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Systemic therapy and the relational consequences of grief.

Systemic therapy and relational consequences as a result of grief

Viviane Azevedo Figueiredo

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6314-5635>

<https://lattes.cnpq.br/9271453425743813>

SUMMARY

This article presents a literature review on systemic therapy and grief in the psychotherapeutic process, the most recurrent emotions, and the contribution of possible interventions. The objective is to understand how systemic psychology can assist patients who choose to experience their grief with professional help. This study addresses the role of the therapist, the different perspectives, and the theories that influence them. The results of this work reveal the significant benefits offered by systemic psychology for patients seeking therapeutic help. Systemic therapists act as intermediaries who seek to help patients recognize, accept, and validate their emotions in the face of grief.

Keywords: Psychotherapy. Grief. Loss. Individuation. Psychology.

ABSTRACT

This article is a literature review on systemic therapy and grief in the psychotherapeutic process, the most recurrent emotions, and the contribution of possible interventions. The objective is to understand how systemic psychology can help patients who decide to experience their grief with professional assistance. This study addresses the role of the therapist, the different perspectives, and the theories that influenced them. The results of this work reveal the significant benefits offered by psychology with a systemic approach to patients seeking therapeutic treatment. Systemic therapists function as a kind of interlocutor, seeking to help patients recognize their emotions during grief and to embrace and validate them.

Keywords: Psychotherapy. Grief. Loss. Individuation. Psychology.

INTRODUCTION

The constitution of the individual is influenced, from birth, by the context in which they are raised. primarily through the family system. Currently, the family context has presented several Changes, and those in family configuration, are related to societal transformations. modern.

A family that breaks up and a family that comes together undergo transformations. presenting new relationships, various difficulties and challenges that neither individuals nor society They are prepared to face it. The question of language, or how to name the new relationships, illustrates this. Well, that limitation (Bucher, 1999). Families take many forms; they don't break apart, nor... They are destroyed, but their configuration changes. (Nichols and Schwartz, 2007).

Sometimes, clients seek therapy because they feel they are going through a crisis. Therefore, it is understood that the evaluation should not be based on seeking responsibilities or Justifications for the events that occurred. In moments of suffering, the client needs moderation. and to help get organized again.

Rosset (2008) clarifies that when a client is in crisis, it does not mean that they are under intense pressure.



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suffering, but that one may be suffering due to losses that have occurred. And that the important thing is that the client needs to reposition themselves, take responsibility, learn, and make changes. In the case of the origin of suffering being a loss, before any other redefinition, it is necessary to deal with the loss itself, and only afterwards, can he strengthen himself to choose whether or not to pursue a therapeutic process. then return to your life in a more organized way.

According to Parkes (1998), losses due to death should require a therapeutic approach. due to the negative impact they eventually have on various areas of the bereaved person's life. For this reason, many schools of thought in psychology, such as cognitive behavioral therapy, Psychoanalytic, humanistic, systemic, and other psychotherapies seek to address the issue of grief. in a clinical setting.

The main function of grief therapy is to help the patient understand and organize their grief. loss, teach him to see death as a natural fact of life, peculiar to human beings, and reframe the A world marked by the absence of what has been lost. As a result, the goal is to raise awareness about... the suffering caused by the loss so that they do not repress these feelings, which can result in prolonged grief, often without a solution.

A welcoming, empathetic, and attentive environment is necessary to address the difficulties that They emerge during the grieving process. By allowing one to explore the most complex feelings, and discover What are the difficulties faced by the bereaved person and, ultimately, help the patient regain control? about his life.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Family Structure and Dynamics

The concept of family structure, according to Wagner et al (2011), encompasses the composition, arrangements and also the functioning and dynamics of the family. Family organization happens through systems, which comprise "a group of people who interact based on affective bonds, blood relatives, politicians, and others establish an endless network of communication and mutual understanding. "influence" (Wagner et al, 2011, p. 21). Within a family system there are subsystems, understood as being groups of family system members who have a dialogue different from the main system.

According to the family life cycle theory, family evolution occurs as a a dynamic process characterized by specific developmental phases that trigger a Change and a reorganization of the family system. The different stages of the life cycle have a They have a universal character and are marked by specific events, such as births and deaths, separations and



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unions, phenomena that are expected in a family (Andolfi, 2021). However much these events are Predictable or even expected, that doesn't mean the journey through them will be easy, some These transitions can generate pain or stress in the entire family or in some member (Andolfi, 2021).

2.2 Systemic View

According to Rapizo (2002), the systemic view of the family is historically accompanied by transformations in the conception and understanding of other sciences, such as physics, the general theory of Systems, cybernetics, and biology. With significant technical and theoretical advancements, family therapy... It encompasses a new vision, breaking away from mechanistic and linear views and acquiring a broader perspective. a more complex, more holistic view of human relationships.

The general contributions of cybernetics are presented by Rapizo (2002) in his work, which They underpin a systemic view of family. Originally, the founders of this view They understood that the mind, as an organization, is relational, and that one must focus on the... relationships between the elements and not the element itself. Compared to this, Rapizo (2002) presents the The idea of ordering and regulating in a more complex way, involving interdisciplinarity, in which The system seeks to move towards a positive order. Feedback conceptualizes the circuit. A circular system that governs a network of forces that feed off and influence each other. Based on the concepts As presented by the author, in second-order cybernetics, the family system of from the point of view that the symptom is part of the system itself, not belonging to an individual, but to the inter-relationships (Rapizo, 2002).

The approach to transgenerationality in systemic therapy, in the family modality, is emphasized in some studies (Pellegrini et al., 2015; Seixas, 2010). Systemic therapy can be defined by a form of psychotherapy that conceives of individuals' behaviors as associated with the relational context in which they are embedded, based on a causality perspective. Recursive link between behaviors and interactions. Family members and other important individuals in the network. The relationships established by clients are frequently included in the therapeutic process, in such a way that Direct or virtual, through questioning about their behaviors and perceptions. (Sydow, Beher, Schweitzer, & Retzlaff, 2010).

Transgenerationality consists of processes transmitted from one generation to another. remaining present throughout family history. Thus, it relates to relational patterns that... They repeat, even if the people involved don't realize it (Falcke & Wagner, 2005).

In this sense, individuals carry with them and transfer to their relationships that They establish an emotional baggage, built up in previous relationships, which can be



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composed of positive or negative charges. In this way, they tend to establish barriers to intimacy.

in the same way that expectations or demands that new relationships come to

to compensate for or heal previously experienced grievances (Carter & McGoldrick, 1995). It emphasizes-

even in situations where a person tries to behave in a way that is contrary to what is stipulated by

The family suffers the consequences for not conforming to what has been pre-established (Falcke & Wagner,

2005).

Systemic therapy began and continues, to this day, to prioritize

notably his interventions and research with families, rather than exclusively with

individuals (Boscolo & Bertrando, 2013; Laurindo, Silva, & Schmidt, 2015; Souza, 2010). No

However, based on international literature, there are indications that professionals with training in

Family therapists dedicate approximately 50% of their time to individual therapy (Breunlin &

Jacobsen, 2014; Kung, 2000).

Thus, clinicians and theorists of family therapy, guided by a systemic perspective,

They understand that interventions based on this approach are distinguished from others by considering

the individuals or the problems they refer to in a contextual way, in which the relational patterns

Established entities connect over time through circular, rather than linear, processes.

(Kung, 2000). Therefore, systemic therapy prioritizes, above all, the relational context in which the individual

is included (Jenkins & Asen, 1992; Reynolds, 2007; Vidal, 2006), considering that for greater

For interventions to be effective, one must consider not only individuals, but human systems as well.

(Schmidt, Schneider, & Crepaldi, 2011).

This emphasis on context, including developmental, transgenerational and other aspects.

Ecological approaches can bring advantages to individual therapy. This is because, by modifying behavior

From an individual's perspective, there is a tendency to transform an interactional pattern, so that the client themselves induces it.

changes to the members of their interaction network (Kung, 2000). Thus, the relationships in the systems and

within the subsystems (that is, regroupings of members of the larger system), feedback occurs, which

This characterizes the concept of globality (Schmidt et al., 2011). Based on this perspective, the therapist

The systemic approach seeks to focus on creating new connections between the different relational patterns of its...

customer and in promoting reflections on possible alternative solutions, considering both the

The present moment, as well as the past and the future (Jenkins & Asen, 1992).

Systemic relational therapy addresses crises in four stages: crying out the pain, in which...

It presupposes genuine crying, talking about what happened, complaining and cursing, but also receiving comfort.

Understanding and comfort. Only after grieving the pain of loss can one come into contact with...

emotions, feelings and desires; expressing anger, situations of great helplessness bring about feelings

linked to anger (misunderstanding, non-acceptance, loneliness, responsibility, incompetence) that

These feelings need to be expressed in order to move forward; to clear the guilt, those involved are still experiencing guilt.



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And the best way to release this is by using therapeutic rituals; reworking projects after this whole process, the client will be able to turn their attention back to their life (Rosset, 2008).

In a Systemic Relational Therapy process, one of the objectives of the clinical work is...

To make the system more flexible, more aware, and to increase the number of functional strategies. In this way,

Gradually, the system enriches its relational and emotional instrumentation and, slowly

and without risks, it gradually relaxes its rules (Rosset, 2008). To understand these interaction patterns

And for the family cycle to function properly, it's essential to have the will to go through this journey and also to have...

Humility to see how things work without making a distinction between what is right and what is wrong.

That's wrong, but understanding that these are personal conditions and that it depends on the individual to know and have them.

autonomy over their choices.

An individual's quality of life varies according to their level of awareness.

Regarding their choices and the responsibility they have in deciding to change. In this way,

It is understood that the focus is on the present, and on seeking alternative ways of functioning and change, and

not based on what happened in the past (Rosset, 2008).

2.3 Grief therapy

In his work "Mourning and Melancholia," Freud (1917/2006) describes mourning as a psychic process.

for processing a loss that may be real or imagined. In this process, there is the

Ego inhibition due to the great amount of energy spent processing the loss of the loved object. After

In this work, the ego is freed and the libido is displaced to another object. This process will be experienced.

For most people, at some point in their lives, achieving maturity can, when successful, lead to maturity.

Even grief considered normal is painful and requires a great effort to adapt to the new conditions.

of life.

Carter & McGoldric (1995, apud Fonseca, 2001) explain that throughout the life cycle

Events occur that need to be processed as grief, so that through this, the individual...

develop and give continuity to life. For this argument, the authors use passages from

family life cycles that require a certain amount of psychological work so that people can...

to re-establish and move forward, for example: leaving home (young single people); the birth of

First child; children starting school; children leaving home (the "empty nest" phenomenon);

and divorce.

The grieving process involves a succession of clinical conditions that blend and intertwine.

they replace. Bowlby (2002/2006) explains that, according to his clinical experience, and the study of

The behavior of primate species allowed him to observe and document the development of

The answers to this process are:



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• Numbness phase: This can last from a few hours to a week and may be interrupted by extremely intense outbursts of grief and/or anger. In this phase, the person feels shocked and unable to accept the news of the loss. Some patients tend to experience panic attacks. • Yearning and searching phase for the lost figure: This lasts from a few months to years. At this point, the reality of the loss begins to take hold, leading to bouts of discouragement and distress. Almost always, there is great restlessness, insomnia, and worry about the lost person, combined with a feeling of their concrete presence and a tendency to interpret sounds and signs as indications that they have returned. • Disorganization and despair phase: At this point, the bereaved person recognizes the immutability of the loss and that they will not be able to recover the lost person, experiencing a demotivation for life. Since it is necessary for the person to leave behind certain relationship patterns, it is almost inevitable that they will feel desperate because nothing can be saved, becoming depressed and apathetic. However, if all goes well, at this stage the individual can assess their situation and examine ways to cope with it. • Reorganization phase (to a greater or lesser degree): Finally, there is a reorganization of depression and hopelessness. And with greater tolerance for the changes experienced, the person makes it possible to invest affection in new objects.

Rando (2000) indicates points that need to be completed to accommodate loss in a healthy way: • Recognizing the loss: admitting and understanding it psychologically; • Reacting to the separation: experiencing the pain, the suffering, feeling, identifying, accepting and giving some form of expression; • Remembering and re-experiencing the lost person and the relationship: realistically reviewing and remembering and reliving feelings; • Abandoning old attachments to the lost object; • Readjusting to move readaptively towards the new world without forgetting the old: developing a new relationship with the deceased, forming a new identity; • Reinvesting

Grief therapy plays a key role in the process of working through loss.

offering emotional support and promoting healthy adjustment in the face of a broken relationship. and to the absence of the loved one. As evidenced by Parkes (1998) and Rando (2000), the Therapeutic support facilitates the expression and organization of grief, and assists the bereaved in... to reframe their experience and avoid complications such as pathological grief. Freud (1917/2006) and Bowlby (2002/2006) emphasizes that the psychotherapeutic process of grief requires time, patience, and a A welcoming environment so that the individual can re-establish affection and build new emotional bonds.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This work can be classified as a bibliographic research with sources. secondary, since the method chosen for its realization was a literature review based on theoretical framework and content analysis of books, websites, and articles focusing on information and knowledge, with emphasis on the themes of grief, systemic therapy and transgenerationality.

Bibliographic research is conducted by gathering theoretical references that have already been analyzed. and published through written and electronic means, such as books, scientific articles, and web pages.



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Any scientific work begins with a literature review, which allows the researcher...

to know what has already been studied on the subject. There is, however, scientific research that is based on solely through bibliographic research, seeking published theoretical references with the aim of to gather information or prior knowledge about the problem about which one is seeking...

answer (FONSECA, 2002, p. 32).

This research is qualitative in nature because it deals with concepts and arguments, and it has a character... descriptive. The objective of a work of this type is, regardless of size, to produce new and in-depth information.

The theoretical foundation began with an explanation of family structure, in Next, there was a clarification about systemic therapy, transgenerationality, and grief. After This approach introduced grief therapy with the goal of seeking a better understanding of its interference in life cycles. Finally, strategies created by the study were presented. from systemic relational therapy to clinical management and potential interventions.

Thus, an exploratory reading was carried out, in which the material to be used was chosen and a selective reading where the parts that were actually significant for the were highlighted. work. Finally, an analysis of the reference framework was carried out through the conclusion of the studies. presented.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The *results* of this work reveal the great benefits offered by psychology with A systemic approach for individuals seeking the therapeutic process.

According to Grandesso (2008), postmodern systems theories are increasingly closely related, being redefined from a constructivist epistemology perspective and monitoring. from the evolution of first-order to second-order cybernetics. The postmodern therapist leaves the The role of specialist, as was widely disseminated by structural and strategic theories, was shifted to that of an initiator. of the language game, that is, an articulator who interacts with family members in search of a solution to problems. The author also states that, nowadays, we are experiencing problems in family therapy. "multiplicity of approaches, as many as there are therapists involved" (GRANDESSO, 2008, p. 116). However, this multiplicity does not mean disorder, as there is a coherence. epistemological framework that unites postmodern therapy practices, thus organizing the action of therapists. It can be said that such coherence stems from the following assumptions:



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- The therapist is a co-constructor in the therapeutic system, working together with the family to solve problems;
- The therapist should be responsible for organizing the therapeutic conversation, but change can only happen from the person themselves and their autopoietic systemic organization;
- The legitimization of the local knowledge of people and contexts;
- The non-essentialist conception of self, which is constructed within the context of relationships;
- The person is the author of their own history and existence, responsible for their choices, and able to create and expand their possibilities;
- The emphasis on conversational practices and questioning processes as resources for reflection and change, as interaction between therapist and client increases.

Sick people know, or sense, what is happening to them, even if they don't.

They should be informed directly. Not telling them, or pretending that nothing is happening, fosters a situation that I call "poor quality theater." (KOVÁCS 2003)

Another point that Kovács (2003) reports is the family's attitude towards loss and grief, in which mentions that current society remains silent during mourning, saying that people should be strong, or Discreet, when it comes to death, don't bother anyone.

Kovács (2008) works with the perspective of listening as a fundamental element of The process of *communicating bad news* involves going beyond words and content, and being present. Aware of the tone of voice, the hesitations, the silence. The subtext can communicate much more than... that the lines.

Nichols and Schwartz (2007) clarify that if each member of a family is As modified, it continues to cause changes in others in a synchronous manner. The same authors They also state that any difficulty can be addressed with individual or family therapy, but that some situations are more prone to family interventions, such as problems with children, complaints about marriage or other intimate relationships, family hostilities, and symptoms that These changes develop in the individual concurrently with a significant family transition.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Therapy is a constructed experience of human encounter, a special kind of art with a A set of goals and ways to achieve them. [...] Therapy is not about truths, but about choices. Each therapist will have to make choices regarding the direction to take, the language to adopt, and the metaphors. selected, according to the senses offered and the changes desired. And no therapeutic training is complete until the therapist learns the truth of uncertainty (Nichols; Lee, 2009, pp. 231-232).

Systemic therapy contributes to the grieving process within the family context by offering a perspective... which allows one to address issues relevant to oneself and others, which implies various options for Development in practice is moving towards a new possibility in relation to the contexts there.



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related.

Walsh and McGoldrick (1998) state that the intensity of the crisis is determined by... imbalance between the amount of adjustment and the resources needed to achieve it. From this In this way, experience translates to the challenge of crisis, and overcoming it strengthens resilience. familiar with what is to come in future situations. Both loss and grief affect everyone. causing emotional symptoms, such as depression and anxiety, and physical symptoms. The importance of Support and encouragement from family members to express the feelings experienced are essential. During this period, it can also serve as a means of preventing physical or emotional symptoms.

Seeking a new way of thinking about grief through systemic understanding is to recognize and to contribute to the bereaved and their support system. Allowing for a new interaction between each party involved in which allows one to recall the significant loss with good memories, actively resulting in a new way of looking at life. It is possible that the bereaved and the family system may present a a new internal and external organization of oneself in relation to others and the environment in which one lives, bringing back The system's homeostasis, in a constructive and adaptive way. Primarily strengthened for new... life's obstacles.

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