

Lecture Title: Introduction to Systemic Therapies

Target Audience: 3rd Year Psychology Students (Clinical Psychology)

1. Introduction and Core Philosophy

Systemic therapy represents a paradigm shift in clinical psychology. Instead of focusing on individual pathology or deficits, it adopts a **contextual and interactional perspective**. The primary focus is on the **feedback circuits**—how one person's behavior affects another, the reactions that follow, and the context in which these interactions occur.

2. Key Concepts in Systemic Theory

- **The Family Life Cycle:** Families undergo various stages and transitions (e.g., birth of a child, adolescence, aging). These transitions often challenge the system's balance and can trigger crises.
- **The Identified Patient (IP):** This is the family member who manifests the symptom. Systemic therapy views the symptom not as an individual illness, but as a role that plays a part in family functioning.
- **Homeostasis:** The tendency of a family system to maintain stability, even if that stability is maintained through dysfunctional symptoms.
- **Potentials over Deficits:** Modern systemic approaches emphasize developing the family's resources and strengths rather than just focusing on "curing" a disorder.

3. Major Schools of Systemic Therapy

According to the sources, systemic therapy has evolved into several distinct models:

- **The Structural Model (Salvador Minuchin):** Focuses on family organization, including **subsystems, alliances, coalitions, and hierarchies**. The goal is to restructure the family to improve interactions.
- **The Intergenerational Model (Murray Bowen):** Suggests that current difficulties stem from dysfunctional patterns passed down through generations (family of origin).
- **The Strategic School (Jay Haley):** Focuses on observing interactive sequences and dysfunctional hierarchies. Interventions often include "tasks" or "directives" to break the system's deadlock.
- **The MRI Interactional School (Mental Research Institute):** Based on the idea that "the solution is the problem." Interventions aim to interrupt the failed interaction circuits that maintain the issue.
- **The Milan School:** Known for interventions like "positive connotation" of the symptom and "paradoxical prescriptions" to challenge family homeostasis.
- **Brief Solution-Focused Therapy:** Instead of exploring problems or history, it focuses on identifying and expanding **non-problematic sequences** and existing family resources.
- **Narrative Therapy:** Based on social constructionism, it focuses on the shared meanings families construct. A central technique is **externalization**, which separates the person from the problem.

4. The Role of the Therapist

The systemic therapist must possess specific relational abilities, including the capacity to empathically connect with the family, the narrative ability to co-create new stories, and the pragmatic skill to inspire viable changes. Personal work on the therapist's own **family of origin** is also considered essential to broaden their emotional resources.

Terminology

English Term	المصطلح بالعربية
Systemic Therapy	العلاج النسقي
Feedback Circuit	حلقة التغذية المرتدة
Family Life Cycle	دورة حياة الأسرة
Subsystems	الأنظمة الفرعية
Alliances	التحالفات
Coalitions	الائتلافات
Homeostasis	التوازن / الاستقرار الداخلي
Identified Patient	(المريض المعين) (المشخص)
Intergenerational Patterns	الأنماط العابرة للأجيال
Externalization	(البروكة) فصل الشخص عن المشكلة
Social Constructionism	البنائية الاجتماعية