



CONFLICT IN THE FAMILY

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Empowering Families



WHY IS CONFLICT INEVITABLE IN FAMILY RECOVERY?

- From a family systems model: whatever happens to one family member will affect the other family members in one way or another. These effects can be both positive and negative. In the context of addiction, these effects are consistently negative.
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SUBSTANCE USE AND FAMILY CONFLICT

- Family conflict is often unavoidable
- The family is an interconnected emotional unit, where each member's behavior impacts the others
- Stems from various sources
- Including
 - Miscommunication or Lack of Communication
 - Unresolved Past issues
 - Financial Stress
 - Differing Values and Beliefs
 - Life Transitions

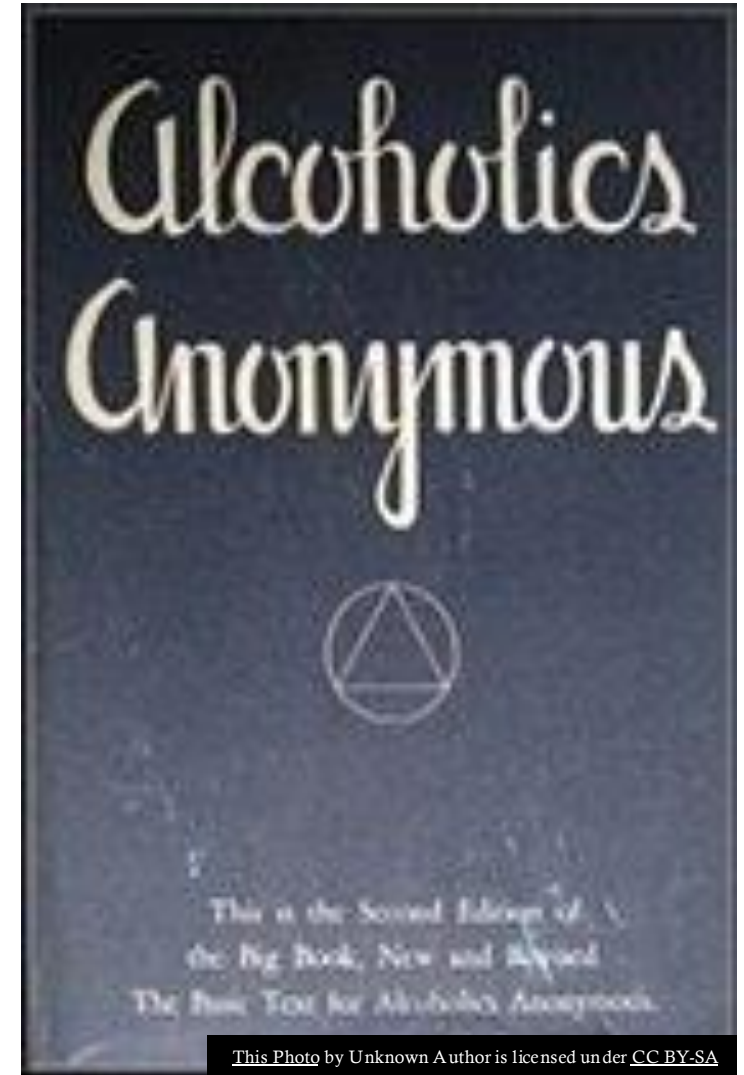


ADDICTION AND FAMILY SYSTEMS

- Addiction is the outcome of a system having exhausted its capacity to manage anxiety and stressors
- Alcohol or substance use is viewed as a symptom of the family, not only of the symptomatic individual

WHAT DOES THE BIG BOOK SAY

- There is a chapter in the “Big Book” of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) dedicated to this topic entitled *The Family Afterward*.
- This chapter states, “A doctor said to us, ‘Years of living with an alcoholic is almost sure to make any wife or child neurotic. The entire family is, to some extent, ill.’ Let families realize, as they start their journey, that all will not be fair weather. Each in his turn may be footsore and may struggle.”



RULES IN A FAMILY AFFECTED BY ALCOHOL

Don't talk, don't trust, and don't feel.”



These rules represent a breakdown in the family.



They represent a lack of communication, a lack of reliability, and a lack of emotional connection

HOW DOES CONFLICT GET RESOLVED

- When dealing with addiction and family systems therapy, it is important that everyone in the family's voice is heard and that they feel seen. It is only when each member can express themselves openly, honestly, and safely that the family can then come together and begin to solve their problems in a unified way.

WAYS TO HELP MANAGE ROLES IDENTIFIED BY CLAUDIA BLACK

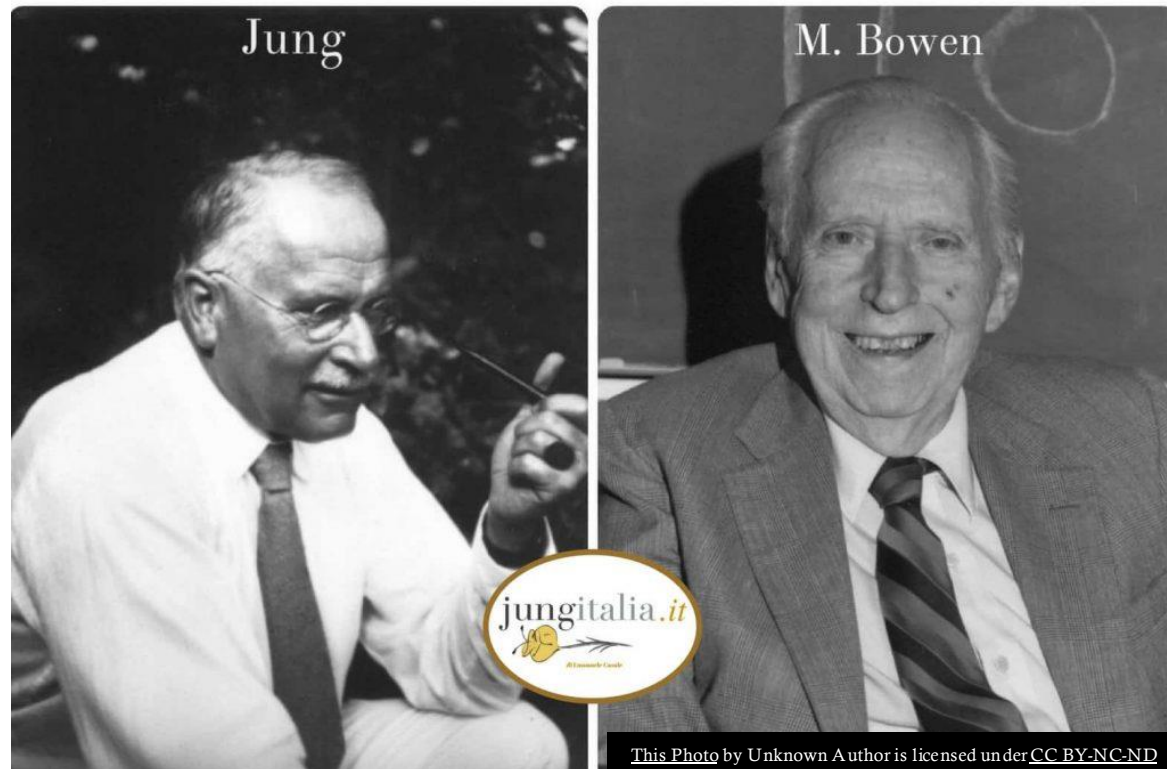
The responsible child role can be addressed by offering additional praise when they are not taking on a leadership role

The adjuster role can be addressed by including the child in more of the decision-making processes within the family

The placater role needs more validation and emotional identification

The act-out role requires the setting of limits and boundaries.

BOWEN FAMILY THERAPY



- Dr. Bowen explains how families struggling with addiction issues have taken on a situation that affects everyone in the family. Yet, it is up to each individual to heal first before coming together. Dr. Bowen writes, "You have inherited a lifetime of tribulation. Everybody has inherited it. Take it over, make the most of it, and when you have decided you know the right way, do the best you can with it."

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF HEALTHY CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Helps establish boundaries, which in turn will ultimately help the person struggling with sobriety and recovery

It strengthens the support systems between family members, which includes how one family member supports another when they are forced to confront the person struggling

Helps build communication skills within the family

Addresses issues of “codependency,” which can be a significant problem in households that are “taken hostage” by addiction

Family systems therapy can help foster empathy and compassion for one another because, before this therapy, family members are often unaware of what the others are going through

STRATEGIES FOR RESOLVING FAMILY CONFLICT

Open communication –Engaging in respectful and honest communication; listening to each other's perspectives

Empathy and Understanding – Trying to understand the other person's feelings even if you disagree with their point of view

Setting boundaries –Establishing clear and healthy boundaries to protect your emotional and physical space

Focusing on solutions – After listening to everyone's needs and interests find middle ground or compromise

WORKING WITH THE FAMILY

Focus on	-Self versus symptomatic one
Focus on	-Managing one's own anxiety
Focus on	-Maintaining one's own life goals
Focus on	-Boundary setting- what I will and will not do
Focus on	Maintaining connection and setting limits versus giving ultimatums
Focus on	--Managing difficult relationship interactions

WORKING WITH THE FAMILY/IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN THE SYMPTOMATIC INDIVIDUALS' LIFE

- Focus on self versus symptomatic one
- Focus on managing one's own anxiety
- Focus on maintaining one's own life goals
- Focus on boundary setting- what I will and will not do
- Focus on maintaining connection and setting limits versus giving ultimatums
- Focus on managing difficult relationship interactions



WORKING WITH COUPLES WITH A SYMPTOMATIC PARTNER



Focus on the reciprocity between partners : over/under functioning, conflict, distance



Focus on how each plays a part in maintaining the disturbance in the relationship – often the focus is on the addiction and not on how the couple is relating to each other

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WHERE ADDICTION IS PRESENT

- Children often lose their voice when they are dealing with a parent (or older sibling or caretaker figure) struggling with addiction.
- It is important they open and vent all of their feelings they have regarding the situation, lest these emotions bottle up and manifest into a type of disorder such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or other type of anxiety or mood disorder.



7 C'S

"I didn't CAUSE it

I can't CONTROL it

I can't CURE it, but I can help take CARE of myself by
COMMUNICATING my feelings

Making healthy CHOICES

CELEBRATING me."

MANAGING CONFLICT CONSTRUCTIVELY

- Empathy is feeling with a person
- Empathy is shown by communication that these thoughts, feelings, and needs make sense to you. That you understand why the other person's experience. That does not mean that you necessarily agree with this person. You might, for example, have an entirely different memory or interpretation of events. Empathy means communicating that, *given your family member's perceptions*, these thoughts, feelings, and needs are valid and make sense. *You have your own perceptions. Both of your perceptions are valid.*

MANAGING CONFLICT CONSTRUCTIVELY

- Validation is that makes sense that you would feel that way
 - Finding common ground which means you don't lose your position but find ways to compromise or have common ground.
 - A key skill of conversations is helping one's family member explore his or her feelings by asking open-ended questions. This is done by either asking targeted questions, like, "What is your disaster scenario here?" or making specific statements that explore feelings like, "Tell me the story of that!"
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HOW TO REDUCE CONFLCIT

When a family member talks, you do not have to agree with them.

You can even disagree, but it is important not to interrupt or talk over them.

This may be challenging at first but making a conscious effort not to interrupt when a family member speaks allows them to feel heard.

It also ensures that you take the time to listen to them while they are talking rather than just thinking about what you want to say next.

Taking a deep breath before replying can also provide the space to respond with patience rather than reacting defensively.

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

- Positive reinforcement is a way to encourage good behavior, which can be helpful in many situations.
- It encourages people to repeat their good behaviors because they know it will earn them something they like, whether tangible or intangible.
- For example, if your teen completes homework after school without complaint, they may earn privileges.
- Young people can also learn how to provide positive reinforcement to their parents, such as showing appreciation when a parent takes the time to listen to them.
- Focus on positive interactions and behaviors, praising and acknowledging positive actions and qualities



FOUR HORSEMAN



PRACTICING THE ANTIDOTES

- Instead of Criticism- Use a Gentle Start up which is I feel ...about... and I need
 - Defensiveness – Taking responsibility even for a part of the problem
 - Contempt – Describe Your own feelings and Needs
 - Stonewalling – Do Physiological Self Soothing
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ZOOM EXERCISE - REAL PLAYS

- In break out groups use a harsh start up and see what the response it then turn it around by using a gentle start up instead
 - Example: Harsh Start Up: “You’re so lazy. You never take out the trash. DO I have to do everything around here!”
 - Gentle Start up: “I feel so tired and overwhelmed. I need some help taking out the trash. Would you be able to help me.”
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