

Family and Systemic Psychotherapy Research

Research has shown that systemic family and couple therapy is as effective—and in many cases more effective—than alternative interventions, often at a lower cost.

Systemic family therapy has been found to be effective for children's and adults' difficulties, both when individuals have acquired a mental health diagnosis and when there is more general or complex distress. It is effective across the lifecycle, spanning developmental stages from under fives to old age. Working therapeutically with individuals together with their families and/or significant others enables the use of individuals' relationships as a resource, and reduces stress and difficulties for all family members. Family therapy has also been found to be particularly effective during severe and complex disorders requiring extensive treatment. Systemic family therapy can sometimes include relational work with individuals, psychoeducational approaches and multiple family groups.

Reviews of research (see below) list the following circumstances in which family therapy has been proven to be effective for children, adolescents and the important people in their lives:

- ⤴ Problems in infancy; sleep, feeding and attachment
- ⤴ Child abuse and neglect
- ⤴ Child and adolescent conduct problems such as behavioural difficulties, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and delinquency
- ⤴ Emotional problems including anxiety, depression, grief, bipolar disorder, self harm and suicidality
- ⤴ Bodyrelated problems including enuresis, encopresis, recurrent abdominal pain, medically unexplained symptoms and poorly controlled asthma and diabetes
- ⤴ Drug abuse
- ⤴ Eating disorders including anorexia, bulimia and obesity
- ⤴ First episode psychosis

Reviews of research show effectiveness of family therapy for adults and families affected by:

- ⤴ Relationship difficulties and distress
- ⤴ Psychosexual problems
- ⤴ Intimate partner violence
- ⤴ Anxiety disorders
- ⤴ Mood disorders and depression
- ⤴ Alcohol and drug problems
- ⤴ Schizophrenia
- ⤴ Adjustment to chronic physical illness

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