

# Family Work in the Out-Patient Setting

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# Goals for Today's Presentation:

- What is it like to treat families in the out-patient clinic setting?
- Who is the identified patient?
- Importance of a relational/family assessment at intake
- Use of a genogram
- Intergenerational mapping
- Cycle of Interaction
- Treatment Goals/Planning
- Case Examples
- Discussion

# Ackerman Relational Model (ARA)

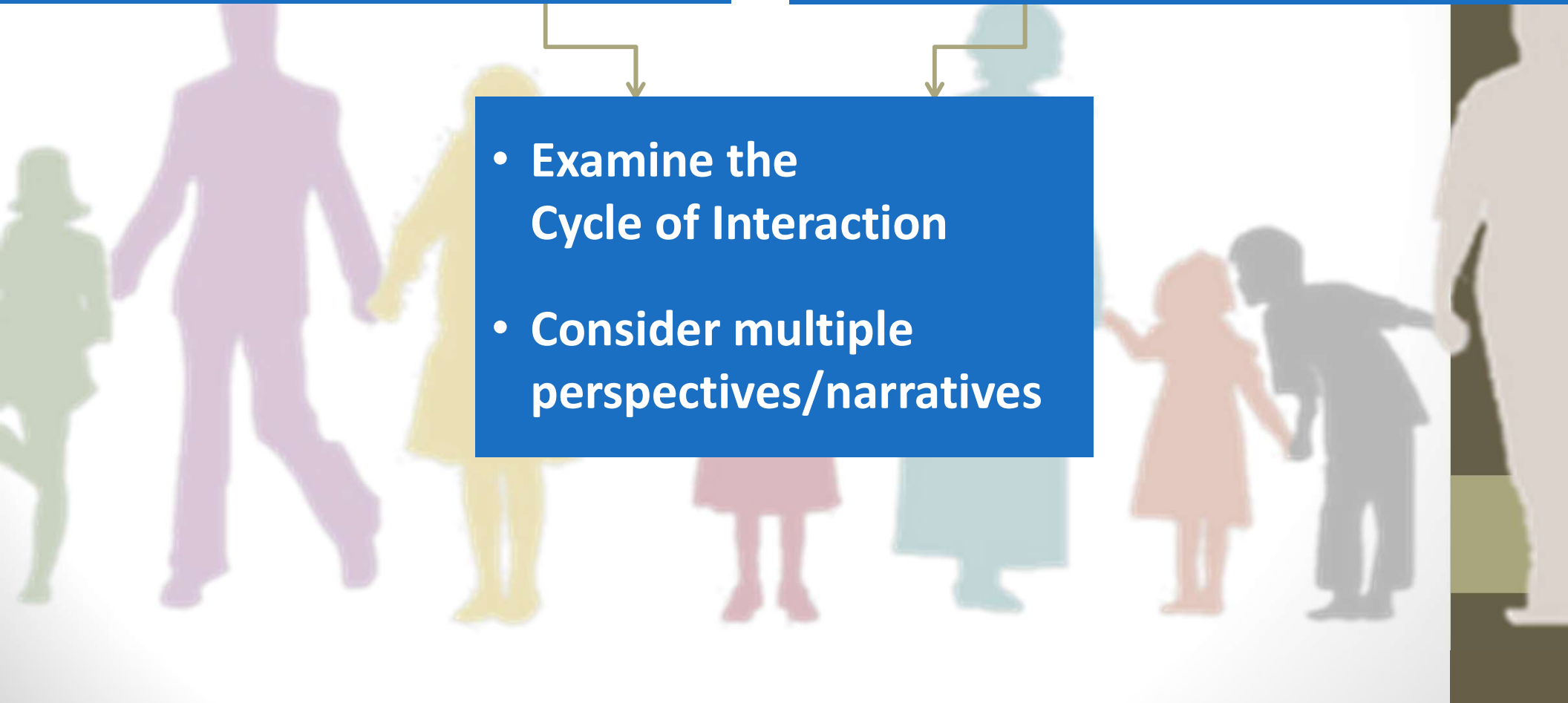
- thinking and working within multiple theoretical frames (no “one size fits all” approach)
- Embracing Complexity (holding multiple perspectives)
- Clinical focus and techniques vary based on family needs and make up

# Family = Relationship

When we think about families,  
we think about relationships

When we look at the dynamics,  
we see the living organism / system

- Examine the  
Cycle of Interaction
- Consider multiple  
perspectives/narratives



# ARA Sequencing

1. Define the presenting problem
2. Identify strengths & resilience
3. Identify cycle of interaction
4. Locate presenting problem within larger life contexts
5. Clarify relational premises informing behavior

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## Relevance in Oncology

1. Cancer Diagnosis
2. Tracking what works well with family's communication around illness, coping
3. Looking for blocks/conflict preventing productive communication around illness
4. Beliefs around illness, how a family should cope through illness
5. gender, caregiving, being sick, doctors, hospitals

# 6<sup>th</sup> Step: Constructing a Relational Hypothesis

- Looking for a pattern within the way a family relates/communicates to one another, which informs potential “blocks” in their ability to express an emotion productively, rooted in old narratives/beliefs that are related to historical constructs (conditioning) that lead to triggers felt during times of escalation/conflict that eventually lead to the family/couple’s increase in disconnection/withdrawal from one another



## 6<sup>th</sup> Step: Constructing a Relational Hypothesis

- you are looking for relational patterns and threads that inform how they are coping around their loved one's illness experience
- a “working hypothesis”

### **EXAMPLE:**

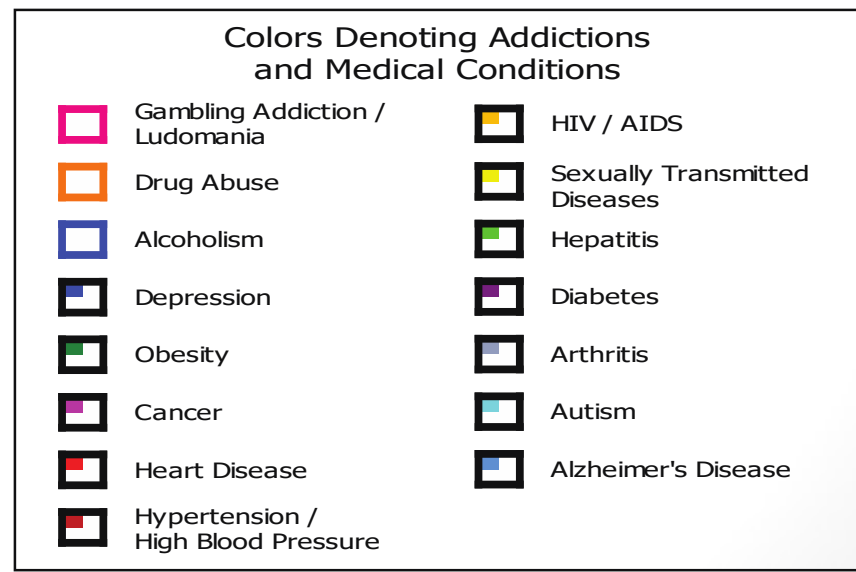
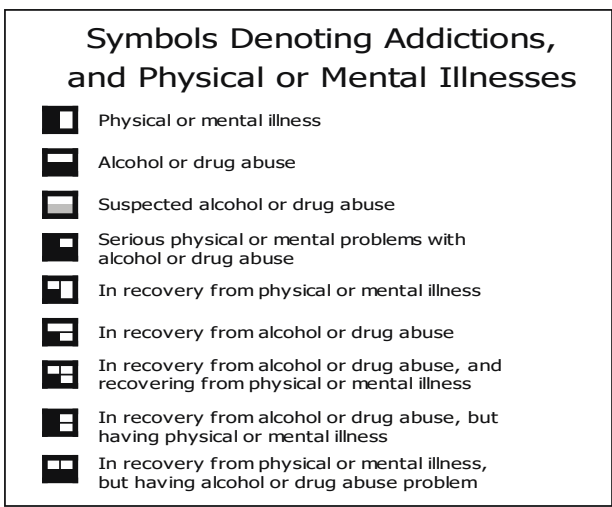
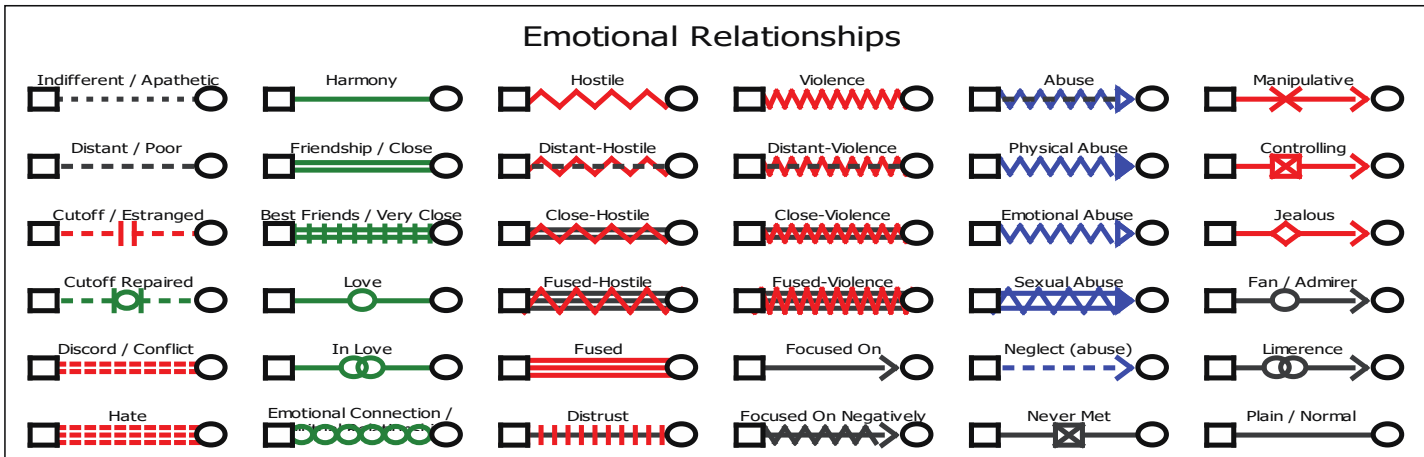
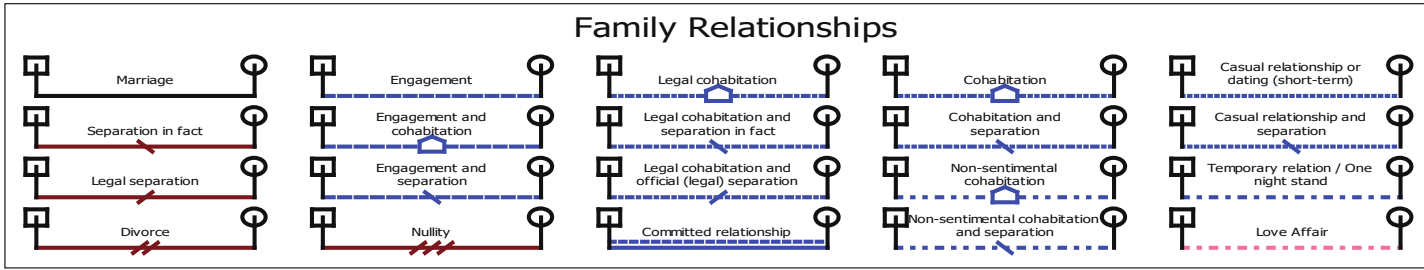
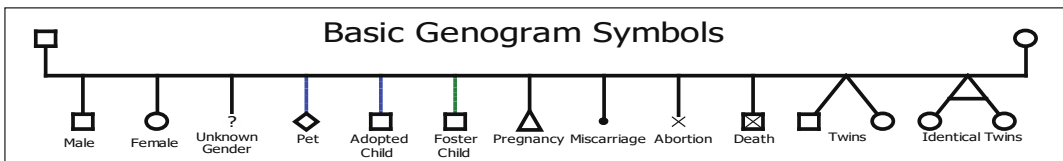
“The death of Dan’s mother to liver cancer, and the role he played as primary caregiver, appears to be contributing to his increased anxiety about his own mortality, given the recent diagnosis he is facing of the same type of liver cancer, which is elevating his interest in marrying his girlfriend and building relationships with his stepsiblings, who he has not yet met”.

# You May Be Thinking....

*“How Can anyone do that in the short amount of time given for intakes, consults, sessions?”*

# Relational Assessments As Tools

- - Genogram
- -Intergenerational Mapping
- -Unpacking the Negative Cycle of Interaction



# Intergenerational Mapping

- Using genogram to illustrate various patterns of social constructs in families

## **Examples:**

- How emotions were expressed or not
- What was acceptable with regard to physical touch and affection
- Gender roles, identity
- Expectations regarding education, work

# Unpacking Negative Cycle of Interaction

**Example questions to consider:**

*When Sally speaks to you (Bob) in this way, what comes up for you?*

*And when you feel that way, how does it make you react towards Sally?*

*And when you react that way, how does Sally respond?*

Turn towards Sally again:

*Sally, does Bob have it right? Re: your response?*

# Treatment Goals/Planning

- once a negative cycle of interaction is identified, families have a pattern that they can visually see which is unproductive and why
- The goal of treatment is to help families begin to learn how to identify their triggers at home and learn to make shifts in this negative pattern, de-escalate during conflicts, and re-organize in more productive ways of relating moving forward

# Conclusions

- Once skills are developed relational assessments can be quickly done and aid in nice thorough overviews of potential stressors informing personality or behavioral changes in individuals
- Teaching necessary, supervision on cases key



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