

Family Therapy

AN OVERVIEW

FIFTH EDITION



IRENE GOLDENBERG
HERBERT GOLDENBERG

5th Edition

FAMILY THERAPY

An OVERVIEW

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Preface

With this fifth edition of our text, we celebrate the twentieth year of its life, along with heralding the beginning of a new millennium. Anniversaries of this sort deserve observance: they help us look back at what we have been able to achieve and set goals for ourselves for the future. Throughout the five editions, we have tried to live up to our original goal, stated in our first effort, of offering readers a balanced presentation of the major theoretical underpinnings and clinical practices in the field. We set ourselves the task in the first edition of providing an overview of the evolving viewpoints, perspectives, values, intervention techniques, and goals of family therapy. With each subsequent edition, we have tried to keep pace with family therapy's clinical and research developments, while remaining cognizant of its history and theoretical foundations. This present edition represents our best effort to continue to live up to those goals while continuing to improve the final product.

On a more personal level, we've cherished the learning process, broadened our conceptual framework for understanding behavior, and sharpened our clinical skills. It has been an exciting ride, observing, describing, and participating in a field growing from infancy through adolescence and into adulthood, and in the process becoming better integrated. We've tried to make the book reflect our continued enthusiasm for thinking of behavior in the context of family life and planning interventions with families that help them discover workable solutions to their problems.

Reaching a personal milestone commonly evokes thoughts of whether what we have accomplished is developmentally appropriate for the time that has passed. Have we been educated, found a job, established relationships, had children? Family therapy, now close to 50, might ask similar questions of itself. Yes, the field has constructed a set of theories that inform us, found ways and places to make it work, established professional working relationships with colleagues from related fields, and now has second- and third-generation children to further refine theory, extend research undertakings, and promote more effective clinical interventions. Divergent theories and techniques are less combative than in the past, and the field is moving toward greater integration. Family therapy has evolved to a good place: looking for

family strengths and resilience rather than pathology, exploring the potentials human beings have for solving problems, and helping them discover appropriate solutions. More problems await resolution, to be sure, but overall it looks as though we are headed for greater maturity and a productive old age.

This current edition has a number of features that reflect the new directions in which family therapy is headed. In addition to updating each chapter, we've added a new chapter on gender, culture, and ethnicity factors in family functioning to reflect a long-neglected area to which family therapists increasingly are turning their attention. In a similar effort, we have elaborated on the developmental sequences in alternative families: single-parent-led families, remarried families, gay and lesbian families, again calling attention to the realities of contemporary family life.

Another new chapter concerns postmodernism and the social constructionist therapies currently at the forefront of family therapy practice. The postmodern revolution has had an important impact on the thinking of many family therapists, leading them to question the "absolute truths" of many dearly held belief systems and opening up possibilities for many theoretical avenues for arriving at useful solutions. Rather than acting as complacent experts prepared to label interactive patterns in troubled families, these therapists have adopted a social constructionist view in which theirs is but one viewpoint about what the family needs, no better or worse than the views of various family members. Conversation and collaboration have democratized the therapeutic process for these therapists, as they and their now-empowered clients together construct new stories allowing new options and possibilities for the future.

In a similar fashion, psychoeducational family therapy has taken center stage for many family therapists, and we have devoted an entire new chapter to its evolution. Here we address some of the groundbreaking research on family functioning and the major mental disorders such as schizophrenia, but also elaborate on the fast growing area of medical family therapy and the prevalent short-term educational programs aimed at relationship enhancement and marital enrichment in everyday family life.

A number of colleagues have been generous with their time in offering suggestions for improving the text, and they deserve a public acknowledgment of our gratitude. In particular we wish to thank Elyce A. Cron, Oakland University; Joshua M. Gold, University of South Carolina, Columbia; Ingeborg Haug, Fairfield University; and Alice Chornesky, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces.

Finally, we wish to thank our friends at Wadsworth for their faith in our ability to carry out this task, and their prompt response with offers of help whenever needed.

For the two of us, who lived with various editions of this text for more than 20 years, it feels as if we have once again launched a child on a new adventure. Along with our three children and five grandchildren, this book is part of our lives, and as is the case with our growing family, brings us all closer together.

Irene Goldenberg
Herbert Goldenberg

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I

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