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# What is a Family?



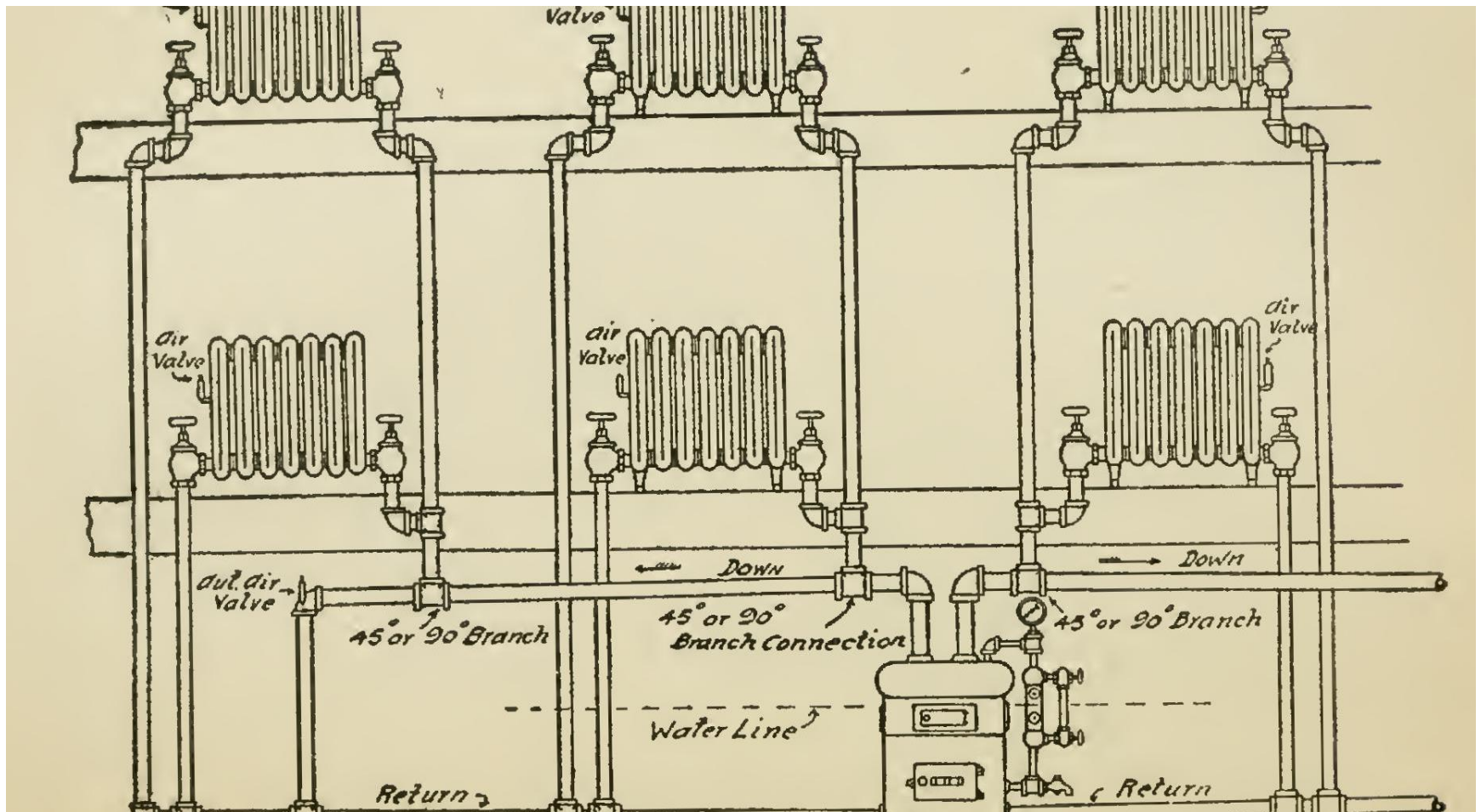
Families are small and unique communities with different beliefs, cultures, contexts and life experiences



# Each Family System and each individual within the System is unique

- How do members in your family like to celebrate success?
- How do members of your family respond when faced with a challenge?
- What does each person in your family like you to do when they are stressed, sad or upset?
- How do you forgive each other, or apologise, in your family?

# Family as a System



# Families are not closed systems

- Other relationships/experiences influence the individuals within the family system which can impact/create difficulties for the family.
- Sometimes relationships within the family system can impact/create difficulties outside of the family system e.g; within schools or friendships.
- Individuals are constantly bumping into other systems such as school, other families and friendships and this increases as the children become older.



# Family Life Cycle





# Family members can resolve the 'difficulty'.

- Families can be a great resource during these times and are often able to find solutions to these 'difficulties' themselves.
- Family members know each other well, understand how their family functions and they often have past experience of resolving 'difficulties' together.



## Sometimes families can maintain/create a 'difficulty' by

- trying to repeat solutions that have worked in the past.
- trying to prevent the developmental change that is taking place for a family member.
- trying a new solution to the 'difficulty' without agreement from another within the system.

# Fixed Perspectives

- Family members can stop listening to each other, perspectives can become fixed, communication can break down and more negative emotions can arise such as frustration, anger, blame.



# New Perspectives

- New perspectives will change the way we understand what is happening for each other and therefore change the way we respond to each other.
- To do this we need to find ways of hearing each other's points of view (positive communication).

# How best to achieve positive communication?

- When are the best times for your family to talk?
- What has to be in place for this to be successful?
- When is it a good time that you can listen?
- Who needs to be part of these conversations?
- (parents, grandparents, school)

# What Questions Might Help?

- What other times have we felt like this and what did we do that helped us to get through it? Will this work again?
- What is different about our family now that means it is no longer working?
- When are things going a little bit better? What are we doing at these times that is helping?
- What am I doing, what is my partner doing, what is my child doing, what is school doing when things are going better?



# Getting Help External to the System

- Getting an objective view on what is happening for family members might be helpful.
- Help is often sought for one individual within the family. This can be useful in order to express difficult emotions, learn new strategies.
- However, this may not take into account the impact on relationships and other family members.
- It may not take into account how the other family members can best support the individual.

# Family Therapy

- Family Therapists can provide a safe environment to enable family members to express and explore difficult thoughts and emotions safely in order to move forward in a constructive way.



# What do Family Therapists focus on?

- Family Therapists are interested in relationships and communication.
- The Family Therapist does not take sides, blame, or provide simple answers.
- They aim to engage family members in sharing understandings and exploring ways forward that work for them

# Who can Family Therapy be useful for?

- Couple relationship difficulties
- Child, adolescent and adult behaviour/emotional difficulties
- Parenting issues
- Illness and disability in the family
- Separation, divorce and step-family life
- Drug and alcohol misuse
- The effects of trauma
- Difficulties related to ageing and other life cycle changes.