

AN ARGUMENT FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF MORAL DISCUSSION INTO
THE FORUM OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY

by

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this critical review of published works is to attempt to gather support for the researcher’s argument for the introduction of moral language into the forum of Marriage and Family Therapy. This introduction would encompass establishing a common vocabulary with clear definitions, and heightening awareness of the concepts of examining motives, considering alternative choices, and looking at consequences. It is posited that Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) can facilitate moral discussion and ethical decision-making within the context of relationships, enhancing therapy by clarifying the need for familial and social obligation based upon the basic principle of respect for persons. Furthermore, this review will convey the essential nature of moral intervention through promoting the internalization of moral reasoning within one’s self,

and the promotion of moral discussion within systems such as families, social groups, organizations, and society itself.

Moral discussion, the examination of motives, the concept of choice, and awareness of consequences benefit individuals within the multiplicity of systems one lives in. By recognizing the necessary interdependence of humans on various levels of interaction, and the need for fairness in order to live moral lives, an opportunity for empathy is established. This in turn may further promote an awareness of the other, and the necessity of personal responsibility in the establishment of values and moral choice. The empathy considered is also that offered by the therapist for the clients so as to uphold the morale of members as they begin to question the meaning of their lives and the consequences of prior belief systems and established behavior patterns. Often this process will necessitate addressing the concept of forgiveness for self, and the other. The researcher convincingly argues that moral discussion, if introduced insightfully and respectfully, will benefit the multiplicity of systems that exist not only within families, but on a broader social level as well.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Moral development is an essential element to an individual's capacity for participating in relationship, and living in society with others. In Hintzman's study of empathy (2000) she convincingly expounds on and supports her notion that, "Moral development is as important to an individual's well being as is physical, social, and cognitive development," (31). Furthermore, she reminds the reader that a moral character within individuals is essential for society to be able to sustain people in a humane fashion. Morality allows for relationship and people living in community with one another by establishing a vocabulary for moral living and setting the framework for personal responsibility to self, and to others (Berkowitz and Grych, 1998).

Robert N. Beck and John B. Orr (1970), in Ethical Choice: A Case Study Approach, define ethics and morals, "'Ethics' is derived from the Greek word *ethos*, which means *character* and, in the plural, *manners*. The synonym 'morals' derives from the Latin *moralis*, which Cicero used to render the Greek *ethikos*, and also means character and manners or customs. Such etymologies," the authors write, "suggest that the ethical refers to one's own relationship (character) to his and other's conduct, manners and customs," (xiii). It seems the authors reinforce the notion that to be a moral agent, one must consider that one's way of behaving in the world, denotes one's way of being.

Moral behavior brings one outside the self, able to live in relationship with others and in community. It becomes a way of being present in the world and is one of the foundational bedrocks of humans' capacity for being resilient in an increasingly

challenging environment. Sometimes challenging life events result in much suffering and one wonders how an individual or a family system can survive and even flourish in spite of it all.

What is it that enables human beings to endure through suffering and hardship? How can one assign meaning to this battering of the soul? Victor Frankl (1946) eloquently states in Man's Search for Meaning, " that human life, under any circumstances, never ceases to have a meaning, and that this infinite meaning of life includes suffering and dying, privation and death" (104). Frankl also suggests that suffering *always* suffuses the soul regardless of the extent or nature of the suffering. What that seems to say, is that quantifying suffering does not exemplify the impact it has on one's life. What differentiates one's suffering is how it is perceived and acted upon.

How then, does one travel through this suffering and transcend it, strengthening one's self along the way? Flach (1995) comments on the environmental influences that perpetuate suffering, and states that in order to reduce the depressogenic forces by which people are battered, they must restore meaningful, constructive values within society. These values, which enhance the meaning of life, are grounded in morality and allow one to live a good life, a life rich with fulfillment and nurturing to the self and others.

Since the fourth century B.C. humankind has pondered the nature of morality; Plato taught that humans need goodness just as the physical world needs the support of the sun (Holmes, 1993). Holmes also quotes Nel Noddings, "Many persons who live moral lives do not approach moral problems formally" (214). Rather, it is apparent that living a moral life is part of the nature of human beings because all have the capacity to care for one another. The world and one's place in it, makes more sense when one

realizes that caring is central to the human condition; people engage one another through caring and find themselves worthy and valued, which fulfills their very being.

Daniel Goleman (1995) goes further, "For all rapport, the root of caring stems from emotional attunement, from the capacity for empathy" (96). He elucidates on the condition of alexithymics who lack empathy and thus, lack self awareness and awareness of others. This condition is often seen in psychopathic criminals, child molesters, and rapists. Human's ability to empathize allows each person to connect with another, to share the pain, to reach out and help, and to receive help and support. This, in turn, provides meaning and purpose to one's life in spite of travails and obstacles.

Goleman (1995) explicates the link between empathy and self-control, which was first posited by Aristotle when speaking about leading a virtuous life. It seems human beings need to be able to regulate the self, in order to defer gratification, keep one's emotions in check, and find the way to empathy. Thus empathic responses are mindful responses that reflect on one's life while simultaneously nurturing another's. Life choices become moral choices, and morality becomes a way of being in this world.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The statement of the problem for this research project is to elucidate the concept of morality in a clear manner to the Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT), while providing a substantial background of literature to support the project and its suggestion that moral discussion and ethical decision making be promoted within the therapeutic forum. In Soul Searching: Why Psychotherapy Must Promote Moral Responsibility, William J. Doherty (1995) clearly elucidates his concern that society is in crisis and part of the crisis is the therapist's inability or unwillingness to speak to "the profound social

and moral problems of our day,” (3). He posits that considerations of morals are still a vital part of understanding and evaluating human behavior, and that therapists need to begin examining contemporary social problems exacerbated by a therapeutic world that for some time, has overemphasized individual self-interest and neglected discussion of family and community responsibilities.

It is clear that relational problems abound within families, communities, and society. Pain and suffering exist on a global level, but are experienced by each individual within the aggregate society. Divorce, poverty, crime, mental illness, and many other maladies serve to change and distort the fabric of human lives and interdependent systems within which humans survive as a species. Often in suffering, individuals and families isolate, separating from the system within which one lives. Relationships suffer, loneliness exacerbates the pain, coping skills lose potency, life loses meaning, and it becomes harder to find one’s way.

In their book Invisible Loyalties, Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy and Geraldine M. Spark (1973) reinforce the importance of looking at the family system or context, within which clients live. When working with families, they assert the importance of an MFT considering all interactions, and caution therapists not to “avoid the ethical implications of the inevitable relational victimizations and exploitations,” (xv). Given the idea that change in relationships is inevitable, every movement a family member makes toward personal maturation implies disloyalty to the system as it is. However, exploring the system and the generational influences allows for the discovery of past injustices and facilitates the discernment of whether a member is an initiator of deeds, or a link in a chain of processes by which the whole family system is affected. The authors encourage

this process of discernment, “Once this member’s own suffering through past injustices can be explored, the process of family therapy is well under way,” (6).

Thus invisible records of invisible injustices which impact the system come to light and the generational migration of injustice, with the efforts to refute it, become part of the understanding of the family in context. The exploration of generational justice leads to an awareness of the multigenerational balance sheet wherein merit and indebtedness influence each individual’s life choices. Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark (1973) believe this process is vital to the understanding of family issues and individual behaviors. The deleterious effects of losing generational affiliation lead to a deprivation that impacts individuals, families, and the society in which they live.

Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark (1973) reflect on the *I-Thou* dialogue posited by Buber, as becoming “one characteristic of the system of family relationships,” (7). Because of this notion and the ancestry one has, it becomes impossible to think of *I* without regard to *You*. The authors assert that the family and the individual are not necessarily polarized, and reinforce the idea that the family therapist indeed, treats both the individual and the family system. Furthermore, they expound, “any social group must rely on an ethical network or else face that aspect of disintegration which Durkheim described under ‘anomie’,” (39). The anomy, or social instability and alienation which is caused by an erosion of standards and values, not only is destructive to relationships, but leads to a sense of purposelessness in life and loss of family values.

In The New Family, David Hamburg (1993) writes that values and ideals have drastically changed in all peoples’ lives, a complexity of new types of relationships has been created, and the family has been reconfigured. In A Demoralized Society: The

British/American Experience, Gertrude Himmelfarb (1994-95) explicates on the demoralization of the society within which these families live, and seeks the end of moral neutrality. There is a diffusion of responsibility exacerbating the fragility of the human relationships that calls for accountability. Hamburg (1993) believes that each individual and social organization is responsible for upholding decency of human relationship.

This researcher agrees with Hamburg, and believes the therapeutic forum is by nature, an opportunity to introduce moral language and ethical decision-making, enhancing relationships within the family and with the larger community within which families live. One might argue that this endeavor leaves the clients vulnerable to therapist bias or unrealistic expectations leading to disappointment, failure, and blame.

Nevertheless, this researcher seeks to convince the reader of the essential presence of moral discussion in therapy, and the MFT's responsibility to provide the opportunity in an ethical format of support and concern for the client family, which exists within a social system seemingly designed, and often failing, to support and sustain it.

One might also suggest this moral awakening is an unrealistic endeavor and too idealistic in a social climate that leaves people feeling neglected, powerless, defensive, and alienated. The researcher's goal is not to suggest an overwhelming task of total social reform nor an overhaul of the entire family system as presented in therapy. However, this work would not be complete were the researcher not to highlight broader social implications if change were to take place, beginning, of course, with individuals and families.

Within a Marriage and Family Therapy context, an MFT can be a foundation builder for individuals and families to transcend personal suffering and enhance

relationships, thus promoting each one's vital social presence. This process is facilitated by the introduction of moral language, the concept of choice, and the necessity for looking at one's motivations and the consequences that might arise as a result of one's behavior. Taking the other into consideration engenders empathy, which strengthens the connections between individuals within a system, promoting a mindfulness in relationship that may in itself, create new meaning in one's life.

Within the forum of marriage and family therapy, an opportunity exists to raise consciousness to moral reasoning and an awareness of choice. Doherty (1995) believes these issues of community well being and moral responsibility are ever present within the therapeutic context. Furthermore, he recommends that balancing attention to these issues and that of the individual's needs, can greatly advance the alleviation of human problems. This type of guidance can wake up the innate wisdom of each individual within a system, to look at potential consequences, and enhance the ability for empathy. Furthermore, not only are clients guided to look at their own influence on others, but also taught how to hold others accountable as well. This holding the other accountable is not grounded in a volatile outpouring of blame, but serves to promote personal responsibility and uphold the idea of justice.

In How Psychology Sanctions the Cult of the Self, Michael Wallach and Lise Wallach (1985) suggest that pop psychology and the psychology profession have given sanction to the self-absorption that seems to pervade today's society. They quote Carl Rogers, as saying, "The only question which matters is, 'Am I living in a way which is deeply satisfying to me, and which truly expresses me?'" (46). This "narcissistic gospel" cultivates an outlook on life that Wallach and Wallach believe, "leads people away from

the sources of happiness and satisfaction they so desperately seek,” (47) and may be making psychological problems worse. The authors suggest this happiness and satisfaction may depend on cultivating a sense of responsibility and seeking goals outside the self.

This moral awakening can positively influence the inherent strength of the individual’s internal system, one’s relationships with those in the family system, and within the broader social system as well. People need a sense of belongingness to flourish; this basic human need is considered relevant within the endeavors of this paper, which seeks to emphasize the importance of healing relationships and promoting the qualities that help sustain the human race.

In Elements of the Socratic Method: III. Universal Definitions, James C. Overholser (1994) discusses the process of defining concepts and proposes that introducing definitions remove ambiguity of speech so that the individual or family members and MFT clearly understand the meaning and content of one another’s statements. Furthermore, introducing and defining the components of a common language builds new knowledge, broadens the each person’s perspective, limits inaccurate overgeneralizations, and helps to guide behavioral changes. What follows are definitions, which will be used throughout this paper in the process of constructing an understanding of morality and ethical discussion.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Awareness of Choice - Having knowledge of alternative ways in which to act or respond to a situation or circumstance.

Consideration - The act of taking into account, how one's choices might impact the other.

Empathy - Ability to connect with another, to be emotionally aware of the other's experience.

Ethical- A way of being in the world that denotes character.

Examination of Motives - Conscientiously discerning the reason why one act or response is chosen over another.

Fairness - Decisions are made conscientiously, with the needs of all parties considered.

Justice - Fairness of treatment and equality of consideration, to all parties involved.

Looking at Consequences - Taking time to think and predict what possible outcomes might occur as a result of choices.

Morale - The spirit of a person or group, as conveyed by cheerfulness, confidence, and willingness to participate or invest in a task.

Morality - Cultivating an informed conscience that extends life toward investing in a good personal life for all of humankind.

Obligation - A self-imposed restriction on one's liberty that requires holding one's self responsible for performing a certain duty. When this is neglected, accountability is in order.

Personal Responsibility - Holding one's self accountable for behavior that harms another.

In other words, justifying the act (making it permissible in this given circumstance), compensating for damage done, or sincerely apologizing for harm done.

Respect for Persons - Treating humanity in such a way that the end result for the other is that which one would expect for one's self. Treating the other as an *end*, and not as a *means to an end*.

Values - A standard or belief that gives meaning to life and purpose for being.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

CARING

While expounding on the ills that plague society today and serve to weaken the family and alienate it from potential resources, Hamburg (1993) pointedly and repeatedly reinforces his belief that it is every individual's responsibility to promote caring and moral responsibility toward self and others. In Discovering our Children, Taffel (1999) asks, "How can family therapy help parents get to know their children better, reclaim them from the casually violent mass culture and raise them to become strong and moral adults?" (29) He asserts that value-free neutrality encouraged and employed within the therapeutic context, has made therapists claim a position of not setting standards of right and wrong. However, Taffel reminds us, "without a firm set of values for raising children, we cannot be much help to parents who are floundering around in their own moral confusion," (29).

In Take Back Your Kids: Confident Parenting in Turbulent Times, William J. Doherty (2000) reflects on a new concept of childhood culture wherein the parents are viewed as providers of parental services, and children are viewed as consumers of these services. Doherty believes this view facilitates the loss of vision for children to bear responsibilities to their families and communities. He explicates, "In a balanced world, children are expected not only to receive from adults, but also to actively contribute to the world around them, to help care for the younger and the infirm, to add their own marks to the quality of family life, and to contribute to the common good in their school and communities," (15). Without this kind of participation and contribution, society's

children are not invested, and not actively a part of the families and communities within which they live.

Taffel (1999) asserts, that because of the societal ills and parental need for guidance, Marriage and Family Therapists “can no longer be confined to abstract family process and ignore the content of what parents should actually do. Therapeutic neutrality aside, the Family Therapist must stand for something”(32). Sometimes the open-ended therapeutic questions have to be discarded and bold directives given instead. It is the MFT’s responsibility to stand for something, to help parents learn what a child needs to develop and flourish in this increasingly expanding world.

So why should an MFT support the notion of fostering a caring nature in the client family? In her study on empathy and moral development, Hintzman (2000) supports the notion that moral development be looked at in three perspectives, that of moral feeling, moral reasoning, and moral behavior. It becomes apparent to this researcher, that the concept of caring is an affective component of morality, one that seems to support moral relationships because of, and in spite of, the challenges involved. Madanes (1990) furthers this notion, in Sex, Love, and Violence and suggests the MFT’s part is that of feeling empathy, exhibiting kindness, keeping up the family morale, and supporting a moral atmosphere.

In his publication Finding Flow: The Psychology of Engagement with Everyday Life, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1997) asserts the irrefutable notion that “well being is deeply attuned to relationships,” (78) and that, indeed, the consciousness which one develops resonates from reciprocal relationships with others. Csikszentmihalyi reminds the reader that even human predecessors, primate relations, have learned that acceptance

by the group supports a longer life than solitary living. This mutually supportive relationship system, however, “cannot be gotten for free” (81). Rather, the author asserts the necessity for goal compatibility so that each participant supports the well being of the other, and reaps the benefit of well being for the self.

In Trust Based Therapy: A Contextual Approach, Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy and Barbara Krasner (1980) discuss relational investments in past and future generations and delineate them as not only a conglomeration of facts, but as ethical claims. What this means, they explicate, is that “receiving people are obliged to give. Expecting people are obliged to meet expectations,” (768). They convincingly argue for the concept that in receiving, one tacitly commits one’s self to a reciprocity that necessitates one investing in the life of the other.

In their essay Justice, Denise Breton, Christopher Largent, and Stephen Lehman (2000) explicate the notion of justice, asserting that they believe justice balances the relationship with the self, and with others. The fairness of treatment and equality of consideration that justice denotes, seemingly shapes how people feel and think about their presence in the world. It touches all areas of their lives, their expectations, their decisions, and their sense of meaning and ultimately, their self-worth. In their reflections on the social practice of justice, which takes all into consideration and necessitates the commitment of each individual, the authors say, “Whatever model of justice we apply to ourselves shapes our relations with others. Ideally, we ask justice to harmonize and protect all of our relationships-with loved one’s, communities, businesses, animals, nature, and the Earth-so that justice serves as the backbone of personal, social, and planetary well-being,” (33).

It is apparent to Hamburg (1993) that even in infancy, providing opportunity for a healthy attachment forms a fundamental basis for decent human relationships throughout a lifetime. Caring, secure relationships are crucial to the overall development of people, from birth to death. Furthermore, one could posit, each individual has a potential for influencing an infinite number of lives within the individual's life span. In Playful Approaches to Serious Problems: Narrative Therapy with Children and Their Families, by Jennifer Freeman, David Epston, and Dean Lobovits (1997), the authors recognize a delight that children experience when they share their knowledge and skills with peers. The authors imply that this delight accompanies an "altruistic satisfaction" (127) resulting from contributing to the experience of others.

Satir (1988) delineates the MFT's role in her book, The New Peoplemaking, and asserts that within the family context is a "real place to develop real people" (18). This atmosphere of being valued and valuing the other enhances relationships and curbs the devaluing of self, which is linked to individual and social problems. Satir poignantly declares, "Giving ourselves full permission to make the family a place to develop people who are more truly human will reflect itself in a safer and more humanly responsible world" (18).

Hamburg (1993) points out that the human species, apart from any other, requires a huge parental/adult investment in order to achieve the fulfillment of each child's potential. More than just economically investing, time, energy, thought, consideration, sensitivity, patience, understanding, coping, persistence, determination, and commitment all are part of the elements necessary to foster the development of a quality adult, capable of decent human relations. Yet it is through this parental or otherwise responsible

advocacy for the raising of society's children, that transformative relationships take place, enabling each child, as one matures, to weather the strifes by which they are challenged. Froma Walsh (1998) supports this notion in her book Strengthening Family Resilience, "Genuine caring proves effective even in families where parenting skills are more modest" (51). Thus, satisfaction gained from investing in caring relationships, in turn, reinforces involvement and mutual investment.

In Families and Family Therapy, Minuchin(1974) suggests that marriage and family therapy can transform the family, making changes that set in place expectations that govern each individual's behavior. Transformation of the family system, he claims, is a restructuring that leads to change for the system, and each member. These changes, Minuchin further explicates, occur in the synapses, the "way people relate to each other" (111). Furthermore, Minuchin posits the MFT must assume leadership of the ensuing therapeutic system, and intervene in ways to support the transformation of the family and enhance the growth of each member.

Wallach and Wallach (1985) believe it is within this therapeutic context, that "We-thinking can be nurtured just like me-thinking can."(15). The authors take this notion further than the family and wonder about the efficacy of instilling the ability to think collectively not only in individuals and families, but in society as well. Furthermore, they assert interconnected groups of people assure that everyone is taken care of, caring and helping become a way of being, a way people act in their daily lives.

One might wonder why an MFT should care about the larger system within which the family exists. In Imagine What America Could Be in the 21st Century, Paul Hawken (2000) writes in his essay entitled Possibilities, that damage is occurring which we do not

even consider thinking about, to people we don't know, but "none of us individually wants what we are doing collectively," (3). It seems that if humans do not take care, then they cannot be assured of being shown care by the other. Hamburg (1993) believes in the essential nature of responsibility toward others and believes humans can achieve much in a concerted effort if one thinks of the entire population as large extended family, tied to a shared destiny, and requiring an ethic of care/aid. He believes decency and national interest must motivate people

In his essay Family, John Bradshaw (2000) takes this further in explicating the necessity for caring to be fostered, when he ponders the human condition, "What destroys us might not be nuclear war, but the refusal of the opportunity to create a deep democracy, one in which we trust one another, love the stranger, and have compassion for those who are weak and in need of our care" (215). It is through this collective thinking, that social feeling is engendered wherein one might transcend the limits of self and connect with care for others. This helps to facilitate a clearer understanding of one's self through the understanding of others.

What can one say with any certainty about this orientation toward the caring for and being aware of others' plight? In Sophistication in Theorizing About Social Problems as a Condition for the Good Life, Chau-Kiu Cheung (1998) supports the idea of socially oriented wisdom as benefiting the good life of both the individual and the larger social structure. Furthermore, Cheung asserts that treasuring fairness in social conditions takes the individual's well being into consideration because the individual, through caring, places the self within the context of a society that cares.

When considering the ethics of care, Carol Gilligan (1987) believes that care rests

on the idea that self is interdependent with others, and actions are responsive within the relationship rather than individually summoned. So one is defined by connection to others and disengagement is a moral problem, since it breeds moral blindness or indifference, a failure to discern need and respond to it. So a respect for persons leads to a respect for self.

Nel Noddings (1984) makes a further distinction with caring, and suggests that morality in action requires natural caring and ethical caring. Natural caring is acting on behalf of the other because of a willingness and desire to do so. Ethical caring requires more effort, but does not supercede natural caring. Rather it is built on caring for the other, and strives to maintain a caring attitude rather than to reject the notion of care of the other. She asserts, “We are never free, in the human domain, to abandon our preparedness to care,” (203). However, Noddings releases one from obligation if there is no possibility of completion, for instance, when distance diminishes the efficacy of one’s care. Thus, one can choose to do something in caring for those beyond concentric circle of care, but is not obligated to do so. Claudia Card (1990) believes that even when we may never significantly affect strangers’ lives, or know them individually, minimally, we at least have responsibilities of care that make us refrain from doing them harm.

Holmes (1993) reminds us, “It takes caring to be central to the human condition,” (213). Caring and being cared for makes one’s world more tangible, more worthwhile. A willingness to nurture others in the hope they will become nurturing, caring people, makes fulfillment for self and other, a potentiality. Holmes notes that the ethics of caring has been traced as far back as 5th century, B.C. to the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu, who in his writing, prompted one to act with no expectations, for the good of others. Holmes

believes the capacity to care resides in each human being. When the natural caring for others is absent, ethical caring emerges wherein one holds one's self as capable of being a caring person. Caring for another even in the absence of natural caring preserves the capacity for caring in the self, and enhances the notion of reciprocal caring. Thus one is caring, and cared for.

Therefore moral living is part of humans' nature because of the capacity to care for one another. The world and one's place in it makes more sense when one realizes that caring is central to the human condition. Humans engage one another through caring and find themselves worthy and valued, which fulfills each person's very being. It promotes purpose in living, and lends meaning to one's life.

Walsh (1998) reinforces the notion of realizing the interconnectedness of life and relationships, which involves values, purpose, and meaning. Just as individuals survive and prosper best within significant relationships, families thrive best when connected to yet larger systems. This larger value system helps define life as meaningful and significant. A system of values and beliefs helps families transcend painful and uncertain realities, and make sense in the larger picture, leaving room for hope. Without this perspective, Walsh believes, "we are more vulnerable to hopelessness and despair" (69).

Systemically speaking, caring for others and for social change is caring for the self within and thru the caring society one works to create. Berkowitz and Grych (1998) postulate that the rescuers of Jews in Nazi Germany were motivated by strong values of care and inclusiveness transmitted to them by attachment bond with parents, which forms the prototype for all relationships. Hamburg (1993) wants humans to care, but asserts "Caring for young people is not just about avoiding tragedy for them, it affects the entire

nation,” (3) thus once again, supporting the idea that in caring for the individual, the collective community is taken into account as well.

It appears Walsh (1998) also supports the broader emphasis on social change, “To encourage families to alter belief systems and create a better future, therapists must also make efforts to build a supportive social environment in which to bring dreams to fruition.” (78). In Fostering Goodness: Teaching Parents to Facilitate Children’s Moral Development, Berkowitz & Grych (1998) assert that moral behavior flows from an interest in and concern for other people, and cannot be developed introspectively, but through attunement to one’s emotional connection to others. When there is a mutual caring for one another within the support of a social group, the afore-mentioned group becomes family-like to its members. This caring takes place actively, within the dynamic of relational interaction, and nurturing it, facilitating it, unfolds within the process of the MFT relating to and with the client family.

Caring shores up the strength of the family's soul, and enhances family problem solving, equality within the family, spirituality, flexibility, honesty, hope, family hardiness, trust, and overall health. These resiliency factors all serve to strengthen, enlighten, and empower the individuals within the family, and the family within the community in which it lives. Certainly there is a continuum of caring and one can surely hope and strive to maintain the fragile beauty of the family system, while empowering the individuals within it to continue weaving the intricate threads of its history, together. Over time, as caring increases, vulnerability decreases. The family is helped to grow stronger and more united.

One might still question, “What’s the use? How can caring for others benefit the

self?” This researcher asserts it can and does, through a sense of connectedness, a sense of ownership and pride in contributing to society, and through the lives of children, and one’s children’s children, even in the challenging environment humans struggle to survive in.

In his essay Systems, Peter Senge (2000) describes a cognitive fragmentation that occurs when people have a perspective of other systems that are separate, in and of themselves. Senge asserts that only when people recognize the interconnectedness of systems, will they recognize personal contributions of the self, through choices made. He cautions the reader not to assume he is implying that singular individuals can reshape or rehabilitate the system within which one lives. However, he does posit a guiding principle, “We produce what we do not intend because we enact systems that we do not see. And,” he continues, “learning to see is a life’s work,” (177). Senge reminds the reader of a sentiment of Goethe’s, “In searching for your self, look for it in the world; in searching for the world, look for it in your self,” (177). The argument for knowing one’s self in relationship to the other, is yet again, supported.

Thus the scope of intent to care, grows from the individual, to family, to society, and to future generations. In Imagine What America Could be like in The 21st Century, Branfman’s (1996) essay Legacies explicates his view that people need to consider future generations when he laments, “We cannot yet see that we have become the greatest threat facing future generations,” (18). Csikszentmihalyi(1993) beseeches the reader to ponder what then, does one want to create for the future? He reminds the reader that the past is not a perfect representation of what to strive for.

Walsh (1998) believes that one must strive for the caring that nourishes and

supports the interdependent nature of human relationship. Furthermore, she explicates, “All concepts of the self and constructions of the world are fundamentally products of relationships, and it is through our interdependence that meaningful lives are best sustained,” (51). Frankl (1946) points out that humans have the capacity for caring, for living moral lives, and it is this richness of potential that lends meaning and gives purpose to life. Thus, living this moral life is inherently part of the nature of human beings, because human beings all have the capacity to care for one another.

When there is mutual caring for one another within the support of a social group, then interdependence is fostered and this sense of caring and belongingness becomes critical to one’s feeling about one’s self. This can manifest within the individuals in many ways, including but not limited to, a sense of ownership or control within and about one’s own life. This often synchronistically occurs with the recognition by individuals of an intimate connection between one’s own behavior and life’s outcomes. Weinstein (1995) elucidates that this awareness “does not bestow immunity to tyranny, but instead emphasizes acquisition of knowledge, skill, and attitudes that support self-sufficiency and social interdependence” (19).

This interdependence or social integration is that which helps each member of a society feel one is not alone, which fulfills a powerful human need to belong. The world and one’s place in it makes more sense when one realizes that caring is central to the human condition; humans engage one another through caring and find themselves worthy and valued, which fulfills some very fundamental human needs. It is this essential nature of caring that fosters hope for a future, which sustains and nourishes the human race.

Robert McAfee Brown (1986) believed in fostering a caring nature when he

wrote the preface for the Twenty-fifth Anniversary Edition of Night, written by Elie Wiesel in which Wiesel portrays the Holocaust from the perspective of his boyhood eyes. McAfee Brown writes, “Among the few who survived the onslaught of that formidable shadow turned substance, was Elie Wiesel, whose deliverance condemned him to tell the story to an unbelieving and uncaring world. But because of his telling, many who did not believe have come to believe, and some who did not care have come to care,” (vi).

EMPATHY

By inviting one to think about Elie Wiesel and Brown’s preface written for the book, “Night,” the invitation is made to consider the impact caring can have on a family system and the society within which it survives. It is apparent many stressors are pervasive throughout today's society and within family systems, all forming a compelling argument for the preventative and restorative nature of caring for the other.

Parental attitudes and behaviors are very important in this endeavor, as is support from the social system within which the family resides. When risk factors are prevalent and crisis is at hand, it becomes increasingly apparent why these measures are necessary in order to sustain the family system in a healthy and viable fashion. The Marriage and Family Therapist can help promote the notion of caring for the other, within the context of a therapeutic setting.

When caring is fostered, empathy is born and there is a positive influence on the inherent strength of the family. Empathy is the ability to be aware and attuned to another. This empathy, as Berkowitz and Grych (1998) observe, is one of the fundamental elements of morality, along with conscience, moral reasoning, and altruism. Empathic behavior brings one outside the self, able to live in relationship with others and in community. Daniel Goleman (1995) writes that empathy builds on self-awareness, a quality that enables one to be aware of self in relation to the other. It becomes a way of being present in the world and is one of the foundational bedrocks of humans' capacity

for moral reasoning.

Goleman (1995) posits that the emotional attunement of empathy promotes caring for the other. He writes that the roots of morality are found in empathy, that human's ability to empathize allows people to connect with one another, to share the pain, and to reach out and help. He explores the root of empathy, the Greek *empathia* and elucidates this term meaning "feeling into" (98). Goleman posits this attunement as reciprocal, part of the "rhythm of relationship" (100).

Carol Bly (1996) takes the notion of empathy further in her book Changing the Bully Who Rules the World: Reading & Thinking About Ethics. She postulates that empathy can be a tool by which people in power are stopped from *wanting* to exploit as much as they would otherwise. She stresses the importance of teaching empathy in steps that one might practice, but asserts that people cannot grow and change, until they have felt "heard out," (83) by a caring and benignant mentor who supports the process. She posits this as being essential because, "The purpose of *any* kind of empathy is to give someone a chance to have his or her story heard," because many people have never had this experience. She explicates further, "Since they have never had the experience of being heard out themselves, they haven't developed a taste for hearing out anyone else," (84).

Berkowitz and Grych (1998), seem to believe that parents can be taught how to foster the development of empathy and a moral nature. Furthermore, they write, early and middle childhood is "when these characteristics develop " (371). They agree with Aristotle in that moral agents need self-control, which enables one to put emotional reactivity aside so as to be interested in and concerned for others. This social interaction is critical to psychological health.

How is an empathic and moral consideration of others fostered in the development of individuals? One has to consider an intellectual development within an ethical realm encompassing consideration for others. Weinstein (1995) convincingly

argues that ethical consideration requires a rational approach to values and emotional concerns and is critically important to the strength and vitality of all human relationships. A strong ethical and moral foundation then serves as an internal control on the behavior of persons, and encourages a building of trust between all people. Within this realm of morality, the nature of social exchange and cooperation is defined, that which makes social existence and justice possible.

When one is grounded in a stable environment with healthy attachment and good role models, the stage is set for moral development and the fostering of empathy. Flach (1995) clarifies the need for supportive environmental influences in the process of developing a more resilient nature so people can overcome the challenges by which they are challenged. He thinks an important component of a person's development is a person's environment and believes it must be sufficiently supportive to allow a person to go through the changes one does when developing a belief system and discovering the behaviors that are compatible with values.

Berkowitz & Grych (1998) posit that moral development is not only a result of environmental enhancement, but also evolves from the internalization of standards for behavior. Braithwaite and Blamey (1998) define these internalized standards as values that "reconcile a person's needs with the demands of a social life " (363). Parents can facilitate this process by which children internalize moral standards, leading to mutually beneficial relationships wherein people have an interconnected feeling, a sense of belonging and an empathic awareness of the other. Coontz (1995) explicates even further, "A society that hopes to foster personal responsibility to others must convince its members that they share some connectedness, that their fortunes are somehow bound together," (18).

In Beliefs, Spirituality, and Transcendence: Keys to Family Resilience, Froma Walsh (1998) thinks relationships compel one to accept the limits of one's own power, assessing what can be changed and acting accordingly. These newly adopted changes can

make a difference in an individual's life, thus influencing the family, and the community within which the family lives. In community with one another, people can often take what part they can, in order to influence that which is accessible to them. A foundation of hope can ensue which provides a positive outlook that lends meaning to life; without hope, despair robs life of meaning and the ability to envision and strive for a better future.

According to Walsh (1998) not only do people have to believe in their efforts, but social support has to be in place as well. When supportive relationships are in place, people feel encouraged to overcome the odds. Where encouragement exists, courage is born. This courage empowers people to make the best of difficult situations, and to strive to overcome oppression and hardship with their best efforts. Nichols (1987) asserts that therapeutic empathy can help create a holding environment for the entire family, which is needed during difficult times of transition and change. This empathic regard for the family also can serve as a model to foster empathy between family members, which in itself, can induce a shift in the family dynamic.

Empathy positively impacts one's relationship with another and stimulates comprehension and understanding of the reasons for making certain behavioral choices, bearing in mind the consequence of that behavior on another person. The consequentialist nature of this awareness calls one to respect another, and expect respect in return; thus, each individual has equal opportunity to influence the outcome of an interaction and the ability to adjust and adapt to difficult situations is enhanced.

In their book The Expanded Family Life Cycle: Individual, Family, and Social Perspectives 3rd Edition, Betty Carter and Monica McGoldrick (1999) discuss the maturation of self as an interdependent entity and posit that this maturing “requires that we appreciate our basic dependence on each other and on nature,” (29). The development of empathy and ability for self-control, allowing one to engage in the social practice of caring for others and being cared for, is another component of this maturation. So too, is the ability to relate to others generously even when one's beliefs are in conflict with the

other's.

Brabeck and Kenny (1994) convincingly delineate how this mutual respect and consideration for one another can be taught through Human Rights Education. This interesting concept suggests that young people should be given historical accounts of human rights abuses of the past so one might compare them with life today. It seems this exposure to true conflicts and educational discussion of human combativeness promotes moral growth and awareness. This also sets the stage for a student to see the effect of choices made by those who have introduced significant reforms in society. This introduces the concept of choice and explicates how one can make a difference and can help prevent abuse of individuals' rights. The authors assert, "students learn that history is not inevitable " (334).

This awareness of choice and empathetic nature promotes understanding between all people and empowers individuals to be pro-active; this prevents one from resting in a passive stance of ignorance or indifference. What this promotes is an ethic of care, which calls one to consider what it is like to be cared for, and how it fulfills one to be caring. Goleman (1995) reiterates the thoughts of John Stuart Mill who spoke of empathic anger, which arouses one's concern for others because the wounding of the other, is a wounding of the self. Mills considered empathy to be the "guardian of justice," (105).

The author Chau-Kiu Cheung (1998) reminds the reader of the cyclical nature of caring and its role as "part of the good life," (353). Cheung construes this maturing consideration as benefiting both the individual and society, calling it, "socially oriented wisdom," (353). Furthermore, Cheung seems to say that research shows this supports the relationship between moral reasoning and adaptation, both of which facilitate the self-actualization of the individual, and the strengthening of societal relationships.

McCown & Johnson (1993) expound on this when they state that families with few resources like social relationships and support, few friends and family within the surrounding community, and alienation or isolation, are highly vulnerable to stressors and

at high risk for becoming subjugated by oppression. Because people are socially dependent on one another, empathy, moral growth and ability to adapt will enhance human relationships; furthermore, these skills help humans to be sustained as a species by promoting social order.

It is clear that social problems abound when mutual understanding and consideration is lacking; understanding is crucial to the ability to problem solve, and good problem solving skills are critical for one's well being. Furthermore, Cheung (1998) reminds the reader that "Ineffective problem solving creates a condition of learned helplessness that can only aggravate personal distress " (357). So one must invest one's self and abilities in order to promote the well being of the self and others within a community.

Taylor and Dryfoos (1998) seem to say that participation in meaningful work that benefits other community members in some direct and personal way promotes well being for all involved. . What better way is there of promoting ownership of life? Not only does this call one to participate in active solutions to life's difficulties for self and others, but it promotes personal awareness and moral growth as well. Taylor and Dryfoos reaffirm the impact one can make on another's life: "it was knowing that someone cared that made a difference," (47). It is apparent that humans confer value on one another and spend time and energy on what is valued. The moral interaction between people is essential to the enhancement of a vital society whose people are empathically aware of one another and willing to promote the well being of all.

This writer believes the fabric of morality can indeed, provide an underlying strength for the tapestry of human lives. The nature of empathy heightens awareness of the other and calls one to live mindfully, considering choices and their impact on the other.

MINDFUL LIVING

When one considers choices and the resulting consequences, one's heart is opened to the potential harm which might result. Facilitating this mindful approach to interacting with others promotes the well being of self and the other. Thus, empathic responses are mindful responses, responses that reflect on life while simultaneously nurturing another's. Life choices become moral choices, and morality becomes a way of being in this world. Thomas K. Abbott's (1949) translation of the eighteenth century philosopher Immanuel Kant, states that Kant believed a moral life presupposed a rational life, that reason not only acquires knowledge and helps one to perceive truth, but also operates as a guide to understand and direct the will.

Holmes (1993) suggests that beings who are capable of deliberating and reasoning, and making free choices, are capable of freely and reflectively choosing to do one thing over another. It seemingly makes sense to do so, he suggests, and so it becomes necessary to question choice, examine motivations, and reflect on whether something is morally right or not. So moral conduct is rational conduct, and makes sense. Reason becomes the reason for making one choice over another. Holmes believes an individual is part of every situation in which one participates, and a moral discernment has to take place with no guarantees of success, but at the very least, intentionality seeks consistency between thoughts and behavior.

In The Meaning and Measurement of Moral Development, Lawrence Kohlberg (1981) postulates that moral reasoning is just one element of the domain of morality. He explicates these elements and asserts, "The student of morality is concerned not only with moral reasoning, but also with moral action-the process by which people arrive at moral

decisions and take action on the basis of those decisions,” (35). Moral judgment and decision-making are only part of the equation of moral development and morality as a way of being in the world.

In The Road Less Traveled & Beyond: Spiritual Growth in an Age of Anxiety, M Scott Peck (1997) asserts that often people think they may make choices that only affect the self, but in reality affect countless others. Humans do not live in isolation and are social creatures also influenced by the other, be it family members, friends, or organizations, be they business or social. Peck emphasizes the need for awareness of what one is doing with the choices made and resulting actions upon others. He reinforces the validity and sensibility of systems theory and reflects, “We have come to realize that virtually everything we do has an effect upon our environment, and that these effects have the potential to either nurture us or destroy us,” (171). Peck encourages his readers to consider choices with an active realization that each choice yields its own consequence, and these consequences are part of what one must reflect on when making decisions.

In his book, Do One Thing Different, Bill O’Hanlon (1999) reminds one to consider that one has choices, not necessarily about what one feels or what first gut reaction is, but about what one chooses to do. He asserts, “We as humans have choices about the actions we take,” (113). O’Hanlon encourages the reader to watch out for blaming the other for what choices one might make. He posits that blaming the other closes down the opportunity for growth in the self, and interferes with the process of change and the promotion of healthy relationships.

In Beyond Blame: A new Way of Resolving Conflicts in Relationships, Jeffrey

Kottler (1994) asserts that taking responsibility for participation in a conflict does not mean one should blame the self then, since the other is not being blamed. He explicates, “Taking responsibility for the relationships in your life that are not going well without accepting blame for the troubles, involves an internal process wherein you address a series of introspective inquires,” (83). Thus, self-reflection leads one to an awareness of how one participates in relationship, and offers opportunity for a mindful approach to problem solving. Kottler asserts that even when the other’s behavioral changes lag, this change of perspective for the self fosters needed change in one’s own attitudes and behaviors.

In Changing Through Therapy, Dr. Lynne Bravo Rosewater (1987) proposes that change does not necessarily connote a taking away of something, but can be thought of as an adding on. Thus, the prospect of change does not require a losing of part of one’s self, but can enhance one’s life and relationships with others by learning new behavioral responses. She elucidates, “Changing is contingent on two factors: 1) that we become aware of what we are doing; and 2) that we become aware of other options,” (3). It seems people can be cognitively aware of their actions but not necessarily consciously aware.

Virginia Satir (1978) in Your Many Faces: The First Step to Being Loved, encourages thought, reflection, and learning, “All too often, people are unaware that through their lack of knowledge, imagination and awareness, they have built high walls around themselves over which they cannot see their possibilities,” (46). Change requires a conscious decision to explore the multi-dimensional qualities of interactions with others, to see what alternatives exist, and to make mindful choices given what one then knows.

M. Scott Peck, (1978) in The Road Less Traveled, writes of the difficulties experienced by people in their daily living, and within their relationships. He ponders these problems and encourages the reader to actively work at solving them. Before this can happen, he asserts, “we must accept responsibility for a problem before we can solve it,” (32). Thus the imperative becomes not to avoid the problem but to reflect on it, and in doing so, come to understand how one can make different choices and facilitate different outcomes.

Anthony deMello (1992) discusses this conscious decision to reflect on one’s life and one’s participation in relationships and in the world, in his book Awareness. He posits that people often start living with a kind of tunnel vision that hypnotizes and limits one’s field of vision and understanding. What this also seems to do, is place limitations on one’s own growth, and the further development of mutually supportive relationships. Furthermore, he convincingly conveys the notion that to be invested in one’s life and relationships, one has to be willing to listen, to see, to wake up and think about what one is doing with one’s life, how one is impacting others and inevitably, the self. This self-observation serves to broaden personal awareness. Yet, deMello challenges the reader to do this without blame and judgment, but with openness and understanding. Reflecting on the self and one’s way of being in the world can be a fascinating process and the information gained, helps one participate in life and in relationships more fully.

In The Miracle of Mindfulness, Thich Nhat Hanh (1987) considers this mindfulness of one’s way of being in the world, to be a type of self-discipline that necessitates a conscious awareness of “each breath, each movement, every thought and feeling, everything which has any relation to ourselves,” (13). He wants the reader to

consider mindfulness a way of keeping consciousness attuned to what one's present reality is. This reality includes not only nurturing relationships and aspects to living, but the hardships of everyday living as well.

Thich Nhat Hanh (1987) recommends a mindful approach that includes being able to focus one's attention on what is necessary, to be aware, and to make good judgments. He considers mindfulness a miracle, an opportunity by which people can "master and restore ourselves," (21). Thus, mindful living is living in awareness of what each encounter entails, and knowing one has choice as to how to consider and respond to that encounter. Mindful living asks that one considers just what is valued in life, and what gives one's life meaning and purpose.

VALUES/MEANING

These values, which enhance the meaning of life, are grounded in morality and allow one to live a good life, a life rich with fulfillment and nurturing to the self and others. Working together to transcend life's inequities reinforces individual strengths and lends credence to what one values, to what one finds meaning and purpose in. Walsh (1998) goes further to explicate this transcendent purpose to be spiritual in nature. Indeed, when studying social and family systems, she reminds us to "conceptualize persons as bio-psychosocial-spiritual beings and to acknowledge that suffering, and often the injustice or senselessness of it, are spiritual issues. It is crucial to explore spiritual questions and beliefs that have profound implications for recovery, healing, and resilience" (McGoldrick, 1998).

In Spirituality as a Dimension of Family Therapists' Clinical Training, Ingeborg E. Haug (1998) defines spirituality, "as attributions of a personal nature which give

meaning to life events, help transcend difficult experiences, maintain hopefulness, and lead to behaviors which honor connectedness,” (471). He posits that spirituality is an integral part of people, and should be included into ethical therapy. The concept of spirituality helps to provide a worldview, moral standards, and a way of being in the world and “tends to liberate ‘dis-spirited’ individuals from hopelessness, isolation, anxiety, and aimlessness” (474) while opening lives for purposeful living, compassion, and harmony. Furthermore, the author asserts, the exploration of spirituality is being rediscovered as a vehicle by which existential anxieties can be allayed, human suffering can be alleviated, and people can find their meaning and purpose in life. This exploration may facilitate and enhance courageous and purposeful living, help clients within the therapeutic process, and promote relationships with self, others, and the community within which one lives.

This process of contemplating relationships leads individuals and families to a heightened morality and sense of purpose in life. Walsh (1998) explicates this process as cultivating hope, increasing awareness of possibilities, building collaborative and mutually supportive subsystems, delineating a perspective of learning from the experiences of adversity, and reinforcing the family's belief in their potential for transcending life challenges. She also points out what one believes, as being the most powerful option of all (McGoldrick, 1998). Then all life experiences, joyful or otherwise, become transformative, enabling a person to actualize one's potential as a spiritual being and moral agent, mindfully aware of one's influence upon the world.

Braithwaite and Blamey (1998) elucidate that it is important for people to delineate and understand why something is morally right or morally wrong. This also

culminates in an individual's ability to reflect on and resolve moral problems and issues, with moral growth taking place all the while. This moral growth and adaptation to stressful life events must evolve through a series of strategic events.

According to Klein and Aldous, (1988) this process of *recovery* and *discovery* in the face of challenge, allows individuals and families to re-establish a condition of equilibrium. Klein and Aldous also concur that sometimes the establishment of a new equilibrium requires the restructuring of the value system by which one lives, for otherwise one might cling to an internalized value system that actually hinders or impedes personal growth. Bly (1996) asserts that many people might even visit therapists, “because they think they have defective personalities or defective minds, when in fact their lives are normal but so lacking in meaning, or virtue, that they suffer,” (94).

In The Place of Values in Psychotherapy, Gene M. Abroms (1978) proposes that psychotherapy is a process which is value laden, “Because,” he writes, “the very notions of ‘therapeutic’, ‘cure’, and ‘health’ involve patients and therapists in making value choices,” (3). Furthermore, he explicates that in dealing with certain patients, therapists often must use their own personal influence to set limits, thus channeling development of the client. Abroms asserts, “Human beings cannot be passively grown but have to be actively raised, that is, trained and educated through rational persuasion,” (5). He maintains that therapists cannot be morally neutral or value-free, but embracing higher-order values and thoughts, keeping in mind, Abroms reminds the reader, to be mindful so the therapist’s ideals are neither too lofty nor underdeveloped.

In working with clients, the MFT needs to be able to inspire without losing sight of the client’s ability to comprehend, able to meet the client where he or she is. Abroms

poignantly explains that success depends on recognizing the client's foundation and stage of moral development, "In this sense, a therapist can never be too morally advanced to help a client, but he may have become too ethereal-by losing touch with the youthful antecedents of his own attitudes and beliefs and thereby not appreciating the need, nor having the means, to provide bridges of understanding for those less sophisticated. It seems that inspiring values and ideals helps to provide a vision of commitment to clients which runs counter to the disillusionment that contradicts human's search for meaning and purpose. According to Abroms (1978), this transcending of the ego helps clients achieve a "transpersonal, empathic identification," (8) with the world and all inhabitants.

In Knowledge and Skills for Social and Environmental Justice, Julie

Andrzejewski (1996) says this personal growth can rise out of re-evaluating personal values and making lifestyle changes which are congruent with aforementioned values. She is a proponent for change at the personal, social, political, and world level, which, she believes are all, important. She seems to believe that the individual has power and choice to create change in one's own life, to re-evaluate values and behaviors, and make thoughtful considerations on how behaviors impact the other, and ultimately, the world.

One can feel hopeful anticipation when considering the innate abilities of the human spirit and its capacity for recovery and potential for empowerment. It is truly inspiring to believe in human's ability to heal from pain, to transcend, and strive for all that is life giving. In Man's Search for Meaning, Victor Frankl (1946) promotes existential analysis and logotherapy that support the human endeavor of finding meaning and purpose in one's life, despite suffering which seems to make no sense. Frankl (1946) believes that the one human freedom that cannot be taken away, is the choice of one's

attitude and was fond of quoting Nietzsche, "He who has a *why* to live can bear with almost any *how*," (12). Life challenges present the opportunity to recover and grow stronger in those wounded places, lending purpose and meaning to one's relationships, and thus, one's life.

MORAL REASONING

Giblin (1996) takes this notion of values further when he defines morality as "an informed conscience that extends one's wish for a good personal life to all of humankind" (442). This intentional extension of the self for the good of all, gives purpose to one's way of being in the world and creates meaning, promoting the establishment of values that nourishes this endeavor. Morality allows for relationship and people living in community with one another by establishing a vocabulary for moral living and setting the framework for personal responsibility to self, and to others. Berkowitz & Grych, (1998) posit that this moral living can be fostered through parents teaching and by parents modeling moral behavior.

When a healthy social orientation is developed, it rests upon and merges with healthy, secure attachment, leading to positive psychological and relational outcomes throughout one's life. Berkowitz and Grych (1998) assert that the lack of healthy attachment is the "single most consistent cause of antisocial behavior" (2). Hamburg (1993) states that infants need healthy attachment in order to "form the fundamental basis for decent human relationships" and he adds, "early adolescents need to connect with people who can facilitate the momentous transition to adulthood gradually, with sensitivity and understanding" (4). When one is grounded in a stable environment with healthy attachment and good role models, the stage is set for moral development.

In Family Therapy: Concepts and Methods, Michael P. Nichols and Richard C. Schwartz (2001) remind the reader that Virginia Satir encouraged family members working together for the good of the system, and she “considered flexibility and constructive problem-solving as characteristic of a healthy family,” (178). One could go further and posit that healthy family systems can then promote healthy social systems within which they live.

Weinstein (1995) convincingly explicates that morality is indeed, very important to the integrity of the community. Furthermore, immoral behavior perpetuates an unstable social system with unrealistic perspectives that deny humans benefits of service, and often even brings harm to individuals. In Promoting Moral Growth: From Piaget to Kohlberg, 2nd Edition, Joseph Reimer, Diana Pritchard Paolitto and Richard H. Hersh (1983) discuss Kohlberg’s theory of moral development and its postulate that moral reasoning requires thinking to be challenged. Furthermore, they explicate Kohlberg’s concept of social role-taking, “taking the point of view of the other person as a way of reflecting critically upon own perspective,” (5) is an important aspect to moral development wherein individuals confront their own moral reasoning. When a clear understanding of moral principles is absent, people are left vulnerable to those in positions of authority who use that power of authority as a means to resolve moral conflict.

In The Moral Judgment of the Child, Jean Piaget (1965) discusses the notion of adult authority and the possibility of its essential nature in the moral evolution of a child. This power of authority, however, “is not in itself sufficient to create a sense of justice, (319). Piaget asserts that moral evolution can only progress through cooperation and

mutual respect. For moral progress to be made, the moral reasoning of individuals and the ability to make ethical decisions is a necessary component to foster.

Carol Gilligan (1982) discusses the making of ethical decisions in her book, In a Different Voice. She writes, “The essence of moral decision is the exercise of choice and the willingness to accept responsibility for that choice,” (67). Thus, an authoritative power that makes decisions in an attempt to resolve moral conflicts is contradictory to the moral development of an individual.

The capacity for ethical decision making becomes important when providing for individuals within a system, be it family system or larger social system. Ethical decision-making necessitates considering alternative choices that exist, the motives behind these choices, and the effects that each choice might have on others. Through this process, a moral understanding is advanced and fairness for each stakeholder is taken into consideration.

When autonomy and justice exist within a democratic society, any inclination or behavior that takes personal control away from individuals is considered immoral. Weinstein (1995) reinforces that social mores must include equity, fairness, and informed personal choice as moral counterpoints to tyrannical behavior. When the individuals within the system support a moral social construct, a sense of belongingness and interconnectedness inspires and supports a healthy societal system and empowerment for the individuals within it. Holmes (1993) believes this is true from the viewpoint of macro ethics, and reminds the reader of Plato’s assertion that “individuals cannot be fully known and understood in isolation from the social and metaphysical context in which they function,” (71).

Berkowitz and Grych (1998) explicate that moral development is not only a result of environmental enhancement, but also evolves from the internalization of standards for behavior. Braithwaite and Blamey (1998) define these internalized standards as values, which "reconcile a person's needs with the demands of a social life" (1). Parents can facilitate this process by which children internalize moral standards, leading to a mutually beneficial relationship wherein people on the whole, have an interconnected feeling, a sense of belonging. Coontz (1995) explicates even further, "A society that hopes to foster personal responsibility to others must convince its members that they share some connectedness, that their fortunes are somehow bound together" (14). This weaving together of the fabric of human nature and morality allows for a strong pattern of living mindfully to unfold, thus resulting in a social awareness not only within an individual, but also throughout society and all human kind.

People have this capacity, as Frankl (1946) points out, and it is this richness of potential that lends meaning to life and gives purpose to humans as actualized beings; as actualized beings people participate in relationship with their self and with others, resulting in more self awareness and awareness of the other. By taking into consideration effects on others, one establishes expectations for mature behavior thus resulting in responsibility toward one's own choices, and toward the well being of the other.

Braithwaite and Blamey (1998) suggest that it is important for people to delineate and understand *why* something is morally right or morally wrong. This also culminates in an individual's ability to reflect on and resolve moral problems and issues, with moral growth taking place all the while.

This personal growth and moral development can be fostered by authoritative

parents who are loving, firm, communicative, and able to set high expectations which motivate children to live positive, successful lives. This inductive learning positively impacts a child's relationship with another and stimulates one's comprehension and understanding of the reasons for making certain behavioral choices, bearing in mind the consequence of that behavior on another person. The consequentialist nature of this awareness calls one to respect another, and expect respect in return; thus, each individual has equal opportunity to influence the outcome of an interaction and the ability to adjust and adapt to difficult situations is enhanced.

Taylor and Dryfoos (1998/1999) remind their readers that "a factor contributing to enhanced resiliency is participation in work that is meaningful and benefits others in some direct and personal way" (3). What better way is there of promoting ownership of one's life? Not only does this call one to participate in active solutions to life's difficulties for self and others, but it promotes personal awareness and moral growth as well. Taylor and Dryfoos reaffirm the impact one can make on another's life, "it was knowing that someone cared that made a difference" (4).

Within relationship, people confer value on one another and spend their time and energy on what they value. Moral interaction between people is essential to creating a way of being that lends value to life and promotes the well being of individuals within a society. It seems one has three choices in life, to spectate, to turn away from, or to commit. One can feel the pulse of the universe when committing, when participating in hopeful solutions, when choosing to live, to make a difference in world. Saying yes to the opportunity afforded in moral growth, is saying yes to what is life giving, saying yes to life.

Human beings have this capacity. It is this richness of potential that lends meaning to life and gives purpose to humans as actualized beings; as actualized beings humans participate fully in relationship with the self and with others, resulting in more self-awareness and awareness of the other. By taking into consideration effect on others, one establishes expectations for mature behavior thus resulting in responsibility toward own choices, and toward the well being of the other.

In the mutually supportive relationships that culminate in collaboration, people are strengthened in their ability to overcome oppression and adversity. This mutual empowerment reinforces the notion that resilience is relationally based and that all families have the potential to heal and transcend life's challenges. Furthermore, Walsh (1998) believes that being challenged by, and transcending life's experiences, can indeed, enable people to learn how to live better lives, and how to enhance the lives of others (McGoldrick, 1998).

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

When securing the published sources for this literature review, a plethora of information related to the various components of this project was explored. The researcher took the various publications and went through a discernment process by which decisions were made as to what literature to use and what might take the researcher's deliberations beyond the scope of this project. Therefore, the researcher had to delineate the primary focus within the context of this paper, and given the limitations of the project, proceed to compile the various resources that would support this project.

During this process, the researcher had to decide how to promote moral discussion as a way for MFTs to open up doors for clients, particularly when they come in torn by their feelings of wanting to care for the self and feeling like they have failed in their obligations to others.

Often clients come in asking, "What is the right thing to do?" as if they are pleading for some type of moral coaching. This is not to say that an MFT always knows what the right thing to do is. However, the MFT can facilitate a discussion and introduce a common language with clear definitions and help maintain a sense of moral compass for the clients who are trying to find their way through difficult issues and on to resolving difficult situations.

It is disturbing to consider the fragmentation of relationships that is occurring in society today. There is the increasing percentage of people who are divorcing, parents who are neglecting their obligations to children, and families who are making geographical changes, becoming more transient and living with fewer familial and social

support connections because of this mobility. For the disabled and impoverished, fewer resources are available, and they are not as strong or as many. As a society people are disengaging because of fear, anger, and hurt, and are trying to hold their own in an increasingly challenging environment. However, in holding their own, there is a need to be held by each other too.

This researcher thinks caring can be fostered so that people can live in a society in which they are cared for. So the underlying tenets of what supports this notion had to be explored, in hopes of encouraging people to look around, and grow in awareness of what they are doing in their lives, with their relationships, and in the choices they make.

The amount of crime in society, blame, estrangement and disengagement causes communities to fall apart. It becomes very important to think about choices and how they impact personal lives and everyone involved. Furthermore, it seems to follow that it is important to look at the lives affected on a broader social level, encompassing not only larger society, but also the environment people live in.

People are each making an impact with their belief systems, attitudes, words, and actions. So it becomes important to look at what this means for the family, and indeed, the whole human race. It is important to care, to take care, and it is a very tangible human need to be cared for. This notion of caring was followed by a discussion of empathy and facilitating empathy between people.

It became apparent that in introducing the notion of caring and the empathic response, a sense of mindful living had to be explored. This is the piece to morality that invites one to consider one's choices, the motivation by which one makes decisions, the consequences of actions, and to contemplate just what is valued in one's life.

Being morally aware of each other and living as such, promotes resiliency for individual and family and community, but resiliency is such a huge topic, this researcher wanted to stay away from it for the purposes of this project.

The notion of mindful living, or living mindfully, asks that people look at what their thought patterns and behaviors are. This researcher thinks people can live cognitively and know how to get from point A to point B, but wonders if this is living consciously? Are people thinking, really thinking about the larger picture, about how they live in multiple groups, and how these systems overlap? One can be a mom, a wife, a student, a daughter and sister, a church member, a productive member of society, community member, and leader. All of these systems, multiple groups, are impacted by that individual's choices. A choice that works for one system totally, may not work for another.

So the question arises whether there is a need to prioritize these impacts and relationships, or weigh the cost/benefit ratio to see where the greater good comes from. For this research project the researcher chose not to explore different moral approaches like utilitarianism and the questions that brings with it.

So values and meanings came to the forefront. What is it that people value, and what gives them purpose, or a meaning to their lives? What seemed to follow were the works of Frankl's Search for Meaning and Wiesel's attempt to promote human caring and moral discourse with his book, Night, and other humanitarian efforts.

Humans are poor predictors, and cannot predict just how much human suffering might be encountered or endured in one lifetime. There is no way to predict just what is going to happen in the future, to this world humans exist in. One thing that can be known

for sure, is that to survive suffering, pain, and hardship and all life challenges, people have to have some kind of purpose and meaning. Without these, life becomes very fragile. Inspiring people to consider what they value becomes important.

What do people value? Do they value making money, going to the job and gaining status? Consider what happens when tragedy occurs, jobs are lost, natural disasters destroy, accidents disable, stock market crashes, human-made disasters occur. There is so much that can happen and go wrong that can strip much of what people value away from them.

So it seems people need to consider values that are much deeper, much more connected to the human soul, to what feeds and sustains it, to what is life giving. Those values can include loving, being loved, being honest, trusting others, being trusted, being able to rely on others and being reliable. Being a vital part of the human community can become purposeful and lend much meaning to existence. It seems that much of what is valued that can never be taken away, is relationship, and how people can be there for and with each other.

What followed then was moral reasoning, and developing at least a basic template for MFTs to discover and begin to understand the world of morality, moral language, moral discourse, ethical decision making, and the vocabulary that comes with it.

All these categories comprised the focus for bringing in literature; and some had to be set aside for future development. Many realms of thought had to go through a siphoning off of what would take this project further than what was needed for the purposes of this project. Some information for argumentation against the thesis was set aside as well. It's an important aspect to explore, but one that cannot be suitably

addressed in this paper.

So these thoughts led to the creation of thesis idea, helped to refine it, directed the research and provided boundaries on just how far the project could be taken at this time.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

After completing this review of literature supporting my thesis, and analyzing the information, it became clear that Marriage and Family Therapists can have both a vested interest in their client family and in the individuals within it, wherein the autonomy and personal development of the individuals are taken into consideration, as well as the integrity of the family and the relationships within it.

In MFT's work with families and the limitations placed by HMOs, and with many clients presenting with enormous crisis going on in their lives, one might ask how MFTs can reconcile teaching morals and bringing up moral discussions given the limitations of few sessions, and the need to do immediate crisis intervention? The HMO question hasn't been answered, but as far as working with families in immediate crisis, ethical decision-making can indeed, contribute to the family's success in settling the issues that might have thrown that family into crisis.

Based upon what has been learned in this project, this researcher thinks it is appropriate for MFTs to broach these concerns in a sensitive and honest fashion. It also seems important to promote a sense of respect for persons, and justice between people, with fairness of treatment and equality of consideration. MFTs are working with families who live in a society where relationships are being hampered, compromised, and destroyed by a type of amorality that exists. Are people necessarily immoral? Not always. Sometimes there is an amorality that exists because people are not even thinking about these things or considering them. It is a handicap of ignorance; they do not even know that this realm of consciousness exists, or that people even have such a profound capacity

for it, as rational human beings.

In Family Therapy: Concepts and Methods, Michael P. Nichols and Richard C. Schwartz (2001) confirm the current neutrality of the therapists, “many think less than they might about the ethical dimensions of their clients’ behavior,” (97). They assert that a conscientious and thorough assessment of the client family should include consideration of the obligations and entitlements, and even invisible loyalties that might be influencing behaviors. Nichols and Schwartz confirm the necessity for balance to exist among the aggregates within a system, whether it involves individuals, a family, their community, or the nation. When one part attempts to have unrestrained power or influence, the system above and below this part “will lose this healthy balance,” (116).

It is an appropriate endeavor for an MFT to consider introducing the notion of moral exchange within the therapeutic setting. Are therapists going to be able to do this always? Probably not. This researcher would like to say that when people come in to therapy while in crisis, with huge issues that have to be decided quickly, and damage control has to be instituted, MFTs might not always be able to go into long moral discourse on what is really going on here. On the other hand, as in Satir’s work, one might think it is possible to take a very hopeless situation and inspire hope, to bring in the notion of caring and empathy and beseech people to open their hearts to the possibility of this, and the potentiality of how it can affect their lives.

In Goals of Family Therapy, Larry B. Feldman (1976) considers the concept of mature dependency and postulates that it is a counterpart to empathy, wherein for a family member to be empathic, the other must be able to reveal feelings and be vulnerable to the other. This in itself, sets the stage for anxiety that has to be recognized

and reduced in order for a healthy level of mature dependency to be fostered for and within each member of the family system. Thus it becomes more probable, that with sensitivity and foresight, the MFT can facilitate and promote empathy and concrescence within families in turmoil.

MFTs work within a society too, where people are hampered by HMOs and are often limited to a certain number of sessions, which places limitations on just how much can be explored with clients. But what MFTs can do, at the very least, is to propose a format for ethical decision-making that empowers families to resolve dilemmas in the best way possible. The HMO dilemma is a problem that continues to exist, and will continue to need to be addressed. It seems introducing moral discussion, makes it even more relevant for MFTs to persist in the attempts to change a system that hampers opportunity for clients' progress and the potentiality of their personal growth.

This gives MFTs even more information to strengthen their purpose and empower their plea, to give more benefits for mental health care to people so MFTs can promote real change and not just put a band aid on the symptoms. MFTs can go a little further and facilitate a kind of tenacious change that is going to hang in there with people, follow them through their life times, and strengthen their relationships with the community within which they and their descendents live.

In Emerging Trends in Treating Relationships, David H. L. Olson and Douglas H. Sprenkle (1976) encourage Marriage and Family Therapists to give more attention to the interface wherein the family interacts with other systems. They remind the reader that general systems theory views the family as an open system experiencing an almost continuous interchange with the outer environmental system within which it lives. Thus,

supporting and enhancing this interchange becomes essential for the survival of systems.

In facilitating this research project, the researcher's hope is that the Marriage and Family Therapist is inspired to think along these lines. Certainly within the limitations of this paper, there is not a substantial source of moral history and philosophical debate over the different views of morality. What is being asked, is not for the MFT to read about the philosophy of ethics and know all that it encompasses. What the researcher is asking, is that MFTs work to inspire people to care, to bring life into their relationships, to introduce the topic in hopes of taking off the sharp edge of hostility, aggression and blame, and help people to reconnect with each other to a point where goodness and nurture can reside.

In fostering caring and empathy it becomes important to invite people to reflect on values and what gives meaning to their lives. What gives them purpose? When working with families dealing with health changes, potentially life threatening diseases, and those who are dying, the question often becomes, "What gives my life meaning?" How can one understand life and what it really brought to the world? When people are really incapacitated by an illness, one works at helping them find meaning in their lives in spite of, and because of, limiting circumstances.

Often in suffering or in the face of impending death, people come to a point where they want to discuss these things, where they need to be able to discuss these things, where they can hope to make some sense out of what they have contributed to their world, their family, their community. It gives one a certain amount of satisfaction when one can look back on life and see how even some of the smallest humane gestures made powerful and good changes to the world one once lived in.

Another idea MFTs might consider is that of how having meaning, purpose, and a set of values and being able to ponder and consider them helps people be more resilient when their physical life is threatened, limited, diminished, or destroyed. This can encompass not only natural disasters that might for instance, threatens one's home or property, fires, accidents, disability. MFTs work with families all the time whose child or parent might have been in an accident and have a loss of capacity with their body. Or perhaps an MFT has worked with families who have children born with handicaps, disabilities, and limitations.

People often have crises that occur when someone is harmed by another, when a home is robbed, when some type of betrayal occurs. Often MFTs work with families who have children struggling to find their identity and sometimes in that struggle they do things that compromise their safety and the safety of others. Or MFTs work with families where the financial security is threatened because somebody loses a job or is laid off.

All these things threaten the security of a person and a family. They threaten one's well being and internal strength. When people place their value and meaning of their lives on the material, financial status, personal gain, athletic prowess...all of these things can be taken away from them in a second, through any kind of disaster, conflict, scarcity, or challenge. What then? What do they have to hold on to? So to promote discussion of values and what gives one's life meaning, what gives one's life purpose, connects people with a deeper element, a sense of their being *essential*. Yes, their existence is essential because of the unique contributions they make to the intricate system within which they live...the family, the community, the nation, the universe.

People recognize they are each a unique and very incredibly important part, thus

what each one brings to that system or systems, is unique to each being. So why not, promote the idea that “We need you, we need what you bring to the world?”

Abroms (1978) believes psychotherapy’s outcome must be a study of value-change wherein MFTs practice as moral agents. He explicates, “To recognize the intrinsic ethicality of psychotherapy and to arrange its goals along a developmental continuum is to advance our understanding of the symptom-change versus value-change distinction in treatment,” (16). Furthermore, he advances the ideas of Strupp when he reminds the reader that when a client loses a symptom or modifies a behavior, the client usually changes one’s outlook on life, values, and views of the self.

When he wrote Man’s Search for Meaning, Victor E. Frankl (1946) completed the project in nine days and was determined to publish it anonymously. His desire was to “convey to the reader by way of a concrete example that life holds a potential meaning under any conditions, even the most miserable ones,” (16). This search for meaning could have been a part of any individual’s personal process, therapist, client, man, woman, or child. Because Frankl wrote it, individuals can consider the search for meaning as becoming a vital part of seeking one’s identity.

Another thing Marriage and Family Therapists can do is to act as advocates for families when they are being oppressed by a system or when there is harm done to them. MFTs can encourage a type of vocabulary that holds the other accountable and helps client families to stand up for their rights and embrace their own advocacy, to stand up for what they need in a society that might seek to oppress. That in itself, can give people more meaning and purpose where they can actively contribute to any moral progress humans might make.

When one looks at the individuals in society and attempt to take the Rawlsian approach, which asks people to look at what is happening to the poorest of the poor, one cannot help but realize that each individual can contribute to making things different, to take care of some very basic and fundamental needs for others.

So in speaking of accountability, an MFT is not only enhancing relationships between people, but is also empowering people to become more than what they think they are capable of. It is thinking that limits growth. To expand thinking in to the realm of moral reasoning opens up a whole plethora of choice to people. In Ethics and the Human Community, Melvin Rader (1966) postulates that individuals and the systems in which they live are enriched by one another, and that moral consideration could indeed, be a creative resolution to the conflict between personal freedom and the organization that is required for systems to function harmonically, wherein the strong individual is in union with an organized community.

In promoting people to be aware, to be mindful, to be caring, to be empathic, MFTs are promoting people to be empowered to create a world in which they want to live. How can one live in a society where things are fair, where justice prevails, where people are taken care of? MFTs can promote it, live it, learn it, teach it, advocate for it, and help create a society of care by fostering and promoting caring.

In Procedures in Marriage and Family Therapy 3rd Edition, Gregory W. Brock and Charles P. Barnard (1999) discuss strategies for teaching within the therapeutic context, and explicate the first step to their systematic training procedure as conveying a rationale for learning. This involves explaining *what* life skill is being taught, for instance, that of moral awareness and ethical decision making; *why* it is important to have

this skill, because it enhances healthy relationships; and *how* the skill will benefit the one participating, by being cared for by a family or community that one invests caring in.

Brock and Barnard explicate, “People learn more easily and cooperate more when they understand the purpose of what they are to learn and what the payoffs will be,” (84).

These notions of morality, motives, choice, consequences, caring, being empathic, mindful living, the resurrection and recognition of values, all can take MFTs even further toward wanting to learn more as professionals in a helping profession, and to wanting to bring up subjects that typically have not been explored.

One example might be the topic of forgiveness... people have been harmed throughout the ages by relationships with prior generations, their relationship with the church, and relationships with a political structure that might seek to oppress them, among others. Sometimes this harm is brought about by ignorance. For instance, if one’s family of origin hurts one, sometimes this is caused by ignorance. This does not mean a person has to stay in relationship with those who refuse to grow and continue knowingly to hurt that individual. However, what can be promoted are compassion, understanding and forgiveness, and hopefully, nurture of the other’s personal growth and moral progress. And so compassion becomes another recommendation. Compassion brings one to the other with a passion for the relationship that might indeed, promote rapprochement between people, healthier relationships, and a mutually supportive social environment.

The mere nature of being an MFT, where one enters a relationship with individuals and families who look to the MFT for guidance, necessitates one to go beyond what one is comfortable with, thus putting one’s best into it. This researcher’s hope is that MFTs become MFTs because they want to be that, because they want to help,

because they feel it is important, because they are concerned. So then it seems to follow that it would be a natural part of the marriage and family therapy relationship, to promote the kind of care for clients that one would hope they would be able to live and thrive in.

It is time to wake people up to the notion of choice. For some time now, psychotherapy has focused on the individual, and has been promoting what fulfills and empowers the individual, what takes care of the individual. People are not single entities existing in a void. Individuals, yes, needing a certain level of autonomy to be upheld so people can take responsibility for their own personal fulfillment and happiness. But most people are not isolated entities living out in the wilderness. They do live in relationships with others, families, friends, neighbors, communities, society and political structures. Even the egoist ultimately works at bettering other's lives because it promotes one's own, while living within that society.

In One River, Many Wells: Wisdom Springing From Global Faiths, Matthew Fox (2000) laments the loss of a sense of community and reflects, "Loneliness in its many guises replaces community," (81). This loneliness propagates behavior, which neglects and often harms the others one relates with, be it individuals, family, society, and even the biotic community. Fox advocates for individuals taking up the cause of promoting the good of systems within which one lives, even on an environmental level, "What is good for the community is good for the individuals in it," (81).

In I, Thou, and We: A Dialogical Approach to Couples Therapy, Mona DeKoven Fishbane (1998) discusses Martin Buber's philosophy of Dialogue and his distinction between the *I-Thou* of relationship, and the *I-It* of relationship in which the ego dominates with its own self interest. Melvin Rader (1969) also approaches Buber's

philosophy in his book, The Enduring Questions: Main Problems of Philosophy, wherein he addresses the notion of considering the *Thou* as an end, and not a means to that end. Rader quotes Buber's expounding, "My Thou affects me, as I affect it," (666) to reinforce the idea that it is only in relationship that the self is distinguished. Rader elucidates, "A person is fully a person only in relation to other persons," (666). Thus, he suggests, the real relationship occurs when one regards the other as an end, that one considers what results for the other when choosing within a given situation or interaction.

In Hedonism and the Family: Conflict in Values? Lois N. Glasser and Paul H. Glasser (1977) write about two trends they see in today's society, instant gratification linked to a hedonistic lifestyle, and the focus on individual rights and the avoidance of hardship. They see both of these trends as having effects on the family. They believe that when therapists focus on the individual's seeking of immediate pleasure, that marriages and families are compromised. They gave a poignant example of the story, Fiddler on the Roof, and the song, "Do You Love Me?" and wrote, "The answer had to do with the commitment these two people had made to each other, to the family they had built together, and to the responsibilities they had shared with one another. They had not only a meaningful relationship but also a sense of social responsibility to their family as an end in itself and to the ghetto society in which the family found itself. They had what might even be called 'happiness'!" (17). During this time of social change, and the fragile state of relationships, Glasser and Glasser encourage therapists to examine and re-evaluate their own values, philosophies, and goals in the realm of these issues.

In Existential Family Therapy: Personal Power-Parental Authority-Effective Action-Freedom, Len Bergantino (1997), trained by Carl Whitaker and Walter Kempler,

expands on what he perceives to be his moral obligation as a therapist. He believes an MFT is called to “manifest courage” (383) in working with families and that sometimes what is necessary, is for the MFT to invade the protective consciousness of the family so as to facilitate an existential shift wherein the skewed reality can begin to become a healthy reality. He believes families are together for a reason and writes “Each has value to bring to the lives of the others” (386). Furthermore, he views the MFT’s job as helping the member most capable of mobilizing the rest of the family to do so, opening the way for the MFT to help each member facilitate the growth of the others, wherein each values the others for their unique and individual strengths.

Bergantino (1997) also posits that the parental influence on children includes “inculcating a sense of morality, a sense of human decency, an empathic understanding of you so you will have empathy for others,” (387) and believes it is important to not deprive them of personal power, but to empower them through love. This necessitates the development of a solid sense of self in each family member, so as to not entrap members, and furthermore, engendering a fear of commitment to family and community.

In The Art of Loving, Erich Fromm (1956) discusses the concept of love and the implication of care for and non-exploitation of others. He posits that the act of giving to the other, expresses the aliveness of the self. Thus personal growth in relationship not only enhances the life of the other, but the life of the self as well. This ability to foster what is good for the other, helps one to acquire faith in one’s self, allowing one to love more freely. So Fromm takes the notion of relationship further, when he writes, “Love is the active concern for the life and the growth of that which we love,” (25). Thus in loving and caring for the other, one takes responsibility in relationship, a voluntary act according

to Fromm, and a very humane “response to the needs, expressed or unexpressed of another human being,” (26). This loving regard for the other is what helps family members to live with care for one another, in the fullest expression of human relationship and consideration.

In An Open Life: Joseph Campbell in Conversation With Michael Toms, edited by John M. Maher and Dennie Briggs (1990), Campbell responds to Toms’ comment about the loss of the nuclear family engendering a society of individuals. Campbell considers the family unit as an organic base, evolving between transitions, yet still more responsible for the upbringing of children than the schools that often bear the brunt of parents neglecting to teach social practices and life skills. He asserts, “The family has to assume the responsibility, and I don’t know how it can be brought about that when people commit themselves to having children, it’s also their job to make sure their offspring grow up to be decent human beings,” (117).

Christina E. Mitchell (1998) seems to think the family systems approach, in spite of its emphasis on interaction patterns, lacks an emphasis on individual responsibility. It is important to take the notion of individual into family therapy further and promote that individual’s moral growth. She convincingly argues the essential nature of looking at both the individual and the family system, “Self Awareness, then, with an acceptance of personal responsibility for role in family conflict and a perception of some degree of control over behavior, even in a family context, can contribute not only to personal improvement, but also to smoother family functioning,” (229).

In Creatively Labeling Behavior in Individual and Group Counseling, John Vriend and Wayne W. Dyer (1976) advocate for the labeling of behavior as opposed to

that of the person. They assert the value of labeling behavior in that it helps delineate an act and clarify it with the particulars that serve to help solve the problem. They warn against labeling the person, and quote Soren Kierkegaard's line, "Once you label me, you negate me," (33). Rather, the labeling of behavior, and the client's self-labeling of behavior help to illuminate the situation's unique reality, yet does not compromise the integrity and self-concept of the individual.

Vriend and Dyer (1976) advocate for distinguishing human behavior as comprised of three parts, mental, emotional, and physical. They expound on the influence thinking has on behavior and write, "When clients are helped to change their thinking, then both emotional and physical behavior will change," (34). Furthermore, they posit that the therapist can help a client to understand and make the decisions necessary to changing the behavior.

Kant's Generalization Principle directs one to take a behavior that one wants to do, make a rule out of it and universalize that rule, so that everyone can do it at all times (Holmes, 1993). If one person has a right to a certain behavior, then everyone should have that right. So people can look at basic moral structures like doing to the other what one wants to have done to self, or respect for persons, or Kant's Categorical Imperative. Basically what it comes down to is that the MFT must promote the consideration of choice, examination of motive, the awareness of consequence, and the concepts of justice and fairness. At the very least, that's what MFTs can hope and strive for, while modeling this type of behavior.

In Elements of the Socratic Method: VI. Promoting Virtue in Everyday Life,

James C. Overholser (1999) asserts that when a therapist and client focus on what

propagates a good life, the many problematic challenges people experience become less troubling and somewhat insignificant. Furthermore, Overholser maintains, therapy can then cultivate a new perspective and move from a problem focus to that of a moral approach wherein the client begins to question one's attitudes and values. Overholser encourages the therapist to consider, "Where is the goodness in this person and how can I help it grow?" (144).

Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy and Barbara R. Krasner (1980), in Trust Based Therapy: A Contextual Approach, introduce the concept of trust wherein it not only has to exist within the family, but between family members and the therapist as well. They explicate, "Because family members are bound to each other by the ethical dimension of mutual trust, or lack of it, we also propose that a sufficiently responsible therapeutic contract is obliged to take account of all persons potentially affected by professional intervention (multidirectedness)," (767). It is this level of therapeutic responsibility, which seeks to hold an MFT accountable in a way that supports therapeutic efficacy.

Keep in mind to always be concerned about therapist's bias and how an MFT might impact client's lives in not so good ways. This is going to exist whether one is talking about morality, individual fulfillment, or family issues. MFTs are human beings who have biases, and the ethics they work by compel them to heighten their ability to discern the appropriate parameters within which an MFT must work, and to consider the impact one does have on clients and the social system within which they live. The moral becomes, be ware and take care. These are people's lives that are being dealt with.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY

This literature review encompassed many realms of thought. After years of thinking about the topic of this paper the writer decided to wed or unite the Philosophy of Ethics with Marriage and Family Therapy. This project could have been made very academic, very philosophical, and very historical. But what was decided, was to provide supportive literature that hopefully is a convincing argument for MFTs to go beyond the neutrality that has been proposed for so long, and to hold people accountable for their lives, their choices, and the consequences of their decisions.

Much was explored in the literature on morality, and it's history and thoughts, among them, egoism, altruism, utilitarianism, ethical relativism. Having a previously developed understanding of moral discourse since Plato gave a sense of purpose and passion to this endeavor and it also solidified the thoughts behind this venture.

Humans live in relationship, in a world with scarcity. And so it becomes important to promote personal growth and moral progress of people within a society, to promote a type of education or type of inspiring that gets people to look at their lives and relationships and how they participate in them, how invested they are. MFTs can encourage clients to look at what they are willing to give in relationship with another, and what they expect in return. The notion of morality, educating clients, the purpose of therapy, and the ethics or notion of neutrality and human services were all taken into account within the realm of this project.

The concept of care, ethics of care, the fostering of empathy, looking at values, and the promotion of mindful living were all examined. The attempt was made to build a

bank of knowledge that MFTs can take into their sessions with them, and start to integrate not a sense of rigid moral structure, but a point of beseeching clients to open their hearts and minds to their way of *being* in this world. Substantial literature was used to promote and argue for the value of these categories and they were tied together in a way to promote a type of overall discernment process that people might go through when they are going through life changes and experiencing life challenges.

CONCLUSION

What has been concluded as a result of this study is that there is value for the MFT to promote moral discussion in the therapeutic forum and these are the ways the MFT can do this. They can do this by imploring the client family and members to care. If not a natural caring, then at least an ethical caring can be fostered, a caring for the other because one wants to live in a caring society. An MFT can introduce the notion of empathy so people can connect with each other on more than just a surface level, so they can then understand the other's experience, what the other might be grieving, feeling, or struggling over.

The MFT can help people find a structured way in which they can live mindfully and make ethical decisions by thinking about choices and alternatives while examining motives for each choice. An MFT can challenge the client to wake one's self up to the concept of consequence and how an individual's choices impact the people one is in relationship with. Even considering the environment within which one lives, works, plays, and survives becomes an important component of this process.

The MFT can take this further and be an advocate for family values. The construction and resurrection of family values can bring the family to a common ground

or purpose so the needs of all members are met as well as the needs of the family system. It is important to invite the exploration of a vocabulary where each participant knows a common definition, to look at how different perspectives and ways of knowing can lead one to misconstrue situations. It is important to advocate for a common language where all the participants have common understanding and common ground to meet each other on.

Yes there are limitations. Holmes (1993) reminds his readers of elements of human error and posits the notion that to strive for moral perfection may result in undue self-absorption, which may be incompatible with moral excellence. He recommends at the very least, to attempt or strive to be realistically moral.

Yes, there are HMOs and yes, people have to be met where they are at, but what this researcher encourages the MFT to do, is to care.

RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR CLINICIANS

For clinicians it is suggested that they explore these concepts, and contemplate the idea of forgiveness. Often shame is a binding influence on people's hearts and actions, the way they see themselves and the other, and way they consider their relationships.

Oftentimes, forgiveness of the other releases a resentment and bitterness that can help people heal relationships. Forgiveness of the self is also a key component to the self being able to make any progress. This self-forgiveness releases one from a bondage that allows the self to grow. In this growing progress, MFTs can introduce compassion, for the MFT to have toward the client family, and for the family members to have for the self, the other,

and the process.

Freeman, et al, (1997) concludes that facilitating awareness from the self to others, is a “powerful avenue for individuals as well as social change and consequently a value-laden pursuit,” (127) and necessitates solid ethical standards for the professional MFT. Thus, an evolving process of informed consent must be in place within a context that is highly collaborative between the client family and the MFT.

In Families and Family Therapy, Minuchin (1974) affirms the MFT’s position of joining a family in a position of leadership, and aiding in creating an atmosphere conducive to transformation of the family. This researcher asserts that MFTs should also help the family understand that this process also involves an honest look at the family dynamics and where transformation needs to take place. It becomes important to convey to the client family that in taking this inventory, the purpose is not to judge or blame, but to look at ways to promote a bit of objectivity to the process of discernment and decision-making. It takes the emotionality and volatile nature out of it and helps people to open their heart to this thoughtful process. To be aware of the other, as well as the self when making decisions, becomes very important to this endeavor.

FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This researcher recommends that further work can be done around the area of therapist bias as proposed by Bill Doherty (1995), and explore the arguments against bringing moral discussion into the therapeutic context. This explores therapist bias, the whole question of what morality is, where people get it, and the question of whose morality is better than the other. Also moral relativism and arguments for and against it could be addressed.

Doherty's notion that psychotherapy has promoted the interest of the individual for so long, that therapists have forgotten how to promote the notion of family obligation and commitment is a concept that also can be explored and researched further.

Future research could also follow up on the concept of commitment. What can also be addressed is the lack of clarity when one makes commitments and explore under what circumstances commitments are made. Why people are entering into marriage commitments when often they do not know what they are doing, or what commitment means to the well being of a child who is a product of a rape, or a commitment to a family of origin who continue out of ignorance, to act in what is an abusive manner all can be examined. So the notion of commitment has to be handled delicately, at length, and definitely, in depth.

PROPOSAL

A proposal would be to take this issue to the Stout Center for Ethics, and present it to Dr. Tim Shiell and Dr. Jerry Kappus and propose taking this into the public forum. It can conceivably be taken further than the marriage and family context; based upon systems theory, there is not just the family system. Humans live in a community that is full of multiple systems, work in organizations that are systemic, and have blended families, which link systems and promote larger systems. These concepts can be taken into the world of business, the realm of post-divorce co-parenting, into family law and custodial issues, into the realm of caring for the elders in society, into the realm of the medical community which deals with end of life issues and the medical technology used to sustain life past normal comprehension, for instance, with premature babies and brain damaged individuals.

Another proposal is to provide public opportunity to discuss and explore the nature of forgiveness and healing, so to promote a generation rapprochement that can reinforce the structure of communities. People who have no families, who move about and find themselves in great need of a support structure, people who are disabled, who are thrown into poverty, people who have children who are being influenced negatively by the media could all be taken into consideration. It is a social problem that needs a social commitment... individuals, human services, businesses impacting people, schools educating the children, to name just a few.

Yes, the problem seems so beyond the scope of what people can conceivably do, but when the idea is revisited that one cannot expect to live in a caring society unless one promotes caring, one cannot help but take notice.

How can MFTs promote caring? By beginning with one person, with one family, and then another, and another. With people who live, five, fifty, or eighty years, one has to consider humans do not affect just their own lives, but the lives of many, many others, today and in all their days to come.

So yes, this is idealistic. Is it realistic? Who knows? All MFTs can do is try. And believe in it, value it, promote it, talk about it, support it, question it, live it. Why care? Why not talk about it in airplanes, waiting rooms, social discussions, and on the job? Why not question it, mull it over, and inspire thoughts about it? Today's media promotes violence and greed, financial success and materialism, power, and immediate gratification. How can the media not be willing to promote an ethics of care?

There are political systems that are sometimes more into power struggles than they are into personal lives. There are behaviors that impact the biotic environment in

ways that causes damage and destruction that may be irreparable.

One can get on this horse and ride it to the depth and breadth and length of any comprehension, and feel quite overwhelmed and discouraged at the prospect of being alone. Or one can walk in the company of people who one inspires and who reciprocate in kind. Be willing to discuss this, to open the forum, to promote a type of language that takes away blame and brings in understanding for human nature. Open the door to comprehending the pain that experiences bring to people and how these life experiences shape very thoughts and ways of being present in the world.

One could even bring in spirituality and shatter the idea that caring has to be related to a doctrine or formal religion, which many people shy away from. When some people hear the word ethics, the word caring, the word values or spirituality, they close the door. So further work may need to be done in this area to promote the notion of spirit, that which inspires, that which breathes life into, that which brings one life.

Recommendations are to not stop here, to keep talking, thinking, reading, asking, “Why Care?”

In conclusion there is good argument for the introduction of moral discussion in the forum of marriage and family therapy. If MFTs really believe in their work as MFTs, then they can not help but believe in the tenacity of relationships and their impact on human lives. Families are not separate cells, never impacted by or impacting society. These families need resources and live in a society that has scarcity of resources. There is always going to be conflict, dilemmas over who gets what, who impacts who, and the negative versus the positive.

One cannot help, after weighing the costs and benefits, to recognize the

convincing evidence that moral discussion, if introduced insightfully and respectfully, will benefit the multiplicity of systems that exist not only within families, but on a broader social level as well.

The cycle of family member responding to family member, responding to community, which responds to the family, would indeed, promote greater social resiliency, and help make up for the already scarce resources that humans are limited by with the great demands placed upon society today.

How can MFTs not discuss morality, values, choice, and empathy? How can one with any conscience, not embrace this issue and try to understand it, comprehend it, and promote it? How can Marriage and Family Therapists, in the truest sense of their role, not care?

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