

RUNNING FAMILY MEETINGS

Certificat interuniversitaire en psycho-oncologie

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Palliative care teams set goals of care

“Family-as-a-whole” goals of care?

- Open communication
- Deep trust & respect – cohesive team
- Generous support – caregiving, love
- Tolerance & forgiveness – conflict resolution

➡ Existential peace & joy for the family

Might we explore a family's spirituality?

- Should this be a legitimate goal for palliative care?
- Might we do this safely during a family meeting?



Explore the family's philosophy of life?

- How would you describe your family's values?
- In what ways are you spiritual together?
- Who matters in your family's life?
- Any heroes / heroines/ family causes?
- Any sense of serving others? Goals? Dreams?
- What are you most proud of as a family?

Family strengths perspective

- Family strengths
- Is the family 'at risk'?

– What do I like about this family?

– How do we recognise families that carry higher risk of poor coping or the development of psychiatric disorder, including morbid bereavement outcomes?





The 3 “C’s” of family relational life?

- Communication
- Cohesion
- Conflict resolution

Ask direct questions about the 3 C's in a family meeting, or administer FRI.....12 items

Core Components of Conducting a Family Meeting

- **Strategy 1:** Planning and prior set-up to arrange the family meeting.
- **Strategy 2:** Welcome and orient to the goals of the family meeting.
- **Strategy 3:** Check each family member’s understanding of the illness and its prognosis.
- **Strategy 4:** Check for consensus about the current goals of care.
- **Strategy 5:** Identify family concerns about their management of key symptoms or care needs.

Core Components of Conducting a Family Meeting

- **Strategy 6:** Clarify the family’s view of what the future holds.
- **Strategy 7:** Clarify how family members are coping and feeling emotionally.
- **Strategy 8:** Identify family strengths and affirm their level of commitment and mutual support for each other.
- **Strategy 9:** Close the family meeting by final review of agreed goals of care and future plans.




Key skills in running family meetings

REVISION:

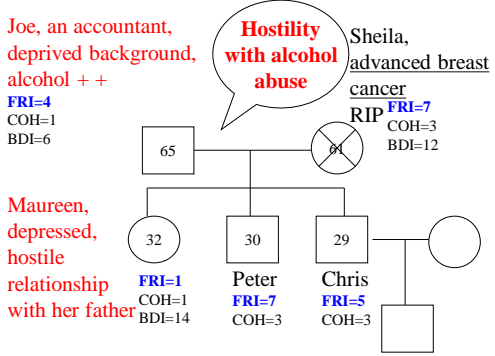
- What are these key communication skills?

- Agenda setting
- Circular questioning
- Integrative summaries

Agenda setting video



Circular questions



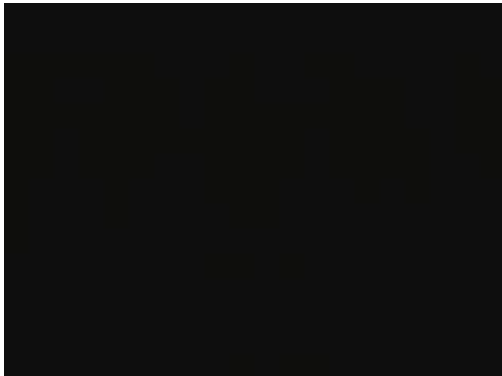
Mix of linear and circular questions in simulated family meeting

Summary comments

**Technique of offering
Summary comments to Family**

- These help to pace the meeting & to bring the family to potential consensus around the issues under consideration
- Include all or as many members in the summary comment: affirm strengths alongside concerns
- Reflect differences in a balanced manner
- Maintain neutrality if possible
- Embed a suggestion, hint or way forward in the summary to see if consensus about this can be achieved

Summary comments in family meeting



Maintaining family's sense of safety

- **Containment of active conflict in the session**
 - Look for soft emotions behind hard emotions
 - Consider advantages & disadvantages of conflict
 - Pattern discerned across generations
 - Promote active search for alternative solutions
 - Time out, Focus on process rather than content
 - Agreeing to disagree / respect / acceptance
 - Forgiveness / tolerance
- **Avoid alignment with one family member to detriment of others, unless an individual needs support temporarily**

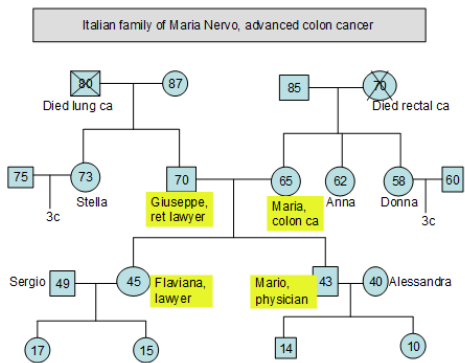
Experiential Role play

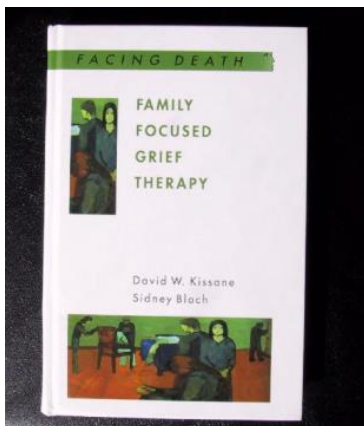
Safe environment: respect, mutual support & confidentiality

Safe to practice: allows for errors & re-runs

Short simulations: – take “time out” if stuck; facilitator takes time out to review

Review: “What worked well?” before “What didn’t feel as good?”





Open University Press, 2002

Reprinted in 2003 & 2008 McGraw Hill

**Bereavement Care
for Families**

**David Kissane &
Francine Parnes (Eds)**

Routledge, 2014 320pp

