In It to Win It: Helping Families Heal From Addiction Through Family Therapy

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Learning Objectives

• The participant will learn about family systems approaches to work with families with a substance use disorder
• The participant will be able to explain the impact the person with a substance use disorder has on the whole family unit
• The participant will be able to describe the correlation between early family bonding and the development of substance use disorders.
Healthy Connections vs Unhealthy Connections

Parent-child bond

Well connected
- Open communication and secure relationships
- Less risk for substance use

Disconnected
- More at risk for substance use
What is going on?

• Nearly half of Americans have a family member or friend who has struggled with addiction (Gramlich, 2017).

• Over 80% of Americans say addiction is a problem in their community (Gramlich, 2018).
When a member of the family has a SUD

• Everyone in the family is affected
• Trust is lost
• Blame, shame, and guilt, circulate throughout the family members
• Despite this, the family functions to maintain homeostasis.
• There is a set of roles, rules, alignments, and communication patterns that have defined the system.
Why Family Systems Approach?

• In the 1950s Murray Bowen began looking at family dynamics. He believed what made up a person's behavior and personality are based on order of birth, their role in the family of origin, and how they cope with family issues.

• This makes up the uniqueness of each family dynamic.

• Understanding of the family system and dysfunctional family patterns allows us to help the family or individual to heal and change.
Viewing the System

Systemic Thinking
Set and System
Importance of Family

- Family bonds have the ability to strengthen the recovery process.
- Family is defined differently depending on culture, beliefs, and values.
- Even when the family of origin is not conducive to recovery, many believe that it is possible to create a family by utilizing the network of positive significant members in a client's life.
- Family members must be treated in order to help create new healthy ways of communicating and behaving-redefining roles.
How does it work?

Family systems approach have been shown to be beneficial in working with a couple or family where a member is experiencing a SUD.
Benefits of Family Therapy in Treatment of Addiction

• Removes the problem from the individual and emphasizes the breakdown of the functioning of the system.

• Reduces shame and guilt

• Works to heal the pain through changing of the narrative or shifting of the system, not “fixing someone”.

• Even when working with an individual you can use a systemic approach.
Exercise
WHEN YOU FOCUS ON PROBLEMS, YOU'LL HAVE MORE PROBLEMS. WHEN YOU FOCUS ON POSSIBILITIES, YOU'LL HAVE MORE OPPORTUNITIES.

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Benefits of Family Therapy in Treatment of Addiction: Solution Focused Therapy

• Externalizes the problem, helping to reduce shame and guilt.

• Uses questioning such as the miracle question, scaling questions, coping and exception seeking questions.

• Problem free talk=no judgement
"I describe family values as responsibility towards others, increase of tolerance, compromise, support, flexibility. And essentially the things I call the silent song of life—the continuous process of mutual accommodation without which life is impossible."

~Salvador Minuchin
Benefits of Family Therapy in Treatment of Addiction: Structural Family Therapy

• Challenges the old structure
• Realigns the hierarchy of the family unit and then resumes treatment of the identified client i.e. the person experiencing the addiction while in proper role
• Utilizes enactments to help family practice new healthier behaviors which exposes areas of opportunity to improve throughout the treatment.
Other Family System Approaches

Just to name a few...

• Narrative Therapy
• Transgenerational Therapy
• Family Reconstruction Therapy
• Strategic Family Therapy
Outside of the Treatment Facility

• Knowledge and Understanding of addiction, impacts on the family, and treatment span far beyond the treatment facility.

• This information is becoming more relevant and important in private practice, collaborative divorce, and family mediation.

• Systems theory should be a required part of treatment during and after the warm hand off.
Questions
Thank You for attending
References


• Gramlich, J. (2017, October 26). Nearly half of Americans have a family member or close friend who's been addicted to drugs. Retrieved September 9, 2018, from [http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/10/26/nearly-half-of-americans-have-a-family-member-or-close-friend-whos-been-addicted-to-drugs/](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/10/26/nearly-half-of-americans-have-a-family-member-or-close-friend-whos-been-addicted-to-drugs/)
