interpreted.

Cohesion

From Olson's *Circumplex Model*, a measure of the strength of the emotional bonds between and among family members.

Collaborative Couples Therapy

Couples treatment in which each partner is seen by his/her own therapist (*See Concurrent & Conjoint*).

Collaborative Family Health Care

Bloch and his followers use teams with other medical care providers – nurses, physicians, or rehabilitation specialists – to help families cope more effectively with the consequences of medical illnesses.

Collaborative Language Family Therapy

From Goolishian and Anderson, a model of family therapy based on the idea that problems are maintained in the family's language and may be resolved by changes in their use of language. The therapist asks questions from a *not knowing* stance, designed to draw out the client's own views of the problem. The problem is "dissolved" as new meanings and actions evolve.

Collusion

A family system defense mechanism in which members cooperate by unconsciously sharing thoughts and feelings. The defense is used to protect

family members from threatening outside forces. For example, both spouses and children may collude to perceive an alcoholic member who induces friends and family to drink with him, as simply a light hearted partygoer.

Communication Theory

Originated by the MRI group, the study of the process by which verbal and non-verbal information is exchanged within a relationship. Communication can be *analogic* which has little structure, but is rich in content, or *digital* which is verbal communication perceived and interpreted based on meaning. (see various types of communications: *Haptic; Kinesthetic; Paralinguistic; and Streptic*).

Communities of Concern (See Leagues)

Complementarity

An interactional pattern in which members of an intimate relationship establish roles and take on behavioral patterns which fulfill the unconscious needs and demands of the other.

Complainant

From solution-focused therapy, one of three ways to characterize the level of participation and commitment to change. This client brings a specific problem, but is currently unwilling to focus on a solution (see *Visitor & Customer*).

Computer

From Satir's experiential family therapy, one of the five communication styles. The computer is rational, but often attempts to sway others by referring to outside "authorities."

Concurrent Couples Therapy

Couples therapy in which one therapist works with both spouses at different times (see *Collaborative & Conjoint*).

Conductor

A therapist whose stance is to be aggressive, confrontational, and charming (see *Reactors*).

Confidentiality

Confidentiality refers to the ethical obligation of the therapist to protect the client's identity and other personal information. Therapists may not reveal information without the client's consent to third parties except as allowed by the governing licensing body and/or as outlined in the Ethical Guidelines of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy.

Conjoint

Therapy that involves two or more family members, introduced by MRI psychiatrist, Jackson in 1959 to describe marital therapy in which the spouses were seen together (see *Collaborative & Concurrent*).

Conjoint Marital Therapy

A model of marital therapy developed by Satir in which both partners are seen together by one or two therapists. The treatment is designed for married couples without children and in which one or both of the partners has either a psychiatric disorder or a social diagnosis e.g., (alcoholism, gambling, extramarital affair).

Constitutionalist Self

From narrative therapy, the view of self is plastic and continuously deconstructed and reconstructed through interactions. The sense of self derives from experiences that fit into the dominant narrative. The therapist and client co-construct a new self that is more congruent with the client's preferred outcome.

Constructivist Family Therapy

A variety of therapeutic models based on postmodern philosophy, which emphasizes the concept that a person's knowledge of the world is based on his/her perception and internal construction of the "truth" and the belief that reality can never really be known (*see Social Constructivist Family therapy*).

Content

A term that describes the topics that people in therapy are discussing (*see Process*).

Contextual Family Therapy

A theory and therapeutic model developed by Boszormenyi-Nagy based on the ethical dimension of family relationships. The family maintains invisible, intergenerational loyalties, which members hold in their personal *ledgers*. Problems in relationships are thought to result either from an attempt to maintain or change the balance sheet of what members owe to one another.

Contingency Contract

In the behavioral family therapy model, an agreement between two or more family members aimed at increasing mutually rewarding behaviors. The contract, which is usually written, specifies the desired behaviors each will do and under what circumstances.

Co-therapy

A technique, introduced by Whitaker, in which two therapists work together as a team.

Countertransference

A concept from analytic theory that relates to the therapist's unconscious emotional reactions to the client which derive from the therapist's own history (*see Transference*).

Craziness

From Whitaker's symbolic-experiential family therapy, a concept in which

healthy functioning for both therapists and families includes a high proportion of non-rational, creative, right-brain activity. Therapists need to be able to be irreverent, to use fantasy freely, to function at a regressed level when it serves the therapy, and to be mature enough to be immature (*see Inconsistency*).

Crisis of Accession – Crisis of Dismemberment

From Hoffman, discontinuous changes in families, like symptom development, often occur at times of stress. Changes in the family composition are particularly demanding. There are *crises of accession* when someone joins the family (marriage, birth) and *crises of dismemberment* when members leave (divorce, death).

Cross Generational Coalition

From structural therapy, a stable coalition between a parent and child against the other parent.

Cross-Sectional Studies

A research design which examines subjects at a single point in time (*see Longitudinal Studies*).

Culture

The set of shared beliefs, behaviors, values, customs, meanings, symbols, and the like, transferred from one generation to the next and from the social groups to which the person belongs (Italian, Jewish, Lesbian, etc.).

Cultural Consciousness (*Cultural Sensitivity*)

Therapists' sensitivity to the existence and impact of the family's cultural rules and values. Such awareness enables easier engagement, reduces misunderstanding and misinterpretation of family members' behavior, and facilitates the development of trust. Therapists should be aware of their biases regarding the cultural background of others and their own.

Customer

From solution-focused therapy one of three ways to characterize the level of participation and commitment to change. This client brings a problem and a willingness to work toward its resolution (*see Complainant & Visitor*).

Cybernetics

The study of how systems are controlled by information and feedback loops and the means by which they work (*see Second-Order Cybernetics*).

Curiosity (*see Neutrality*)

De-catastrophizing

A behavioral technique in which the therapist teaches the client to challenge his/her tendency to have catastrophic expectations.

Deconstruction

The postmodern process of constructing new meanings by examining implicit assumptions.

Defense Mechanism

An analytic concept describing the unconscious process by which the ego protects the person from conscious awareness of anxiety provoking, threatening thoughts and memories.

Detriangle

The Bowenian concept of withdrawing from an existing triangle so that the person is not drawn into the conflict between the other two, often the parents.

Destructive Entitlement

From Nagy's contextual family therapy, the development of symptomatic behaviors in the pursuit of self-justifying and harmful means to satisfy the perception of what is due as a result of deficient caring and responsibility in parenting. For example, a child who was forced into the role of "adult" by his/her parents may feel entitled to engage in irresponsible, adolescent behaviors as an adult (*see Revolving Slate of Injustice*).

Detouring

From structural family therapy, when two family members attempt to preserve their relationship by defining their conflict as a disagreement about a third person, keeping the focus on that person rather than themselves and their problem.

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM - IV)

The most recent edition of the diagnostic manual of the American Psychiatric Association, which provides a classification system of mental disorders and syndromes.

Differentiation of Self

In Bowenian family therapy, the separation of intellectual and emotional functioning, which results in being less reactive to family system dynamics and other members' emotional states.

Differentiation of Self Scale

A scale, developed by Bowen, to measure the degree of emotional fusion with others. The scale ranges from 0, or no self, to 100, a hypothetical ideal of fully differentiated.

Diffuse Boundaries

In structural family therapy, boundaries that are not clearly defined or maintained, resulting in blurred generational roles and responsibilities. Diffuse boundaries often lead to enmeshed relationships.

Directed Masturbation Training

From sex therapist, LoPiccolo, a method of treating primary inorgasmic or

preorgasmic dysfunction. The woman is taught to become familiar, more comfortable with, and more accepting of her body and her sexuality. She is encouraged to explore her genitals for tactile quality then for pleasure; to use erotic materials and fantasy; to use orgasm “triggers;” and, if necessary to use a vibrator. The woman then teaches her partner (*Partner Training*) about the kinds of stimulation that she finds pleasurable. Throughout the program, the woman is instructed to do Kegel exercises, which are thought to increase orgasmic potential. The couples is also instructed to engage in a variety of mutually pleasurable, non-demanding and initially non-genital, sexual experiences.

Directive

An intervention developed primarily by Haley and Madanes in which the therapist gives the family a task with the intent of changing stuck sequences. There are two types of directives: *straightforward* and *indirect*. Straightforward directives are not paradoxical, and the therapist expects the family to carry out the task as given (parents are asked to take control of their misbehaving child). Indirect directives are paradoxical and the therapist expects the family to resist the task (the parents are asked to act as if it were impossible to take control of their child). With all directives, the process of negotiating relationships and behavior is more important than whether they are carried out.

Dirty Games

From Milan systemic family therapy, the unacknowledged power struggle between parents and the symptomatic child.

Dirty Middle (The)

From Framo’s couples therapy, an impasse in treatment when couples have gained some insight about the nature of the problems and the irrationality of their demands on one another, but they still have differences as to what each want from one another and from the marriage.

Discontinuous Change

Sudden, unanticipated change in family organization usually brought on by a crisis (may be therapeutically induced), which causes a change in perception, beliefs, or perspective. The opposite of continuous change which is gradual, evolutionary, or developmental.