

Systemic Concepts & Risk

Enhancing our decision-making at times of risk and uncertainty

John Woolner

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Objectives

- What is a systemic approach?
- The influence of the wider system.
- Where does power lie?
- A systemic approach to difference and diversity.
- First and second order change.
- Planning and formulating from a systemic perspective in a risk management context.



Exercise



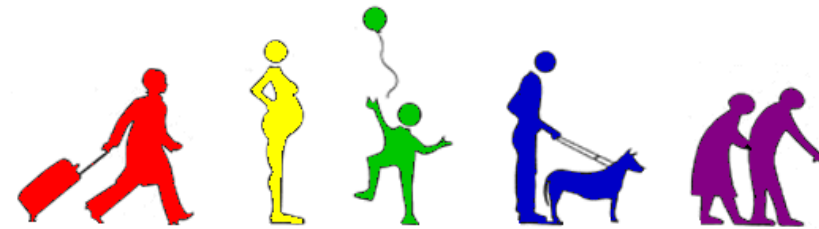
What do you already know about systemic theory and Practice?



Exercise

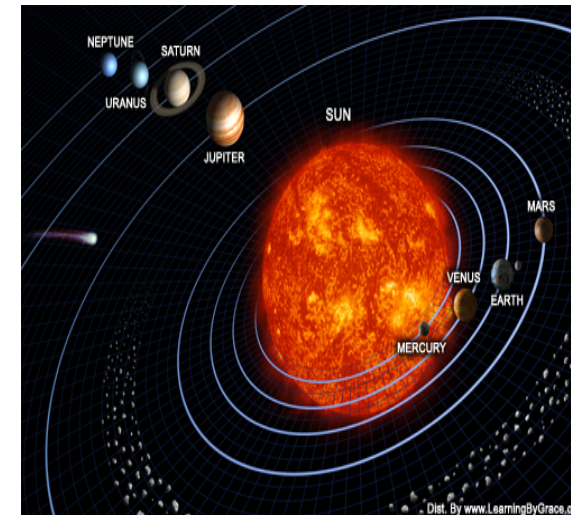


1. How many different systems can you think of?
2. What are the properties of a system?
3. Why do systems go wrong?
4. What do systems have to do with working with families?



What is a system?

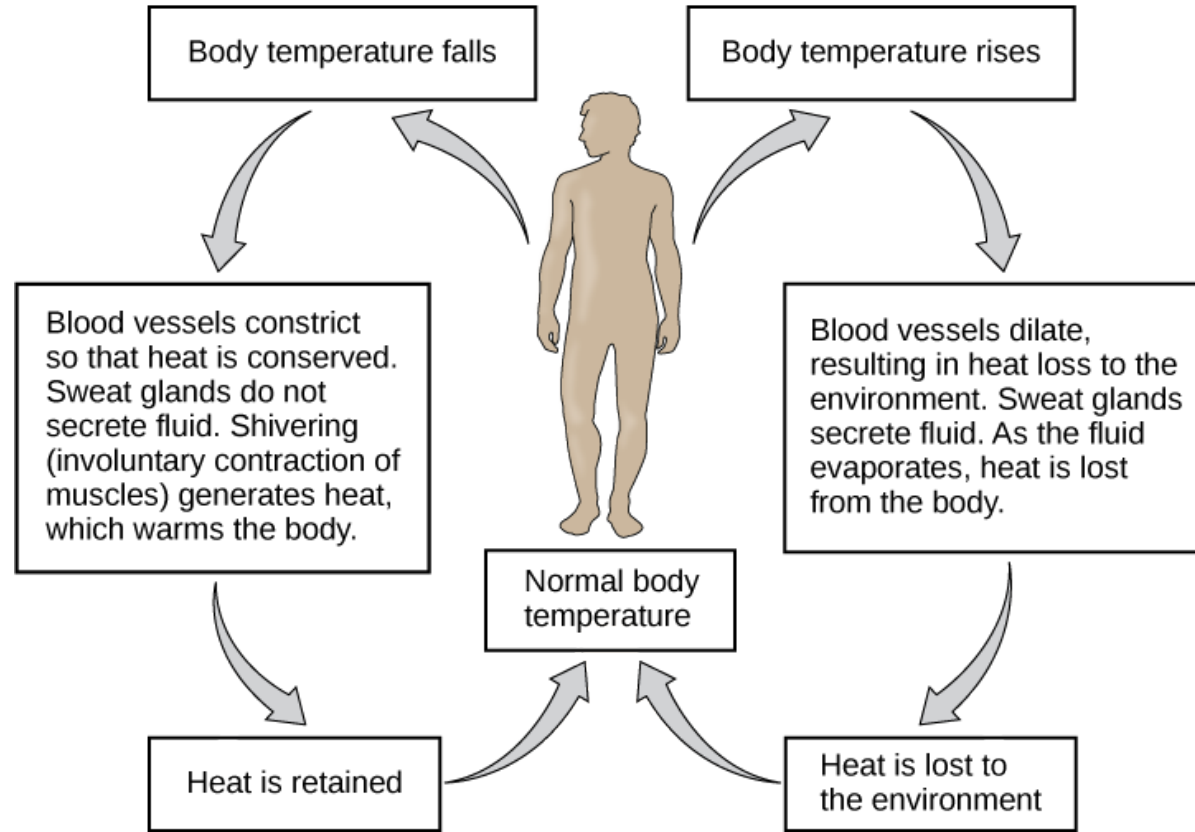
- We all live within systems and speak of systems when referring to our bodies - e.g. digestive system, circulatory system etc.
- Systems consist of distinct but interconnected parts that operate together in integrated and co-ordinated ways to maintain stability or homeostasis.
- Different parts of a system operate on the basis of feedback. Feedback loops are circular mechanisms whose purpose is to introduce information about a systems output back to its input, in order to correct, and ultimately govern the system's functioning.



For things to remain the same, things have to change.



Homeostasis



HOW WOLVES CHANGED RIVERS

What is a systemic approach?

- Systemic practitioners see problems as existing, and being maintained in the relationships between people, rather than being located 'inside' any one person
- Move away from inherent personality traits being the problem



- We are interested in patterns which connect people together and allow us to make sense of their lives. The connections that concern us are established by the process of emotional, cognitive and behavioural information exchange, which constitutes the family's communication.
- A behaviour by a family member elicits responses from others, which in turn provide feedback, in an unending cycle, making for complex processes.
- This complexity we call pattern.



- This stance is the basis of the systemic commitment to taking a strengths-based approach to working with families.
- We see the patterns of interaction within families and between families and their wider systems as making sense in the contexts in which they live, including contexts of poverty, poor housing, other forms of disadvantage.
- Context will include the influence of attachment experiences, relational trauma, family scripts, life-cycle, world events, the social 'ggrraaccess,' etc.



The Social Graces

- Aspects of the social graces are interwoven
- They come and go into the background or the foreground at different times and in different contexts
- Some are given more attention than others according to the practitioner's comfort and/or skill in dealing with them
- They all relate to different levels of power and privilege



- SOCIAL
- GENDER
- GEOGRAPHY
- RACE
- RELIGION
- AGE
- ABILITY
- CLASS
- CULTURE
- ETHNICITY
- EMPLOYMENT
- SEXUALITY
- SPIRITUALITY

Social Constructionism

The social ggracceess is an acronym for socially constructed meaning (developed by Alison Roper-Hall. Ref: Roper-Hall, A.(1993) cited in Burnham, J. (1993) 'Systemic Supervision,' Human Systems: The Journal of Systemic Consultation and Management. Vol. 4, 349-381)

What can be said about the world – including self and others – is an outgrowth of the shared conventions of discourse. (McNamee, S. & Gergen, K. (1992). Eds. *Therapy as Social Construction*. Sage: London. P4.).

We are all born into and live within, cultural stories that are not always visible to us. (Freedman and Coombs 2002: 7)

- We are culturally programmed to make assumptions about appearance, language, behaviour and its meaning
- The GRRRAACEES are a useful tool to promote understanding of factors relating to power, discrimination & privilege in society.
- Also a useful tool in ‘engagement’ within the therapeutic relationship where service users & workers maybe positioned to hold assumptions about power.



A zoom lens





Milan Family Therapy - Constructivism

We do not 'discover' the world out there, but on the contrary we invent it.

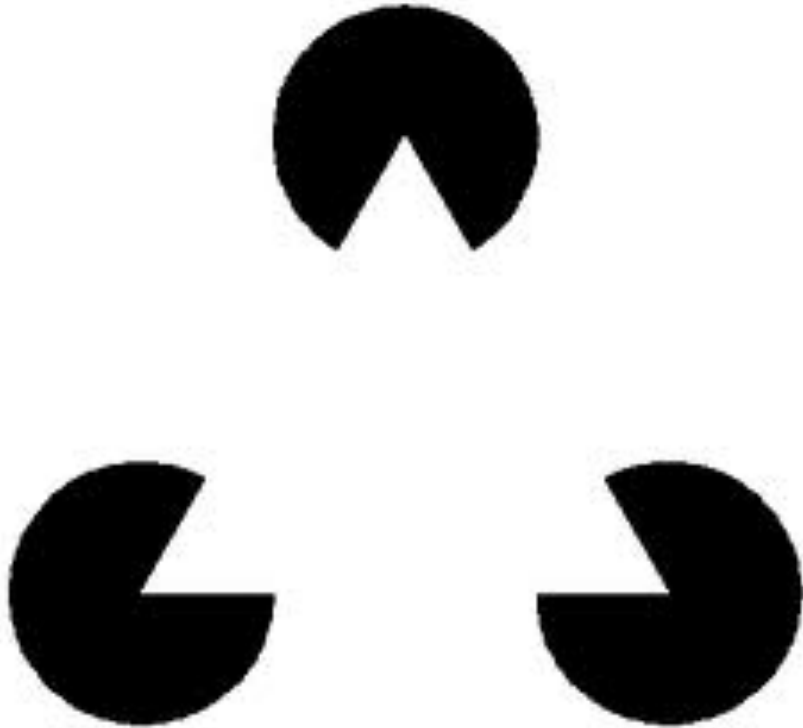
Hoffman 1993

The Milan team of family therapists introduced the concept of constructivism – i.e. that there is no external reality, but rather reality is filtered on the basis previous experience, culture and context. As Bateson said 'there is no meaning without context.'



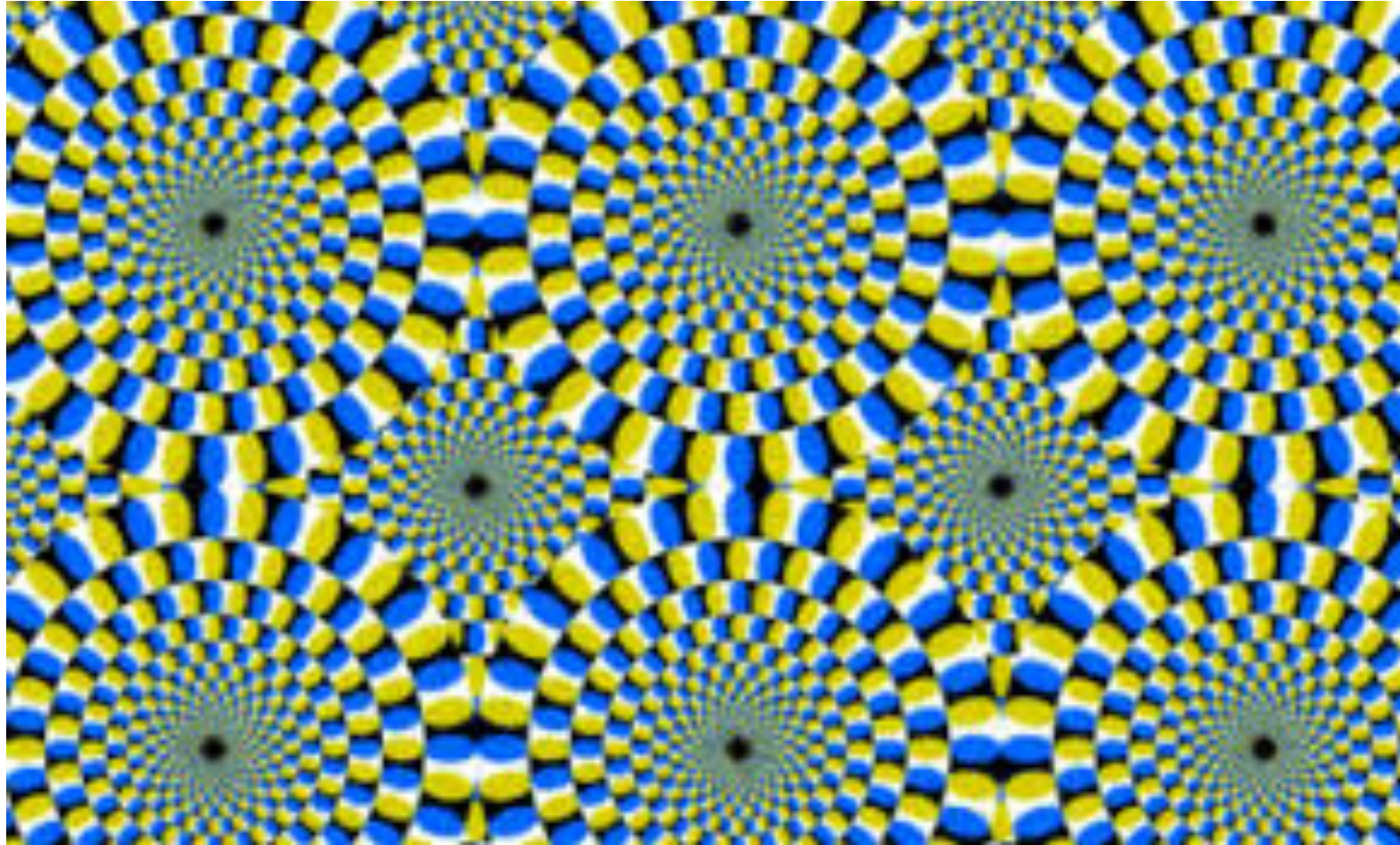
Is there a triangle?

How many 'f's' in the sentence below?



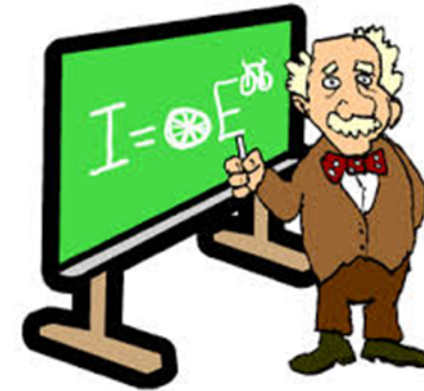
**FINISHED FILES ARE THE
RESULT OF YEARS OF
SCIENTIFIC STUDY
COMBINED WITH THE
EXPERIENCE OF YEARS...**

What do you see?

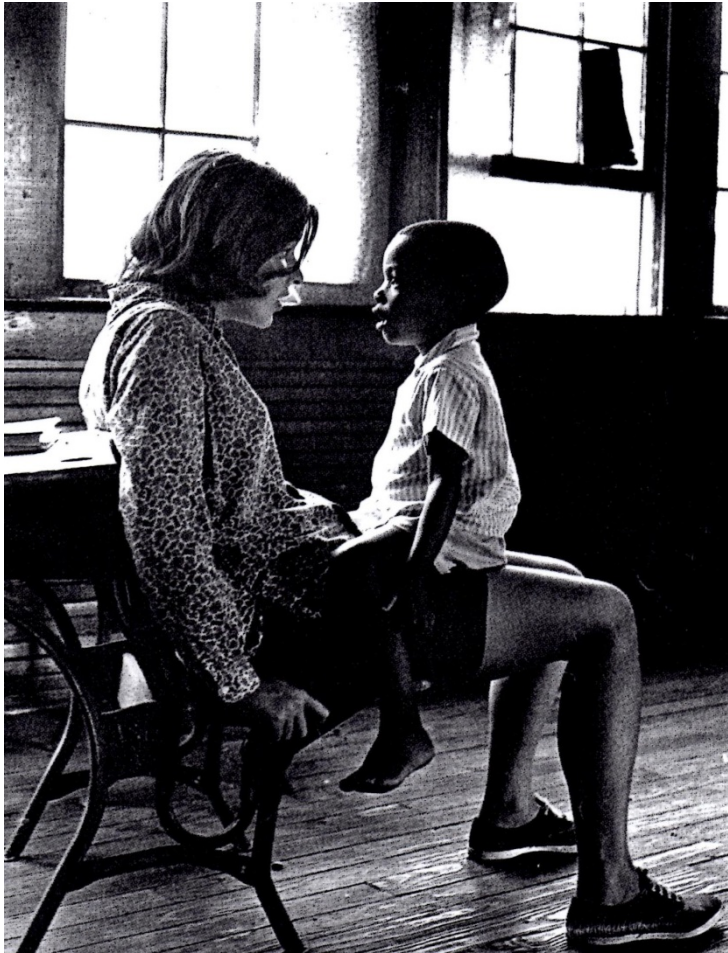


Hypothesising

- Hypothesizing is a familiar skill which we use in all sorts of situations
- Hypotheses are ideas/hunches about what is happening
- Hypotheses are an attempt to explain how beliefs and behaviours are maintaining difficulties



What Hypotheses do you have about the pictures?







We all wear glasses!
I see through the lens of
who I am



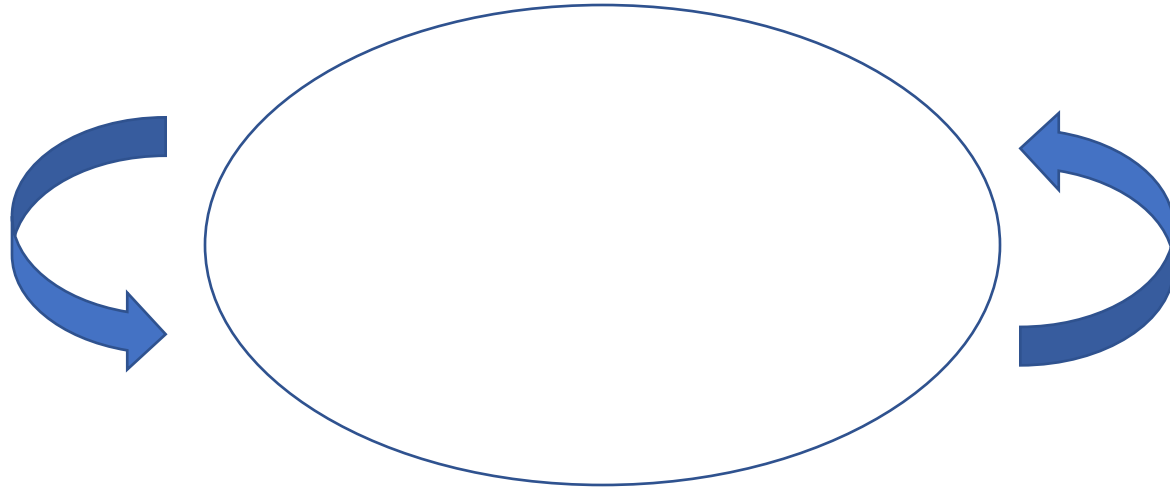
Circularity/Circular Causality

- **S**ystems theory stresses that each person influences and is influenced by others, such that an action is a response (feedback) and a response an action. Consequently searching for who caused a sequence of events becomes pointless.
- **E**ach observer will perceive an episode through the lens of his or her own theoretical and personal framework.



Each punctuation of a particular sequence of events is but a different side of a coin, or different arc of a circle involving beliefs, emotions and behaviour, which in turn affect the experience of the relationship for people involved.

Jenny withdraws



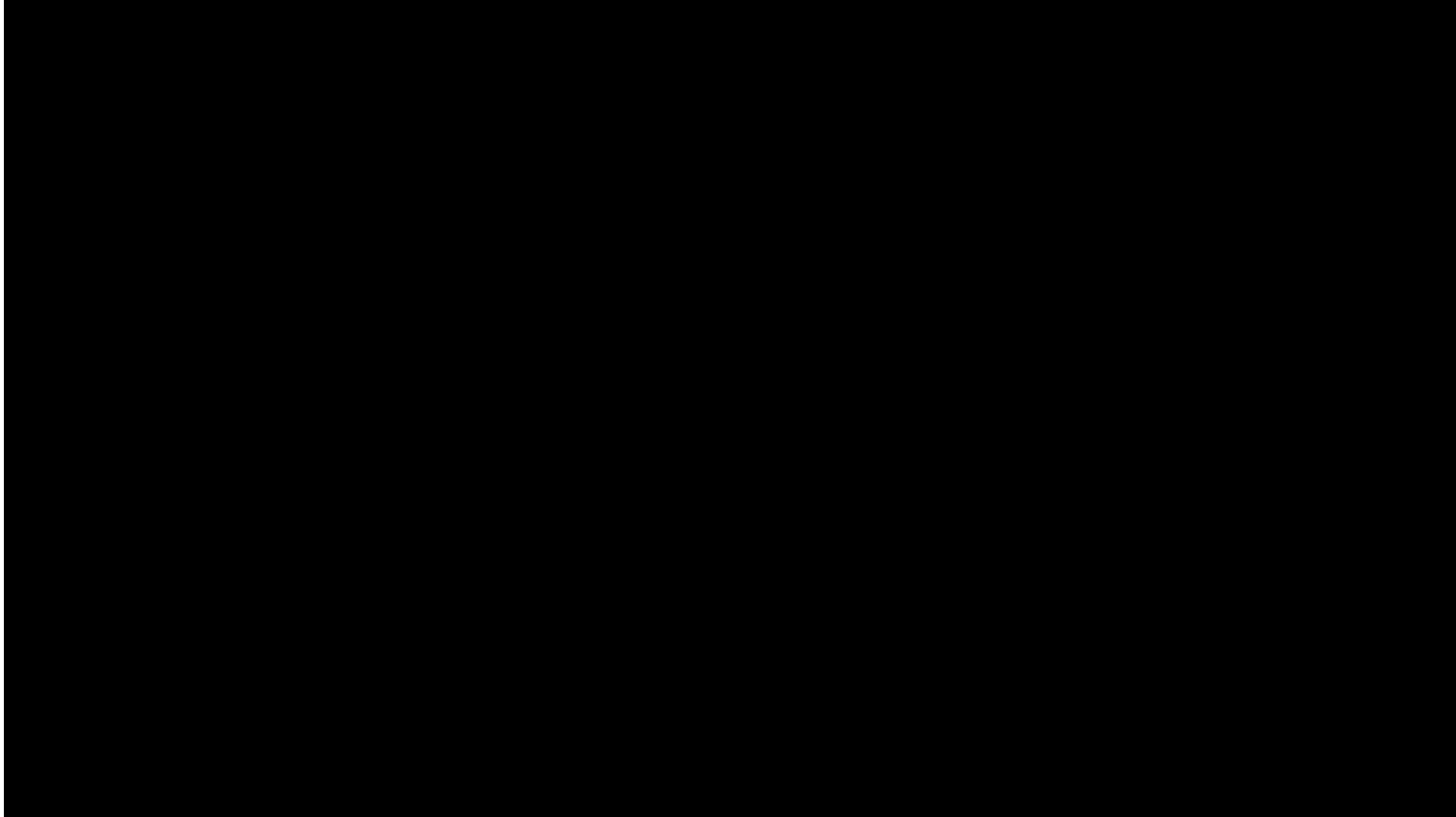
James criticises

Neutrality/Curiosity

- ⦿ Understanding the logic of the system
- ⦿ ‘what’ happened (description) to ‘how’ does it happen (explanations)
- ⦿ Multiple perspectives
- ⦿ How do you imagine others experience the problem? In what way does it impact others?
- ⦿ The opportunity to ‘notice’ differences, quiet stories – effects of power/ dominance

Get
CURIOUS!

EXERCISE IN CURIOSITY



Structural Family Therapy



Enmeshment



Disengagement



Healthy or 'Normal' Family Development



A Structural Perspective on 'Problems.'

Exercise



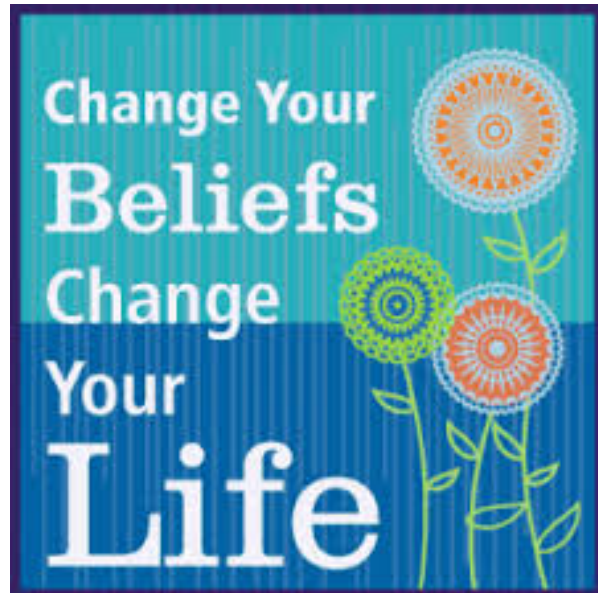
1. What feedback mechanisms are operating in the family?
2. What do you notice in the way of pattern?
3. What do you think the unspoken rules of the family are?
4. What do you notice about boundaries in the family.
5. What would you want to know more about?



THE ROYLE FAMILY CHRISTMAS ARGUMENT



First and Second Order Change



- First order change: Results in a change at the level of **behaviour** – somebody does something different
- Second order change: Change at the level of **belief** – somebody starts to think about things in a different way
- Purposefully changing the rules of the system, or a “reorganisation of what the problem means and the dynamics around it” (Vetere and Dallos 2003)

Language and Power



- our use of language: ‘resistant’, ‘hostile’, ‘difficult to engage’
- Instead of *families* being hard to engage, think about whether the *services* are hard to engage with
- ‘Resistance’, ‘non-compliance’ etc. can be seen as a clash of different cultures or systems with an imbalance of power

A 'collaborative' approach

- Build bridges between professionals and marginalised socially withdrawn clients
- Careful attention to the initial conversation/connection - Permission seeking practice: Aggett (2012):

“too often we invite clients to enter our world without asking for an invitation to enter theirs”

Doing to



Working with



A 'collaborative' approach

- The 'client' plays a significant part in mapping the direction of the 'journey.'
 - Narrative conversations are interactive and always undertaken in a spirit of collaboration.
 - The worker seeks to understand what is of interest to 'clients,' and how the journey is suiting their preferences.
- *How is this conversation going for you?*
 - *Should we keep talking about this or would you be more interested in ...?*
 - *Is this interesting to you? Is this what we should spend our time talking about?*
 - *I was wondering if you would be more interested in me asking you some more about this or whether we should focus on X, Y or Z?*