

Strategic and structural family therapy

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Jonathan had been suspended from work due to increasing difficulties arising from his personal life. He had been experiencing feelings of loneliness, failure and worthlessness due to isolation from his estranged wife and daughter. His depression drove him to indulge in alcohol abuse, getting angry outburst and often arguing with his co-workers. He also involved himself with unsatisfying extra-marital affairs with women. These problems prompted the organization he was working for to seek counseling and therapeutic sessions for him.

Two family therapists were called upon who upon the onset of the sessions diagnosed Jonathan with a late onset dysthymic disorder as well as that of alcohol abuse.

A structural family therapist would work better for Jonathan's family since the therapist would be personally involved in the family matter and would not be nonpartisan. Instead they become family members by extension. Capuzzi, D & Gross, R, D, (2003) hold that though the strategic family therapist does not become 'part of the family', he would fit there-in in the sense that he would attend to the nature of the problem described by the members of the family experiencing it. In this case the problem he would need to attend to would be alcohol abuse.

A structural family therapist would be involved in the family issues like finding out the source of the broken extended family ties as well as those of the nuclear family ties. Throughout the week he would be trying to facilitate change and making sure that things are happening with an aim of bringing about a positive change so that feelings of loneliness and attributes of being edgy towards his co-workers are addressed. (Piercy, P. F., et al. (1996). A

strategic family therapist would only make assumptions with regard to how the family is responding in attempting to resolve the problem cycle hence it would only be suitable for Jonathan and his issues if combined with structural therapy for the root cause of the problems to be worked on.

A structural family therapist would put more emphasis on his work action hence taking risks within his execution of duties during a therapeutic period until it brings about a positive change. A strategic family therapist would work at building feelings of worth and communication among the affected members while decreasing pain using a closed system which is rigid and only deals with the behavioral change. (Piercy, P. F., et al. (1996))

A structural family therapist would try to stimulate family reactions in order to get more information about the structure of the extended and nuclear families taking into account their rules and systems. He would alternate between participation and observation as a way of unbalancing the system by supporting one family member against another (Minuchin Salvador. (1977)). In this he would also try to observe the different types of responses from the family members as they interact with each other. While a strategic family therapist would deal with the relational problem in an intensive way by organizing the family members in a certain pattern in order to protect the family from the threat of collapse (Capuzzi, D & Gross, R, D, .. (2003)). The strategic therapist is asking Jonathan to draw the conflict between his role as a member of the family, specifically a father, and the alcohol abuse. This works successfully because he eventually gets out of his addiction.

A structural family therapist would join in with the family and become part and parcel of them without having to convince the family that the
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assumption guiding him is valid (Minuchin Salvador, 1977). While a strategic family therapist would try to create new understanding among the members using dynamics and have the members express and apply their new understanding with each other while using their new behavioral changes outside therapy. Both forms of therapies are indispensable in the pursuit of correcting the maladaptive families like those surrounding Jonathan's Life.

References:

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