



PART I

IT'S ABOUT THE FAMILY DYNAMIC

Seminar # 1

“The Family is a System” Seminar Handout

Family is a System Lessons

Study Guide & Workbook

1. What you will learn: *Study Guidebook, Seminar One*

- a. Define a Family
- b. Homeostasis, how does this theory define your family?
- c. Functionality, Potentiality in the family dynamic
- d. The Impact of Denial, Enabling, Codependency.

2. Practical Exercises: *Workbook, Seminar One*

- a. Apply the theory of Homeostasis to your family.
- b. Rank each family members Functionality and Potentiality.
- c. Identify the impact of Denial, Enabling, Codependency.

3. Family Plan of Action: *Workbook , Seminar One*

- a. Our family will identify the functionality and potentiality of each member prior to addressing a major issue that the family is presented. This will be done by using the worksheet: *ability to function surrounding an issue*.
- b. The family will identify how Denial, Enabling and Codependency might be a part of our family system. If found, we will create an agreement on how it will be addressed.
- c. The family will review our understanding of Homeostasis and write ways it can impact our family, in order to lessen the impact to our family dynamic.

What defines a family

What is a family? There is no single definition of family. Because cultures and beliefs change over time, definitions of family also change. To follow is a list of today's definitions:

Traditional Families, including heterosexual couples (two parents and minor children all living under the same roof), single parents, and families including blood relatives, adoptive families, foster relationships, grandparents raising grandchildren, and stepfamilies. Extended families, which include grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and other relatives.

Elected Families, which are self-identified and are joined by choice and not by the usual ties:

- blood,
- marriage,
- and law.

For many people, the elected family is more important than the biological family. Examples would include:

- Emancipated youth who choose to live among peers
- Godparents and other nonbiologically related people who have an emotional tie (i.e., fictive kin)
- Gay and lesbian couples or groups (and minor children all living under the same roof) The idea of family implies an enduring involvement on an emotional level.

Family members may disperse around the world, but still be connected emotionally and able to contribute to the dynamics of their family's functioning.

For practical purposes a family can, be defined according to the individual's closest emotional connections. In family therapy, clients identify who they think should be included in therapy. A counselor or therapist cannot determine which individuals make up another person's family. When commencing therapy, the counselor or therapist should ask the client, "Who is important to you? What do you consider your family to be?"

It is critical to identify people who are important in the person's life. Anyone who is instrumental in providing support, maintaining the household, providing financial resources, and with whom there is a strong and enduring emotional bond may be considered family for the purposes of therapy (*see, for example, Pequegnat et al. 2001*).

The family of one's workplace may be an example. As treatment progresses, the idea of family sometimes may be reconfigured, and the notion may change again during continuing care.

Brooks and Rice (1997, p. 57) adopt Sargent's (1983) definition of family as a "group of people with common ties of affection and responsibility who live in proximity to one another."

They expand that definition, though, by pointing out four characteristics of families central to family therapy:

1. Families possess non-summativity, which means that the family is greater than—and different from—the sum of its individual members.
2. The behavior of individual members is interrelated through the process of circular causality, which holds that if one family member changes his or her behavior, the others will also change as a consequence, which in turn causes subsequent changes in the member who changed initially. This also demonstrates that it is impossible to know what comes first: substance abuse or behavior types that are called "enabling."
3. Each family has a pattern of communication traits, which can be verbal or nonverbal, overt or subtle means of expressing emotion, conflict, affection, etc.
4. Families strive to achieve homeostasis, which portrays family systems as self-regulating with a primary need to maintain balance.

Homeostasis Theory

Homeostasis Theory is the family's natural way of seeking balance. The family understands (knowingly or not) their goal is to help each other in life and to keep the family as a system "in-balance". When family members' behavior becomes disruptive to the family unit, it causes imbalance in their roles, relationships and communication.

As the family responds to this undesired behavior, it compensates by adjusting. The greater the behavior, the greater the required adjustments.

An example of this type family dynamic would be taking a family of four, two parents two children. Suddenly one child starts to present substance use behavior.

This draws the attention from both parents to that one child, absorbing their time and resources. The second child is left on their own while years of attention, stress and worrying become the norm. From a development standpoint, the second child has been emotionally and in many ways physical abandon. The family system is out of its order and it will likely take therapy sessions to bring the family members back into alignment.

In family therapy, the unit of treatment is the family, and/or the individual within the context of the family system. The person abusing substances is regarded as a subsystem within the family unit—the person whose symptoms have severe repercussions throughout the family system.

The therapist facilitates discussions and problem-solving sessions, often with the entire family group or subsets thereof, but sometimes with a single participant, who may or may not be the person with the substance use disorder.

Functionality and Potentiality in the Family Dynamic

There is a theory worthy of consideration, functionality. This means to what level is a family member prepared to deal with the impact of what has been delivered.

It starts as each family member has their own issues, but because there are many family members each (independently) needs to determine how they will respond to a single issue. The family system consolidates these responses to achieve some combined outcome.

Example: each member has their own way of addressing their loved one's incarceration, but the family system allows their combined responses to achieve some single outcome, i.e. "we will all help him navigate the legal system". Even though they come at it from different perspectives, the result is a single combined outcome. They all showed up at the drug court hearings in his support. This can present in the negative, also. The question is how well the family is **EQUIPED** to work together in a **FUNCTIONAL** manner? For many families they are not equipped functionally, although they seem to care about each other, and the family system starts to break apart.

Q: Does your family have the ability and skills to respond effectively? The other theory is potentiality, whereby one issue impacts the family members and they all respond differently because they all have a different capacity to respond, thus creating several possible outcomes. In this case, the legal system is intervening in their loved one's life and each family member chooses their own way to respond, creating many outcomes. i.e. one member chooses to ignore it, even though they had the potential to help. Another member shows up to drug court in support of him, a third member criticizes him and provides negative input. It's the same issue, with different outcomes. This can present in the positive, also. The question is how well the family is **EQUIPED** to use their **POTENTIALITY** in support of the family unit? Do they have the capacity of skills and ability, if yes, *are they willing* to use them?

There is no right or wrong. However, the family needs to focus on how to navigate the journey, not why each obstacle (issue) that comes up must be addressed.

Therefore, the focus for the family is on "What has to be done, and How". Not why this issue has happened. When rafting down a stream, we don't ask why the rocks are there, we just determine what needs to be done to navigate around them and how to paddle and steer our effort to move forward.

The Impact of Denial, Enabling, Codependency

Nearly every person in contact with an addict is impacted in some way. It's rare that the effects of an addiction are limited solely to the one who is abusing substances. Frequently, the people who spend the most time around the addict are friends, family, and co-workers – therefore, these are the people who are likely to be most impacted by drug addiction or alcoholism.

Family members, especially non-addicted spouses, are forced to pick up the slack for the substance abuser, make excuses for his or her behavior, and potentially endure sexual, physical and emotional abuse. In many cases, extended family members and close friends must help financially and in other ways to account for the ignored responsibilities by the substance abuser.

The children suffer in school and are more likely to be involved with drugs and alcohol as adults. Coworkers are not always as close to the addict, but they may also be affected by having to increase their workloads to make up for diminished job performance. Nearly every person in contact with an addict is impacted in some way.

The impact of Denial, Enabling, Codependency

When a family member is suffering from a substance use disorder, it can affect the entire family in countless ways. One of the most common is through a dynamic where family members are divided on the reality of the addict in their family. In other words, those that see the addiction for what it is and *those that refuse to see that reality*.

1. **Denial**, is a common defense for family members that do not want to face the reality of the addiction that is overwhelming their loved one. It is also common to find that other family members clearly see the problem of substance abuse, its costs, and there is a need for stronger intervention.

The reality is that one or more family members understand that helping this family member will require some difficult emotional decisions. They understand how hard it is to do what is right. It is rarely an easy thing move towards.

These aware family members often see things as they are rather than how they were or would like them to be. Their decisions are based on what will help heal this family member and consequently, the family. This comes with an understanding that even beyond recovery; things will be forever changed from the time before their diagnosis.

The “aware” family members may be the families only way towards seeing this as a family dilemma. The fact that change is required is one of the greatest sticking points for the family to address.

The other family members who are in denial are overwhelmed by emotions when they see the perceived magnitude and sense of helplessness that this reality of poses. They long to see things as they were before this took hold and will avoid seeing the signs in the early stages as well as make excuses for the extreme behaviors that come from later stage addiction. It’s only going to get worse, until something changes for the addicted family member.

A family member who is in denial can take many forms including enabling and justifying. Both behaviors come in many forms, will further harm this person as well as the family that is divided on what is their new reality.

2. **Enabling**, is when the family members *enable their loved one towards negative behavior*. This can take many forms. For example, it’s a good thing to help a family member in need under most circumstances, but doing so in certain circumstances where an addict is involved can make matters worse

This enabling can be as simple as covering for them when they miss work to providing financial support when they are involved in a DUI. In any situation where family members take care of the problems created by their behavior, an enabling dynamic is present.

A family member’s justification is often a “*denial tactic*” that comes to the forefront when the family member that sees things from a clearer perspective “**seeks to question the unwise intervention of the family member in denial**”. The family member in denial will make excuses for the behavior of this family member such as their being under a great deal of stress or going through a difficult stage of life. The reality is that we all have these periods in our life, and they are only exacerbated by their behaviors.

3. **Codependence** can also be at the heart of the behavior of a family member in denial regarding their treatment of this family member. Although this is a complex dynamic the family member becomes reliant on this person's substance abuse. A simple explanation is that a family member comes to believe that they must support this family member even though their behavior is incredibly destructive.

The addicted family member uses their powers of persuasion to manipulate the emotions of each family member in denial by convincing them that they are “sick” and will perish without their help.

The codependent family member believes them and their fear that this family member will be harmed in some way guides the family members actions.

The codependent family member then becomes an accomplice in the addict's behavior and will lend them money or support them in their behaviors. As the cycle repeats itself, the codependent family member begins to derive satisfaction from “helping” the family member, which leads to even more destructive behavior.

All these dynamics of taking sides can manifest between parents when a child is substance abuser, and between adult brothers and sisters where another adult sibling is the substance abuser.

This last scenario can pit the husband or wife of the person against their adult siblings from either side of the family. The only way to ultimately get the substance abuser family member the help that they need is to have both sides see the reality of the addiction so that they can form a united front.

REPEAT: Both sides of the family (those in denial and enabling with those who are not) need to get on the same page, if they want to form a united front to address substance abuse in their family system.

When these scenarios manifest themselves, it is unlikely that the divided family members in question can resolve the issue of how to help on their own. The help of a “*drug and alcohol counselor*” or *family therapist* can often provide the guidance to the aware family member as to how to cope with the family member in denial and stay the course.

The emotional wellness of the family living with a substance abuser is deep and takes time to reach the bottom in order to sort out the reality. The goal is to go through this journey without wasting time in arguments. The divided family must come to see a common reality sooner rather than later in order to provide the necessary support for the addict. This is the surest path to getting them into recovery and getting the whole family on the road to healing.

REF: SAMHSA TIP # 39



PART I

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Seminar # 1

“The Family is a System”

The Seminar Goals:

1. The attendee will be able to name the four (4) domain parts in the family system and the presence of Homeostasis.
2. The attendee will be able to identify how the degree of functionality and potentiality of each family member will impact the outcome of dealing with a family issue.
3. The family will identify any indicators of Denial, Enabling or Codependency.

Introduction

A family is a system, and in any system each part is related to all the other parts. Consequently, a change in any part of the system will bring about changes in all the other parts. (Brodrick, 1993; Klein & White, 1996)

It is important to note, the definition of what composes a family is much looser than what was assumed in the past. The household parent role might be a grandparent, aunt or neighbor.

Change is the new norm in the Family

When substance use disorder is introduced to the family system the one with the disorder becomes a subunit to the family system. The other parts adjust with constant adaptations in order to accommodate the new behavior. This is disruptive to the overall family system.

Because the goal of a family (realized or not) is to help each other, the family will seek to aid the one that has the disorder. These efforts take away from other parts of the functioning family system and create an in-balance. (Day et al, 2001)

Because the family system exists around the idea of well-being, overall the family goal is to help each other to "do better". The idea of subsystems is important in order to separate the needs of the family from the one experiencing substance use disorder. (Minuchin, 1981)

Therefore, within the family system is an ongoing stream of transitions requiring change and adjustments from each member of the family. (Klein & White, 1996, p. 128)

The four dominate parts of the family system

There are four primary domains to consider when looking at a family as a family system:

1. **The Child** – Is there an intrapersonal and relation development with the child.
2. **The Parent** – Are the parents individually functioning and can provide parenting.
3. **The Family Environment** - How well does the family transacts within itself, between family members.
4. **The Family External System** - How much is the family is influenced from outside the family system, i.e. Schools, work, faith organizations, legal issues.

These four need to be considered as you take this seminar training. Each domain needs to function at its best, using its potential and being committed toward contributing to the outcomes of how the family responds to issues that are presented in their journey with addiction. Even though we seek balance in the family system, what one family member is willing to contribute or give up, may be completely different from the other family member.

Homeostasis Theory

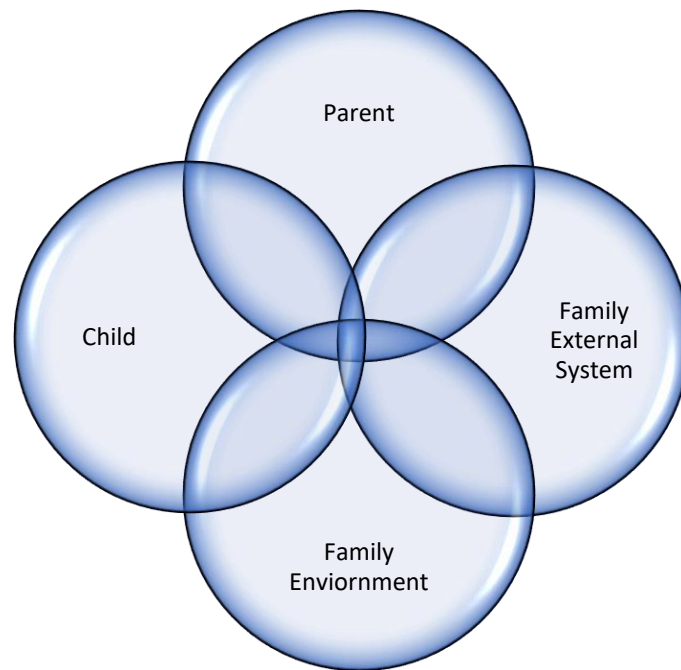
Homeostasis Theory is the family's natural way of seeking balance. The family understands (knowingly or not) their goal is to help each other in life and to keep the family as a system "in-balance". When family members' behavior becomes disruptive to the family unit, it causes imbalance in their roles, relationships and communication.

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KEEPING IT IN BALANCE



Where the four overlap,
is where the family system becomes one.

Your Family System?

Take a moment to identify the members of your family, as it is currently:

Name: _____ Relation: _____

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Homeostasis applied to your family.

Have you noticed any new behavior patterns in the members of your family, now that substance use has been identified?

1. What Have You Noticed?
2. What is the impact to the family system?

Functionality and Potentiality in the family dynamic

There is a theory worthy of consideration, functionality. This means to what level is a family prepared to deal with the impact of what has been delivered. It starts as each family member has their own issues, but because there are many family members each (independently) needs to determine how it will respond to a single issue. The family system consolidates these responses to achieve some combined outcome. Example: each member has their own way of addressing their loved one's incarceration, but the family system allows their combined responses to achieve some single outcome, i.e. "we will all help him navigate the legal system". Even though they come at it from different perspectives, the result is a single combined outcome. They all showed up at drug court hearings in his support. This can present in the negative, also. The question is how well the family is EQUIPED to work together in a **FUNCTIONAL** manner? For many families they are not equipped functionally, although they seem to care about each other, and the family system starts to break apart.

Q: Does your family have the ability and skills to respond effectively?

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Therefore, the focus for the family is on "What has to be done, and How". Not why this issue has happened. When rafting down a stream, we don't ask why the rocks are there, we just determine what needs to be done to navigate around them and how to paddle and steer our effort to move forward.

Practical Exercise # One:

Instruction: Take an issue, then apply it to your current family dynamic. Describe in your own words how well your family is likely to work as a system in addressing this issue: Consider Homeostasis (helping each other to keep the family balanced). Also consider, the families members functionality and potentiality. Using a numeric score rate their level of functionality and potentiality in the relationships between mother, father, sister brother, etc. This does not include the substance use disorder family member(s).

SCORING KEY: (Good 5pts, Fair 3pts, Poor 1pt.)

Choose an issue facing the family: (describe the issue “Enabling”)

QUESTIONS:

The Families Ability to Respond to this issue as an example: “Enabling”:
(complete and score each question)

1. Are the mother and father able to address this issue?

Functionality (do they know what to do, as individuals and together as parents, regarding “Enabling”)

Potentiality (are they willing to do it)

How well do you feel this is currently working? Good____ Fair ____ Poor ____

2. Parents to the other siblings?

Functionality (do they know what to do with the “other siblings”, as individuals and together as parents, regarding “Enabling”)

Potentiality (are they willing to do it, regarding “Enabling”)

How well do you feel this is currently working? Good____ Fair ____ Poor ____

3. Parents and Siblings to the person with Substance Use Disorder?

Functionality (do they know what to do, as individuals and together as a family, regarding “Enabling”)

Potentiality (are they willing to do it)

How well do you feel this is currently working? Good____ Fair ____ Poor ____

4. Parents and Siblings to those outside the family?

Functionality (do they know what to do, as individuals and together as a family, regarding “Enabling”)

Potentiality (are they willing to do it)

How well do you feel this is currently working? Good____ Fair ____ Poor _

OVERALL SCORE: (take this worksheet to a family counselor for discussion)

Good 35pts – 22pts

Fair 21pts – 8pts

Poor 7pts – 0pts

Video One:



Instructions: Go To www.youtube.com

In the search field type this title: Family Matters: Bowen Systems Thinking & Addictions

Or copy/type in this link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8HQ1ZL7xOo&list=PLK9_yWbpBidoFLIz1znyWKebChhCVJktl&index=12&t=777s

Duration: 28:07min Published on Mar 17, 2014

Dr. Anne McKnight, Director of the Bowen Center for the Study of the Family here in Washington, D.C.

Practical Exercise # Two

VIDEO WORKSHEET “Family Matters: Bowen Systems Thinking & Addictions”

In your world situation

1. Why was coming to terms important to the family members?
2. How is addiction more dangerous for the family members than the addict? Is this true for your family?
3. In what way did the family members self-behavior change as the addict's disease progressed?
4. How did the family respond, in what ways was that harmful to the family?
5. How does allowing vulnerability help to fix the way a family faces addiction?

Video Two: (Optional)



Instructions: Go To www.youtube.com

In the search field type this title: Exposing the Family Effect of Addiction | Sam Fowler | TEDxFurmanU

Or copy/type in this link: <https://youtu.be/1qI-Qn7xass>

Duration: 15:17 min Starting Instruction: Hit (skip ad) to start video.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE # THREE

VIDEO WORKSHEET “Exposing the family effect of addiction”

In what way is getting educated on the brain disease of addiction helpful to the family system?

What can your family do to beat back the stigma of addiction?

Is denial a healthy response, if no state why?

In what can you relate to the speaker’s life?

How can you live a life of vulnerability?

The Impact of Denial, Enabling, Codependency

Nearly every person in contact with an addict is impacted in some way. It's rare that the effects of an addiction are limited solely to the one who is abusing substances. Everyone around him or her is affected in some way. Frequently, the people who spend the most time around the addict are friends, family, and co-workers – therefore, these are the people who are likely to be most impacted by drug addiction or alcoholism.

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Practical Exercise # Three:

1. How would you describe Homeostasis in your family dynamic? (study Guidebook)
2. Why is knowing the functionality and potentiality of family members, valuable? (Workbook)
3. In what way is denial a part of your family system? (Study Guidebook)
4. In what way can an issue impacting the family come from both internal and external sources? (Workbook)
5. How do you identify your family system? Who is included?

SEMINAR # 1 "FAMILY IS A SYSTEM": FAMILY PLAN OF ACTION

Complete answers and move these to "Master Family Plan of Action" found It's Time to Get Organized Workbook.

1. Our family will identify the theory of Homeostasis in our family dynamic. *How does it present in the family?*
2. Our Family will need to first understand each member functionality and potentiality and agree that it is accurate then gather the resources which will empower each family member in dealing with their response to the issue. This will be done by using the *Self-Assessment of Family System Worksheet, Functionality and Potentiality found in Practical Exercise # One,*
3. We know as a family no one escapes addressing the obstacles in this journey. When issues present in this journey the obstacles will be even more prevalent. For this reason, the family chooses to address them now, so later they are not a contributor to the impact or a family issue. This will be done by using *The Obstacles Denial, Enable, Codependency will be included to the Master Plan of Action, from the study guidebook.*