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Evolution of Family Therapeutic Mediation

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Family Theory and Dynamics

- Family systems
- Understanding the relationship dynamics within the family
- Human need for social connection
- Interdependence as opposed to independence
- Understanding the power relationships

Interface between individual and family life cycles

- Interrelated and support families through the developmental life cycle
- Adapt family structure and functions to evolving developmental changes
- Cultural differences based on family values related to independence and interdependence
- Impact of older family members living longer
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Social and Cultural Influences

- Significance of social and cultural contexts
- Variations in cultural norms and expectations
- Positive aspects associated with norms derived from these contexts
- Challenges/stressors that can emerge from these realities

Impact of Family History



- Significance of understanding the current immediate familial history
- Importance of intergenerational history
- Interlocking nature of these histories

Mediating Decline of Elder Family Members

- Different types and rates of change/decline
- Families required to mediate and adjust roles, functions and perceptions of the aging family members with each level of change/decline
- Every level of change/decline is challenging for families and may create a crisis situation for them
- Generational differences

Examples of issues that are presented for mediation/fam. therapy

- Caregiving issues between siblings and parent
- Distribution of asset issues
- Guardianship issues
- Housing and living arrangements
- Advance planning - health, property
- Financial management

Other Issues Presented for Elder Mediation

- Social life and activities
- Conflictual Relationships

The Mediation Framework



- What is mediation?
- Alternative conflict resolution-non-adversarial
- Relationship is the primary context

Mediation and Therapy

- Similarities between mediation and family therapy
 - definition of problem is the client's role with help of mediator
 - mediation and therapist distinguish between client's position and underlying interests
 - family is the client
 - empowerment of all parties

Six Suggested Steps Mediation Process

- 1. Introductions - present the ground rules
- 2: Each party presents his/her perception of the problem
- 3: Each party gives alternatives and suggestions for resolution of the conflict

Six Suggested Steps Mediation Process Cont'd

- 4. Each party consider the perspective of the other parties - Teach empathic considerations
- 5: Weigh the pros and cons of each option
- 6: All party members agree (hopefully) on a resolution.
- All participants should walk away feeling they reached a “win-win” conclusion

Reframing the Disparate Interests/ Positions

- Combining Therapeutic family techniques with mediation:
 - First identify interests of each generation
 - Determine function vs. dysfunction of the structure of the system (i.e. hierarchy)
 - Advocate for those who are not at the table or most valuable (dependent older adults?)

Interventions



- Determine the level of functioning of the family
- Encourage that disputes are settled cooperatively keeping best interests of the elders in mind
- Role of mediator/therapist may be educator, facilitator, advocate

Interventions Cont'd

- Understand relational dynamics-
grandparents marital dynamic
- Sibling relational dynamics
- Marriages among sibling dynamics
- Renormalizing the family: the new normal

Relation dynamics



- Emotions
- Myths and family secrets
- prejudice/bias
- Enmeshed or disengaged relationships
- Complicated and sometimes unnecessary role reversals
- Physical and emotional absence
- Physical and emotional abuse -Power and control

Barriers to Dispute Resolution

- Clashing perspectives don't get stated
- Losing sight of the problem or the party of interest (battle between siblings lose sight of elderly parents)
- Power and control issues imbedded in the relationships

The mediator's role of neutrality

- Can neutrality exist?
- Should neutrality exist?
- Is it justified in situation with unequal power?
- Power is imbedded in all relationships

The Final Phase- Reframing, Renaming and Resolving conflicts

- Reframing with the clients
- Restate the themes from the reframed perspective
 - care for older family members is a shared responsibility
 - family members have common interests
 - older adults retain capacity for executive decision making as long as possible
 - family boundaries: each subsystem has boundaries and must be respected as long as the bounded subsystems don't put others at risk

The Final Reframe Cont'd

- Separation between parenting roles/ obligations and adult child roles/ obligations
- Recognize the new normal
 - the family of childhood has “evolved”
 - the reality to change the persistence of childhood memories

Family Case Presentation

- Presenting problem
- Current family structure, functions, roles
- Historical/intergenerational aspects of family dynamics
- Intervention strategies
- History of nuclear family

Family Case Presentation Cont'd

- Variety of family therapy interventions implemented
- Face to face meetings including telephone conferences
- Sub-system sessions
- Family therapy approach to mediate impact of the decline of an elderly family member
- Family sessions with whole family and sub-systems



Ethics

- Self-determination
- Best interests
- Filial responsibility

References

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