



This booklet can be made available in other languages or formats such as large print, audio or Easy read. Contact 01225 362900

Ongoing therapy

If the meetings seem useful, more are planned.

Sessions usually last one hour are every two to four weeks.

Some clinics offer a series of four or six meetings. Then at the last one, they talk about whether more would be useful.

Further information

The Association for Family Therapy (AFT)

Tel: 01925 444414. Download their leaflet at www.aft.org.uk/home/familytherapy.asp

UK Council for Psychotherapy

www.psychotherapy.org.uk

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence www.nice.org.uk

Contact us

For more information, please ask to speak to the psychological therapies services manager in your area.

For information on Trust services visit www.awp.nhs.uk

PALS

To make a comment, raise a concern or make a complaint, please contact the Trust's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).

Tel: 01225 362900

Free phone: 0800 073 1778

Email: awp.pals@nhs.net

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Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership
NHS Trust

Systemic Family Therapy

This is one of a series of information leaflets on psychological therapies for service users. The therapy is described, what it involves, and the kinds of problem it may be helpful for.

You matter, we care

When someone experiences a mental health problem, it can affect everyone in a family or group and is often hard for them too.

People often see the problem in different ways and may not know what to do for the best.

Family therapy can help people see things differently and do things which make everyone feel happier and get on better.

What is Systemic Family Therapy?

Systemic Family Therapy is a 'talking therapy'. It is called "Family Therapy" because it is often for people in families. It is called "Systemic Therapy" because it is also for people in other kinds of group, relationship or 'systems'.

Who is the therapy for?

Systemic Family Therapy helps people of all ages, from very young children to older adults who:

- feel very anxious
- get mood swings or get very low
- have difficulties with obsessive thoughts and compulsions
- have problems with food or eating
- harm or hurt themselves
- sometimes lose contact with everyday reality
- have drug or alcohol problems
- have experienced something very frightening
- are very afraid of something

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) recommends the therapy for moderate to severe depression and for eating disorders or anorexia nervosa.

The therapy team

Systemic family therapists may be nurses, psychiatrists, social workers, psychologists and occupational therapists with experience and training in this therapy.

A team of therapists will work with you and your family at the same time.

This helps produce more ideas and suggestions about what might be helpful for everyone. Two heads – or more - are often better than one.

Systemic family therapists do not take sides.

They offer support and guidance to help families look at their problems differently and to work together on changes that might be useful.

They look at people's strengths, how these could be used to overcome difficulties.

What happens first?

The first meeting is a chance to be clear about what the difficulties are and whether the approach might be helpful.

We usually ask you to invite family members or other people supporting you to the first meeting.

When you arrive, you meet the whole team and then talk with one or two therapists while the other therapists listen.

The family and therapists sometimes share ideas by drawing or writing things down.

The therapists who are listening think carefully about the conversation and sit quietly, so they will not distract the family.

Sometimes they sit to the side or behind a one-way screen. At times, they may make comments or suggestions if they think it will be useful.

Towards the end of the meeting, the therapist/s who has been talking with the family will usually ask to hear the views and feelings of the therapists who have been listening.

They may they leave the room so the family has a few minutes to talk on their own.

Or the 'listeners' may be invited to share their thoughts with everyone.

It usually depends on what makes the family most comfortable.