

Creating Relational Contexts for Resilience, Dialogue, and Hope

In many ways, family therapy is about creating relational contexts for resilience, dialogue, and hope to occur. Yet, how do we create an ethical and relational understanding of resilience, especially when dealing with disturbing narratives of violence? What are the benefits of creating a dialogic context for multidisciplinary team reviews using a reflecting team process? How does the diversity of parenting values and practices amongst Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders contribute to their resilience and emotional wellbeing? What is the state of play of family therapy in France, and the link between theory and its cultural context? How do we construct hope and manage hopelessness when working systemically in an acute health setting with persons affected by cancer? How does State of Change Theory and Motivational Interviewing help families to have a conversation about difficult issues like sibling sexual assault? These are some of the varied contextual issues creatively addressed in this issue.

First up, in his scholarly yet practice-informed article, Alan Jenkins traces narratives of violence and abuse by boys and men through the ethical lens of the philosopher, Deleuze. The second part of a previous publication in this journal, the article is based on a plenary address at the 30th Australian Family Therapy Conference in 2009. Alan develops an idea of ethical practice and resilience, grounded in his inspiring work with perpetrators, to ask the question: How is it possible to move towards change and difference? He connects the ethics of remorse, protest, and generosity to an understanding of resilience that resists historical narratives supporting violence and its effects. Along the way, Alan provides several fascinating therapy examples to illustrate resilience as a process of ethical agency and renewal.

Roxanne Garven's paper describes the theory and practice of creating a dialogic context for multidisciplinary team reviews using a reflecting team process. This allows team members to integrate different hypotheses and skills, and engage in a creative dialogue, instead of becoming bogged down in a 'monocultural' discussion based on competing roles and models. As Roxanne deftly comments: 'When team members are encouraged to connect their responses to one another, to listen to words that seem to carry significance for their speaker and to keep the dialogue open and to avoid knowing too early, they seem to be less intent on imposing their views on others'. The dialogic process is illustrated using a consultation with a multidisciplinary team, and feedback is provided by teams who have experimented with this approach. This is a valuable article for introducing multidisciplinary teams in the mental health field to the benefits of a dialogic and reflecting team process.

In their rich and informative article, William Bor, Jenny Thompson, Fiona Heath, and Leonie Cox review the diversity of parenting values and practices amongst Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. To begin, they discuss the

disruption to family attachment associated with the Stolen Generations and the stereotyping related to government intervention in the Northern Territory. The authors then detail a diversity of parenting values and practices for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, and argue that these contribute to resilience and emotional wellbeing. This informs a respectful, holistic, collaborative, and strengths-based approach to family therapy. As the authors wisely conclude, a 'position of cultural humility and respect on the part of therapists can lead to a balanced therapeutic alliance from which to pursue a variety of therapeutic approaches'.

Have you ever wondered what it might be like to be a family therapist in France? After working in Melbourne as a social worker and family therapist, Lynda Moore took advantage of moving to Paris for two years with her family, to explore the current state of play in French and European family therapy. These investigations took her to various medico-psychology therapy centres in Paris and, eventually, to the 2010 European Family Therapy Conference, culminating in an interview with Dr Mony Elkaïm, founder of the European Family Therapy Association (EFTA). In an engaging, reflective, and conversational style, Lynda reports how this adventure stretched her both professionally and personally, and then discusses its relevance for Australian family therapists. Dr. Mony Elkaïm was invited to respond and provides a fascinating overture that connects the therapist, theory, and cultural context.

Peta McClean's paper on balancing hope and hopelessness is a moving, informative, and practice-friendly guide to working with persons affected by cancer in an acute health care facility. It considers the relevance of these concepts for the therapeutic relationship and for working in a biomedical model, as well as the role of culture, religion, and spirituality. Peta suggests that therapists need to give patients the time and space to explore feelings of hopelessness, without rushing them to a place of hope for which they are not ready. Several engaging practice pieces are provided, with examples of useful questions and reflections on practice. This stresses the importance of critical reflection, supervision, and peer support to help therapists remain creative and curious.

The paper by Elizabeth McNevin creatively explores ways to work with families who attend therapy 'involuntarily' under a legal process, as in the case of sibling sexual assault. It applies ideas and techniques from the drug and alcohol fields, such as Stages of Change Theory and Motivational Interviewing, which address motivation to change. Elizabeth explores how this can help family therapists to work with resistance and encourage a more helpful dialogue between family members. A detailed practice guide to working with families experiencing sibling sexual assault is provided.

The next issue of the journal will be a special edition on Single Session Therapy by guest editors Jeffrey Young and Pamela Rycroft from the Bouverie Centre, Melbourne, which will coincide with an inaugural international symposium on this topic to be held on Phillip Island in Victoria, March 21, 2012.

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