

# What is Family Therapy?



AN INFORMATION  
LEAFLET FOR  
FAMILIES

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## WHAT IS FAMILY THERAPY?

Family and systemic psychotherapy – also known as family therapy – can help those in close relationships to better understand and support each other. It enables family members to express and explore difficult thoughts and emotions safely, understand each other's experiences and views, appreciate each other's needs, build on family strengths, and work together to make useful changes in their relationships and their lives. Every family is a bit like a human body. Sometimes it feels great, and things work well. Sometimes even small things can feel like a huge challenge. When we hurt one part of our body, every part can be affected in some way. But all the parts of the body can work together to help if a bone gets broken, or if there's an infection. So, family therapy helps family members to work together when something is hurting, or just feeling out of sorts.

## WHEN IS FAMILY THERAPY HELPFUL?

Family therapy is useful for families and relationships that are facing all kinds of difficulties and experiences, such as:

- Families and couples who want to build closer and happier relationships.
- Families facing special challenges like alcoholism, mental illness, physical illness, bereavement, eating disorders, ageing, family conflicts, cultural adjustments, trauma, etc.
- Families who are worried about their children's behaviour.
- Families who are fostering and adopting children.
- Parents who want to divorce or separate in a way that focuses on their children's happiness and needs.
- Any family who would like someone to help them talk about difficult things together in a way that's safe, open, creative and useful.

## WHAT DO FAMILY THERAPISTS DO?

Here are some of the things that a family therapist might do with a family:

- Talk about each person's hopes for their family.
- Encourage everyone in the family to talk about their experiences, and to listen to everyone else.
- Respect and clarify each person's beliefs, values, needs, hopes and assumptions to help them understand each other better.
- Help families to stop blaming each other and to begin exploring how everyone can work together to make things better.
- Help people to understand the effect their words and actions have on everyone else in the family.
- Explore what each person in the family does well, and what they are most proud of.
- Draw a kind of family tree, called a genogram, to help people think about the different relationships in their family.
- Help families to talk about the challenges they are facing
- Support families as they work towards their own goals.

## HOW LONG WILL FAMILY THERAPY LAST FOR?

At Beacon House we would start with a commitment to 6 sessions and review together as we go.