

Family Problems and Their Solution

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Family Problems

Family problems can manifest in the healthiest of families, resulting in challenging, frustrating and painful interactions among family members. From little irritations to buried resentments, from dramatic arguments to feelings of guilt, disappointment and anger we did not even know we had, our families often bring up the most intense emotions we experience, for better or worse.

Common Concerns and Symptoms

Ideally, our families are those whom we can always rely on for support, from whom we draw strength and feedback, for whom we feel love and concern, and with whom we feel close and comfortable, openly sharing thoughts and feelings. In reality, few families meet this expectation 100% of the time, and in some cases, a person's family is far from ideal, associate instead with stress, misunderstanding, anger, disconnection, and unmet needs, from our family of origin, we develop our expectations of others, communication skills, outlook on life, ability to give and receive love, and coping skills, among myriad other traits, and chronic family problems can have lasting effects.

Family problems from mild to severe will challenge every family at some point. These can result from behavioral and mental health issues in the family or from specific stressful events. Common family problems include:

- Financial issues
- Grief
- Substance abuse
- Behavioral issues and academic concerns in children and adolescents
- Mental health concerns
- Separation, divorce, or blended family adjustments
- Chronic illness

Whatever the source, distressing family dynamics can greatly interfere with the functioning of every family member, including extended family, although those living in the same household are likely

to be impacted more significantly than those who live apart. When family members do not get along, the tension can impact each family member's mental and physical health, relationships, and even his or her capacity for routine tasks. Evidence of family problems can materialize through repeated family conflicts, dramatic behavioral shifts in children and adolescents, mood swings and depression.

Fortunately, resolving family issues require the cooperation of everyone in the family, and this provides a great opportunity to strengthen family ties and interactions.

Psychotherapy For Family Problems

Family therapy is designed to help families collaborate to address family problems. The course of treatment is often brief, and most family therapy models seek to address the communication (verbal and nonverbal) styles of the family, as well as any individual issues that may be interfering with the cohesiveness of the family system. Family problems do not have to be severe to warrant therapy. Working with a therapist, families can expect to learn to understand one another better, communicate more effectively, and work proactively to disrupt unhealthy patterns.

Marriage and family therapists may offer to see the family as a group in each session, or individual sessions may be provided to supplement the group sessions. Most forms of family therapy fall under the umbrella of family systems therapy, though there are a number of treatment modalities suitable to addressing family concerns.

Ideally, family problems are addressed as they surface, but many times family problems are not handled in a timely fashion and sometimes not at all; instead, issues surrounding an event or family pattern may surface for family members later in life. Family-of-origin concerns are frequently addressed as part of individual therapy, whether the person enters therapy expressly for that purpose or for other concerns.

Case Examples

- **Troubled Teen:** The Jay family brings their daughter, Amelia, 13, in for therapy due to her "anger problem". In session with her parents,

as the parents discuss Amelia's poor behavior, Amelia is by turns withdrawn and sullen, then suddenly talkative, sarcastic, and silly. Alone with the therapist in the second session, she is quiet and sad, but more direct and focused. The therapist begins family sessions again, this time asking that Amelia's younger brother attend as well and concentrating on communication patterns between the members of the family. Although the parents insist Amelia is the reason for their visit, with their young son in session Amelia is sweet and attends to him while the parent seem to have little to say to one in session Amelia is sweet and attends to him while the parent seem to have little to say to one another and barely make eye contact. The therapist is able to point this out to them privately, and soon begins couples therapy with them, seeing Amelia separately and not discussing her anger with hr unless she brings it up, which she doesn't. After two or three months, the family is getting along much better, and the parents have identified several areas of their marriage to work on in therapy.

- **Adult Sibling Conflict:** John,47, seeks help to deal with his conflict with his adult siblings and parents. They seem to fight constantly whenever they are together, and his parents call him daily to "criticize" and "put me down". The therapist takes a history and finds John's family has always functioned somewhat like this, and informs John that there isn't anything the therapist can do to change John's family, but that she is willing to help John learn how better to deal with his family and the emotions John feels. John agrees to this and the therapist works with him on communicating, self-care skills (such as eating right, relaxation medication, and positive internal messages), and boundary-setting.

How To Solve Family Problems

1. Repeat the old adage

You know the one. "You can choose your friends, but you can't choose your family." We've all heard this saying before. You can choose whichever friends you like, and if a friend wrongs you, then you can think about whether they're healthy for you, and remove them from your life if you decide they're not.

However, you can't choose your family. Just because you swear them off doesn't mean they're not related to you. You will still share a bond stronger than anything else: blood. This means that you do have to

deal with their faults, just like they have to deal with yours. But if family is important to you, then this is something you'll remember, no matter how deep the rift is.

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2. Let go of your pride

Pride can take many forms. "I'm not going to call them first, because they should call me first." "I would have never done that to them, so I'm not going to bother anymore." Or maybe, your family member has tried to contact you, but you've ignored them completely. Pride is important sometimes so that you don't get the doormat treatment, but there's such a thing as too much. If you want to make things better, you have to let go of that.

3. Make your aim to reconcile - not to win

You might think you want resolve the issue, but really, you want your family member to come to you and apologize (or, if you were the one to wrong them, just forget the issue without a discussion). This means your objective isn't to make things better - your objective is to win.

Stop thinking of the issue as two-sided and make your main objective to reconcile and remedy the situation. This is your family, not some twisted competition.

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4. Figure out what exactly the issue is

This sound obvious, but sometimes, especially when the issue started years ago, it's hard to even remember what the problem was in the first place. Figure out the root of the problem and why it bothered you so much - or, if you were the perpetrator, why you haven't been able to right your wrong. This will make it easier to clearly explain how you feel without getting frustrated and defensive.

5. Talk to the rest of the family

Explain to other trusted family members what your intentions are. If you've followed the rest of the steps and changed your perspective on the situation, let them know.

Tell them that your only goal is to make things better. This is especially important if your family can be gossipy and tends to take sides. If you communicate your intentions genuinely, this may help them stop from being a bit vindictive and make them adopt your peaceful goal as well.

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6. But don't invite them to the discussion

It can be tempting to bring the entire family into it to have some back-up, but it's best to just face

this on your own. Make sure the family member you've been feuding with does the same. When the rest of the family is present, it's easier for the discussion to become two-sided -and it's likely to just make matters worse and create more issues.

7. Be honest, but respectful

Explain exactly how you feel -why you're upset and how the situation made you feel. However, be very conscious of your tone and make sure not to sound accusatory. After all, even if your family member "started it," you likely did some things wrong as well. Try acknowledging their feelings at the same time, i.e. " I understand that you were hurt by my comment, and I should never have said something like that -but it hurt me when you talked so badly of me to Aunt Sue instead of telling me."

No matter how defensive the other person gets, stay calm and remember your goal: to reconcile. Make this clear to the other person, and tell them that you love them and want to move past this.

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8. Prevent

What can you do to prevent this from happening in the future? If you communicated well, you made it clear what upset you, so hopefully this will not happen again. But remember that your family members are human. Remember what their faults are, but don't hold them against them -just know they're a part of their character and remember what upset them, so you can avoid in the future.

The Takeaway

Family issues can be devastating, and it can be hard to know how to deal with them at the time....so it can be tempting to just not deal with them. However, studies show that many people regret talking that path when they're older. Take the high road. Love your family, and live your life with no regrets.

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