

The Youthline approach is to protect the safety of staff, clients and others and to provide therapeutic interventions for families in accordance with current best practice research and guidelines, Youthline ethics and Youthline's policies and procedures.

The Family

The family plays arguably the most important role in a young person's development, helping to form their identity, attitudes and values, as well as their behaviour patterns (McLaren, 2002). Families should provide young people with the nurturing relationships, guidance and support needed for their development into positive and resilient youth, and healthy families are essential in a young person's physical and mental development (Waldegrave & Waldegrave, 2009). Family dynamics, and how individuals within the family react to situations and to the actions of other family members, shape how relationships are built and developed within that family. In New Zealand, the term 'family' encompasses a multitude of concepts, beliefs and understandings, including notions of identity, belonging, heritage, family processes, interactions, multigenerational identity and distinct cultural practices.

New Zealand is based on a bicultural discourse that is expressed through a partnership between the Tangata Whenua (indigenous Maori people) and Tangata Tiriti (non-Maori settlers) and established with the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840. In recent decades, New Zealand has become home to multiple nationalities and cultures, including Pacific Island, Asian, Middle Eastern, European and African peoples, each having their own unique set of values and belief systems.

The notion of 'family' in Aotearoa New Zealand is unique to the cultural context in which individual family units are located. This cultural diversity highlights the importance for practitioners to consider family therapies within the context of cultural preferences. Family values, structure, gender roles and discipline practices may differ widely between families of different cultures, and practitioners need to contextualize their understanding of the family so they can provide a culturally sensitive approach (Waldegrave, 2009).

Youthline's Approach

Youthline family practitioners work from a strength based approach, where interventions build upon the strengths of the individuals and the families as a whole. Positive relationships and behaviours are used as a starting point, and the families own support networks are identified and utilised. This approach, aligned with the principles of Whanau Ora¹, means any intervention is based on the needs of the young person and their family, and family-focussed and culturally responsive interventions are employed with the view of the family becoming self sufficient in time (Lees & Penk, 2009).

Youthline employs a blended, pragmatic approach to family therapy that has the potential to be as dynamic as the families with whom it is used, utilising best practice from Functional Family Therapy (FFT)² and Family Systems Therapy (FST)³. These therapies offer a set of techniques that can be applied with a variety of cultures and within the world view of individual families (Richeport-Haley, 1998). Appropriate support hinges on the therapist having a good understanding of what 'family' means to their clients.

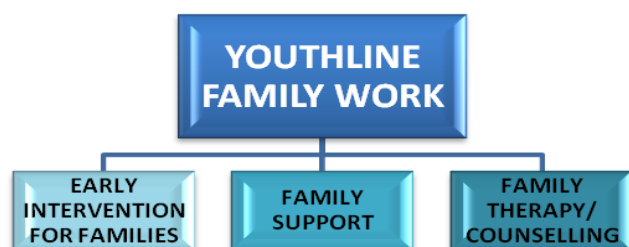
In a study done by Youthline, 15% of youth identified family violence and 9% noted communication with parents as the biggest issues faced by young people today (2011).

As McGoldrick (2005) emphasises, developing a therapeutic alliance with clients is paramount and this may be facilitated by employing skills of cultural competency. Indeed some clients may prefer or require (e.g. if language barriers present) a culturally matched therapist. These skills, combined with an approach that demonstrates cultural competency by being responsive to the needs of different ethnic groups, without imposing assumptions about family structure, will ensure practitioners address the needs of unique families from different backgrounds.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AOTEAROA

The Youthline approach to working with families is flexible and can be tailored to the family's needs. As the term 'family' is open, dynamic, unique and changeable, flexibility and a 'non-fixed' approach ensure interventions and support are personalised and specific to the needs of the family and young person.

Family dynamics may be influenced by a wide range of factors, including parental relationships, socio-economic pressures, financial issues, and parent-child relationships. These pressures mean the family needs to be a consistent and cohesive support structure around the young person, and family and parenting skills such as positive role modelling and consistent routines may need to be developed to cope with these issues. Youthline employs a multi-level approach that is developed around supporting the young person(s), which includes early intervention, family support and family therapy/counselling.



Early Intervention for Families

Youthline works with families to identify and manage concerns before they reach crisis stage. Youthline's Helpline and Specialty Assessment Services staff can be a first point of contact for families to talk through their concerns, receive resources or advice, and link in with further services and support.

Family support

Effective communication is important in good family relationships, and the aim of Youthline's family support is to enhance the communication and relationships between whanau/caregivers and young people. This can happen over the telephone, email, or face to face and whanau/caregivers can access team members to assist with: support, conflict resolution, and opportunities for enhancing communication and parenting skills.

Family Therapy and Counselling

Family therapy works with the whole family system. Youthline counsellors use a family-focussed framework, with support and interventions utilising a range of methods including family systems, attachment, object relations, client-centred, narrative, psychodynamic, psychodrama, group process therapy, Gestalt, behavioural CBT/DBT, and meta-frameworks when working with families.

Youthline follows a strengths-based approach when working with young people and families in accordance with the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa (YDSA). This strengths-based approach focuses on the protective factors that enable young people and their families to develop skills that will build their capacity to fulfill their potential. Youthline's family work is guided by the six principles of the YDSA.

1. *Youth Development is shaped by the big picture*

Young people's lives are framed by their social, economic and cultural contexts, and their experiences, which all help shape their identity and their self-efficacy. Youthline recognizes that a supportive and safe environment helps build resilient and empowered youth, and includes the wider family and community when working with young people. Being able to connect with supportive adults, family, education, work, health services, community and other support services is a vital part of youth development.

2. *Youth Development is about young people being connected*

Practitioners assist in the development of positive and supportive relationships, where young people and their families are encouraged to identify and develop their connections with their communities. This can enhance their confidence and capacity to seek support and resources that are available in their community when needed (Sanders & Munford, 2010).

3. *Youth development is based on a consistent strengths-based approach*

Youthline views families as the experts in their own lives, and support them to build on their strengths and protective factors around the young person. Areas where whanau are confident and robust are affirmed and strengthened as a foundation upon which areas of risk that can be addressed through skill building and enhancing connections to other support networks.

4. *Youth development happens through quality relationships*

Youthline supports families and significant adults in the lives of young people to develop successful, quality relationships with them. The way that people relate, listen and respond to young people is of the

utmost importance. Youthline's family services provide information and referrals to other agencies and services where necessary, supporting families to resolve conflict and maintain positive relationships and open communication between family members.

5. Youth development is triggered when young people fully participate

Young people need to have control over what happens to them, and around them, and Youthline encourages families to provide young people with opportunities to exercise autonomy and voice concerns over decisions that affect them or those around them. Family therapists provide young people and their families with the skills to encourage young people to voice their opinions in a positive manner to their parents/caregivers. Information on relationships and how to get heard by your family is available to clients on the Youthline website.

6. Youth development needs good information

This principle acknowledges that youth development is continually informed by effective research, evaluation and information gathering. Research and evaluation involves learning from what we do. Youthline therapists regularly review their therapeutic work with professional supervisors and/or the clinical services manager. Training provides skills for counsellors to work with families ensuring they follow the strengths-based wrap-around model promoted by all Youthline services. Youthline also endeavours to provide quality, useable information to families and young people, and language translations are available.

SAFETY OF CLIENTS AND OTHERS

All Youthline counsellors are familiar with and utilise Youthline's policies and procedures to inform their practice. These policies and procedures are assessed by Child, Youth and Family and Youthline is an accredited provider under the Child Youth and Family Act (1989). In all support and interventions with families, the welfare, safety and interests of the child or young person are the first and paramount consideration. All information about the client/family is treated with confidence within Youthline and not passed on without the client's prior consent, unless the safety of the client or of others is threatened.

All staff working with young people and their families will clearly explain confidentiality and its limits when they enter into a new counselling relationship. Confidentiality is not an end in itself, but a means of providing the client with sufficient safety and privacy

to enable them to explore matters which they may consider risky. Youthline emphasises that while the building of rapport and a trusting relationship with the young person and their family as the base of all support and intervention, confidentiality is also an expression of the client's right to act for themselves.

Youthline is able to refer clients to other community agencies if appropriate. Clients have the right to choose whether they see a counsellor alone, with a friend, or with family members. A translator can be arranged if required. If clients prefer, Youthline will also help them to find someone from their own culture/ethnicity to talk to.

Youthline's (2009b) paramount policy is to protect the safety of young people, and Youthline is bound by moral and legal obligation to report cases to Child, Youth and Family if the safety of the young person or others around them is compromised. While this obligation exists, Youthline is committed to providing open and transparent information regarding any processes that involve confidentiality, and will work with the family in the involvement of other agencies.

The goal of family therapy and support is: **Families and whanau are strong and richly interconnected with their communities. They are able to support their members' wellbeing, identity, participation in society and interdependence** (Gandar & Shephard, 2004).

1. Whanau Ora is a whanau approach to intervention, empowering the whole family to make positive change, and utilises multiple agencies who work collaboratively to achieve this.

2. Functional family therapy (FFT) is a strengths based approach that is used as both a preventative measure and an intervention for at-risk young people and their families. By providing an assessment of the risk and protective factors influencing the young person, FFT seeks to understand the causes of resistance in families and address them, rather than focussing on behavioural patterns. Positive change is encouraged by FFT by promoting engagement and motivation in family members, encouraging them to work towards acceptance of their own 'model' or understanding of family. The young person and their family are supported in this process by establishing a network of sources and multidimensional (e.g., medical, educational, justice) systems to surround them. The priority of FFT is to enhance positive relational patterns in order to empower the young person.

3. Family systems therapy views family members as being interconnected parts of an organic system rather than focussing on individuals. Difficulties experienced by one family member may therefore be the result of an unproductive function within system; introducing change to the system is theorised to bring about change to the individual by making healthy the whole.

USEFUL LINKS

Family support – Youthline

Free phone: 0800 37 66 33

Free Txt: "FS" before your message to 234

Email: parenttalk@youthline.co.nz

Family counselling: 09 361 4168

Franklin Family Support Services:

<http://www.familysupport.org.nz>

Mangere East Family Service Centre:

<http://www.mefsc.org.nz>

C.A.R.E Waitakere Trust:

<http://www.carewaitakere.org.nz>

Masculinist Evolution New Zealand (MENZ) (support for fathers) <http://menz.org.nz>

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