

Family Intervention Now
The Center for Family Recovery

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Family Systems Theory: Basic Elements

- ◆ The family is a structure of related parts or subsystems. Each action or change affects every other person in the family.
- ◆ The family structure has elements that can only be seen in its interactions. Individual make up a family system. This family system is a complex whole that cannot be understood by examining members separately.
- ◆ Family Roles: Patterns of interaction become ingrained habits that make change difficult.
- ◆ Family Rules: Each family has certain rules that are self-regulating and peculiar to itself. The family is a purposeful system; it has a goal. Usually the goal is to remain intact as a family.
- ◆ Boundaries: For families to function well, subsystems must maintain boundaries.
- ◆ Adaptation: Despite resistance to change each family system constantly adapts to maintain itself in response to its members and environment.
- ◆ Systems change through the family life cycle. Changes in family systems are caused by both normative (predictable life cycle changes) and non-normative (crisis) stresses.

Within the family, individual members can use their power to cooperate, individuate and get their collective and individual needs met and grow to mature human beings.

The family is:

- A survival and growth unit
- The soil that provides for the emotional needs of family members
- The foundation for growth and development of each member , including the parents.
- The place where attainment of solid self-esteem takes place.
- A major unit in socialization-crucial for an enduring society.
- The matrix out of which a child's character and moral value's are formed

The Family is where we learn to:

- Communicate and socialize
- Develop core beliefs about ourselves, others and the world around us.
- Navigate developmental milestones
- Develop our values
- Develop sense of self
- Define “normal”
- Resolve conflict (or not!)
- Get our fundamental needs met

Stressors that lead to family imbalance

- Addiction
- Violence/abuse
- Divorce
- Death/loss
- Chronic /mental illness
- Poverty or financial stress
- Cultural stress
- Immigration
- Spiritual oppression
- Absent caregivers
- Lack of nurturing
- Trauma
- Traumatic transitions
- Rigidity/emotionally repressive
- Enmeshment/boundary diffusion
- Shame

Characteristics of the Family Impacted by Addiction

Focus on the
Alcoholic/Addict

Shame Based

Denial

Inconsistency &
Insecurity

Emotional Cycles of
Family Members

Looped Communication

Chaotic Interaction or No
Interaction

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Hyper-Vigilance/Hyper-
Sensitivity

Unspoken Rules

Doubting of Perceptions

Fear of Normal Conflict

Survival Roles

“Open” Secrets

Rigid Short-Term Crisis
Focus

Structure and Process in the addicted family system:

Rules: tend to be rigid, arbitrary and protective of addiction and core beliefs around the family's behavior.

Roles: generally inflexible, adaptive, serve to hold family and system together.

Rituals: generally include alcohol/drugs. With progression of disease, can be a source of "dread for families".

Boundaries: overly porous, enmeshed within the family and rigid outside the family.

Hierarchies: In place, rigid- anyone who challenges drinking behavior is seen as disloyal, "less than" other family members.

Structure and Process in the addicted family system cont.-

Communication: Typically defensive/avoiding reality that might threaten denial. Underlying environment of fear discourages honesty/spontaneity .

Interaction: Can be tentative or confrontational-system ruled by impulse. Does not allow connection or separation. Members can experience both enmeshment and isolation, choice becomes of extremes.

Stability: tends to be unstable and inflexible and easily thrown off balance by unexpected or traumatic events.

Change: resisted at all costs, denial, anxiety and shame keep members gravitating toward what's familiar.

One or more members in system must break through denial and "hit bottom" before real change can occur.....

Shame

Develops a rigid defense system

Anger, apathy, shut down, isolation, lack of trust for others and self, perfectionism, controlling, blaming others, arrogance (fear of being vulnerable or found out)

Any of these can be defenses for feelings of shame

Malignant Shame

- ◆ **Low Self-esteem**
- ◆ **Internalized Rage**
- ◆ **Repression of Feelings**
- ◆ **Blocks to Intimacy**
- ◆ **Extreme Defensiveness**
- ◆ **Compulsivity**
- ◆ **Evolution of a *False Persona* to cover it all up!**

Wegscheider-Cruse's Survival Roles

Survival roles describe the coping mechanisms members use to survive in a imbalanced family

Chief enabler

Family hero

Family scapegoat

Lost child

Family mascot

Chief Enabler

Assumes primary responsibility for chemically dependent family member.

Major enabling approaches

Avoiding and shielding

Attempting to control

Taking over responsibilities

Rationalizing and accepting

Cooperating and collaborating

Rigid Family Systems

Rules – strict interpretation of the rules with no exceptions.

Values – things are always right or wrong.

Motto – “do it right, or else”

Communication – linear, hierarchical.

Functions of drug – Suppress feelings, stay numb to the trauma in this family system.

Overextended Family Systems

Rules – be productive, get busy, stay on the move.

Values – look good, achieve, willpower, feelings are for wimps.

Motto – “we can achieve anything we set our minds to.”

Communication – feelings are not expressed, decisions based on what will please parents.

Functions of drug – keep on working/doing

Distorted Family Systems

Rules – don't let outsiders know we are crazy.

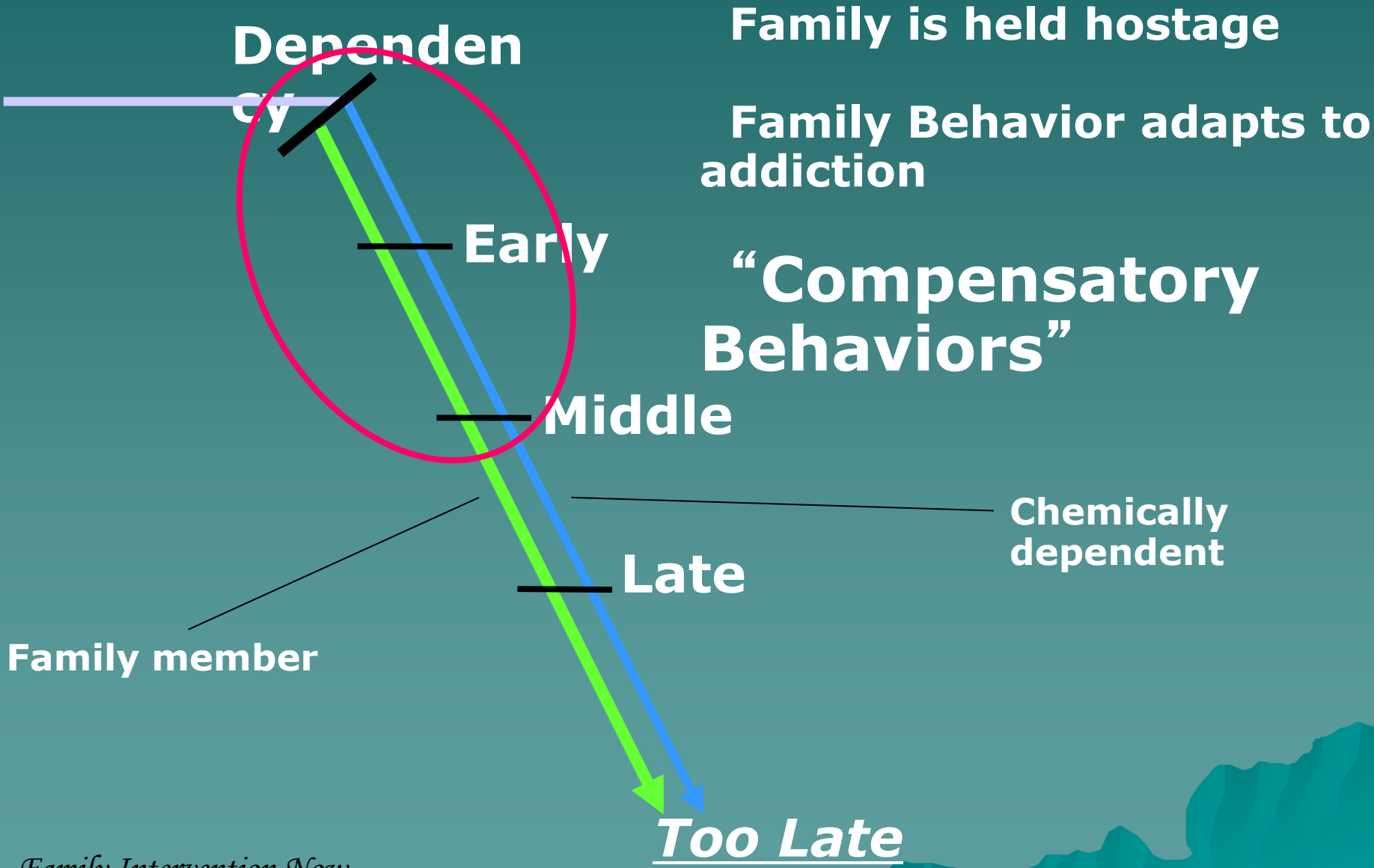
Values – maintain illusion of normalcy.

Motto – “aren't most families like ours?”

Communication – mixed messages; limited common perceptions of situations.

Functions of drug – distort reality, which is already distorted, to try and make sense, or no sense, of it.

Family Disease Progression



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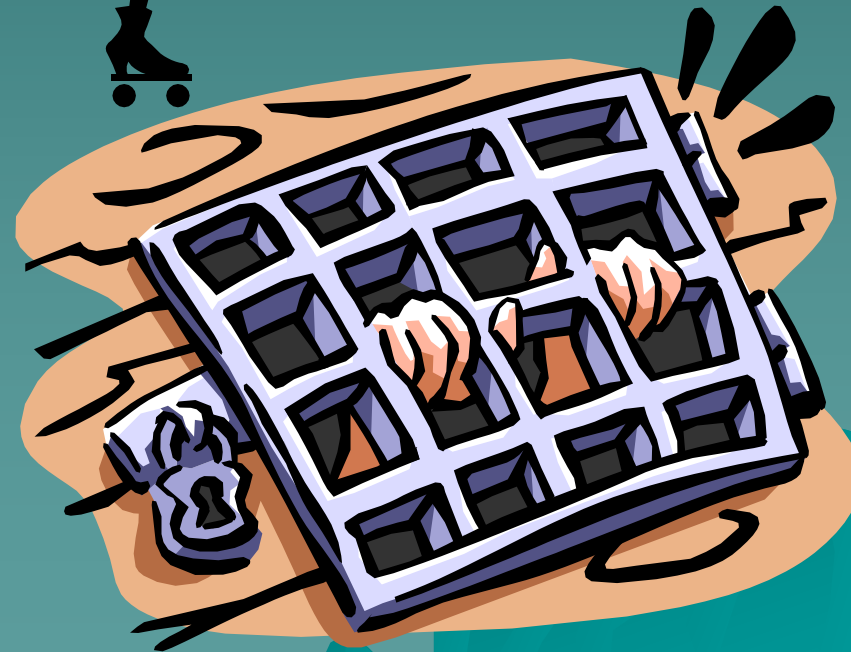
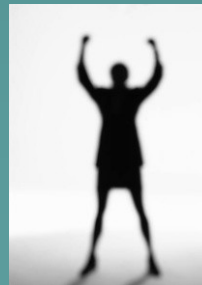
Source: Bill Maher

Similar Characteristics



Family's behavior

Control
Caretake
"Tip Toe"
Berate
Nag
Isolate
Enable
Interrogate



Importance of Family Involvement

Family education about the Disease (we wouldn't send a diabetic child home with educating the family about diabetes)


Family treatment

Family therapy

Alanon/Naranon/Families Anonymous

Multi-family group- helps reduce shame and isolation and introduces families to step work

Recovery Lag

- *not all individuals/families are affected the same way**
 - *not all parts of the individual/family will need intervention**
 - *not all individuals/family will respond the same way to treatment**
 - *not all personal or family issues/problems will recover at the same rate**
 - *not all members of the family will need the same amount of support**
 - *not all individuals/families will recover to the same degree**
- 

RULES FOR PERSONAL GROWTH

1. Learn to focus on you for the sake of your own integrity and personal development.
2. Don't put expectations on the addict.
3. Don't put expectations on you.
4. Stop taking your addict's reactions personally.
5. Stop trying to change your addict.
6. Forget about "*working on the relationship*" and start working on yourself!

Stages of Family Recovery

The family goes through similar stages as the alcoholic/addict in breaking through their own denial systems and grieving the losses, and pain of living in an alcoholic/addict system.

Working on myself.....

Examine family of origin in depth

Identify emotional triggers

Identify self defeating core beliefs and behaviors

Develop healthy boundaries

Connect to support system and share
(Alanon, CODA, therapy)

The purpose of looking at FOO issue's is to:

to come to terms with these past experiences and resolve them

- * learning to relate more effectively with their family of origin today**
- * to interrupt and change generational patterns**
- * to provide a more healthy marital and family system for your own children and grandchildren**
- * increase awareness, gain new perspectives on old patterns we tend to re-enact in adulthood**
- * reduce your family "baggage" to a "carry on"**

Alcoholic Family System (continued)



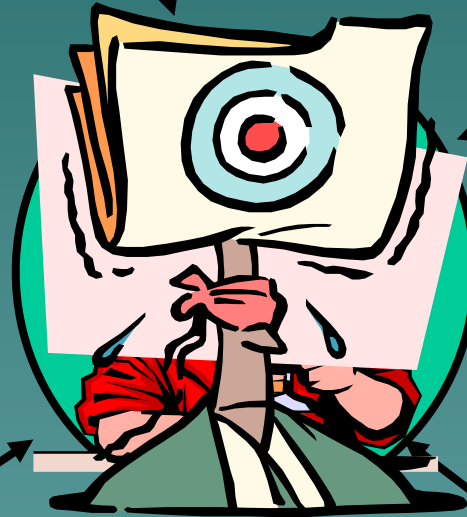
Pain/Abandonment



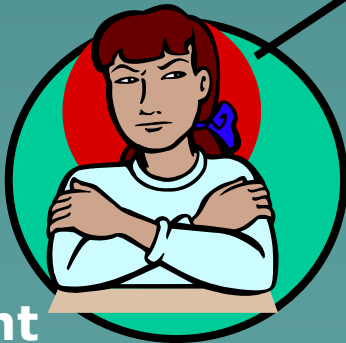
Anger /
Rage



Frustration



Co-Addiction..



Disappointment



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Movement of System in a Healthy Family



Values

Virtues

Rituals

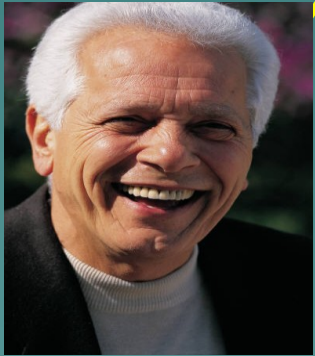
Humor

Intimacy

Communication

Respect

Boundaries



New Rules

Mistakes are essential to learning

Nobody can do it right ALL the time

You're not defective

You can develop skills, not defenses

You are not accountable to rules of
addiction or imbalanced family

Personhood is the most important thing
you have!

Naming a Shame Bind releases the power