

# **Overview of Family Systems**

# Psychology 470

Introduction to Chemical Additions Steven E. Meier, Ph.D.

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# Background

- Families have a major impact in substance abuse and treatment
- Are also a major protection against use and treatment as well.
- Each member plays a role
- Roles may be different in different cultures
- Family itself has a function in the communityWhat is considered a family differs in different
- what is considered a family differs in different cultures

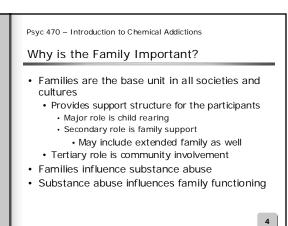
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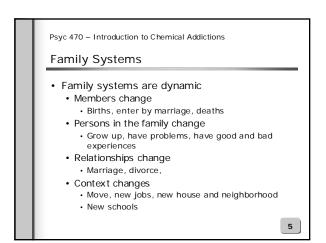
Psyc 470 – Introduction to Chemical Addictions Lots of Different Types of Families • Traditional family • Single parent household • Family having a step-parent • Child being raised by a grandparent • Same-sex couples • Interracial couples

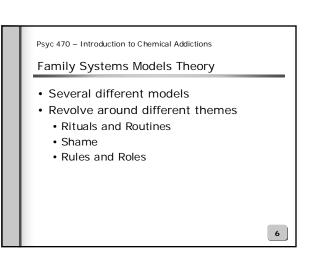
- Children being raised by foster parent
- Hillary's villages
- Other

3

1







### Overall

- Models view the family as a homeostatic system
- Family is seen as a unit, regardless of "cost" to individual members
- Individual's use serves as a stabilizing function

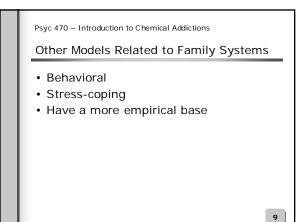
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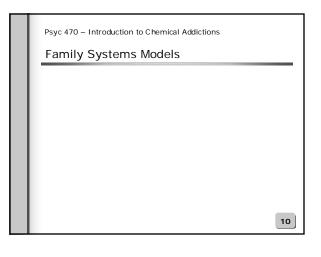
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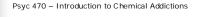
• System maintains the behavior to prevent change

Psyc 470 – Introduction to Chemical Addictions Change Causes Stress • System is balanced like a scale • Add problems it becomes of balance • Substance abuse • Family tries to rebalance • Isolates the abuser • Members take on more roles • Change can be positive or negative • Systems in general tend to resist change • Changes: positive, negative • Change requires adaptive energy, adjustment requires resources

Systems resist change (systems seek and preserve homeostasis, equilibrium, or balance)

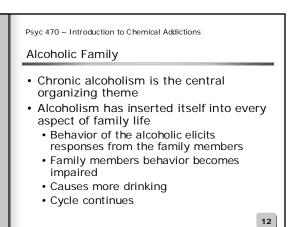






**Rituals and Routines Models** 

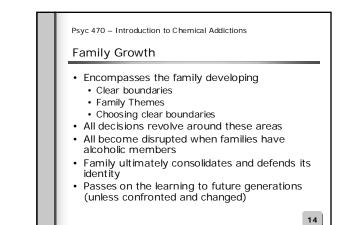
- Steinglass
- Contends there are two different types of alcoholic related families
  - Alcoholic Family
  - Family with an alcoholic member



# **Family Behaviors**

- Are homeostatic in nature
  - Are organized to return stability to the family
  - Causes continued drinking
  - The family system ultimately becomes organized to maintain the drinking
  - Normal rituals may be disrupted by the drinking
    - Meals, holidays, etc

13

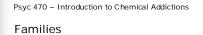


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# Shame Systems

- Normative Shame
  Is necessary for social functioning
- Shame-bound families
  Engage in pathological patterns of communication
  - Instills a sense of toxic shame in their offspring
  - Ultimately disrupts real relationships
  - Promotes secretes and changes boundaries
  - Causes disruption in the family
  - Causes problems in all aspects of their lives

15

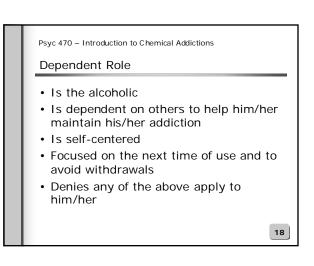


- Construct networks to hide alcoholism from
- each other and the community. • Alcoholism is also correlated with
- Emotional abuse
  - Sexual abuse
  - Physical abuse
- · Each problem is surrounded by secrecy
  - · Secrets inhibit the members
  - Stops changes in behavior
  - · Permits the behaviors to continue
- Parents can help children by explaining the alcoholic is responsible for the behavior, not the child

16

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Rules and Roles Models
Wegscheider - Cruise
Six typical family roles

Dependent (alcoholic)
Chief enabler (spouse, powerless spouse)
Hero (overachieving child)
Scapegoat (delinquent child)
Lost child (isolated child)
Mascot (immature child)



# Chief Enabler Role

- · Usually the spouse
- Tries to help the alcoholic
- Supports the alcoholics drinking
- Needs to pickup the roles of the alcoholic as well as maintain their own
- Is often seen as powerless in the family but often has a lot of power over the other family members

19

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#### Family Hero Role

- · Child that can do no wrong
- Has exceptional grades
- Wins all the events
- Etc.
- Is an overachiever in all aspects
- · Provides the hero aspects to the family

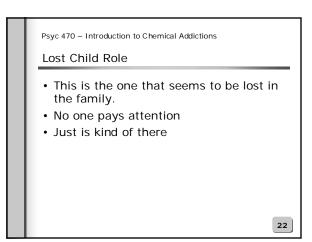
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# Family Scapegoat Role

- · Is the reason the alcoholic drinks
- Is the Black Sheep
- Is the person that always causes problems for the family
- Blame is always placed on this person for the family's problems
- Very difficult to change out of this role even with family counseling

21



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# Child Mascot Role

- Is the family clown
- Always makes everyone laugh
- Always getting attention by engaging in some behavior out of the ordinary
- Hard to change this role as well
  Gets lots of reinforcement

23

# Psyc 470 – Introduction to Chemical Addictions Other Aspects • Members may have one or more roles in the family • Roles may shift over time • May see some of the roles in normal families

• In alcoholic families, the roles are very rigid and more intense.

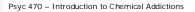
24

When User is Trying to Recover

- Person tries to regain original or traditional role or position in the family system
- Includes
  - · Decisions regarding sex and intimacy
  - Difficulties in parent-child relations (discipline, communication)
  - Developmental changes, family life cycle transitions, situation changes

25

27



Problem

- Members try to maintain their roles and positions
- Lack trust
  - You (the user) let us down before
- Power
  - I like the power I now have thank you
  - I have had to do to these tasks for a long time.
  - I need to keep doing them because you are going to use again

26

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# Problems With the Models

- Most theories are descriptive and lack scientific rigor (Steinglass)
- Imprecise, untestable, commonsense
  Gender bias (e.g., Goldner)
  - Boundary called a family does not take into account the other social forces in the community.
  - Families are not equal Females have less power than men in families and society
     Cannot ignore that fact.
- Are correlational in nature
- Often are developed after the fact.
- Have a lot of face validity

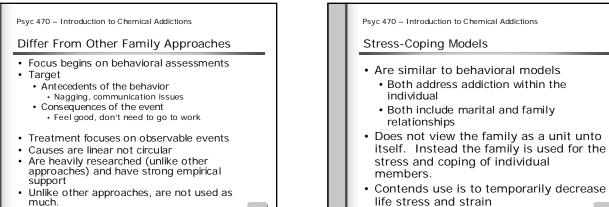
# Psyc 470 – Introduction to Chemical Addictions Defenders of Family Systems Models • Criticisms are irrelevant • Main value is not from scientific models • Is a different approach to conceptualizing clinical problems and interventions

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# **Behavioral Models**

- · Based on principles of behavioral theory
- Contends
- All behavior is learned and maintained through environmental or social consequences (reinforcement and punishment
- Insists on
  - Rigorous and data driven set of proceduresRegularly monitored scientific methodology
- Social Learning and Cognitive models
- Social Learning and Cognitive models
  - Have added that cognitive processes often mediate between the person and environment Social learning / modeling, expectancy, others
     29

# Psyc 470 - Introduction to Chemical Addictions Models Contend Families use reinforcement to maintain the drinking behavior Positive – give attention to when the person is drinking Negative – protects the individual from negative consequences for using Also use Punishment Inflict penalties for using substances Problem All three approaches causes an increase in using the substance.



31



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# Focuses on

- Stressful life circumstances
- Social resources
- Individual coping responses
- Can be useful to:
  - Identify the processes for relapse
  - Processes by which family members adapt to the user

33



#### Stress

- · May not cause the use
- Stress may be associated with consequences after use and ultimately maintains the use
- Use may actually reduce the stress
  - · Family stays away
  - Spouse does not bother you with things to do.
  - If you are out drinking, people are not yelling at you

Immediate vs. delayed consequences

You want to go "Where everybody knows your name"

34

32

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# Conclusions

- · Families have a role in the behavior
- May or may not cause the behavior
- May play a role in the maintenance of the behavior
  - How it does depends on the model
  - How reliable or valid the model is varies
- Has a role in the treatment process
  - May not be as important as other factors.

35