

# Teaching Family Systems: How to facilitate a meaningful and engaging workshop

## Facilitators Guide

### Pre-Workshop

- 1) Identify a family:
  - a) Collaborate with senior faculty to identify a compelling family story
  - b) Explore stories of families with high degree of biopsychosocial complexity
  - c) The family should have 2 or more members who are patients of the practice
  - d) The family should have a story that evolves over time
- 2) Write brief case descriptions:
  - a) Write a unique description for each family member (their story/perspective)
  - b) Make sure that identified family member is the *center* of the case
  - c) Create a separate sheet that contains events that disrupt the initial stories
- 3) Purchase or borrow a “balancing” game. Examples include
  - a) [Don't Rock the Boat](#)
  - b) [Dont spill the beans](#)
  - c) [Stackable Trees](#)
  - d) [Diner Drop](#)

### Workshop

- 1) Divide participants into small groups equal to the number of cases
- 2) Give each group a case and have them construct an ecomap of that case  
Create an ecomap reflecting the family relationships and social context of each patient from their perspective focusing on the strengths, stressors, and supports
- 3) Have the groups share the ecomaps with the entire large group  
*Facilitator note- watch for the aha moments when they realize their cases are all tied together. Help them make connections if they do not see them.*
- 4) Set up the game in a central location, have each group add balance pieces representing the elements in their case that are part of the system of care/support
- 5) Hand out the description of the “disrupter” events for each case
- 6) Discuss how these events impact each member of the system
- 7) Remove and rebalance pieces on the game in response to the disrupting events  
*Facilitator note- discuss what resources might be needed to keep the system balanced and functioning*
- 8) Tell any remaining parts of the story as a wrap up
- 9) Discuss other examples of systems that function well, function in spite of their dysfunction, fall apart with crisis.  
*Facilitator note- highlight what makes a system work well (communication, defined roles, checks and balances), the tendency to seek homeostasis, and how outward appearance may not mean the system is functioning well*

Identifying a family to use for a family system case presentation

How many members are in the family?	
What are the key medical issues for each member?	
What are the key psychosocial issues for each member?	
Identify disrupting events that occurred in the system.	
Identify resources and supports needed for the system.	