



The Bundys to the Bradys

UNMASKING THE MAGIC FOR DEALING WITH DIFFICULT FAMILIES

Families are Stressed

- Research indicates that many families experiencing brain injury report a myriad of psychosocial difficulties before the injury.
- Family dysfunction is reported in anywhere from 25% to 74% of families after brain injury, depending on the population.
 - Communication difficulties
 - Changes in emotional health
 - Unequal sharing of responsibilities
 - Lack of access to resources and services



Families are Stressed

- Estimates indicate that nearly 90% of caregivers of individuals with TBI report significant caregiver burden.
- Caregivers report substantial perceived stress at three months post injury, with increases at six months and one year.
- In fact, they are still stressed five years and seven years out.



Families are Stressed

- More than 33% of caregivers reported symptoms of emotional distress consistent with a psychiatric diagnosis at three and six months post injury. (25% at a year)
- 50% of caregivers report general family interactions in the unhealthy range
- Increased alcohol use/dependency
- Increased use of tranquilizers
- Experience Ego Depletion



What's Ego Depletion

- Severe impairment of cognitive activities such as –
 - Self-control
 - Decision making
 - Emotional awareness
 - Stress tolerance
- Passivity and impulsiveness increase significantly.



Love and Marriage

- Stress fatigue (Ego Depletion)
- Concerns over Economic and Healthcare Costs
- Opportunity for Increased Bonding and Communication
- Delays and Disruptions Regarding Life Cycles
- Parental/Spouse vs Advocate and Caregiver Identity



So who is the client??

- Identified Patient (IP): IP is a phenomenon in which an individual carries the pathologies of dysfunction of a family system.
- The IP can be seen as a type of “scapegoat” that becomes the villain in the system’s automatic thinking.



What Gets You...What You Want?

- Most social and relational interactions are transactional, one person brings “X” to the table and another “Y”. Together (hopefully) a functional relationship is established.
- Too often those with chronic conditions learn the hidden rule of agency interactions or better said learned dependency.



Homeostasis



We take the role or action that keeps us in homeostasis



Family identity framed by the injury?



How Can They Help?

Focus on individual and family strengths!!

Different types of strengths can enable individuals and families to cope, to change, and to develop:

- Who they are – individual or a family traits (e.g., optimism, resilience)
- Who they have – social capital (e.g., social network, faith, extended family)
- What they can do – competencies (e.g., problem-solving skills, coping skills)
- What they got – right now (e.g., motivation, optimism)



Mirror and Reflect Strengths



Flexing Muscles/Developing Strengths

- Does the family/individuals have "transferrable skills"?
- Reframe it, Rename it
- Find the littlest thing and jump on it



How Else Can We Help?

- Do an inventory of capacities, competencies and resources
- Establish mutually beneficial relationships
- Help them find their Feedback Loop 2.0
- Focus on natural supports over agencies when possible
- Avoid creating a "patient" identity at home for the family member
- Avoid labeling problematic behaviors



Agency Supports are Important Too

-- Just not as important as Social Supports 😊

- Created a unified plan across agencies
- Take breaks from the caretaking and caregiving role (combat ego depletion)
- Know the resources in your community
- Brain injury has a dramatic impact on the entire family, for the long term
- People do best when they are informed
- Caregivers must learn to take care of themselves and their own needs first



Topic	Implemented by non-licensed professional	Back up with licensed professional	Licensure Required
What's normal after BI	Yes	Yes	X
Brain injury affects whole family	X	X	Yes
Coping with change and Loss	X	X	Yes
Taking care of yourself	Yes	X	X
Setting reasonable goals	Yes	X	X
Focusing on gains and accomplishments	Yes	X	X

How to Contact Us

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