

Researching Systemic Therapy History In search for a definition

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Background

”While family therapists acknowledge the need for clinical practice to be evidence- based, the difficulti is identifying any one methodology that does justice to the work”

(Larner, 2004, p. 20)

Re-discovering process

- ⊗ From the original definitions and descriptions of systemic therapy interventions from the development of Milan Systemic Therapy. We then moved on to the postmodern definitions and descriptions.
- ⊗ Aim to propose a definition of systemic therapy practice, that both can do justice to the history at the same time respond to the requirements of present- day mental health occupational standards.

Towards a definition

- ⊗ The development of (Milan) Systemic Therapy
- ⊗ Strategic-Systemic Therapy
- ⊗ Postmodern and Social Constructionist/constructivist Therapies
- ⊗ Manualization: The quest for consistency
- ⊗ The inclusion of emotions

Definition of post-Milan Systemic Therapy

Systemic therapy is based on the assumption that people's challenges and difficulties can best be solved within the relational system and context in which they arose.

Clients' own experience and history is considered to be the best starting point for finding new ways of dealing with their problems. The basic therapeutic goal is therefore to mobilize the strengths of their relationships so as to make disturbing systems unnecessary or less problematic for them.

The understanding of meaning as created in language also makes it a therapeutic goal to identify each client's thoughts and beliefs. The client's thoughts and beliefs are then connected to their emotions and feelings, in order to co-create new meaning and the possibility of new alternative relationships.

Throughout the therapeutic process, the therapists maintain an attitude of respect and uncertainty, knowing that clients' expertise and knowledge of their lives must be mobilized, and that the therapists' knowledge is always provisional.

(Lorås, Bertrando, Ness, 2016)

Closing comments

- ⊗ Our proposal for a definition is intended as a contribution to a short and transparent presentation of systemic therapy in non-systemic contexts, particularly in mental health, due to the requirement of clearly defined interventions.
- ⊗ We believe that such a definition can ease the understanding and discrimination of the basic values and features of this therapeutic approach for both students and mental health professionals who have not yet been exposed to systemic ideas.

References

- ⊗ Larner, G. (2004). 'Family Therapy and the politics of evidence', *The Association for Family Therapy*, 26, pp. 17-39.
- ⊗ Lorås, L., Bertrando, P. & Ness, O. (2016). Researching Systemic Therapy History. In search for a definition. *Journal of Family Psychotherapy*, pp. 1-16.