

Discussion Topic

This week we are focusing on the family as a Psychosocial unit. The family is a viable psychosocial system. It is comprised of members who interact and are connected. Families have rules, boundaries, hierarchies, as well as an established equilibrium. If there is one change, it affects the unit.

This is an excerpt from the book *Understanding Families* by Jo Ann Allen: Many writers in discussing the family as a system use the analogy of the heating system of a house. As Haley (1963) explains it, the furnace responds to the signal from the thermostat, but the thermostat responds to the temperature of the room which responds to the heat from the furnace. Each element serves a function in the total heating system. The elements are interdependent. For example, when the air becomes "too cold" the thermostat signals the furnace to give more heat, and when the air is "warm" the thermostat signals the furnace to shut off. The temperature in the house fluctuates within a narrow range around the setting of the thermostat. The heating system has a kind of balance, or homeostasis, and all of the elements of the system (the furnace, the thermostat, the room temperature) are involved in maintaining that balance. As long as the setting remains the same, the temperature remains stable. Even when the setting is changed the elements of the heating system still relate to each other in the same way. There are rules which govern this process, and all parts of the system work to maintain the rules, in this case, the setting. This analogy is comparable to the family system in which the elements, the family members, are dependent upon one another. In a similar manner, families develop a kind of balance in their relationship patterns.

Researchers say that the family is dying every day in the US (at least the nuclear family). Do we still need family? Any other ideas about the impact of a family?

Chapter 5 focused on Legal, Ethical, and Professional Issues. Professional codes of ethics are indeed essential for the practice of counseling. Please make yourself familiar with the concepts identified in this reading particularly HIPAA and dual relationships.