

Brief Strategic Family Therapy

The family is defined by an organizational structure that is characterized by degrees of cohesiveness, love, loyalty, and purpose as well as high levels of shared values, interests, activities, and attention to the needs of its members. Families may be considered a system, organized wholes or units made up of several interdependent and interacting parts. Each member has a significant influence on all other members. For positive change in an identified client, therefore, family members have to change the way they interact. Family therapists work with the present relationships rather than the past. They are interested in the balance families maintain between bipolar extremes that characterize dysfunctional families.

Strategic refers to the development of a specific strategy, planned in advance by the therapist, to resolve the presenting problem as quickly and efficiently as possible.

DESCRIPTION

Brief Strategic Family Therapy (BSFT) is a short-term, problem-focused therapeutic intervention, targeting children and adolescents 6 to 17 years old, that improves youth behaviour by eliminating or reducing drug use and its associated behaviour problems and that changes the family members' behaviours that are linked to both risk and protective factors related to substance abuse. The therapeutic process uses techniques of:

Joining—forming a therapeutic alliance with all family members

Diagnosis—identifying interactional patterns that allow or encourage problematic youth behaviour

Restructuring—the process of changing the family interactions that are directly related to problem behaviours

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

BSFT was developed at the Spanish Family Guidance Center in the Center for Family Studies, University of Miami. BSFT has been conducted at these centers since 1975. The Center for Family Studies is the Nation's oldest and most prominent center for development and testing of minority family therapy interventions for prevention and treatment of adolescent substance abuse and related behaviour problems. It is also the Nation's leading trainer of research-proven, family therapy for Hispanic/Latino families.

INDICATED

This program was developed for an indicated audience. It targets children with conduct problems, substance use, problematic family relations, and association with antisocial peers.

CONTENT FOCUS

ALCOHOL, ANTISOCIAL/AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR, ILLEGAL DRUGS, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE, TOBACCO

This program addresses family risk and protective factors to problem behaviour, including substance use among adolescents.

Parents as a primary target population:

The program involves family systems therapy, involving all family members. It seeks to change the way family members act toward each other so that they will promote each other's mastery over behaviours that are required for the family to achieve competence and to impede undesired behaviours.

INTERVENTIONS BY DOMAIN

INDIVIDUAL: Life and social skills training

FAMILY: Home visits, Parent education/family therapy, Parent education/parenting skills training

Task-oriented family education sessions combining social skills training to improve family interaction (e.g., communication skills)

PEER: Peer-resistance education