Experiential Family Therapies

Satir

Three primary approaches:
- The Satir Growth Model
  - Focus on communication
- Symbolic-Experiential
  - Focuses on symbolic meanings and emotional exchanges
- Emotionally-focused Couples Therapy
  - Leading evidence-based approach to couples therapy

Commonalities of Experiential Theories

- Targeting Emotional Transactions
  - Focus on the emotional layer of problematic interactions
- Warmth and Empathy
- Self of Therapist
- Individual and Family Focus
  - Therapist addresses both individual and family concerns as distinct sets of problems

The Satir Growth Model

Virginia Satir
- Began career in family therapy at the Mental Research Institute (MRI)
- Developed her own ideas broadly described as fusing humanistic values into a systemic approach
- Focus on individual growth and improving family interactions
Chapter 11
Mastering Competencies in Family Therapy

Significant Contributions to the Field

**Communication Stances:** effective means of conceptualizing communication as each stance recognizes or minimizes three realities: **self, other, context**
- **Congruent:** Acknowledge self, other, context
- **Placator:** Acknowledge other, context; not self
- **Blamer:** Acknowledge self, context; not other
- **Super-reasonable:** Acknowledge context, not self or other
- **Irrelevant:** Avoids acknowledging any

Overview of Therapy Process

Uses a six-stage model of change -
1. Status quo
2. Introduction of foreign element
3. Chaos
4. Integrating new possibilities
5. Practice
6. New status quo

The Therapeutic Relationship

- Humanistic and systemic foundations
- Therapeutic presence: Warmth and humanity
- Making connections
- Conveying hope
- Establishing credibility

Significant Contributions to the Field

- One of the first therapists to work with entire families
- Began private practice in 1951 and went on to MRI Palo Alto to continue research
- 1964 published first book *Conjoint Family Therapy* outlining key aspects of her model
- Left MRI to become director of Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California offering workshops
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Case Conceptualization/Assessment

Assessment of **Family Functioning** includes:
- Role of the symptom in the system
- Family dynamics
- Family roles
- Family life fact chronology
- Survival triad

Assessment of **Individual Functioning** includes:
- Communication Stances
- Self worth / self esteem
- Mind / body connection
- Congruence

Goal Setting

- **Relationally focused goals:**
  - Develop ways for all members to communicate congruently

- **Individually focused goals:**
  - Promote **self actualization** of all members
  - **Emphasis to individual level** is unique amongst systemically based therapists

Interventions

- Self of the therapist
- Facilitate emotional expression
- Communication enhancement: Coaching, role play, and enactment
- Sculpting or Spatial Metaphor
- Softening family rules
- Touch
Interventions

**Family Reconstruction**: Group intervention
- Form of group psychodrama allows clients to safely explore **unresolved issues**

**Parts Party**
- Client identifies group members to represent aspects of the self. Process is to have the client better able to **accept different aspects of the self**