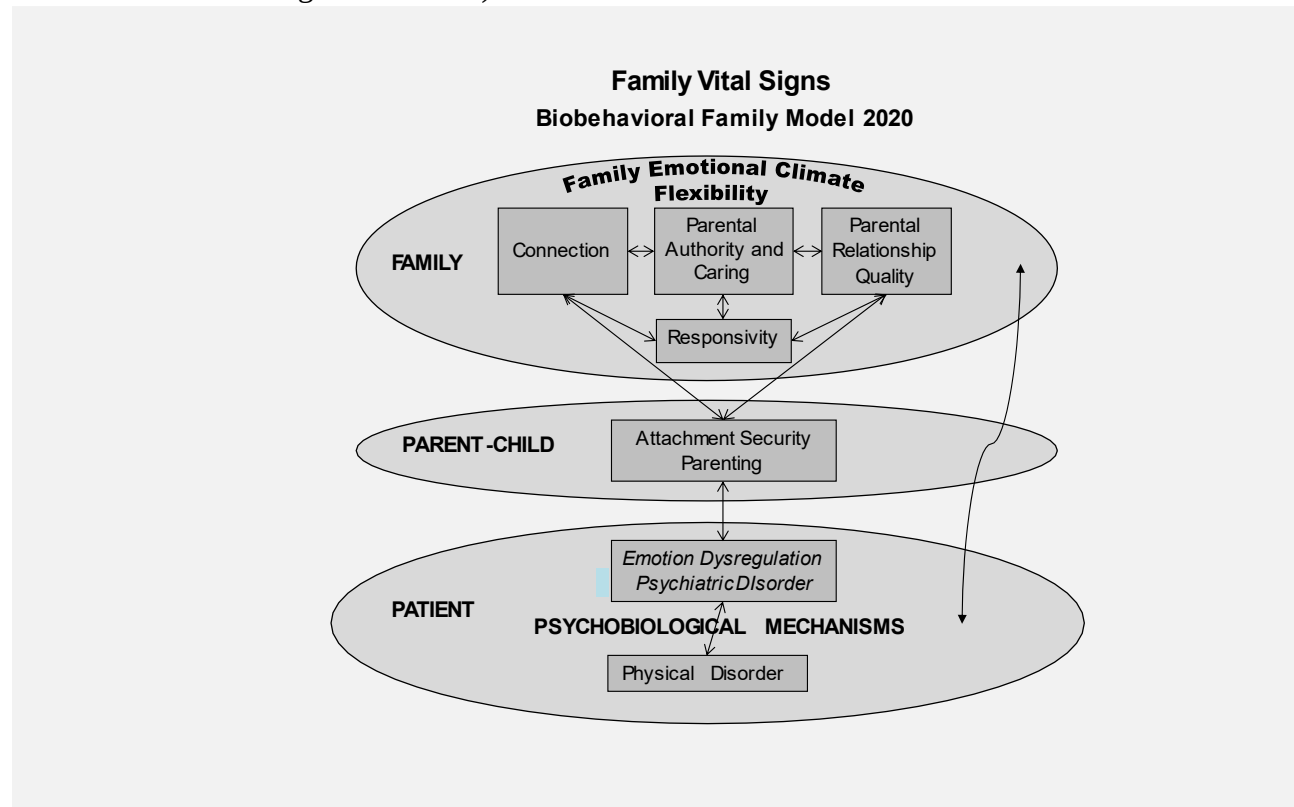


Family Vital Signs from the Biobehavioral Family Model (BBFM) DEFINITIONS AND INTERACTION BEHAVIOR INDICATORS

- A. The Biobehavioral Family Model (Wood, BL, 2017) in “*Encyclopedia of Couple and Family Therapy*,” Jay Lebow, Anthony Chambers, Doug Breunlin, (Eds.), Springer Publishing Company, NY. This model is derived from Minuchin’s Structural Family Therapy concepts.
- B. The BBFM is a *systemic* theory of “vital signs” of family function. These specific dimensions of family interaction are potential targets for intervention. (Families #528 and #617 as contrasting illustrations.)



Emotional Climate: the overall intensity and valence of family emotional exchange (e.g. warm, calm and accepting, tense, angry, anxious, depressed, disengaged/flat emotional tone)

Interaction indicators- body and facial language; tone and volume of voices; content of things said (nasty vs nice)

Family flexibility- - extent to which the family interactions are patterned; ranges from rigidly patterned (and resistant to change), to patterns adaptive according to content, to chaotic lack of patterning in interactions

Interaction indicators-same people say the say types of things, or show the same emotions over and over, patterns of exchange do not vary; vs. variability in exchanges, but staying on topic; vs

exchanges are not completed, others interrupt or topic changes, no “turn-taking” in conversations, relentless interruptions

Connectedness: who is close to whom and how; family wide connectedness is often referred to as “family cohesion”

Interaction indicators -eye contact; sharing emotions, private information; interactive facial expressions others? _____

Parental authority: the extent to which caregivers are in charge of children by offering guidance, and limit setting;
effective parental alliance and absence of cross-generational coalitions

Interaction indicators-parent(s) provide developmentally appropriate respectful guidance and limit-setting; child listens (eye contact, respectful response;
-parents respectfully collaborate in relating to their children, and don’t undermine one another;
-child and one parent do not join together against the other parent, e.g. with criticism or disrespect or stonewalling
Others? _____

Parental caring: providing nurturance, warmth, respect, validation

Interaction indicators: parental eye contact and listening when child expressing negative affect; parent expressing sympathy and empathy when called for; parent listening attentively to child’s experience, opinions, disagreement and respectfully considers them
Others? _____

Parental relationship quality: mutual support, understanding, and adaptive disagreement (respectful and resolving) versus hostility, rejection, and unresolved conflict. (*Note: Parent-parent relationship quality is key in determining family-level emotional climate. It also helps or hinders parental alliance.*)

Interaction indicators-parent looks at other parent when he/she is speaking, tone of voice in verbal interaction, body language, verbal content nasty, nice, or remote.
Others? _____

Responsivity: refers to the extent to which family members are behaviorally, emotionally, and physiologically responsive to one another. Moderate levels of responsivity allow for empathic response among family members. Extremely high levels of responsivity (i.e., reactivity) can exacerbate maladaptive emotional/physiological resonance and emotional escalations, Low levels of responsivity (i.e detachment) may result in neglect or avoidance, leaving family members unbuffered from internal, familial, or environmental stressors.

Interaction indicators-speed and intensity of emotional response (verbal content, tone, body language) in interactions.

Others? _____

Parent-child attachment (for each caregiver): Attunement (informed observation) and appropriate response to child's signal of emotional or physical suffering; child tendency to reach out for soothing or support from parent, parent offering it, child accepting it. It is a reverberating system. Types of attachment: secure, anxious, avoidant, confused. (Parent- parent attachment, and sibling attachment security vs insecurity may be relevant to an individual child's wellbeing.)

Interaction indicators- child shares feelings comfortably (if awkwardly) with parent; parent makes eye contact with child when child expresses emotion or emotionally relevant content, parent listens, parent responds in way that connects with child and helps the child with the emotionally difficult moment

Others? _____

Emotion regulation/dysregulation in child: Ability or inability of child to modulate stress and emotions adaptively; dysregulation can express itself in anxiety, depression, behavioral disruption *and is always accompanied by physiological dysregulation which may impact physical systems to make physical disorders worse, e.g. child asthma through physiological stress pathways.*

Interaction indicators- extremely high OR low levels of emotional or verbal or behavioral reactivity or distress.

IMPOTANT NOTE: These dimensions are interactive with one another in a systemic fashion. For example, in secure life circumstances, a very reactive and connected family patterns would likely enhance positive emotional climate, which supports positive parenting and supportive attachment. However the same very reactive and connected family pattern in a setting of insecure and stressful life circumstances may lead to an intensely negative emotional climate which in turn, undermines parenting, increases interpersonal reactivity and impairs secure attachment, which undermines individual emotion regulation which contributes to psychiatric and physical dysfunction in individuals. Recursively, the individual dysfunction would negatively impact patterns of relational function the family.

Exercise: View Family Process Assessment Protocols from Families #538 and 617. Compare and contrast patterns of interactions in these families according to the BBFM Family Vital Signs.

Session 4. Developing BBFM Formulation and Initial Treatment Plan

Exercises: Develop formulation and Treatment Plan for Family #617. Continue this practice for each family for which the residents/fellows conduct a Family Process (Interaction)Assessment Protocol. (See **BBFM Formulation Template Attached**)

- I. Consider BBFM targets for intervention and whom to include in initial sessions (With adolescents usually best to have individual sessions with the adolescent plus family sessions to address the relational processes that need redirecting or adjusting)
 - II. Consider strategy
 - A. Consider what family relational changes would likely have greatest positive effect on patient
 - B. Consider most feasible relational target to begin the intervention
- Factor in developmental stage of child/adolescent