

# FAMILY THERAPY

## CONCEPTS AND METHODS



*Twelfth Edition*

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## CONCEPTS AND METHODS

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*This book is dedicated to the memory  
of Salvador Minuchin.*



## FOREWORD

Sigmund Freud disliked the families of his patients. He complained that relatives often undermined treatment, seemingly preferring the patient remained sick. Following Freud's lead, his successors kept families at arm's length, although they might influence them indirectly through their work with one member. Eventually, however, some therapists came to suspect relatives might not just *prefer* the patient remain sick but actually were *making* the patient sick, and they saw a need for the whole family to be treated. Thus family therapy was born as an attempt to disrupt the web of relationships that entrapped individuals.

But once families and therapists met in person, their relationship changed. Now the family was no longer a distant observer with an obstructed view of the treatment but an active protagonist. Therapists were experiencing the family firsthand rather than through the distortion of one member's view. They learned, or were reminded, that a family is more than just a generator of pathology; it actually shapes its members' whole identities. Whereas working with individual patients inclines therapists to prioritize individuation, self-sufficiency, and personal realization, working with families nudges them toward appreciating belonging, interdependency, and mutual responsibility. It then becomes possible to look at the binds that connect family members as something that can be fine-tuned rather than just dismantled—the family may not be part of the problem but is certainly part of the solution.

The therapist's journey from avoiding families to valuing them has not always moved in one direction, and not everybody has been on board. Therapists' choices of approach are conditioned by the context within which they practice, and at different times that context has been more or less supportive of work with families. In the United States today, some of the contextual realities that discourage such work are the requirement of individual diagnoses for purposes of insurance reimbursement, the reimbursement

rates that favor individual treatments, and the ever wider availability of prescription drugs that promise to improve one family member's behavior without inconveniencing the others.

Other realities, however, are redirecting the attention of practitioners and policy makers toward the family. Some see a link between adolescent destructive or self-destructive behavior and the replacement of proximal, in-person connections with the virtual ones facilitated by modern technology or with a pill. Residential treatment, the expensive strategy of temporarily taking disturbed children away from their families, is falling out of favor with cost-conscious administrators who look for ways to keep those children at home. Along the same lines, the 2018 Family First Act bill aims to prevent children from entering foster care by redirecting funding streams to family support programs. Family therapy, originally designed to disrupt negative bonds, is now being applied to the nurturance of positive ones.

For current and future clinicians who contemplate entering the exciting world of working with families, Nichols and Davis's *Family Therapy: Concepts and Methods* provides the best road map. Wide in scope and substantial in content, meticulously researched and clearly written, the text outlines the core rationales and techniques of the foundational models and the ones that followed, illustrating them with abundant clinical vignettes that bring the theories to life. First published in the mid-1980s, each successive edition has been thoroughly revised and updated, keeping pace with the continuous evolution of the field. This version, the twelfth, captures the more recent developments in family therapy and in the sociocultural context where family therapists ply their trade.

Jorge Colapinto, LMFT  
Wynnewood, PA





# PREFACE

One thing that sometimes gets lost in academic discussions of family therapy is the feeling of accomplishment that comes from sitting down with an unhappy family and being able to help them. Beginning therapists are understandably anxious and not sure they'll know how to proceed. ("How do you get *all of them* to come in?") Veterans often speak in abstractions. They have opinions and discuss big issues—postmodernism, managed care, second-order cybernetics. While it's tempting to use this space to say Important Things, we prefer to be a little more personal. Treating troubled families has given us the greatest satisfaction imaginable, and we hope the same is or will be true for you.

## NEW TO THIS EDITION

In this twelfth edition of *Family Therapy: Concepts and Methods*, we've tried to describe the full scope of family therapy—its rich history, the classic schools, the latest developments—but with increasing emphasis on clinical practice. There are a lot of changes in this edition:

### Content Changes in the New Edition

- New case studies throughout
- Revised chapter on research in family therapy, including a discussion on common factors and recommendations for bridging the gap between research and practice (Chapter 15)
- Expanded section on establishing a fee-for-service private practice (Chapter 3)
- Expanded and updated section on technology, including a discussion of the effects of technology on family relationships and adolescent emotional development (Chapter 10)
- List of prominent training centers and recommended readings added to each theory chapter
- New section on immigration (Chapter 10)
- New section on community mental health (Chapter 3)
- Expanded discussion of Bowen theory (Chapter 4)
- New section on emotional affairs (Chapter 3)
- Expanded discussion of narrative externalizing questions (Chapter 13)
- Revised sequence and structure of several chapters to improve readability. The Fundamental Concepts of

Family Therapy has moved to Chapter 2 to provide a foundation for the Basic Techniques in Chapter 3. Chapter 10 in the previous edition has been split into two chapters (Chapters 10 and 11)

- Updated photos and references throughout

## ALSO AVAILABLE WITH MYLAB HELPING PROFESSIONS

This title is also available with MyLab Helping Professions, an online homework, tutorial, and assessment program designed to work with the text to engage students and improve results. Within its structured environment, students see key concepts demonstrated through video clips, practice what they learn, test their understanding, and receive feedback to guide their learning and ensure they master key learning outcomes.

- **Learning outcomes and standards measure student results.** MyLab Helping Professions organizes all assignments around essential learning outcomes and national standards.
- **Video- and Case-Based Exercises develop decision-making skills.** Video- and Case-Based Exercises introduce students to a broader range of clients, and therefore a broader range of presenting problems, than they will encounter in their own preprofessional clinical experiences. Students watch videos of actual client–therapist sessions or high-quality role-play scenarios featuring expert helpers. They are then guided in their analysis of the videos through a series of short-answer questions. These exercises help students develop the techniques and decision-making skills they need to be effective helpers before they are in a critical situation with a real client.
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- **Video Library offers a wealth of observation opportunities.** The Video Library provides more than 400 video clips of actual client–therapist sessions and high-quality role plays in a database

organized by topic and searchable by keyword. The Video Library includes every video clip from the MyLab Helping Professions courses, plus additional videos from Pearson’s extensive library of footage. Instructors can create additional assignments around the videos or use them for in-class activities. Students can expand their observation experiences to include other course areas and increase the amount of time they spend watching expert helpers in action.

- **Chapter Review Quizzes and Video Examples** give students additional opportunities for practice.

## INSTRUCTOR SUPPLEMENTS

An instructor’s manual, test bank, and PowerPoint slides are available to accompany this text. They can be downloaded at [www.pearsonhighered.com/educator](http://www.pearsonhighered.com/educator).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Albert Einstein once said, “If you want to learn about physics, pay attention to what physicists do, not what they say they do.” When you read about therapy, it can be hard to see past the jargon and political packaging to the essential ideas and practices. So in preparing this edition, we’ve traveled widely to visit and observe actual sessions of the leading practitioners. We’ve also invited several master therapists to share some of their best case studies with you. The result is a more pragmatic, clinical focus. We hope you like it.

So many people have contributed to our development as family therapists and to the writing of this text that it is impossible to thank them all. But we would like to single out a few. To the people who taught us family therapy—Lyman

Wynne, Murray Bowen, Salvador Minuchin, Fred Piercy, and Douglas Sprenkle—thank you. Some of the people who went out of their way to help us prepare this twelfth edition were Jay Lappin, Jill Freedman, Michele Weiner-Davis, Scott Woolley, Giorgio Nardone, Michael Kerr, Jill Scharff, Frank Dattilio, Norman Epstein, Douglas Snyder, and Jay Lebow. To paraphrase John, Paul, George, and Ringo, we get by with *a lot* of help from our friends—and we thank them one and all. We are especially grateful to Rebecca Fox-Gieg at Pearson for making a hard job easier.

We wish to thank the following reviewers, who provided suggestions for revising this twelfth edition: Cathleen Jordan, University of Texas, Arlington; Tamara Coder Mikinski, University of Kansas; and Joy-Del Snook, Lamar University.

Finally, we would like to thank our postgraduate instructors in family life: I (MPN) thank my wife, Melody, and my children, Sandy and Paul. In the brief span of 50 years, Melody has seen me grow from a shy young man, totally ignorant of how to be a husband and father, to a shy middle-aged man, still bewildered and still trying. My children never cease to amaze me. If in my wildest dreams I had imagined children to love and be proud of, I wouldn’t even have come close to children as fine as Sandy and Paul.

I (SDD) want to thank my wife, Elizabeth, for enduring my absent-mindedness as I get lost in yet another project. I couldn’t ask for a more supportive spouse. Thanks as well to my children, Andrew, Hannah, Rachel, and William. They all get a well-deserved laugh out of the fact that their dad is writing a book on healthy family functioning.

M.P.N.

S.D.D.

## THE STAGES OF THE FAMILY LIFE CYCLE

Family Life-Cycle Stage	Emotional Process of Transition: Key Principles	Second-Order Changes in Family Status Required to Proceed Developmentally
Leaving home: single young adults	Accepting emotional and financial responsibility for self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Differentiation of self in relation to family of origin</li> <li>b. Development of intimate peer relationships</li> <li>c. Establishment of self in respect to work and financial independence</li> </ul>
The joining of families through marriage: the new couple	Committing to the new system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Formation of marital system</li> <li>b. Realignment of relationships with extended families and friends to include spouse</li> </ul>
Families with young children	Accepting new members into the system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Adjusting marital system to make space for children</li> <li>b. Joining in childrearing, financial and household tasks</li> <li>c. Realignment of relationships with extended family to include parenting and grandparenting roles</li> </ul>
Families with adolescents	Increasing flexibility of family boundaries to permit children's independence and grandparents' frailties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Shifting of parent-child relationships to permit adolescent to move into and out of the system</li> <li>b. Refocus on midlife marital and career issues</li> <li>c. Beginning shift toward caring for older generation</li> </ul>
Launching children and moving on	Accepting a multitude of exits from and entries into the family system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Renegotiation of marital system as a dyad</li> <li>b. Development of adult-to-adult relationships</li> <li>c. Realignment of relationships to include in-laws and grandchildren</li> <li>d. Dealing with disabilities and death of parents (grandparents)</li> </ul>
Families in later life	Accepting the shifting generational roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Maintaining own and/or couple functioning and interests in face of physiological decline: exploration of new familial and social role options</li> <li>b. Support for more central role of middle generation</li> <li>c. Making room in the system for the wisdom and experience of older adults, supporting the older generation without overfunctioning for them</li> <li>d. Dealing with loss of spouse, siblings, and other peers and preparation for death</li> </ul>

# MAJOR EVENTS IN THE HISTORY OF FAMILY THERAPY

	Social and Political Context	Development of Family Therapy
1945	F.D.R. dies, Truman becomes president World War II ends in Europe (May 8) and the Pacific (August 14)	Bertalanffy presents general systems theory
1946	Juan Perón elected president of Argentina	Bowen at Menninger Clinic Whitaker at Emory Macy Conference Bateson at Harvard
1947	India partitioned into India and Pakistan	
1948	Truman reelected U.S. president State of Israel established	Whitaker begins conferences on schizophrenia
1949	Communist People's Republic of China established	Bowlby: "The Study and Reduction of Group Tensions in the Family"
1950	North Korea invades South Korea	Bateson begins work at Palo Alto V.A.
1951	Julius and Ethel Rosenberg sentenced to death for espionage Sen. Estes Kefauver leads Senate probe into organized crime	Ruesch & Bateson: <i>Communication: The Social Matrix of Society</i> Bowen initiates residential treatment of mothers and children Lidz at Yale
1952	Eisenhower elected U.S. president	Bateson receives Rockefeller grant to study communication in Palo Alto Wynne at NIMH
1953	Joseph Stalin dies Korean armistice signed	Whitaker & Malone: <i>The Roots of Psychotherapy</i>
1954	Supreme Court rules school segregation unconstitutional	Bateson project research on schizophrenic communication Bowen at NIMH
1955	Rosa Parks refuses to move to the back of the bus; Martin Luther King Jr. leads boycott in Montgomery, Alabama	Whitaker in private practice, Atlanta, Georgia Satir begins teaching family dynamics in Chicago
1956	Nasser elected president of Egypt Soviet troops crush anti-Communist rebellion in Hungary	Bateson, Jackson, Haley, & Weakland: "Toward a Theory of Schizophrenia" Bowen at Georgetown
1957	Russians launch <i>Sputnik I</i> Eisenhower sends troops to Little Rock, Arkansas, to protect school integration	Jackson: "The Question of Family Homeostasis" Ackerman opens the Family Mental Health Clinic of Jewish Family Services in New York Boszormenyi-Nagy opens Family Therapy Department at EPPI in Philadelphia
1958	European Common Market established	Ackerman: <i>The Psychodynamics of Family Life</i>
1959	Castro becomes premier of Cuba Charles de Gaulle becomes French president	MRI founded by Don Jackson
1960	Kennedy elected U.S. president	Family Institute founded by Nathan Ackerman (renamed the Ackerman Institute in 1971) Minuchin and colleagues begin doing family therapy at Wiltwyck
1961	Berlin Wall erected Bay of Pigs invasion	Bell: <i>Family Group Therapy</i> Family Process founded by Ackerman and Jackson

	Social and Political Context	Development of Family Therapy
1962	Cuban Missile Crisis	Bateson's Palo Alto project ends Haley at MRI
1963	Kennedy assassinated	Haley: <i>Strategies of Psychotherapy</i>
1964	Johnson elected U.S. president Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Martin Luther King Jr.	Satir: <i>Conjoint Family Therapy</i> Norbert Wiener dies (b. 1894)
1965	Passage of Medicare Malcolm X assassinated	Minuchin becomes director of Philadelphia Child Guidance Clinic Whitaker at University of Wisconsin
1966	Red Guards demonstrate in China Indira Gandhi becomes prime minister of India	Brief Therapy Center at MRI begun under directorship of Richard Fisch Ackerman: <i>Treating the Troubled Family</i>
1967	Six-Day War between Israel and Arab states Urban riots in Cleveland, Newark, and Detroit	Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson: <i>Pragmatics of Human Communication</i> Dicks: <i>Marital Tensions</i>
1968	Nixon elected U.S. president Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. assassinated	Don Jackson dies (b. 1920) Satir at Esalen
1969	Widespread demonstrations against war in Vietnam	Bandura: <i>Principles of Behavior Modification</i> Wolpe: <i>The Practice of Behavior Therapy</i>
1970	Student protests against Vietnam War result in killing of four students at Kent State	Masters & Johnson: <i>Human Sexual Inadequacy</i> Laing & Esterson: <i>Sanity, Madness and the Family</i>
1971	Twenty-Sixth Amendment grants right to vote to 18-year-olds	Nathan Ackerman dies (b. 1908)
1972	Nixon reelected U.S. president	Bateson: <i>Steps to an Ecology of Mind</i> Wynne at University of Rochester
1973	Supreme Court rules that states may not prohibit abortion Energy crisis created by oil shortages	Center for Family Learning founded by Phil Guerin Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark: <i>Invisible Loyalties</i>
1974	Nixon resigns Gerald Ford becomes thirty-ninth president	Minuchin: <i>Families and Family Therapy</i> Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch: <i>Change</i>
1975	Vietnam War ends	Mahler, Pine, & Bergman: <i>The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant</i> Stuart: "Behavioral Remedies for Marital Ills"
1976	Carter elected U.S. president	Haley: <i>Problem-Solving Therapy</i> Haley to Washington, DC
1977	President Carter pardons most Vietnam War draft evaders	Family Institute of Westchester founded by Betty Carter American Family Therapy Academy (AFTA) established
1978	Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel U.S. and People's Republic of China establish diplomatic relations	Hare-Mustin: "A Feminist Approach to Family Therapy" Selvini Palazzoli et al.: <i>Paradox and Counterparadox</i>
1979	England's Margaret Thatcher becomes West's first woman prime minister Iranian militants seize U.S. embassy in Tehran and hold hostages	Founding of Brief Therapy Center in Milwaukee Bateson: <i>Mind and Nature</i>
1980	Reagan elected U.S. president U.S. boycotts summer Olympic Games in Moscow	Haley: <i>Leaving Home</i> Milton Erickson dies (b. 1901) Gregory Bateson dies (b. 1904)

(continued)

**xiv** Major Events in the History of Family Therapy

	<b>Social and Political Context</b>	<b>Development of Family Therapy</b>
1981	Sandra Day O'Connor becomes first woman justice of Supreme Court Egyptian president Sadat assassinated	Hoffman: <i>The Foundations of Family Therapy</i> Madanes: <i>Strategic Family Therapy</i> Minuchin & Fishman: <i>Family Therapy Techniques</i>
1982	Equal Rights Amendment fails ratification Falklands war	Gilligan: <i>In a Different Voice</i> Fisch, Weakland, & Segal: <i>Tactics of Change</i> <i>The Family Therapy Networker</i> founded by Richard Simon
1983	United States invades Grenada Terrorist bombing of Marine headquarters in Beirut	Doherty & Baird: <i>Family Therapy and Family Medicine</i> Keeney: <i>Aesthetics of Change</i>
1984	Reagan reelected U.S. president U.S.S.R. boycotts Summer Olympic Games in Los Angeles	Watzlawick: <i>The Invented Reality</i> Madanes: <i>Behind the One-Way Mirror</i>
1985	Gorbachev becomes leader of U.S.S.R.	de Shazer: <i>Keys to Solution in Brief Therapy</i> Gergen: "The Social Constructionist Movement in Modern Psychology"
1986	Space shuttle <i>Challenger</i> explodes	Anderson et al.: <i>Schizophrenia and the Family</i> Selvini Palazzoli: "Towards a General Model of Psychotic Family Games"
1987	Congress investigates the Iran–Contra affair	Tom Andersen: "The Reflecting Team" Guerin et al.: <i>The Evaluation and Treatment of Marital Conflict</i> Scharff & Scharff: <i>Object Relations Family Therapy</i>
1988	George H. W. Bush elected U.S. president	Kerr & Bowen: <i>Family Evaluation</i> Virginia Satir dies (b. 1916)
1989	The Berlin Wall comes down	Boyd-Franklin: <i>Black Families in Therapy</i>
1990	Iraq invades Kuwait	Murray Bowen dies (b. 1913) White & Epston: <i>Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends</i>
1991	Persian Gulf War against Iraq	Harold Goolishian dies (b. 1924)
1992	Clinton elected U.S. president	Family Institute of New Jersey founded by Monica McGoldrick
1993	Ethnic cleansing in Bosnia Los Angeles police officers convicted in Rodney King beating	Israel Zwerling dies (b. 1917) Minuchin & Nichols: <i>Family Healing</i>
1994	Nelson Mandela elected president of South Africa	David and Jill Scharf leave Washington School of Psychiatry to begin the International Institute of Object Relations Therapy
1995	Oklahoma City federal building bombed	Carl Whitaker dies (b. 1912) John Weakland dies (b. 1919) Salvador Minuchin retires Family Studies Inc. renamed the Minuchin Center
1996	Clinton reelected U.S. president	Edwin Friedman dies (b. 1932) Eron & Lund: <i>Narrative Solutions in Brief Therapy</i> Freedman & Combs: <i>Narrative Therapy</i>
1997	Princess Diana dies in auto accident Hong Kong reverts to China Google is founded	Michael Goldstein dies (b. 1930)

	Social and Political Context	Development of Family Therapy
1998	President Clinton impeached by House of Representatives	Minuchin, Colapinto, & Minuchin: <i>Working with Families of the Poor</i>
1999	President Clinton acquitted in impeachment trial	Neil Jacobson dies (b. 1949) John Elderkin Bell dies (b. 1913) Mara Selvini Palazzoli dies (b. 1916)
2000	George W. Bush elected U.S. president	Millennium Conference, Toronto, Canada
2001	September 11 terrorist attacks	James Framo dies (b. 1922)
2002	Sex abuse scandal in Catholic Church Corporate corruption at Enron	Lipchik: <i>Beyond Techniques in Solution-Focused Therapy</i>
2003	United States invades Iraq	Greenan & Tunnell: <i>Couple Therapy with Gay Men</i>
2004	George W. Bush reelected U.S. president Facebook is founded	Gianfranco Cecchin dies (b. 1932)
2005	Hurricane Katrina devastates New Orleans Rosa Parks dies (b. 1913)	Steve de Shazer dies (b. 1940)
2006	Enron executives convicted of fraud	Minuchin, Nichols, & Lee: <i>Assessing Families and Couples</i>
2007	Shootings at Virginia Tech First iPhone released	Jay Haley dies (b. 1923) Lyman Wynne dies (b. 1923) Insoo Kim Berg dies (b. 1934) Albert Ellis dies (b. 1913) Thomas Fogarty dies (b. 1927) Paul Watzlawick dies (b. 1921) Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy dies (b. 1920)
2008	Barack Obama elected U.S. president	Michael White dies (b. 1949)
2009	Worldwide economic recession	Sprenkle, Davis, & Lebow: <i>Common Factors in Couple and Family Therapy</i>
2010	Earthquake in Haiti	LaSala: <i>Coming Out, Coming Home</i> Dattilio: <i>Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy with Couples and Families</i>
2011	Earthquake and tsunami in Japan	Cose: <i>The End of Anger</i>
2012	Mass shootings in Newton, CT Barack Obama reelected U.S. president Smartphone ownership surpasses 50 percent in the United States	Betty Carter dies (b. 1929)
2013	Nelson Mandela dies (b. 1918) Affordable Healthcare Act #blacklivesmatter movement protests the targeting of Black civilians by law enforcement	Alan Gurman dies (b. 1945)
2014	Ebola epidemic in West Africa	Donald Bloch dies (b. 1923)
2015	European Syrian refugee crisis U.S. Supreme Court grants gay and lesbian couples right to marry nationwide	Walsh: <i>Strengthening Family Resilience</i>
2016	Donald Trump elected U.S. president Britain votes to leave the European Union	Murray Straus dies (b. 1926)

(continued)

**xvi** Major Events in the History of Family Therapy

	<b>Social and Political Context</b>	<b>Development of Family Therapy</b>
2017	Las Vegas mass shooting deadliest in U.S. history Harvey Weinstein sexual misconduct accusations spark worldwide #metoo protests Deadliest wildfire season ever in California	Salvador Minuchin dies (b. 1921)
2018	Conservative Brett Kavanaugh confirmed to U.S. Supreme Court Prince Harry marries Meghan Markle India decriminalizes homosexuality Saudi Arabia allows women to drive	Douglas Sprenkle dies (b. 1941)



# BRIEF CONTENTS

## **PART I THE CONTEXT OF FAMILY THERAPY**

- Introduction** The Foundations of Family Therapy 1
- Chapter 1** The Evolution of Family Therapy 7
- Chapter 2** The Fundamental Concepts of Family Therapy 24
- Chapter 3** Basic Techniques of Family Therapy 39

## **PART II THE CLASSIC SCHOOLS OF FAMILY THERAPY**

- Chapter 4** Bowen Family Systems Therapy 59
- Chapter 5** Strategic Family Therapy 79
- Chapter 6** Structural Family Therapy 100
- Chapter 7** Experiential Family Therapy 117
- Chapter 8** Psychoanalytic Family Therapy 133
- Chapter 9** Cognitive-Behavioral Family Therapy 149

## **PART III RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN FAMILY THERAPY**

- Chapter 10** Family Therapy in the Twenty-First Century 169
- Chapter 11** Tailoring Treatment to Specific Populations and Problems 185
- Chapter 12** Solution-Focused Therapy 199
- Chapter 13** Narrative Therapy 217

## **PART IV THE EVALUATION OF FAMILY THERAPY**

- Chapter 14** Comparative Analysis 233
- Chapter 15** Research on Family Intervention 248



# CONTENTS

## PART I THE CONTEXT OF FAMILY THERAPY

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>The Foundations of Family Therapy</b>	<b>1</b>
	The Myth of the Hero	2
	Psychotherapeutic Sanctuary	3
	Family versus Individual Therapy	4
	Thinking in Lines, Thinking in Circles	4
	The Power of Family Therapy	5
	Recommended Readings	6
<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>The Evolution of Family Therapy</b>	<b>7</b>
	The Undeclared War	7
	Small Group Dynamics	8
	The Child Guidance Movement	9
	Marriage Counseling	10
	Research on Family Dynamics and the Etiology of Schizophrenia	11
	Gregory Bateson—Palo Alto	11
	Theodore Lidz—Yale	12
	Lyman Wynne—National Institute of Mental Health	12
	Role Theorists	13
	From Research to Treatment: The Pioneers of Family Therapy	13
	John Bell	13
	Palo Alto	14
	Murray Bowen	16
	Nathan Ackerman	17
	Carl Whitaker	17
	Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy	18
	Salvador Minuchin	18
	Other Early Centers of Family Therapy	19
	The Golden Age of Family Therapy	19
	The Postmodern Revolution	20
	Conclusion	22
	Recommended Readings	23
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>The Fundamental Concepts of Family Therapy</b>	<b>24</b>
	Cybernetics	24
	Systems Theory	27
	General Systems Theory	28

- Social Constructionism 28
  - Constructivism 28
  - The Social Construction of Reality 29
- Attachment Theory 30
- The Working Concepts of Family Therapy 32
  - Interpersonal Context 32
  - Circular Causality 32
  - Triangles 33
  - Process/Content 33
  - Family Structure 33
  - Family Life Cycle 34
  - Family Narratives 35
  - Gender 36
  - Culture 36
- Conclusion 37
- Recommended Readings 38
- Chapter 3 Basic Techniques of Family Therapy 39**
  - Getting Started 39
    - The Initial Telephone Call 39
    - The First Interview 40
    - The Early Phase of Treatment 41
    - The Middle Phase of Treatment 43
    - Termination 44
  - Family Assessment 44
    - The Presenting Problem 44
    - Understanding the Referral Route 45
    - Identifying the Systemic Context 46
    - Stage of the Life Cycle 46
    - Family Structure 46
    - Communication 46
    - Drug and Alcohol Abuse 47
    - Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse 47
    - Extramarital Affairs 47
    - Gender 48
    - Culture 48
  - The Ethical Dimension 49
    - The Marriage and Family Therapy License 51
  - Family Therapy with Specific Presenting Problems 51
    - Marital Violence 52
    - Sexual Abuse of Children 54
    - Working with Managed Care 55

Community Mental Health	56
Fee-for-Service Private Practice	56
Conclusion	57
Recommended Readings	58

## **PART II THE CLASSIC SCHOOLS OF FAMILY THERAPY**

### **Chapter 4 Bowen Family Systems Therapy 59**

Sketches of Leading Figures	59
Theoretical Formulations	60
Differentiation of Self	61
Emotional Triangles	61
Nuclear Family Emotional Process	61
Family Projection Process	62
Multigenerational Emotional Processes	62
Emotional Cutoff	63
Sibling Position	63
Societal Emotional Process	63
Family Dynamics	64
Normal Family Functioning	64
Development of Behavior Disorders	65
Mechanisms of Change	66
Goals of Therapy	66
Conditions for Behavior Change	66
Therapy	67
Assessment	67
Therapeutic Techniques	69
Evaluating Therapy Theory and Results	74
Current Status of the Model	75
Conclusion	76
Recommended Readings	78

### **Chapter 5 Strategic Family Therapy 79**

Sketches of Leading Figures	79
Theoretical Formulations	80
Family Dynamics	82
Normal Family Functioning	82
Development of Behavior Disorders	83
Mechanisms of Change	84
Goals of Therapy	84
Conditions for Behavior Change	85

- Therapy 85
  - Assessment 85
  - Therapeutic Techniques 86
- Evaluating Therapy Theory and Results 95
  - Current Status of the Model 97
- Conclusion 97
- Recommended Readings 98

**Chapter 6 Structural Family Therapy 100**

- Sketches of Leading Figures 100
- Theoretical Formulations 101
- Family Dynamics 103
  - Normal Family Functioning 103
  - Development of Behavior Disorders 104
- Mechanisms of Change 106
  - Goals of Therapy 106
  - Conditions for Behavior Change 106
- Therapy 107
  - Assessment 107
  - Therapeutic Techniques 108
- Evaluating Therapy Theory and Results 114
  - Current Status of the Model 115
- Conclusion 116
- Recommended Readings 116

**Chapter 7 Experiential Family Therapy 117**

- Sketches of Leading Figures 117
- Theoretical Formulations 118
- Family Dynamics 118
  - Normal Family Functioning 118
  - Development of Behavior Disorders 119
- Mechanisms of Change 119
  - Goals of Therapy 119
  - Conditions for Behavior Change 120
- Therapy 120
  - Assessment 120
  - Therapeutic Techniques 121
- Evaluating Therapy Theory and Results 130
  - Current Status of the Model 131
- Conclusion 131
- Recommended Readings 132

<b>Chapter 8</b>	<b>Psychoanalytic Family Therapy</b>	<b>133</b>
	Sketches of Leading Figures	133
	Theoretical Formulations	134
	Freudian Drive Psychology	135
	Self Psychology	135
	Object Relations Theory	135
	Family Dynamics	137
	Normal Family Functioning	138
	Development of Behavior Disorders	138
	Mechanisms of Change	140
	Goals of Therapy	140
	Conditions for Behavior Change	141
	Therapy	141
	Assessment	141
	Therapeutic Techniques	142
	Evaluating Therapy Theory and Results	145
	Current Status of the Model	146
	Conclusion	146
	Recommended Readings	147
<b>Chapter 9</b>	<b>Cognitive-Behavioral Family Therapy</b>	<b>149</b>
	Sketches of Leading Figures	149
	Theoretical Formulations	150
	Family Dynamics	151
	Normal Family Functioning	151
	Development of Behavior Disorders	151
	Mechanisms of Change	153
	Goals of Therapy	153
	Conditions for Behavior Change	153
	Therapy	154
	Behavioral Parent Training	154
	Behavioral Couples Therapy	157
	The Cognitive-Behavioral Approach to Family Therapy	159
	Treatment of Sexual Dysfunction	163
	Evaluating Therapy Theory and Results	165
	Current Status of the Model	166
	Conclusion	167
	Recommended Readings	168

## **PART III RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN FAMILY THERAPY**

- Chapter 10 Family Therapy in the Twenty-First Century 169**
- Challenges to Traditional Family Systems Models 169
    - Erosion of Boundaries 169
    - Postmodernism 169
    - The Feminist Critique 170
    - Social Constructionism and the Narrative Revolution 173
    - Multiculturalism 174
    - Race 174
    - Poverty and Social Class 175
    - Immigration 176
    - Gay and Lesbian Rights 177
    - Spirituality and Religion 178
  - New Frontiers 178
    - Advances in Neuroscience 178
    - Sex and the Internet 179
    - Technology and the Family 182
  - Conclusion 183
  - Recommended Readings 184
- Chapter 11 Tailoring Treatment to Specific Populations and Problems 185**
- Tailoring Treatment to Populations and Problems 185
    - Single-Parent Families 186
    - African American Families 188
    - Gay and Lesbian Families 189
    - Transgender Individuals and Their Families 191
    - Home-Based Services 192
    - Psychoeducation and Schizophrenia 193
    - Medical Family Therapy 194
    - Relationship Enrichment Programs 195
    - Discernment Counseling 197
  - Conclusion 198
  - Recommended Readings 198
- Chapter 12 Solution-Focused Therapy 199**
- Sketches of Leading Figures 199
  - Theoretical Formulations 200
  - Family Dynamics 200
    - Normal Family Development 201
    - Development of Behavior Disorders 201



Mechanisms of Change	201
Goals of Therapy	201
Conditions for Behavior Change	201
Therapy	202
Assessment	202
Therapeutic Techniques	203
Problem Description	204
Taking a Break and Giving Feedback	211
Later Sessions	212
Interviewing Children	213
Evaluating Therapy Theory and Results	214
Current Status of the Model	215
Conclusion	215
Recommended Readings	216

<b>Chapter 13</b>	<b>Narrative Therapy</b>	<b>217</b>
	Sketches of Leading Figures	217
	Theoretical Formulations	218
	Family Dynamics	219
	Normal Family Development	219
	Development of Behavior Disorders	219
	Mechanisms of Change	220
	Goals of Therapy	220
	Conditions for Behavior Change	221
	Therapy	221
	Assessment	221
	Therapeutic Techniques	222
	Evaluating Therapy Theory and Results	229
	Current Status of the Model	230
	Conclusion	231
	Recommended Readings	232

## **PART IV THE EVALUATION OF FAMILY THERAPY**

<b>Chapter 14</b>	<b>Comparative Analysis</b>	<b>233</b>
	Theoretical Formulations	233
	Families as Systems	233
	Stability and Change	233
	Process/Content	234
	Monadic, Dyadic, and Triadic Models	235
	Boundaries	236

- Family Dynamics 236
  - Normal Family Development 236
  - Development of Behavior Disorders 237
  - Inflexible Systems 237
  - Pathologic Triangles 238
- Therapy 238
  - Assessment 238
  - Decisive Interventions 239
- Integrative Models 241
- Eclecticism 241
- Selective Borrowing 242
- Specially Designed Integrative Models 242
  - Integrative Problem-Centered Metaframeworks (IPCM) Therapy 243
  - The Narrative Solutions Approach 243
  - Integrative Couples Therapy 244
  - Dialectical Behaviorism 245
  - Other Integrative Models 245
  - Integrative Family Therapy Approaches for Adolescents 246
  - Community Family Therapy 246
- Conclusion 247
- Recommended Readings 247

**Chapter 15 Research on Family Intervention 248**

- Family Therapy Research in the Early Days 248
  - The Search for a Winner: Randomized Controlled Trials 248
  - The Search for Consensus: Meta-Analysis 249
  - Effects of Family Therapy with Specific Populations 250
- Family Therapy Research Today 253
  - Common Factors 253
  - The Search for How Change Occurs: Process and Observational Research 255
- Family Therapy Research in the Future 256
- Recommended Readings 257

- Glossary 258*
- References 263*
- Index 284*