

Analysis of family dynamics for therapy: case study



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When a family comes in for therapy, the therapist needs to take into consideration different circumstances a family may have that is different from their own cultural background; whether it is race, religion, family structure, socioeconomic status, or core values. I chose *Seven Heaven* show which was an 11 year series about a family who the father is a well-known respected pastor of the town community church, whom lives on a basic salary from what he makes from the church, mom doesn't work outside the home however everything inside the home to make her husband and children happy does. As the therapist of the Camden family, I will discuss how I will integrate multicultural consideration in working with this family, then conceptualize the family's strengths, weaknesses, structure, and dynamics. Finally the therapist will discuss how she will intervene in helping this family.

Erik and Annie Camden and their seven children came in for family therapy because Erik recently had a heart attack and the doctor said he need to lessen the stress in his life. He is the Minister of the local church and will sacrifice his family for the needs of the church. His wife Annie is overwhelmed with trying to raise seven perfect minister children. She is jealous with her husband spending so much time with women in the church and many times not come home for dinner. When talking to the parents and children these are the main concerns about each of the children: Matt is 20 just started college and moved back home because he felt his family needed him after his dad's heart attack. Mary 18 is on probation after vandalizing her school after being mad at her bb coach for terminating basketball due to girls on the team grades. Lucy 16. 5 is a well-adjusted young women than

tries to keep her others siblings out of trouble. Simon 15-Sassy towards his parents, sneaks out to see girls and lies to cover up the truth. Ruthie 12-stick her nose in everyone's business, lies to stay out of trouble,. Sam and David are busy five year old twins.

Conceptualize of family dynamics

One of the first things that need to be done is to conceptualize their family's strengths, weaknesses, structure, and dynamics in order to bring the family back into balance. Erik parents were very strict and Annie parents were very lenient; however, Erik and Annie were firm but loving in their discipline with the children. They always came up with a punishment together and they never went behind one another's back nor withheld anything from each other concerning their children

Erik and Annie take their parenteral roles seriously where they don't take time for themselves to the point Annie was close to a breakdown and Erik had a heart attack. Likewise Erik took his job as a pastor seriously to the point Annie was jealous and felt neglected because he spent more time helping members of their church day or night even when Annie needed his help with one or more of the children.

One of the issues is the Camden's children stick up for each other for, when someone does something wrong one or more of their siblings will cover for them. For example, Mary got into financial debt and Luck, Matt, and Simon came up with braking into Sam and David's penny bank so that Mary will have money to pay her debts. Although it was thoughtful, it enabled Mary to be irresponsible where she continued down the road of destruction by

lowering her payments so that she can have left over money to use for alcohol.

Another issue the Camden's lack were boundaries, first is Eric and Anne had a good personal intimacy relationship; however, they would not lock their door and the children would come into their parents room without knocking and at least once each of the children have walked in on their parents. The kids would invade each other's boundaries by getting into each other personal space by either assuming their sibling was doing something wrong and preventing them from making a mistake that might not even been the case. For example, Simon went to a party, he lied where he was going, and Matt figured it out thinking alcohol was being served and went and broke him out of the party where alcohol was not served. Matt is the first born This structure is not always healthy because first born tend to seek power as a way to insure their place in the family (Nichols 2013). Matt tries to rescue his other siblings making sure they are taken care of to the point he is overinvolved emotionally so that he does not have to face his own needs, thus causing him focus on his siblings not himself (Nichols, 2013).

When children get into fights their mom is right there to settle it, Nichols (2013) mentions that this causes children not to feel treated equally the same because they are deprived of settling their disagreements, thus learns to depends on others to settle their differences. Some of the Camden's are well adjusted and show strong differential of self where they don't respond to emotional stress and act appropriately during times of anxiety (Nichols, 2013). For example, Lucy, she is emotional stable, she is able to make her own decisions and communicate her feelings. She can stand on her own;

however, she is able to ask for advice when she is stuck. Unlike Mary, her older sister, Mary will react to peer pressure, she will respond with defiance when things in her life are unfair such as, vandalize the gym because she got kicked off the basketball team.

Treatment

After talking with the whole family the focus of therapy the Camden's clearly mentioned were boundaries within the family dynamic, Mary's behavior problems, not necessarily dad's heart attack and spending too much time doing church work and mom's jealousy over it. Utilizing structured therapy in helping the Camden's family clearly needs to set appropriate boundaries in many different areas of their family: children/children, parents/children, home/church, and romantic relationship between the parents. Structured therapy is used to direct in changing the old patterns so that the family can then solve their problems (Nichols 2013).

First of all Eric and Anne will form a tighter partnership (Nicholas, 2013) as they form boundaries between Eric's church responsibilities and the relationship between them and their children. They will set clear boundaries of rules Eric will follow with his church work such as he will work only 40 hours a week and limit his time alone with female members of his congregation, and he will be home each night in time for dinner even if he has to go back to finish a job later in the night. Anne will respect Eric judgment when it comes to working with female members of their church.

Boundaries within the family would that Eric and Anne will have a lock on their bedroom door and teach the children to not come in their room when it

is closed and only knock on the door when it is an emergency. This way the children do not assume they are only in their room having sexual relationships but talking or watching a movie together.

Using experiential therapy would be not to solve the Camden's problems within the family but for each family member to express themselves to uncover their true emotions (Nicholas, 2013). This will work well with Camden family because there are many unspoken emotions. The parents and children alike will enable the family member thus preventing consequence to happen. For example, mom will solve children conflicts thus alienating further arguments however, it prevents them from leaving to solve their conflicts within the family. Another example, is Mary's siblings gave her money to prevent further debt instead of helping her learn money management skills.

Experiential therapy will be used to allow family member to be themselves, they do not need to put on a show but to share experiences in a functional way which will lead to a more honest interaction between family members (Nicholas, 2013). I think doing the puppets with the Camden's family will be the best experiential technique to use. It will help highlight conflicts the Camden's have with each other in a safe environment to express anger they might have with each other (Nicholas, 2013). I also feel using Experiential would also help Mary act out her feeling she has about her basketball coach in a positive way. This will help her see the direct consequence her behavior caused and hopefully come to her own conclusion how she could of handled it without family members or therapist telling her, therefore lessen her defiance towards her parents.

A counselor religious or not will take into consideration the religious background of their clients. Being a multicultural competent counselor I would need to explore how religion and spirituality should be integrated into counseling. For example, being LDS and the Camden's of a protent faith, I would need to make sure that my values are not forced onto the Camden's (Balkin, Schlosser, & Levitt, 2009). Since the Camden's are quite religious, Eric, being the minister, I would need to make sure that I am not downplaying his believes such as they shouldn't drink which drinking according to his faith is not wrong nor think he should be less on his children do to my believes.

Working with a religious family as the Camden's, the counselor would need to integrate that in therapy with the family. Structured therapy would help a family who struggle with setting clear boundaries. Using experiential therapy will work with a family that needs to work on expressing their unspoken emotions. I believe integrating these two therapy approaches will bring the Camden's family back into balance as they work on problems they identified as issues.

References

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