

2026

IFTA World Congress



Book of Abstracts





International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Danna Abraham

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Stories that refuse to harm: Narrative Care with Medical Trauma

Short Description: Stories that refuse to harm draws from White (1998) foundational ideas on how to respond to medical trauma avoiding re-traumatization. In the ICU for burned patients in Brazil, the workshop explores a real account of experience to help therapists support identity repair and develop their own moral commitments

Long Description: This workshop explores the therapeutic clinical work with medical trauma conducted in the ICU for burned patients in Brazil. Drawing from White (1998), we will focus on how trauma work can avoid becoming a site of re-traumatization through double-listening to both injury and response. Grounded in this practice, we review the innovative use of tilapia skin in thermal-burn care to situate therapy inside real interactions within ICU routines. We pair that clinical social cultural context (Brazil) with a response-and-values approach in which dignity is named as a clinical goal and therapists coordinate with nursing, surgery, and rehabilitation so that language and rituals fit the person and community, not only the procedure. Attention to consent and language justice guides every move. Considering the urgency to respond to trauma events, it becomes critical to expand how identity repair can be supported even in moments of intense pain. We introduce a brief narrative concepts that therapists can adopt to orient to values, witness preferred responses, and document words that can be transformative. This session helps therapists locate themselves not as distant experts, but as accountable witnesses and active participants in relationship with stories of pain. In other words, we explore how narrative therapy attends not only to suffering but also to restoring dignity when hope feels out of reach. In a culture organized by evidence-based mandates, we offer a complementary form of evidence: contemporaneous accounts that document dignity, agency, and preferred identity in real time. Throughout, we center the ethics we carry as therapists, what we learn from the margins of lived experience and from therapist's accounts of care. These small, teachable practices help teams coordinate around safety and respect, re-orient care, and renew moral commitments.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



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Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
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Presenter: Dasha Abreu Tome

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Intergenerational Healing: Creative Pathways to Overcome Trauma

Short Description: Intergenerational Healing: Creative Pathways to Overcome Trauma explores how families can collectively heal from generational trauma. Presented by a mother–daughter duo, this session introduces innovative, family-centered therapeutic approaches that stop the cycle of inherited pain, strengthen intergenerational bonds, and foster shared healing across age and experience.

Long Description: Intergenerational Healing: Creative Pathways to Overcome Trauma is a dynamic and deeply personal presentation led by a mother–daughter duo who bring both professional expertise and lived experience to the study of family healing. This session delves into the complex interplay of generational trauma, exploring how pain, patterns, and silence are transmitted—and how they can be consciously transformed through intentional, creative therapeutic work. Three key themes guide this presentation: 1. Generational Trauma and Stopping the Cycle – Understanding how trauma manifests across generations, how families unconsciously reenact unresolved pain, and how targeted interventions can break these inherited patterns. 2. Bonding Generations and Finding Common Ground – Exploring strategies to rebuild empathy and communication between family members of different ages, fostering mutual respect and emotional understanding through narrative and expressive practices. 3. New Methods to Work Through Trauma as a Family, Not as an Individual – Introducing innovative, collaborative approaches that engage the family as a unit—integrating art, storytelling, ritual, and systemic therapy—to create shared healing spaces and strengthen intergenerational resilience. This presentation blends clinical insights, creative modalities, and authentic family dialogue to illustrate how collective healing can reshape relational dynamics and restore hope across generations. Participants will leave with practical tools, fresh perspectives, and renewed inspiration to help families move from cycles of trauma toward cycles of connection, understanding, and growth.

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Presenter: Sheila Addison

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Deliberate Practice in Supervision

Short Description: Deliberate Practice, or iterative skill practice with immediate feedback, has been shown to enhance the acquisition and development of clinical skills for psychotherapy. This workshop will provide attendees with a brief experience of the application of DP principles to supervision.

Long Description: Training future psychotherapists in the clinical skills needed for practice has historically relied on a combination of reading, didactic instruction, and video review, which emphasize theory and discussion; and role play, which focuses on sustaining a mock session regardless of what difficulties may arise, then discussing the experience afterwards. However, none of these methods provide a focused opportunity to improve a specific skill with which the clinician is struggling. Deliberate Practice (DP), or iterative skill practice with immediate feedback, is the primary method of learning and honing skills in many performance-oriented fields, including athletics and music. Applying DP techniques to therapy skills helps to bridge the gap between theory and practice. By identifying a specific process skill, clinicians can engage in focused practice targeting the skill, receive immediate feedback, and then adapt subsequent rehearsals accordingly. This workshop will demonstrate the application of DP principles to supervision. Participants will understand the difference between Deliberate Practice and other supervisory practices such as discussion, role play, and video review. Participants will be able to identify key principles of DP to apply to their own supervision, and describe one model of DP-focused supervision that has emerged from applying DP principles with multiple cohorts of trainees.

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Presenter: Abdikheir Ahmed

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Intergenerational Trauma in Refugee Families: Understanding, Resilience, and Healing

Short Description: This interactive workshop explores the complex phenomenon of intergenerational trauma in refugee families, examining how trauma is transmitted across generations, the resilience factors that enable healing, and effective interventions to reduce its impact. Drawing on interdisciplinary research, participants will engage in reflective exercises and discussions to deepen understanding and practice.

Long Description: Intergenerational trauma in refugee families arises from a complex interplay between historical and communal trauma and family relational processes, where trauma originates both outside and within the family system. This cyclical influence profoundly shapes family functioning, parent-child attachment, and community cohesion. This workshop examines mechanisms of trauma transmission across generations, resilience factors that can buffer harm, and intervention approaches that foster healing within a systemic, family-centered context. Drawing on interdisciplinary research from psychological, sociocultural, and family therapy perspectives, the session explores key transmission mechanisms, including parenting styles, family communication patterns, and the influence of historical and communal experiences. It highlights how silence, disrupted narratives, and ongoing social stressors can reinforce trauma across generations. Resilience is presented as a dynamic process fostered by family members who maintain well-being despite adversity, strong marital bonds, community connectedness, and cultural continuity. Reframing family relationships within the context of larger community and historical trauma and empowering collective storytelling emerge as critical pathways to relational healing and identity reconstruction. Participants will learn about trauma-informed, culturally sensitive, systemic approaches supported in the literature, including family- and community-based interventions such as multifamily therapy and parenting programs. The clinical utility of genograms for mapping family trauma histories and resilience strengths will be discussed, alongside intergenerational family therapy principles that support open communication, attachment repair, and systemic resilience. Through brief reflective exercises and case examples, attendees will deepen their understanding of intergenerational trauma's complexity and explore evidence-informed strategies to support refugee families across clinical, community, and policy settings. The session emphasizes integrated relational approaches that honor cultural context and foster healing within multidimensional social systems.

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Presenter: Abdikheir Ahmed

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: From Resilience to Rupture: Understanding and Addressing Delayed-Onset Trauma Among Refugees After Resettlement

Short Description: Many refugees initially appear well but later experience family and systemic ruptures as trauma resurfaces post-resettlement. Drawing on trauma-informed, culturally grounded, and family-systems approaches, the presentation examines early trauma assessment and systemic interventions that strengthen family resilience and prevent delayed-onset psychological distress among refugees.

Long Description: Refugee resettlement is often framed as the endpoint of displacement; yet for many families, it marks the beginning of new psychological and relational challenges. Refugees arrive with complex histories of violence, persecution, and loss that are rarely explored during initial medical and settlement screenings. Early resettlement efforts understandably prioritize immediate physical and logistical needs housing, employment, language acquisition, and family reunification. During this phase, many individuals and families appear resilient and functional, masking deep emotional and relational distress. However, as stability increases and survival pressures ease, unresolved trauma often resurfaces, disrupting family dynamics and straining support systems. Clinicians and service providers are frequently confronted with sudden presentations of severe depression, post-traumatic stress, or psychotic symptoms that emerge years after arrival. At Resilia Community Wellness Centre, we have observed these patterns across refugee families in Manitoba, Canada. Our approach integrates trauma-informed, culturally grounded, and faith-sensitive practices with a systemic lens that recognizes the family as a central unit of healing and adaptation. Early trauma assessments conducted within safe, culturally responsive environments allow practitioners to identify both individual and family-level vulnerabilities and strengths. These assessments inform collaborative care plans that emphasize relational connection, intergenerational understanding, and community-based supports. This presentation shares insights from Resilia's family-systems approach to refugee mental health, illustrating how trauma, culture, and adaptation intersect within family and community networks. Drawing on clinical experience, community partnerships, and case examples, we demonstrate how culturally, and systemically attuned interventions can strengthen family resilience, reduce stigma, and prevent long-term psychological and relational deterioration. We argue that early, context-sensitive, and family-centered screening must become a standard component of resettlement to promote collective well-being and sustainable integration.

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Presenter: Eleni Aivalioti

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: The offer of free therapy sessions in the context of Systemic Training Program The example of Allilepidrasis IKE

Short Description: The socioeconomic conditions nowadays in Greece, deprive people of the opportunity to have psychotherapy as the public health system cannot respond to the plethora of requests for psychotherapy. Allilepidrasis IKE offers for free 5 systemic sessions to people who ask for help . Brief Solution Focused Model is used.

Long Description: The constantly changing socioeconomic conditions nowadays in Greece, make necessary the ongoing scientific training and specialization of the professionals in the field of psychological health. Besides, the economic recession deprives many people of the opportunity to start or to maintain their psychotherapy in private sector while the public health system cannot respond to the plethora of requests for psychotherapy. Allilepidrasis IKE, since 2013, as a member of EFTA TIC, organizes a four year training program in Systemic Therapy. The program is addressed in psychologists, social workers and psychiatrists who need to be specialized in systemic therapy. In this context, 5 systemic sessions are offered for free to people who ask for help and cannot afford it. Brief Solution Focused Model is used. What is a novelty is the association of the training process with the therapeutic activity as well as the emphasis that is given to the energetic participation of the trainees in the whole process which is a scientific challenge for the trainers and the supervisors of the program as well as for the trainees. One has to deal with matters as confidentiality, neutrality/ curiosity/irreverence, joining with clients who are a little suspicious about the offer of free sessions, and free trainees from the fear that they aren' t ready to take action as therapists or co-therapists. The method that is used is described as a way of helping trainees to complete their clinical practice as therapists and people who cannot afford the cost of psychotherapy to overcome a difficulty.

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Presenter: Nika Alakbarova

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Narrative-Informed Collaborative Care (NICC): A Systemic and Narrative Framework

Short Description: The Narrative-Informed Collaborative Care (NICC) model integrates systemic, narrative, and collaborative approaches to enhance therapeutic and interdisciplinary care. Using perinatal case vignettes, this presentation demonstrates how NICC fosters narrative reconstruction, relational resilience, and culturally responsive collaboration across family and healthcare settings.

Long Description: The Narrative-Informed Collaborative Care (NICC) model introduces a novel framework integrating systemic, narrative, and collaborative approaches to care. Rooted in clinical practice and qualitative research with women and families experiencing perinatal distress, NICC centers on meaning-making within relational and medical contexts. It addresses the gaps between therapeutic and biomedical models by prioritizing narrative reconstruction, collaborative dialogue, and contextual sensitivity. This 45-minute presentation will outline the theoretical foundations of NICC and demonstrate its application through selected perinatal case vignettes. These examples illustrate how collaborative narratives can transform experiences of loss, vulnerability, and disconnection into stories of agency and relational growth. The presentation will also discuss NICC's implications for interdisciplinary teamwork, training, and systemic integration across diverse cultural settings. Participants will gain a deeper understanding of how NICC operationalizes systemic collaboration and narrative inquiry to support both clinical practice and professional development. The model contributes to the ongoing dialogue in family and medical therapy by offering an adaptable, relationally informed structure for therapeutic collaboration.

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Presenter: Robert Allan

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: "You're a Stranger in a Strange Land:" LGBTQ + Experiences of Being Othered in Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy

Short Description: This presentation will describe LGBTQ + Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) clients' experiences and insights of feeling othered in therapy. We discuss how the process of othering relates to client identity development, therapeutic safety, and therapist education, qualities, and cultural humility. We conclude with recommendations for EFT practice and training.

Long Description: Despite seeking therapy at higher rates than their cisgender, heterosexual peers (Pepping et al., 2017), lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, plus (LGBTQ +) individuals, couples, and families, have less access to quality and effective mental healthcare compared to their cisgender, heterosexual counterparts (Alencar Albuquerque et al., 2016). Moreover, therapists report lacking confidence and competence to work with non-heterosexual, non-cisgender relationships (Green & Mtichell, 2015). Indeed, therapist knowledge of LGBTQ + mental health needs and lived experiences is insufficient to provide quality mental healthcare to LGBTQ + people, including those in romantic relationships (Nguyen et al., 2016). This is concerning considering that LGBTQ + individuals and relationships continue to experience discrimination from therapists (Romanelli & Hudson, 2017). This study presentation highlights an important theme that emerged in the current study to understand LGBTQ+ client within the context Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy (EFCT). Specifically, we utilized theater testing (National Cancer Institute, 2001; Wingood & DiClemente, 2008) to demonstrate EFCT to fidelity using EFCT training videos with a gay male couple and a lesbian couple. Eight focus groups with 35 LGBTQ + identified EFCT clients. During the focus groups, participants discussed several ways in which they felt othered when observing the training video or in their own experiences with EFCT. We will discuss key themes and results from the study, including clients' experiences of othering when (1) LGBTQ + identity was (or was not) discussed, (2) when feeling the need to educate the therapist, and (3) feeling othered negatively impacts therapeutic safety. We will discuss the implications of LGBTQ + clients feeling othered in therapy, and how these experiences tie into client identity development and therapist education, competence, and humility. We will frame this discussion in the context of cultural humility and, using this frame, provide recommendations for EFCT training and practice.

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Doug Tschopp



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Presenter: Amanda Alonzo

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Autism and Relationships: BBIPOC Women's Personal Narratives

Short Description: This presentation focuses on the relational experiences of BBIPOC women with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) through the critical disability theory. It explores ASD's impact on romantic connections, cultural influences, and therapeutic approaches, highlighting how both neurodivergence and societal relationship expectations shape these women's experiences

Long Description: This transcendental phenomenological study examined the lived experiences of BBIPOC adult autistic women in romantic relationships, addressing a significant gap in autism research. By adopting a Critical Disability Theory framework, we centered on the experiences of six BBIPOC adult women with autism who participated in videoconference interviews. The participants come from diverse gender identities, sexual orientations, ethnicities, and relationship styles, primarily with white partners. This approach acknowledges that understanding autism in women requires examining both disability, culture, and gender as interconnected social constructs rather than solely as medical conditions or individual challenges. The presentation will focus on several significant findings regarding BBIPOC women with autism and their romantic relationships. Participants experienced substantial diagnostic delays, with an average age of 25 at diagnosis and only one participant diagnosed during childhood, demonstrating how gender-specific presentation and masking behaviors often lead to missed or late identification. Cultural factors played a crucial role, as all participants reported minimal autism awareness in their cultures of origin, contrasting with what they perceived as greater acceptance in their white partners' cultural backgrounds—a finding consistent with documented racial disparities in early diagnosis despite similar autism prevalence across cultural groups. The sample showed a high representation of LGBTQIA+ identities, aligning with research indicating autistic individuals more frequently identify outside heteronormative frameworks. Despite social-emotional challenges inherent to autism, participants actively pursued and valued meaningful romantic connections. They consistently reported struggling with navigating both gendered expectations and cultural obligations, which likely contributed to their delayed diagnoses and added layers of complexity to their experiences as autistic women. This research gives voice to an underrepresented population and provides crucial insights for partners, families, and mental health professionals supporting BBIPOC autistic women. It illuminates the intersection of neurodivergence, gender, race/ethnicity, and relationships, potentially improving culturally-informed clinical approaches.

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William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



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Rock Island, Illinois 61201
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Presenter: Nasser Aloud

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Artificial Intelligence in Family Therapy: Enhancing Practice, Expanding Access, and Addressing Ethical Challenges

Short Description: This paper provides an overview of how AI can shape the landscape of family therapy. It seeks to discuss the opportunities and risks of AI integration, highlighting the implications for family therapists, and reflecting on the ethical, clinical, and practical ramifications.

Long Description: The incorporation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Family Therapy represents a pioneering shift in the way therapists assess and intervene in familial dynamics. This paper examines the potential applications, challenges, and ethical considerations of integrating AI technologies into the practice of family therapy. AI systems, including machine learning algorithms, natural language processing, and emotion recognition tools, offer novel ways to analyze and interpret family interactions, providing therapists with deeper insights into communication patterns and relational conflicts that might otherwise remain obscured. AI can assist in the clinical process by automating assessments, offering objective data to inform treatment planning, and enhancing ongoing support. These tools have the potential to track emotional responses, predict familial outcomes, and identify subtle patterns of behavior that inform more personalized therapeutic interventions. Furthermore, AI-based platforms enable remote or scalable therapeutic services, thus broadening access to family therapy for underserved populations and offering cost-effective solutions. However, the use of AI in family therapy also raises significant ethical concerns. Issues such as privacy, data security, and the risk of dehumanizing therapeutic relationships are paramount. This paper discusses how AI can augment—not replace—the human elements crucial to effective therapy, emphasizing the need for a careful balance between technology and the therapist-client relationship. By analyzing current AI-driven innovations and exploring potential future developments, this paper provides a comprehensive overview of how AI can shape the landscape of family therapy. It seeks to stimulate a critical discussion on the opportunities and risks of AI integration, highlighting the implications for therapists, clients, and the field at large. Ultimately, this paper aims to contribute to the ongoing dialogue regarding AI's role in mental health and family therapy, encouraging thoughtful reflection on its ethical, clinical, and practical ramifications.

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Doug Tschopp



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Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
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Presenter: Jenny Altschuler

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Family and Systemic Psychotherapy with People with medical Conditions: Evidence, practice and Developments

Short Description: In this workshop we describe the development of family and systemic psychotherapy for people with medical conditions. We review research, evidence-based practice and practice-based evidence regarding the use of systemic techniques and principles to support individuals, families and healthcare professionals through an often non-linear, harrowing journey.

Long Description: Based on our recently published book, in this workshop Jenny and Sarah describe the international development of family and systemic psychotherapy for people with medical conditions. We review research, evidence-based practice and practice-based evidence regarding the use of systemic techniques and principles to support individuals, families and healthcare professionals through what is often a non-linear, harrowing journey. Core themes arising from this work include the identity shifts illness can pose, sustaining relationships in situations of ongoing loss, trauma, uncertainty, and balancing loss, sadness and trauma with hope and resilience. Emphasis is placed on embodied experiences and the importance of addressing discrimination and diversity within healthcare. Supervision and systemic leadership are vital in developing the specialist and broader workforce and growing services. Clinical, supervisory and leadership examples will be presented from within our own practice. We will consider the importance of parity of esteem: and argue strongly for a bodymind joined up approach to providing healthcare services to people with medical conditions. During the workshop we will invite participants to consider their own relationship to health and illness, and to reflect on the state of family and systemic psychotherapeutic services in their country. We will invite discussions about research questions that will bolster our shared understanding of practice and will share some ideas about the use of systemic formulation together with suggestions for training our medical and nursing colleagues to think and practice more systemically.

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William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



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Rock Island, Illinois 61201
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Presenter: Sigurd Andersen

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Beyond findings: how research shapes our live supervisory practice

Short Description: We organize this workshop inspired by interesting findings from two recent research projects on live supervision in family therapy training, focusing on both students' and supervisors' perspectives. We invite participants to share experiences on live supervision, and to collaboratively explore how these experiences may resonate with findings from our studies.

Long Description: The workshop is planned together with Bill Northey and Mark Rivett and is intended to be part of the Supervision track. ----- We organize this workshop inspired by interesting findings from two recent research projects on live supervision carried out at the Counseling Center, a part of the training program in family therapy and systemic practice at VID Specialized University in Oslo. The Counseling Center provides a free and low-threshold service for individuals, couples and families, where supervisees can practice couples and family therapy under live supervision. In the first study we explored how supervisees experience live supervision at the Counseling Center and the relevance of this type of supervision for their development as family therapists. This study also prompted us to reflect on our own roles as live supervisors, leading to the second study, in which five supervisors conduct an autoethnographic study into their own experiences of providing live supervision to supervisees at the Center. Findings led us to make some general reflections about the challenges and opportunities related to ethical issues, self-reflexivity, power and pedagogical aspects that may be of interest for supervisors and supervisees. During the workshop we will briefly present our studies and related findings as a basis for further discussion on how engaging in this type of research has shaped our thinking and supervisory practice, both personally and professionally. We invite participants to share their own experiences and/or research on live supervision, either as supervisors, supervisees, or researchers, and to collaboratively explore how these experiences resonate with or challenge the findings from our studies. Diverging perspectives are welcome; we wish to promote a pluralistic and reflective dialogue.

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Rock Island, Illinois 61201
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Presenter: Asbjørn Andreas Heskestad

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: A multi-family approach to children who have experienced domestic violence

Short Description: The multi-family group in Kristiansand, Norway, is a treatment for children who have experienced domestic violence. It has run annually since 2005. Research and feedback show that this is an effective and meaningful way to meet children's trauma. We will present the way we work with this group.

Long Description: The multi-family treatment group that has run annually since 2005. It is a collaboration project between Sørlandet Hospital/ABUP and Vest-Agder Family Counselling Office, both situated in the city of Kristiansand, Norway. The group was initiated by Psy.S. Heine Steinkopf. The group participants are the children from several families, together with one or more parent figure(s) to whom they feel safe together with. All the children have experienced domestic violence. Either directly, or indirectly as witnesses. Each group consists of 15-20 two-hour sessions. The treatment is anchored in both systemic and psychodynamic therapy, as well as general trauma psychology. The main difference from single family therapy is that this setting enables the families to go beyond their own perspectives and make use of the resources of other families. Through role play, playing games and symbolic rituals, they can look back at their own experiences as well as their hopes for the future. This might help to feel less alone in the world, lead to a greater openness and less reluctance to explore possible changes that need to be undertaken. Through the principle of "therapist-de-centralisation", the families become therapeutic to each other, building on the resources and strengths of the families. In this workshop, we will outline the theoretical concepts, the structure and organization of the treatment approach through case examples and practical demonstration of interventions. - Kristi Olsen, family therapist, social worker - Asbjørn A. Heskestad, family therapist, social worker

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Presenter: Kristy Archuleta

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: The Couple Financial Conflict Scale: A New Tool for Therapists

Short Description: This presentation introduces the Couple Financial Conflict Scale (CFCS), an eight-item tool grounded in Couples and Finances Theory, designed to assess financial conflict between partners. Attendees will explore the current state of relational-financial issues, the importance of relational-financial assessment, and applications of the CFCS in various settings.

Long Description: Conflict over financial matters is a prevalent challenge among couples and can undermine relationship stability. Despite its significance, the availability of validated assessment tools to measure financial conflict within intimate relationships remains limited. Grounded in Couples and Finances Theory, this presentation introduces the development of the Couple Financial Conflict Scale (CFCS), an innovative, eight-item instrument designed to evaluate the presence and frequency of self-reported financial conflict between intimate partners. Attendees will be briefly introduced to the current state of relational-financial issues, learn why assessment of couple financial conflict matters, review current assessment tools available (including the Couple Financial Conflict Scale; CFCS), and learn how the assessment tool can be utilized in their practice settings.

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Presenter: Brianna Arnold

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Cultural Competency in Non-Native Bilingual Clinicians

Short Description: Presenters will discuss a qualitative content analysis exploring how bilingual mental health clinicians develop cultural competency while providing therapy in a second language. Themes will highlight strategies, challenges, and language influences shaping multicultural skill development, offering insight into how linguistic and cultural navigation impact therapeutic effectiveness and client connection.

Long Description: As the world becomes increasingly diverse, the demand for culturally and linguistically competent mental health care continues to grow. Yet, the mental health workforce continues to lack adequate diversity and preparation to meet the needs of multilingual and multicultural clients. While bilingual clinicians are uniquely positioned to bridge cultural divides, an often-overlooked subset—non-native speaking therapists—face additional challenges in achieving both cultural and linguistic competency. This study explores how non-native speaking clinicians who conduct therapy in their second language develop cultural competency and navigate barriers in clinical practice. Drawing from existing literature on multicultural competence, cultural humility, and bilingual therapy, this qualitative content analysis examines the tasks, strategies, and lived experiences of non-native speaking mental health clinicians. Semi-structured interviews with 5–10 non-native bilingual therapists will explore how language learning, self-reflection, supervision, and immersion in diverse cultural contexts contribute to their development as culturally responsive practitioners. Findings are expected to reveal how non-native clinicians cultivate awareness of their own cultural and linguistic identities, manage misunderstandings, and build trust with clients from differing cultural backgrounds. The study also highlights systemic barriers—such as limited bilingual supervision, resource gaps, and institutional inequities—that can hinder their growth and effectiveness. By amplifying the voices of non-native speaking clinicians, this research aims to enrich the understanding of what it means to practice cultural competency in multilingual therapeutic contexts. Implications will inform training programs, supervision models, and institutional policies that promote linguistic diversity, cultural humility, and equitable care across diverse client populations.

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Presenter: Halima Arshid

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: How to use routine outcome monitoring in couple therapy

Short Description: This workshop presents findings from implementing routine outcome monitoring (ROM) in family counseling. Drawing on recorded sessions and therapist interviews, we explore how ROM informs clinical decision-making. Participants will gain practical insights into using ROM as a conversational tool to enhance therapeutic dialogue and facilitate change.

Long Description: Routine outcome monitoring (ROM) has gained increasing attention in recent decades as a means to strengthen the quality of mental health care and family counseling. International research suggests that systematic feedback can enhance therapeutic outcomes, support client participation, and foster greater responsiveness in therapy. However, less is known about how ROM is actually used in family counseling practice, and how therapists make decisions when they bring feedback tools into conversations. In this workshop, we will present findings from our ongoing implementation of ROM at a family counseling office. Therapists have introduced the Couple Rating Scale (CRS; Anderson et al., 2021) and the Intersession Alliance Measure (IAM; Anderson et al., 2024) in their work with couples and families. Sessions where ROM was used have been video recorded, and therapists have been interviewed about how they interpreted and applied the feedback in concrete therapeutic moments. Preliminary results indicate that ROM provides more than just symptom and relationship information; the tools can serve as conversational entry points to important themes, help clarify different perspectives among family members, and strengthen the therapeutic alliance. At the same time, therapists encounter challenges, particularly when feedback highlights difficult or conflicting experiences that need to be addressed constructively in the session. This workshop will offer participants practical insights into effective ways of using ROM as a conversational tool in therapy, and into how implementation influences clinical decision-making. We will also discuss the organizational and methodological conditions required for ROM to contribute to sustainable quality development in family counseling.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Ulf Axberg

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Beyond findings: how research shapes our live supervisory practice

Short Description: We organize this workshop inspired by interesting findings from two recent research projects on live supervision in family therapy training, focusing on both students' and supervisors' perspectives. We invite participants to share experiences on live supervision, and to collaboratively explore how these experiences may resonate with findings from our studies.

Long Description: The workshop is planned together with Bill Northey and Mark Rivett and is intended to be part of the Supervision track. ----- We organize this workshop inspired by interesting findings from two recent research projects on live supervision carried out at the Counseling Center, a part of the training program in family therapy and systemic practice at VID Specialized University in Oslo. The Counseling Center provides a free and low-threshold service for individuals, couples and families, where supervisees can practice couples and family therapy under live supervision. In the first study we explored how supervisees experience live supervision at the Counseling Center and the relevance of this type of supervision for their development as family therapists. This study also prompted us to reflect on our own roles as live supervisors, leading to the second study, in which five supervisors conduct an autoethnographic study into their own experiences of providing live supervision to supervisees at the Center. Findings led us to make some general reflections about the challenges and opportunities related to ethical issues, self-reflexivity, power and pedagogical aspects that may be of interest for supervisors and supervisees. During the workshop we will briefly present our studies and related findings as a basis for further discussion on how engaging in this type of research has shaped our thinking and supervisory practice, both personally and professionally. We invite participants to share their own experiences and/or research on live supervision, either as supervisors, supervisees, or researchers, and to collaboratively explore how these experiences resonate with or challenge the findings from our studies. Diverging perspectives are welcome; we wish to promote a pluralistic and reflective dialogue.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Korinne Babel

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Teaching Counselors in Training to “Hear” the Family System

Short Description: Counselor education programs expose students to a variety of approaches to working with families. One challenge is how to honor the voices of each family member. During this experiential session, the presenters will explore ways to regulate the room and hear the trauma responses from family members at various ages.

Long Description: In this presentation, the presenters will briefly review literature and research findings regarding trauma responses across developmental stages and how these responses interplay within a family system in treatment. The presenters will address the importance of exposing counselors in training to the realities of working with the entire family system when addressing the trauma experienced by one or multiple members of the family system. The presentations will include an experiential demonstration that can be used in the classroom setting to demonstrate how trauma responses can impact the work done within the counseling space and impact the healing of the family system. This demonstration will help audiences understand how the nervous system of each member of the family system can become activated during discussions of trauma, and how the counselor in training can best serve the system by “hearing” these reactions within the counseling space. Audience members will leave with a teaching strategy to help novice counselors understand reactions and activations within their counseling space to better serve all members of a family system effectively.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Korinne Babel

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Quest Accepted: Teaching Family Systems Therapy through Video Games

Short Description: This session explores how family systems theory can be taught and applied using popular video game narratives and mechanics. Participants will learn how to identify systems-related concepts in video gameplay and amplify them as metaphors to engage students and clients alike in understanding complex relational dynamics.

Long Description: As video games grow in global popularity, there is increasing interest in integrating narrative and game mechanics into mental health settings (Bean, 2018; Kuniak, 2014; Plante et al., 2019). Researchers are also exploring the educational potential of video games within counselor education and related disciplines (Anderson & King, 2016). This session examines how mental health instructors can use video games to teach systemic therapy concepts in creative and compelling ways. We propose that video games offer symbolic, immersive landscapes for illustrating key family systems concepts such as family roles, intergenerational transmission, triangulation, and feedback loop. Their rich storylines make them powerful tools for experiential learning and meaning making (Dickey, 2015). By engaging in narrative analysis and gaming metaphors from titles such as *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*, *Final Fantasy XVI*, and *Pokémon*, we explore how themes such as familial legacy, parentification, betrayal, and inherited patterns appear in gameplay. These narratives naturally evoke concepts of differentiation of self, healing, and systemic change, allowing learners to move beyond abstract theory toward emotionally resonant and embodied understanding. By exploring systemic challenges in the context of video games, clinicians-in-training engage with family systems in a lower-risk environment that supports learning and content mastery. Additionally, using games as a metaphoric teaching tool can model therapeutic strategies for clinical practice, helping clients recognize systemic patterns in familiar, accessible ways. The session offers examples, discussion prompts, and implementation strategies for using video games both as a teaching method and a bridge to clinical work. Attendees will leave with new tools to energize classrooms, deepen student learning, and connect theory to lived experience through the power of play.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Lisa Bennett

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Bisexual Women in Heterosexual-Presenting Relationships: Mental Health Implications

Short Description: This presentation explores the lived experiences of bisexual women in heterosexual-presenting relationships through data from semi-structured interviews. Couple therapy implications include: (a) consideration of partner dynamics; (b) seeking validation and navigating invalidation; and (c) bisexual identity development journey. Implications underscore the need for affirming, identity-informed couples therapy.

Long Description: This presentation centers on a qualitative study that used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to explore the lived experiences of bisexual women in heterosexual-presenting couples. Bisexuality is a complex and evolving identity encompassing attraction to more than one gender (Feinstein & Dyar, 2017), often shaped by developmental stages (Brown, 2002) and influenced by social factors such as biphobia and bi-erasure (Boccone, 2016; Xavier Hall et al., 2021). Bisexual women in a heterosexual-presenting couple face unique mental health risks, including stress and identity concealment (Vencill et al., 2018), yet may experience resilience through community support and pride in their identity (Dorrell et al., 2024; Velasco et al., 2024). All these considerations can impact the larger relationship. Eight self-identified bisexual women partnered with cisgender men participated in semi-structured interviews. Three interconnected themes emerged. Through theme one, presenters will share how these women navigated complex partner dynamics—balancing emotional dualities, receiving and giving support, confronting past negative experiences, and negotiating straight-passing privilege—all while affirming their queer identities within their partnerships. Theme two illustrates how participants described both seeking and providing validation while navigating invalidation and bi-erasure from themselves and others. Finally, through theme presenters will describe how bisexual identity development is a personal, evolving journey marked by early self-discovery, internal and external struggles, repeated coming out experiences, and emotional complexity. Implication and application for mental health professionals, such as the need for affirming work, identity-informed counseling, and knowledge of bisexuality within couple's work will be explored.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Kristen Benson

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Systemic Family Therapy in a Shifting Global Political Climate

Short Description: The changing political landscape across the globe has created concerns and challenges for systemic family therapists. This workshop will draw from collaborative dialogic practices to address how the political climate has impacted SFTs, explore strategies to mitigate concerns, and invite participants to share their clinical practice or training context.

Long Description: Systemic family therapists attend to the social context of families to engage in culturally appropriate and meaningful change (McDowell et al., 2022). However, the changing political landscape across the globe has created concerns and challenges for systemic family therapists. These efforts challenge foundational aspects of SFT including accreditation standards for graduate training program, codes of ethics, and best practices. For example, lack of statutory regulation in England can leave clients vulnerable to misconduct and abuse (Hall, 2024) and conservative family policies in Turkey challenge gender equity in couples and families (e.g., Kılıçer et al., 2020). Therapist in the United States have seen a rise in family cut off due to political differences in an increasingly divided country (e.g., Coleman & Johnson, 2024) and challenges between couples who are not politically aligned (Peacock & Pederson, 2022). SFTs are also navigating political disclosures by and with clients in therapy (Solomonov & Barber, 2018) and how to discuss political differences (Laszloffy & Platt, 2024). Drawing from collaborative dialogic practices of interconnected meaning making and relational responsiveness (Bava, 2022), this workshop will address how the political climate has impacted SFTs, explore strategies to mitigate concerns, and invite participants to share their context. The facilitators will begin by sharing their social location and recent experiences navigating politics and practice in the United States. We will briefly explore the three key pillars of collaborative-dialogic practice which include the politics of knowledge construction, language play, and participation (Bava, 2022). Throughout the workshop, attendees will be invited to participate in group discussion activities and invited to share ideas and strategies regarding politics relevant to their location and clinical practice or training context. This workshop will provide a space for generative conversation about the intersections of politics and systemic family therapy training and practice in varying global locations.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Judith Maria Bermudez

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Sociocultural Attunement as a Compassionate Guide for Navigating Political Polarization

Short Description: Equitable and just family therapy requires third order thinking and change; however, most contexts are far from equitable and just. This workshop aims to examine how the tenets of socioculturally attuned family therapy can serve as a compassionate guide for managing the sociopolitical tension that negatively affects our lives.

Long Description: Family therapists and researchers are often caught in binds as therapists and scholars working toward equitable and just social change. Our ability to think from second and third order perspectives is paramount to navigating the many practical and ethical considerations that support equitable relationships in systems that are often unjust. McDowell and colleagues (2023, p. 12) apply Gregory Bateson's levels of learning to engaging in third order thinking and change. They contend that "taking a third order perspective means taking a metaview of systems of systems to map relationships between society, ourselves, and families." They define systems of systems as a complex interaction within and between societal systems (e.g., economic, political, social). Third order thinking expands our thinking beyond what is, to imagine alternatives within interconnecting systems. In essence, it is taking a metasystemic perspective and changing ideologies (e.g., colonialism, patriarchy, capitalism, etc.) to generate equitable transformational change. Being ethical family therapists requires us to work toward equitable and socially just practices. Experiencing the effects of dominant political ideologies and practices that negatively impact our lives (health, relationships, resources) takes its toll. It is especially challenging to disrupt oppression while protecting ourselves from being targeted, especially in societies that have leaders who exert forceful and unethical power and influence. Thus, the aim of this workshop is the following: 1) Review the effects of dominant political ideologies and political polarization on a global scale; 2) Review the tenets of socioculturally attuned family therapy and third-order thinking and change; 3) Discuss the ways we experience sociopolitical tension in our own lives; and 4) Apply the tenets of socioculturally attuned family therapy to challenge the harmful effects of distancing, isolation, discord, and othering.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Ari Bonagofski

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Eco-Informed Supervision: Navigating Climate, Nature and Interconnected Crises

Short Description: This presentation will discuss findings from a research project exploring eco-informed supervision. To support therapists facing and treating climate, nature, and interconnected crises, an overview of eco-informed supervision will be presented followed by practical applications and actionable recommendations for integrating an eco-informed perspective into existing supervision approaches.

Long Description: Systemic practice has been criticized for overlooking climate- and nature-related issues in therapy. This gap is increasingly problematic, as evidence shows that the climate crisis and disconnection from the natural world contribute to adverse physical and mental health outcomes. Moreover, social and environmental injustices create vulnerabilities that lead to unequal impacts when hazards such as wildfires, floods, or extreme temperatures occur. We are also living in a polycrisis, where climate challenges intersect with other threats like gender inequality, economic instability, and healthcare inaccessibility. In the Couple and Family Therapy field, neglecting these issues leaves a care gap for those experiencing ecological distress or related mental health challenges. Clinical supervision offers a pathway to address this gap by cultivating competence in working with climate, nature, and interconnected crises systemically. This presentation will discuss findings from a modified Delphi study that consulted experts to define and exemplify eco-informed supervision. Panelist perspectives helped clarify what eco-informed supervision involves and emphasized central importance the supervisor-supervisee relationship is. Climate- and nature-related issues as well as the broader effects of the polycrisis, will be discussed within the context of self-of-the-therapist issues. Eco-informed supervision is proposed as a more complete form of systemic supervision, designed to be accessible to all supervisors—whether adopted as an expansion of systemic practice or as a supplement to other supervisory models. Additionally, an eco-informed perspective provides a useful framework for supporting therapists in navigating climate- and nature-related issues both personally and professionally. This presentation will explore implications for supervision and offer practical recommendations for integrating an eco-informed perspective to strengthen therapists' preparedness and resilience in facing these complex challenges.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Arina Borodkina

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Is It Just Common Couple's Conflict or Abuse?: Couples Therapists' Clinical Conceptualization and Experiences Treating Emotional Intimate Partner Violence

Short Description: Our study explores how couple therapists conceptualize and treat emotional IPV in couples therapy. Using qualitative interviews, we examine therapists' assessments of emotional IPV and their clinical meaning-making process. Data collection is scheduled to begin in January 2026, with findings expected to inform IPV clinical training and research gaps.

Long Description: Emotional intimate partner violence (IPV) is one of the most underrecognized yet clinically distressing forms of IPV. Despite comparable or greater psychological harm than physical IPV, emotional abuse has received limited empirical and clinical attention, leaving therapists without clear frameworks for treatment. This study seeks to address these gaps by exploring how couples therapists identify, conceptualize, and intervene when emotional IPV is present in their clinical work. Existing literature highlights widespread confusion surrounding the definition of emotional IPV, leading to inconsistencies in identification and treatment. Emotional IPV behaviors such as humiliation, manipulation, and denigration often emerge in therapy under the guise of "communication problems" or "common couples conflict," leading to minimized clinical responses. Consequently, both treatment efficacy and client safety may be compromised. This study uses a phenomenological qualitative design to examine how therapists make meaning of and respond to emotional IPV within conjoint therapy contexts. Through semi-structured interviews, participants will describe their experiences with recognizing emotionally violent patterns, assessing for client safety, and their unique treatment interventions. Data collection will begin in January 2026, with the sample including approximately 5-10 licensed therapists with at least 5 years of experience recruited from private practice settings. Interview data will be analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to identify central themes reflecting therapists' conceptualizations, challenges, and strategies when working with emotionally violent couples.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Caroline Braathe

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: How to use routine outcome monitoring in couple therapy

Short Description: This workshop presents findings from implementing routine outcome monitoring (ROM) in family counseling. Drawing on recorded sessions and therapist interviews, we explore how ROM informs clinical decision-making. Participants will gain practical insights into using ROM as a conversational tool to enhance therapeutic dialogue and facilitate change.

Long Description: Routine outcome monitoring (ROM) has gained increasing attention in recent decades as a means to strengthen the quality of mental health care and family counseling. International research suggests that systematic feedback can enhance therapeutic outcomes, support client participation, and foster greater responsiveness in therapy. However, less is known about how ROM is actually used in family counseling practice, and how therapists make decisions when they bring feedback tools into conversations. In this workshop, we will present findings from our ongoing implementation of ROM at a family counseling office. Therapists have introduced the Couple Rating Scale (CRS; Anderson et al., 2021) and the Intersession Alliance Measure (IAM; Anderson et al., 2024) in their work with couples and families. Sessions where ROM was used have been video recorded, and therapists have been interviewed about how they interpreted and applied the feedback in concrete therapeutic moments. Preliminary results indicate that ROM provides more than just symptom and relationship information; the tools can serve as conversational entry points to important themes, help clarify different perspectives among family members, and strengthen the therapeutic alliance. At the same time, therapists encounter challenges, particularly when feedback highlights difficult or conflicting experiences that need to be addressed constructively in the session. This workshop will offer participants practical insights into effective ways of using ROM as a conversational tool in therapy, and into how implementation influences clinical decision-making. We will also discuss the organizational and methodological conditions required for ROM to contribute to sustainable quality development in family counseling.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Judith Brannon

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Secure Your Scroll: How Attachment Styles Shape Social Media Use and Emotional Resilience

Short Description: Social media connects and challenges us, amplifying both belonging and stress. This workshop explores how attachment styles shape online engagement and mental wellbeing. Through an attachment theory lens, participants will gain insights and strategies to build emotional resilience, foster balance, and encourage healthier digital interactions in professional and personal life.

Long Description: Social media has become an inescapable part of daily life, profoundly reshaping how we connect, communicate, and understand ourselves in relation to others. These platforms create opportunities for greater visibility, interpersonal connection, and professional networking. Yet, alongside these benefits, they can also amplify stress, comparison, misinformation, and emotional strain—affecting both personal wellbeing and professional effectiveness. Attachment theory provides a powerful lens for understanding why individuals experience social media so differently. Our attachment styles—whether secure, anxious, avoidant, or disorganized—influence not only how we relate to others offline, but also how we interpret likes, comments, “ghosting,” or endless scrolling online. By examining social media engagement through this framework, we can uncover hidden patterns that shape our digital interactions, self-concept, and resilience. This workshop will bridge psychological theory and practical application. Participants will explore the intersection of attachment and online behavior, consider the implications for mental health and professional identity, and gain strategies to strengthen emotional resilience. Through guided reflection, discussion, and evidence-based tools, attendees will learn to navigate the digital landscape with greater balance, intentionality, and confidence. Designed for therapists, educators, and higher education professionals, this session will provide both insight and actionable takeaways for supporting themselves and those they serve in building healthier relationships with social media.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Elin Okkenhaug Bratland

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Understanding listening in a cultural and system therapy perspective

Short Description: Listening is viewed as one of the most important skills for therapists. This workshop is based on hermeneutics research to understand the nature of listening. The presenter will look at what it means in a western, family therapy setting, and compare it to how it's understood in other cultures.

Long Description: Listening is viewed as one of the most important skills of the therapist. Some even regard it as the most important. The presenter will go into depths to understand what listening means in a western, family therapy setting, and compare it to how it's understood in other cultures. Further, the presenter will address how listening can be understood as part of ontological being compared to a therapeutic skill. This workshop is based on hermeneutics research done by the presenter on the word listening. A scientific article is in the process of being produced and is planned to be published in 2026 if approved. Some of the questions that the presenter will explore, but not limited to, are: What does listening really mean, and are there differences in how we understand it across different cultures? How is response deeply connected to listening, and what may happen if it's not? What can hinder us from listening and what might the consequences be in a family therapy setting? The workshop will be an interactive process of lecture, dialog in different formats, and simple experiential exercises. The hope is that we together become more relational-aware and go back to our everyday life with some new or more expanded reflections regarding the profoundness of listening. Some journeys are never meant to end, and to listen more deeply to the complexity with great presence and humility, are one of those.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Karen Burgess

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Social Justice and Trauma - informed Supervision

Short Description: To explore the impact of trauma on supervisors and supervisees and the stories around social justice that inform the positions we take In developing conversations about power in our supervisory positions we find versions of the self which fits our ethical stance and diminish the impact of burn out

Long Description: In the workshop we will think about the impact of trauma in our work as supervisors, and consider what it means to take a social justice stance in our supervisory practice. Little is written about the impact of Trauma on the supervisory process for both supervisor and supervisee, and this is something we would like to explore We would like to create a dialogue to support participants to further develop ideas from their own experiences of holding power and being powerless. We want to think about the stories we tell that build the self of the supervisor. How do we build a supervisory self that fits with our sense of our personal ethical position ? What do you stand for as a supervisor ? How can these ideas have a bigger presence in supervision? We will develop these ideas though descriptions of our own clinical supervision, and from our teaching together at the Institute of Family Therapy London.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Sarah Burley

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: The Mental Health and Resiliency of Family Therapists: Recognizing the Importance of Self-assessment and Attunement

Short Description: This presentation discusses challenges therapists experience related to their own emotional and psychological well-being as they consistently offer support to others. We emphasize the importance of paying attention to one's own mental health and use case studies to illustrate evidence-based strategies for navigating challenges to support resilience.

Long Description: Background: Family therapists routinely engage with emotionally charged relational dynamics, often supporting clients through trauma, conflict, and crisis. While their work centers on healing others, the psychological toll on therapists themselves is frequently overlooked. Recent research reveals elevated rates of burnout, compassion fatigue, and vicarious trauma among practitioners, particularly those working in high-stress or trauma-focused environments. This presentation addresses the critical need to prioritize therapist mental health within the broader discourse of family therapy. Methods: Drawing on evidence based and clinically rich data, this session will explore the experiences of therapists who struggle with emotional exhaustion, ethical dilemmas, and systemic pressures. It will examine how factors such as organizational culture, supervision quality, and personal coping strategies shape therapists' well-being. The discussion highlights the paradox of emotional labor in the expectation to remain empathetic and composed while at times perhaps managing personal distress. It will underline how the therapist's mental health can directly influences therapeutic outcomes and client engagement. Discussion: This presentation advocates for a cultural shift in family therapy to one that recognizes therapist mental health not as a private concern, but as a professional priority essential to sustainable, effective care. It is critical to recognize and identify early indicators of burnout, secondary trauma, or professional fatigue in themselves and their colleagues. Outcomes: Attendees will leave with a deeper understanding of the psychological risks faced by family therapists, along with evidence-based strategies for promoting well-being. Practical tools for integrating mental health support into supervision and organizational policy will be shared, emphasizing self-care as an ethical imperative in therapeutic practice. Participants will be invited to share insights, challenges, and best practices from their own clinical contexts, creating a supportive context for mutual support and learning.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Catherine Butler

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: The effectiveness of systemic supervision

Short Description: This talk explores whether systemic supervision improves client outcomes and seeks to identify the elements that contribute to its effectiveness. By reviewing existing English-language research, the talk will examine whether and how systemic supervision influences practitioner development and therapeutic effectiveness in client change and wellbeing.

Long Description: This talk will present the results of a systematic review examining the effectiveness of systemic supervision in therapy and consultation contexts. The review explores whether systemic supervision influences client outcomes and what elements make it most effective in supporting practitioner development, reflective practice, and therapeutic change. All available English-language peer-reviewed research and relevant grey literature have been thematically synthesized to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current evidence base. Systemic supervision, grounded in relational and contextual perspectives, emphasizes patterns, meanings, and interactions within systems of care. It is widely valued for fostering reflexivity, collaboration, and resilience among practitioners, yet the empirical evidence for its direct impact on client outcomes remains limited and varied. This presentation will critically evaluate the extent to which systemic supervision contributes to measurable differences in therapeutic effectiveness, either through improved practitioner competence, greater coherence within teams, or enhanced systemic awareness in client work. The thematic synthesis identifies recurring elements that appear to make systemic supervision effective, including the quality of the supervisory relationship, attention to relational and contextual dynamics, and the use of systemic questioning and reflexive dialogue. The talk will discuss how these factors intersect to shape both practitioner learning and the broader system of therapeutic practice. By integrating insights from diverse methodologies and professional contexts, this review provides an overview of whether systemic supervision truly makes a difference and how it might be further refined or researched. The findings aim to inform supervisors, trainers, and policymakers about best practices and gaps in current knowledge, offering a foundation for evidence-based development of systemic supervision models that genuinely enhance both practitioner effectiveness and client outcomes.

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William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

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Fax: +1-309-786-0205
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Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: McKenna Cape

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Response to ICE Raids: A Thematic Analysis of Community Conversations

Short Description: Presenters will review a thematic analysis of community responses to ICE raids since the start of the Trump Administration. Presenters will discuss themes extracted from public commentary from BIPOC people who discuss their responses to ICE raids and their engagement with forum commentators. Implications for clinical practice discussed.

Long Description: In a recent ruling issued by the U.S. Supreme Court, *Noem v. Vazquez Perdomo* (2025), the Supreme Court overruled a District Court and permitted the Trump administration to question anyone they suspect of being undocumented based on the way they look, how they speak, and where they work. In the last 10 months, social media and public discussions have given ample examples of the ways that racial profiling targets BIPOC with countless videos of ICE agents violently subduing people to detain them. As such, some have described, just as Justice Sotomayor's dissent of the ruling, that these experiences subjugate Latinos into second class citizenship. While literature identifies the resourcefulness and resilience of immigrant families as they live with undocumented status, there is also significant research noting the hardships of immigrants' lives in the U.S., especially in recent years where it seems more permissible for people to openly vilify and discriminate undocumented people. However, the enforcement of immigration policy our communities witnessed in the first Trump administration drastically differs with the escalation of violence currently seen in communities since the start of Trump's second term. Many community members seek to spotlight injustices via their recordings of violent ICE encounters, while others voice their concern and desperation about what they see and experience. Therefore, it is essential to amplify community voices of those who openly share their responses to immigration enforcement tactics by the current administration. Thus, this presentation will review a thematic analysis of community responses to ICE raids. Presenters will discuss themes extracted from public commentary from BIPOC who discuss their responses to ICE raids and their engagement with forum commentators. Using the emergent themes, presenters will also describe clinical considerations for mental health practitioners working with people who are negatively affected by socio-political movements.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Kelsey Card

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Implications of physical space on the therapeutic relationship

Short Description: Review of recent literature from environmental psychology and related academic fields on the impact of physical space as it relates to therapy and the therapeutic relationship. Also includes a discussion of future implications of space (physical and virtual) on teletherapy.

Long Description: In the United States it has been close to a decade since easily accessible information on how to set up the space of a private practice office has been published. In addition, many academic programs do not discuss considerations for room design in their academic preparation. There have been many recent developments in environmental psychology and other academic fields that rely on relationship building that can be used to inform our physical space. Many of the previous findings continue to be supported but research into the effects of space on disclosure, furniture type on wellbeing, lighting, color, and potted plants effects on mood should be explored. By incorporating this new research into office space design, therapists can increase client comfort and confidence in the therapeutic relationship. Future implications: In the post-covid world, teletherapy is here to stay and emerging research challenges the thought that physical space has limited impact on virtual environments.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Tak-Mau Chan

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Reclaiming Narratives: A Multiple Family Narrative Therapy Model for Neurodivergent Chinese Children and Families

Short Description: Confucian values complicate experiences of Chinese families with neurodivergent children, risking marginalization. Integrating Narrative Therapy and Multiple Family Therapy empowers families to reframe identity through supportive communities. A four-week intervention with 90 families highlights neurodiversity affirmation, family agency, and cultural competence as key to healing and belonging.

Long Description: Confucian ideology shapes a complex social landscape for individuals with disabilities in China, simultaneously reinforcing hierarchical marginalization and advocating for dignity and support. This tension places Chinese families with neurodivergent children—often identified as having special educational needs—at heightened risk of hermeneutical injustice. Narrative Therapy, by contextualizing problems within social, cultural, and political frameworks, empowers marginalized individuals to reclaim their stories beyond external stigmatization. Multiple Family Therapy facilitates healing through structured, collective psychosocial interventions. By integrating these approaches into Multiple Family Narrative Therapy, practitioners can enhance cultural competence and implement identity-reframing interventions that support families with neurodivergent children and others marginalized by society. This approach creates a vital counterspace where diverse voices are acknowledged and valued. This presentation examines the application of this model with 90 Chinese families over a transformative four-week intervention—48 with children diagnosed with ADHD and 42 with dyslexia. Rich therapeutic data, including parents' letters, children's artifacts, reflections, videos, and interviews, reveal how supportive communities facilitate the processing and reframing of identity injuries. Three core practices emerge as essential: cultivating a neurodiversity-affirming mindset, recognizing families as active agents of healing, and employing dynamic cultural competence strategies. These insights offer practitioners powerful tools to help families and children navigate the complexities of identity and belonging in culturally sensitive ways.

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William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Jeff Chang

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Strategic Family Therapy: An Idea Whose Time has Come... Again

Short Description: Strategic family therapy in the tradition of Haley and Madanes was once prominent in family therapy. Still typically taught as a "classic" model in theories courses, it has largely disappeared from the contemporary scene. Jeff will share a fresh look at strategic therapy and what it has to offer today.

Long Description: Strategic family therapy, as taught by Jay Haley, Cloe Madanes, and their colleagues at the Family Therapy Institute of Washington, DC, was a dominant model in family therapy from the 1970s until the early 2000s. At the time of its emergence distinct approach in the 1970s, strategic therapy along with the nascent cognitive-behavioral approach, represented a departure from psychodynamic thinking. Their common emphasis on therapist-directed change in the here-and-now, and de-emphasis on psychological archaeology, was perceived as active, practical, and refreshing. CBT thrived and strategic therapy has all but disappeared, pretty much relegated to theories courses as "classic" approach. In this presentation, I will describe how the strategic approach was distinctive in its emphasis on taking responsibility for client change, attention to the therapeutic relationship with the entire family, recognition of family hierarchy, pragmatic case conceptualization over diagnosis, and social justice/strategic humanism. Then I will argue that many elements of strategic therapy provide a welcome counterpoint to procedurally-driven, model-heavy, certification-based, and individualistic ethos of contemporary family therapy. Finally, I will suggest how ideas from strategic are still relevant now.

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William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Chiemi Chiba

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Child-Rearing Support for Mothers Participating in a Parent-Child Interaction Program Requiring Developmental Guidance

Short Description: In Japan, various forms of support are provided for families raising children with congenital conditions or complications at birth. These include national level systems, child-rearing support for children with medical or developmental needs, and support specifically directed at parents of children with severe disabilities.

Long Description: This study reports on the necessity of mental support, based on interviews and field observations conducted with in University-based program that provides both play activities for children and support for their mothers. Methods: This ethically approved study was conducted between May 2023 and March 2024. Nine mother-child dyads participated, most of whom were raising children requiring medical care, such as tube feeding or oxygen monitoring. Mothers were interviewed regarding their perceptions of parenting, challenges faced, and their most pressing needs. Data were analyzed qualitatively using the SCAT (Steps for Coding and Theorization) method, developed by Japanese researcher Naohisa Ohtani. Results: Four main categories emerged from the interviews: 1. Life born with disability (eg., surviving hypoxia, saved by medical technology) 2. Medical declarations (eg., overwhelming grief, daily tears) 3. Daily parenting support (eg., solitary struggles, lack of spousal cooperation and error, support from peers with similar experiences, support from family members) 4. Future child-rearing (eg., aging parents, national policy measures, anxiety about the child's future).

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

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IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Chip Chimera

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Not for the faint hearted: supervising high conflict

Short Description: High post separation parental conflict is extremely stressful for workers and supervisors. How to help children who become invisible in the shadow of the conflict is a continual practice dilemma. This workshop aims to give supervisors and supervisees additional tools for dealing with the complexity of these difficult situations

Long Description: High post separation parental conflict can be extremely stressful for workers and supervisors alike. Helping children who can become invisible in the shadow of the conflict is a continual practice dilemma. Practitioners can leave the field feeling disillusioned and demoralised. The work is often imbued with a sense of futility, dismay and hopelessness. Sticking to systemic principles of open practice and collaboration can start to feel like a distant dream, an unobtainable goal. This workshop aims to give supervisors and supervisees additional tools for dealing with the stress and complexity of these situations which will ultimately help the parents and especially the children caught up in the web of unhappiness which accompanies high conflict. Some of the issues which particularly arise in such work are: • staying child focused, • agreeing realistic goals, often very small, (a difference that makes a difference?) • recognising and celebrating achievements and progress • working with entrenched hostility, • protecting oneself Using a lens of trauma informed practice and integrating knowledge from current neuro-science research, the presenter applies an overall Attachment Narrative approach. This presentation will identify how this work has specific requirements for systemic supervision and present some ways of addressing these. Dr Chip Chimera is a systemic family therapist and psychodrama psychotherapist with many years' experience of working with family conflict. She is an EMDR practitioner and an established trainer and supervisor in the UK.

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William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
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E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Alexandra Cintron-Oquendo

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Giving passion a field to practice: The uses of artistic creation in therapy and supervision.

Short Description: This presentation explores how artistic passion and creation can serve as transformative resources in clinical supervision and therapy. Doctoral students and their supervisor will illustrate how their use facilitates the connection between identity, personal growth, and therapeutic skill development, enhancing the learning process in supervision and generating therapeutic change.

Long Description: This presentation delves into the processes of passion and artistic creation, exploring their potential to generate internal and relational resources in therapeutic practice and clinical supervision. We will discuss how a learning space based on trust and openness can be co-created in supervision and how this can be used to connect students with their sources of artistic passion, play, and creativity. The presenters, a supervisor and two clinical students at the University of Puerto Rico, practice in an archipelago in the Caribbean, distinguished by its cultural richness nourished by art in its various forms. These artistic expressions are integral to our traditions, serving as pillars of our identity and cultural diversity. The arts in all their manifestations have stood as tools of liberation and resistance to processes of colonization, providing spaces for re-imagining our identity, fostering possibilities, while sustaining complex memories, relational patterns, and emotions. In the context of clinical supervision and psychotherapy, reconnecting students with their sources of passion, their potential, and their practices of artistic creation and expression allows them as therapists to reaffirm their identity as performers capable of connecting with others, being patient and curious, enjoying the process, and trusting their inventiveness for provoking generative change. Through this, the space of clinical supervision and therapy becomes an opportunity to construct a therapeutic identity that recognizes and values the qualities and creative processes that nurture students and supervisors outside their academic and professional identities, treating them as rich resources for clinical training. In this presentation, we will discuss and provide examples of how artistic passion and creation can be evoked, nurtured, and utilized in the context of supervision and psychotherapy as a performative and metaphorical resource for navigating the learning experience and accessing resources that enrich the abilities and capacities of future clinicians.

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William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



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Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Blake Conley

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: AI Tools for Group Facilitation: Enhancing Training for Family Therapists

Short Description: This presentation explores how AI can support students and new clinicians in group therapy training. Using simulations and feedback tools, AI offers scalable and ethical practice environments. A proposed model integrates AI into therapy education, balancing technological innovation with oversight to prepare future practitioners for complex group dynamics.

Long Description: As artificial intelligence (AI) rapidly transforms mental health practice, its potential as a training tool for group therapy remains under explored. This presentation proposes a model for integrating generative AI into the training of group facilitators, particularly to enhance the development of core interpersonal, ethical, and leadership skills. Training in group facilitation is a core competency (Northey & Gehart, 2019) yet many emerging clinicians report feeling unprepared to lead groups. Although traditional approaches such as didactic instruction and role plays have well-established value, they are often constrained by time, access, and variability in practice opportunities (Warkentin, 2016). AI offers a promising supplement to these methods by providing low-risk, scalable, and flexible training experiences. Drawing from interdisciplinary pedagogies and emerging AI technologies, this session will introduce a range of AI tools that can enhance experiential learning for aspiring group leaders. We will explore how AI can support students in analyzing group dynamics, practicing interventions, and reflecting on their communication styles. Participants will leave with a practical guide for thoughtfully integrating AI into group training, including recommended tools, implementation strategies, and key ethical considerations. This work is especially timely for family therapy educators and supervisors seeking innovative ways to prepare practitioners for complex relational work in diverse cultural and technological landscapes. Northey, W. F., & Gehart, D. R. (2020). The Condensed MFT Core Competencies: A Streamlined Approach for Measuring Student and Supervisee Learning Using the MFT Core Competencies. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 46(1), 42–61 Warkentin, B. (2016). Teaching social work with groups: Integrating didactic, experiential and reflective learning. *Social Work With Groups*, 40(3), 233–243.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Blake Conley

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: AI in Systemic Family Therapy Education: A Co-Constructive Pedagogical Approach

Short Description: This presentation offers an integrative model for harnessing AI in SFT pedagogy. Students engage AI to generate and co-analyze complex family case studies. This approach positions AI as a facilitator, supporting learners in recognizing systemic principles through the lens of peers and AI to create developed and appropriate assessments.

Long Description: Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping the landscape of education, yet its role in developing systemic thinking within family therapy remains largely understudied (Aviram, 2025). This presentation proposes a conceptual framework for integrating AI into Systemic Family Therapy (SFT) pedagogy as a collaborative learning partner that enhances students' ability to think systemically, as well as to critically evaluate AI output. Current pedagogy relies on role-plays and didactic methods to learn frameworks. Despite the strength of these methods, role-plays have limitations (Natrajan-Tyagi, 2016). Students are also entering professional practice by utilizing AI without having learned how to evaluate or engage with this advanced technology critically (Aviram, 2025; Reamer, 2023). This presentation offers an integrative model for harnessing AI in SFT pedagogy. In this model, students engage AI to generate complex case studies that reflect core SFT principles. Small groups of learners analyze these AI-created cases, apply systemic concepts, and then compare their interpretations both with one another and with AI's synthesized case study reflections. Through an iterative process, students examine the family system within the case, co-construct systemic meaning with peers, and ethically co-evaluate AI output. This approach positions AI as a facilitator, supporting learners in recognizing systemic principles through the lens of their peers and AI to create developed and appropriate assessments. Integrating AI offers a novel pedagogical pathway for cultivating systemic fluency in students and critically co-evaluating AI output. This framework reframes both technology and the classroom as co-constructive systems, expanding the possibilities for how SFT can be taught and learned in contemporary contexts. Ultimately, this framework invites educators and students to engage AI as a reflective collaborator. Students learn to verify outputs, examine and develop systemic reasoning, and cultivate critical judgment for professional practice.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

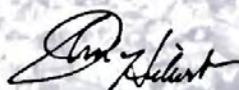
Presenter: Sydney Crane

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

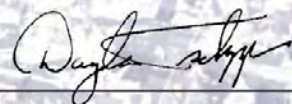
Title: I'm On Hospice: A Children's Book for Processing & Coping With A Terminal Illness

Short Description: While receiving hospice care, children may encounter unfamiliar terms or struggle to articulate their questions. Through Riley's story, I'm On Hospice fosters developmentally appropriate dialogue, creating space for understanding, discussion, and emotional connection within the family and care team as they navigate the complexities of terminal illness.

Long Description: This children's book was written and developed in 2023 as a resource for families with a child receiving hospice care. Inspired by a family the author had the privilege of supporting, the book invites readers into the often difficult and uncertain conversations surrounding terminal illness. It gently and directly explains terminal illness and the hospice care team, while posing thought-provoking, developmentally appropriate questions to support reflection and dialogue.



IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert



General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Caleb Cuthbertson

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Engaging Loved Ones in the Recovery of Adolescents and Young Adults Experiencing Homelessness

Short Description: Most unaccompanied youth (14-24 years) living on the streets report some contact with supportive others (SOs). Yet, efforts to engage SOs in their recovery are limited. In this presentation, the process for engaging SOs using Community Reinforcement and Family Training (CRAFT) and family systems therapy will be presented.

Long Description: Homelessness is still a major problem and is devastating for youths. Diagnosed alcohol and drug use disorders range from 50% to 86% (Burke et al., 2023) which is of concern since substance use has been associated with a lower likelihood of exiting the streets. The homeless service system for youth is woefully underfunded and enormous service gaps exist in being able to engage, treat and house the increasing numbers of youth experiencing homelessness (YEH). Engaging the family members and/or supportive others of individuals with a SUD has consistently been shown effective at reducing SUD and associated mental health problems (Bufford & Lappan, 2024). While studies have documented the social network characteristics of unaccompanied YEH, no study has developed an intervention to engage a family/social network member to facilitate and support that youths' substance use treatment. Supportive others (SOs) can include a family member or friend (chosen family) over the age of 15 years with no history of abuse or exploitation of the YEH. Engaging SOs in the YEH's SUD treatment could have significant implications for substance use outcomes, but also for housing and mental health. Therefore, the current study provides a first step towards addressing these devastating conditions through engaging SOs of these youth which can also confer significant benefit to SO. The intervention consists of the Community Reinforcement and Family Training (CRAFT; Myers et al., 2002) which targets supportive others of unmotivated persons with SUD, offering approximately 12 sessions with the goal to engage the substance user into treatment. In addition, family systems therapy focuses on improving family/SO interaction patterns. The process for adapting and implementing these interventions to the unique family and social relationships of YEH will be described, using a case example.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Chris DaSambiagio-Moore

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Quest Accepted: Teaching Family Systems Therapy through Video Games

Short Description: This session explores how family systems theory can be taught and applied using popular video game narratives and mechanics. Participants will learn how to identify systems-related concepts in video gameplay and amplify them as metaphors to engage students and clients alike in understanding complex relational dynamics.

Long Description: As video games grow in global popularity, there is increasing interest in integrating narrative and game mechanics into mental health settings (Bean, 2018; Kuniak, 2014; Plante et al., 2019). Researchers are also exploring the educational potential of video games within counselor education and related disciplines (Anderson & King, 2016). This session examines how mental health instructors can use video games to teach systemic therapy concepts in creative and compelling ways. We propose that video games offer symbolic, immersive landscapes for illustrating key family systems concepts such as family roles, intergenerational transmission, triangulation, and feedback loop. Their rich storylines make them powerful tools for experiential learning and meaning making (Dickey, 2015). By engaging in narrative analysis and gaming metaphors from titles such as *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*, *Final Fantasy XVI*, and *Pokémon*, we explore how themes such as familial legacy, parentification, betrayal, and inherited patterns appear in gameplay. These narratives naturally evoke concepts of differentiation of self, healing, and systemic change, allowing learners to move beyond abstract theory toward emotionally resonant and embodied understanding. By exploring systemic challenges in the context of video games, clinicians-in-training engage with family systems in a lower-risk environment that supports learning and content mastery. Additionally, using games as a metaphoric teaching tool can model therapeutic strategies for clinical practice, helping clients recognize systemic patterns in familiar, accessible ways. The session offers examples, discussion prompts, and implementation strategies for using video games both as a teaching method and a bridge to clinical work. Attendees will leave with new tools to energize classrooms, deepen student learning, and connect theory to lived experience through the power of play.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Justine Demaine

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Honouring Difference: Neurodivergent-Informed Family Therapy for Systemic Change

Short Description: Grounded in Satir's principle that "we are the same," this presentation integrates humanistic family therapy with neurodiversity scholarship. Centring relational safety, environmental attunement, and congruent communication, it shows how systemic change emerges when neurological diversity is honoured.

Long Description: This presentation introduces a neurodivergent-informed family therapy approach that integrates Satir's humanistic principles of congruence, self-worth, and systemic interconnection with contemporary neurodevelopmental science. Rather than aiming to "normalise" difference, this approach honours neurological diversity while addressing authentic relational challenges. Grounded in lived clinical practice, it examines how therapists can use congruent, neuro-affirming language, reframe expectations through a disability-rights lens, and attune to each family's sensory, emotional, and cultural ecology. Relational Safety establishes psychological and sensory safety as the foundation for therapeutic engagement, realising Satir's belief that self-worth and transformation arise in safe relational spaces. Therapists practise curious, predictable, non-pathologising attunement, helping families identify what safety feels like within their system and how to repair relational ruptures. Environmental Attunement extends Satir's systemic awareness by recognising the physical, sensory, and temporal environment as a dynamic participant in family life. Therapists consider daily cycles, sensory thresholds, and contextual pacing, shaping interventions around environmental co-regulation. Applications include reducing instructional language, recognising ableist assumptions, distinguishing biological from developmental age, and scheduling reset periods for overloaded systems. Collaborative Meaning-Making invites families to re-author their stories from deficit to understanding. Through congruent reframing, families view neurological difference through biological and developmental lenses, using factual and compassionate language that restores coherence and belonging. By aligning Satir's humanism with neurodiversity principles, this approach reframes therapy as an act of systemic justice, where difference is not corrected but understood, and connection becomes truly achievable.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
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E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Elizabeth Dennis-Hancock

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Teaching Counselors in Training to “Hear” the Family System

Short Description: Counselor education programs expose students to a variety of approaches to working with families. One challenge is how to honor the voices of each family member. During this experiential session, the presenters will explore ways to regulate the room and hear the trauma responses from family members at various ages.

Long Description: In this presentation, the presenters will briefly review literature and research findings regarding trauma responses across developmental stages and how these responses interplay within a family system in treatment. The presenters will address the importance of exposing counselors in training to the realities of working with the entire family system when addressing the trauma experienced by one or multiple members of the family system. The presentations will include an experiential demonstration that can be used in the classroom setting to demonstrate how trauma responses can impact the work done within the counseling space and impact the healing of the family system. This demonstration will help audiences understand how the nervous system of each member of the family system can become activated during discussions of trauma, and how the counselor in training can best serve the system by “hearing” these reactions within the counseling space. Audience members will leave with a teaching strategy to help novice counselors understand reactions and activations within their counseling space to better serve all members of a family system effectively.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



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Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
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Presenter: Roseana Diaz-Castillo

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Organizational culture and stigma surrounding help-seeking behavior: Advancing Mental Health for Public Safety Personnel

Short Description: Public safety personnel (PSP) face elevated mental health risks but often avoid seeking support due to stigma and cultural barriers. This presentation examines how addressing stigma, fostering supportive workplace environments, and enhancing clinicians' understanding of PSP- specific experiences are essential to improving mental health and overall well-being.

Long Description: Public safety personnel (PSP) face extraordinary pressures to protect and ensure the safety of the public, exposing them to high risks of stress, physical injuries, and emotional trauma. Organizational culture, concerns about confidentiality, and stigma act as barriers to seeking help for mental health concerns. Law enforcement officers consistently report the lowest levels of PTSD when compared to other PSPs. Yet, law enforcement officers have significantly higher suicide rates than other professions. This paradox, likely fueled by significant underreporting as well as the stigma surrounding mental health in these fields, underscores the urgent need for greater awareness and support. This poster aims to examine mental health stigma and help-seeking behavior among public safety personnel. Findings from the literature reveal that PSP reported fear of being overlooked for a promotion, perceived as weak by colleagues and supervision, embarrassment/harm to one's reputation, and perceived as unfit for duty, all of which discouraged communication about mental health or help seeking behavior. Although many departments offer mental health assistance through employee assistance programs (EAPs), PSPs may avoid this resource for fear of a lack of confidentiality and stigma. Clinically, it is essential that clinicians devote intentional and sufficient time to ensuring confidentiality and cultivating a trusting therapeutic relationship. At the organizational level, supervisors should promote help- seeking as a normal behavior, so employees feel comfortable accessing support without fear of stigma or adverse career consequences. Addressing stigma within PSP culture is critical, as it prevents individuals from accessing needed support and intervention. Reducing stigma and fostering supportive environments can enhance individual recovery, promote organizational acceptance of mental health, and strengthen awareness within individuals working in the public safety field. Ultimately, supporting PSPs not only benefits their well-being but also contributes to healthier organizations and safer communities.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Roseana Diaz-Castillo

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: From Sierra Leone to Kenya: Expanding Behavioral Health Capacity Through Teacher Training

Short Description: This study explores a cascading task-shifting model to address global mental health treatment gaps in low-resource settings. Non-specialist trainers prepared Kenyan teachers to deliver behavioral health interventions with teachers, students and parents. Findings highlight feasibility, engagement, and adaptability, while noting supervision, contextual adaptation, and sustainability challenges.

Long Description: Addressing the global mental health treatment gap requires innovative strategies to build capacity in low-resource settings. Task-shifting, training non-specialists to deliver evidence-informed interventions, has shown promise but requires careful attention to implementation processes. This presentation describes an international capacity-building effort to train and support teachers in Kenya to deliver behavioral health interventions. Five non-specialist trainers from Sierra Leone, previously trained in the Community Resiliency Model (CRM) and Families, Schools and Communities Engaged Together (FaSCET) program, provided 24 hours of initial training over four days to 16 Kenyan teachers across two urban schools. Teachers also completed an additional 18 hours of practice-based training before implementing a five-week school-based intervention. Evaluation of the trainers took place pre, post and at monthly intervals throughout the intervention. Approximately 20 additional teachers, 100 students and 60 parents were trained during the five-week intervention. Teacher trainers were provided weekly supervision throughout the course of the intervention. Preliminary reports from trainees suggest that non-specialist trainers were able to deliver quality training comparable to professional trainers. Findings demonstrate the feasibility of using task-shifting as a capacity building intervention. Kenyan teacher trainees reported strong engagement and adaptability in delivering the intervention. Using the Implementation Outcomes Framework as a guide, the presenters will discuss the feasibility, acceptability, and fidelity considerations, as well as challenges in supervision, contextual adaptation, and resource constraints. Lessons learned from this project include being mindful of workload burden of increasing teacher work responsibilities and implementing family-based interventions in settings where parents have less time flexibility. Nevertheless, this project underscores the potential for scaling behavioral health services in low-resource contexts through multi-tiered task-shifting models, while also identifying critical areas for refinement to ensure sustainability.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Ja'Nece Dickerson

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Healing Through Music: A Narrative Review of the Role of Music Therapy in Adolescent and Young Adult PTSD

Short Description: This narrative review examined 15 studies from the past decade on music therapy for adolescents and young adults with PTSD. Evidence indicates music therapy reduces symptoms such as anxiety and intrusive thoughts while fostering resilience and emotional regulation. Findings highlight its promise as an effective, youth-centered intervention.

Long Description: Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is increasingly prevalent among adolescents and young adults, with symptoms such as hyperarousal, intrusive thoughts, and emotional dysregulation significantly impairing functioning and quality of life. Traditional treatments, including psychotherapy and pharmacotherapy, have shown effectiveness but are not universally accessible or appealing to younger populations. Music therapy, which uses active or receptive musical engagement to promote emotional expression and regulation, has emerged as a promising complementary intervention. However, its effectiveness in reducing PTSD symptoms among adolescents and young adults remains underexamined. This narrative review explores evidence from the past ten years on the role of music therapy in this population. Literature searches were conducted in EBSCOhost, PsycINFO, and PubMed for peer-reviewed studies published between 2013 and 2023. Inclusion criteria limited studies to adolescents and young adults (ages 13–25) diagnosed with PTSD or who recently experienced a traumatic event. Only studies examining music therapy as the primary intervention were included. Fifteen studies meeting these criteria were reviewed and narratively synthesized. Across the studies, music therapy was associated with reductions in PTSD symptoms, particularly intrusive memories, anxiety, and emotional dysregulation. Both active interventions (songwriting, improvisation, and group performance) and receptive approaches (guided listening and relaxation with music) were reported to enhance emotional expression, self-regulation, and social connectedness. Several studies highlighted the role of music therapy in fostering resilience, self-efficacy, and post-traumatic growth. While small sample sizes and methodological heterogeneity limit generalizability, the overall evidence suggests music therapy is a safe, acceptable, and effective adjunct for PTSD management in youth. Findings underscore the potential of music therapy as a viable intervention for adolescents and young adults with PTSD. Clinicians should consider integrating music therapy into trauma-informed care, while researchers should pursue larger, controlled trials to strengthen the evidence base and identify best practices.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Timothy Donovan

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Three Lenses, One Model: An Integrative Approach to Couples Therapy

Short Description: This workshop explores the Developmental Model of Couples Therapy—an integrative approach rooted in differentiation, attachment theory, and neuroscience. Learn how this framework addresses attachment reactivity, emotional vulnerabilities, and communication patterns, helping couples move through conflict toward deeper connection and create the kind of relationship they desire.

Long Description: This workshop explores the Developmental Model of Couples Therapy—an integrative approach grounded in differentiation, attachment theory, and neuroscience. Whether you're using attachment-based, behavioral, or other evidence-based methods, this model offers clinical markers that many therapists find useful in deepening and organizing their couples work. Rather than viewing conflict as pathology, the Developmental Model—like many contemporary approaches—frames it as a natural and necessary part of relational growth. Central to this perspective is differentiation: the ability to maintain one's identity while staying emotionally connected. When differentiation is underdeveloped, couples often default to protest, withdrawal, fusion, or shutdown—patterns shaped by attachment dynamics and nervous system reactivity. The model highlights seven core areas to assess and follow throughout treatment: 1. the couple's developmental stage; 2. each partner's capacity for differentiation; 3. attachment-based reactivity; 4. core emotional vulnerabilities; 5. communication and conflict style; 6. motivation and therapeutic engagement; and 7. self-reflection versus blame. These domains serve as evolving clinical guideposts that can complement your existing approach—helping guide interventions, track progress, and support deeper emotional engagement. The integration of neuroscience further enhances understanding of affect regulation and therapist attunement. Through teaching, clinical examples, and discussion, participants will learn how this model addresses attachment reactivity, emotional vulnerabilities, and communication patterns—helping couples move through conflict toward deeper connection and create the kind of relationship they desire. Whether new to couples work or looking to expand your clinical framework, this workshop offers a systematic, accessible, and integrative lens to support growth within and between partners.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Kelly Duggan Shearer

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Using the 4 R's of Relational Teaching to Promote CFT Students' Development

Short Description: Nurturing students' relational presence with clients is challenging when educators primarily focus on content or skill mastery. "The Relational Teaching Clock" explains how educational relationships can foster students' ability to form strong therapeutic relationships. Participants will discuss a case study and generate strategies for implementation in their setting.

Long Description: Developing students' conceptual knowledge and relational presence are both necessary in CFT education. Yet, nurturing students' therapeutic presence using methods that prioritize content and skill mastery over relational processes may fall short because attuned relationships are the primary means through which people learn to connect. Using a relational teaching framework that centralizes the importance of relationships to promote growth is advantageous in CFT education. Strong, attuned educator-student relationships have the capacity to become embodied encounters where students experientially learn how to foster strong therapeutic relationships. After conducting a review of the literature on relational teaching in mental health education from 2003-2025, "The Relational Teaching Clock" model was developed. This model explains how role clarity, restoration (i.e., attending to power), responsiveness to students' needs, and co-regulation work together to promote CFT students' personal and professional development. Participants will discuss a case study based on the presenter's own teaching experience to generate practical strategies for implementing relational teaching practices in education and supervision

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

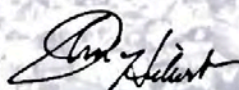
Presenter: Brandon Eddy

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

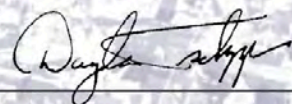
Title: Experiences of first-time Muslim Fathers

Short Description: This presentation will provide in-depth insight into the experiences of first-time Muslim Fathers, focusing on their navigation of pregnancy and the mental health challenges encountered during the postpartum period.

Long Description: This presentation will provide a comprehensive and detailed examination into the experiences of first-time Muslim fathers, with a particular focus on their journey through pregnancy and the mental health challenges encountered during the postpartum period. While much research has traditionally centered on maternal health and experiences, there is a growing recognition of the importance of understanding the perspectives and needs of new fathers, especially within specific cultural and religious contexts such as Islam. This presentation will explore the unique cultural, spiritual, and social factors that influence Muslim fathers' experiences during this significant life transition. This includes examining how religious beliefs, community support, and cultural expectations impact their transition to fatherhood and their mental health. By highlighting these experiences, the presentation aims to raise awareness about the specific needs of Muslim fathers during this critical period. Recognizing these challenges is essential for developing culturally sensitive support systems and interventions that promote mental health and well-being for new fathers.



IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert



General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Caitlin Edwards

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: "You're a Stranger in a Strange Land:" LGBTQ + Experiences of Being Othered in Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy

Short Description: This presentation will describe LGBTQ + Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) clients' experiences and insights of feeling othered in therapy. We discuss how the process of othering relates to client identity development, therapeutic safety, and therapist education, qualities, and cultural humility. We conclude with recommendations for EFT practice and training.

Long Description: Despite seeking therapy at higher rates than their cisgender, heterosexual peers (Pepping et al., 2017), lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, plus (LGBTQ +) individuals, couples, and families, have less access to quality and effective mental healthcare compared to their cisgender, heterosexual counterparts (Alencar Albuquerque et al., 2016). Moreover, therapists report lacking confidence and competence to work with non-heterosexual, non-cisgender relationships (Green & Mtichell, 2015). Indeed, therapist knowledge of LGBTQ + mental health needs and lived experiences is insufficient to provide quality mental healthcare to LGBTQ + people, including those in romantic relationships (Nguyen et al., 2016). This is concerning considering that LGBTQ + individuals and relationships continue to experience discrimination from therapists (Romanelli & Hudson, 2017). This study presentation highlights an important theme that emerged in the current study to understand LGBTQ+ client within the context Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy (EFCT). Specifically, we utilized theater testing (National Cancer Institute, 2001; Wingood & DiClemente, 2008) to demonstrate EFCT to fidelity using EFCT training videos with a gay male couple and a lesbian couple. Eight focus groups with 35 LGBTQ + identified EFCT clients. During the focus groups, participants discussed several ways in which they felt othered when observing the training video or in their own experiences with EFCT. We will discuss key themes and results from the study, including clients' experiences of othering when (1) LGBTQ + identity was (or was not) discussed, (2) when feeling the need to educate the therapist, and (3) feeling othered negatively impacts therapeutic safety. We will discuss the implications of LGBTQ + clients feeling othered in therapy, and how these experiences tie into client identity development and therapist education, competence, and humility. We will frame this discussion in the context of cultural humility and, using this frame, provide recommendations for EFCT training and practice.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

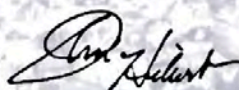
Presenter: Todd Edwards

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

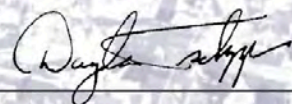
Title: Publishing Without Panic: A Therapist's Guide to Academic Journals

Short Description: This session offers practical guidance for therapists, students, and researchers seeking to publish their work in academic journals. Participants will explore common challenges in the publication process and learn accessible strategies for developing, submitting, and revising manuscripts while maintaining their clinical voice and systemic perspective.

Long Description: This session offers practical guidance for therapists, students, and researchers seeking to publish their work in academic journals. Participants will explore common challenges in the publication process and learn accessible strategies for developing, submitting, and revising manuscripts while maintaining their clinical voice and systemic perspective.



IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert



General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Tanya Elez

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Intergenerational Trauma in Refugee Families: Understanding, Resilience, and Healing

Short Description: This interactive workshop explores the complex phenomenon of intergenerational trauma in refugee families, examining how trauma is transmitted across generations, the resilience factors that enable healing, and effective interventions to reduce its impact. Drawing on interdisciplinary research, participants will engage in reflective exercises and discussions to deepen understanding and practice.

Long Description: Intergenerational trauma in refugee families arises from a complex interplay between historical and communal trauma and family relational processes, where trauma originates both outside and within the family system. This cyclical influence profoundly shapes family functioning, parent-child attachment, and community cohesion. This workshop examines mechanisms of trauma transmission across generations, resilience factors that can buffer harm, and intervention approaches that foster healing within a systemic, family-centered context. Drawing on interdisciplinary research from psychological, sociocultural, and family therapy perspectives, the session explores key transmission mechanisms, including parenting styles, family communication patterns, and the influence of historical and communal experiences. It highlights how silence, disrupted narratives, and ongoing social stressors can reinforce trauma across generations. Resilience is presented as a dynamic process fostered by family members who maintain well-being despite adversity, strong marital bonds, community connectedness, and cultural continuity. Reframing family relationships within the context of larger community and historical trauma and empowering collective storytelling emerge as critical pathways to relational healing and identity reconstruction. Participants will learn about trauma-informed, culturally sensitive, systemic approaches supported in the literature, including family- and community-based interventions such as multifamily therapy and parenting programs. The clinical utility of genograms for mapping family trauma histories and resilience strengths will be discussed, alongside intergenerational family therapy principles that support open communication, attachment repair, and systemic resilience. Through brief reflective exercises and case examples, attendees will deepen their understanding of intergenerational trauma's complexity and explore evidence-informed strategies to support refugee families across clinical, community, and policy settings. The session emphasizes integrated relational approaches that honor cultural context and foster healing within multidimensional social systems.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Tanya Elez

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: From Resilience to Rupture: Understanding and Addressing Delayed-Onset Trauma Among Refugees After Resettlement

Short Description: Many refugees initially appear well but later experience family and systemic ruptures as trauma resurfaces post-resettlement. Drawing on trauma-informed, culturally grounded, and family-systems approaches, the presentation examines early trauma assessment and systemic interventions that strengthen family resilience and prevent delayed-onset psychological distress among refugees.

Long Description: Refugee resettlement is often framed as the endpoint of displacement; yet for many families, it marks the beginning of new psychological and relational challenges. Refugees arrive with complex histories of violence, persecution, and loss that are rarely explored during initial medical and settlement screenings. Early resettlement efforts understandably prioritize immediate physical and logistical needs housing, employment, language acquisition, and family reunification. During this phase, many individuals and families appear resilient and functional, masking deep emotional and relational distress. However, as stability increases and survival pressures ease, unresolved trauma often resurfaces, disrupting family dynamics and straining support systems. Clinicians and service providers are frequently confronted with sudden presentations of severe depression, post-traumatic stress, or psychotic symptoms that emerge years after arrival. At Resilia Community Wellness Centre, we have observed these patterns across refugee families in Manitoba, Canada. Our approach integrates trauma-informed, culturally grounded, and faith-sensitive practices with a systemic lens that recognizes the family as a central unit of healing and adaptation. Early trauma assessments conducted within safe, culturally responsive environments allow practitioners to identify both individual and family-level vulnerabilities and strengths. These assessments inform collaborative care plans that emphasize relational connection, intergenerational understanding, and community-based supports. This presentation shares insights from Resilia's family-systems approach to refugee mental health, illustrating how trauma, culture, and adaptation intersect within family and community networks. Drawing on clinical experience, community partnerships, and case examples, we demonstrate how culturally, and systemically attuned interventions can strengthen family resilience, reduce stigma, and prevent long-term psychological and relational deterioration. We argue that early, context-sensitive, and family-centered screening must become a standard component of resettlement to promote collective well-being and sustainable integration.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Sarah Elliott

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Ethical and professional considerations of providing Reportable Family Therapy in the Australian Family Law Court System

Short Description: Family Therapy process can evoke complex ethical dilemmas in everyday practice. The provision of Reportable Family Therapy ordered through the Family Court requires wading through paradoxical themes, although basic to Family Therapy theory and required for family repair. How are Family Therapist's equipped to conceptualise this complexity?

Long Description: This presentation focuses on the paradox of Family Therapy theory and themes and how these same themes can be problematic in Family Law Court Orders. Reportable Family Therapy is often ordered when the Family Law Court is finding decision making difficult and complex. There are often competing needs, developmental ages of family members, and the "rights" of the parent vs the "rights" of the child. There are also often safety concerns and ongoing risk considerations. This presentation looks at how Family Therapists can assist the Family Law Court in understanding the dynamics and needs of the family system, whilst also taking a longer term perspective on planning and predicting harm to each family member. Family Therapist's working in this field often battle with their own ethical dilemma's whilst delivering the therapy and the ongoing recommendations to court. This presentation will focus on the theory of Family Therapy and how themes in practice often cause contradictions when finalising recommendations to the Family Court.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Christie Eppler

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Synthesizing Grounding Practices with Systemic Therapy Dynamics

Short Description: This workshop integrates grounding practices with systemic therapy, including Milan-influenced techniques such as sequencing and circular questions. Through didactic, demonstration, and experiential methods, participants will explore how grounding enhances relational insight, supports regulation, and deepens systemic interventions for intimate partnerships and families.

Long Description: This workshop proposes an integration of clinical grounding practices with systemic therapy, Milan-influenced dynamics such as sequencing and circular questioning. While somatic, mindfulness, and affect-regulation approaches are well established as methods for enhancing safety, presence, and self-regulation (Ogden, Minton, & Pain, 2006), they are less frequently considered in conjunction with systemic models that emphasize relational patterns, hypothesizing, and meaning-making (Boscolo, Cecchin, Hoffman, & Penn, 1987). Bringing these traditions into dialogue offers both conceptual and clinical benefits for practitioners. Grounding techniques provide clients with embodied awareness that fosters stability and emotional accessibility, thereby creating conditions for deeper systemic exploration. For example, when a therapist integrates a breath-based or sensory-focused grounding exercise with circular questions, family members may be better resourced to reflect on interactional processes without becoming dysregulated. Similarly, sequencing can be enhanced when paired with grounding, allowing clients to notice how physiological responses are embedded in relational exchanges. This synthesis highlights the interplay between personal regulation and systemic dynamics, rather than privileging one domain over the other. The workshop will employ didactic presentation, live demonstration, and experiential practice to support participants in bridging these traditions. By situating grounding as both an individual and relational resource, this workshop positions therapists to foster resilience, deepen systemic insight, and promote therapeutic change across contexts. Participants will leave with practical interventions that advance systemic therapy by synthesizing embodied and relational dimensions of practice.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Sibel Erenel

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Self of the Therapist in the Satir Model: The Therapist's Self as the Instrument of Transformational Change

Short Description: This presentation focuses on the use of self as an instrument of change within Satir Transformational Systemic Therapy. During the presentation through experiential exercises, participants will have a chance to develop self-awareness as a therapist, and develop an idea on how to bring congruence in professional practice.

Long Description: The concept of use of self is not peripheral but central and essential to Satir Transformational Systemic Therapy (STST). Satir explicitly emphasized that the therapist's greatest tool for therapeutic change is not technique, but their own authentic, congruent presence. This belief positioned the therapist as one of the primary instruments of change in the therapeutic process. The therapist's presence, congruence, and resources are the foundation of the therapeutic interaction with clients. This 45-minute presentation will explore the use of self as the therapist's primary instrument of change through a set of experiential exercises. Participants will be invited into experiential exercises to explore their internal processes. By the end of the presentation, participants will have a better understanding of conceptual clarity of self on the therapist concept. They will also have a practical skill set enhancing their therapeutic presence, developing self-awareness, and bringing congruence into their professional work.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
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www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Mariana Falconier

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Evaluation of the Online TOGETHER Relationship and Financial Education Program for Couples

Short Description: This study evaluated the online TOGETHER program in 604 couples. Multilevel models showed significant improvements in individual well-being and relationship functioning, comparable to the in-person program. Some outcomes were significantly different from the control group. Findings suggest the online program is as effective as the in-person version.

Long Description: This study evaluated the effectiveness of the online, synchronous TOGETHER program, a 14-hour evidence-based relationship and financial education program for couples. TOGETHER is a six-week program providing relationship and financial education and case management for low-income couples. The sample consists of 604 different-gender couples (control: 93; in-person: 238; online: 339) who completed self-report measures upon enrollment (T1) and after program completion (T2), regarding their individual psychological well-being, relationship functioning, and financial management. Dyadic multilevel models were used to examine mean differences from pre- to post-intervention across groups, controlling for demographics and baseline measures. Findings showed that the online group showed improvements in psychological distress ($b = -1.14$, $SE = 0.19$, $p < .001$), positive conflict management ($b = +1.14$, $SE = 0.16$, $p < .001$), conflict management satisfaction ($b = +0.31$, $SE = 0.03$, $p < .001$), relationship quality ($b = +0.77$, $SE = 0.13$, $p < .001$), shared time with partner ($b = +0.15$, $SE = .08$, $p < .05$), relationship satisfaction ($b = +1.12$, $SE = .03$, $p < .001$), and negative conflict management ($b = -1.39$, $SE = 0.16$, $p < .001$) from T1 to T2. Changes were not significantly different from those of the in-person group. There were no significant changes in the difficulty paying bills in the online group. Improvements in positive conflict management, relationship quality and satisfaction, and reduction in negative conflict management were significantly different from the control group. Furthermore, there were no significant differences between the intervention groups in attrition and attendance rates. Findings suggest that the online format is a clinically relevant option for couples facing barriers to couple therapy and in-person programs, such as distance, cost, transportation, or stigma and shame. Accessible online interventions can help couples acquire relationship skills, strengthen communication, and improve individual and relational outcomes.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Mariana K Falconier

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Evaluation of the TOGETHER program adaptation for LGBTQ+ relationships

Short Description: This presentation examines the adaptation of the evidence-based TOGETHER program for LGBTQ+ couples. Qualitative and quantitative findings suggest a successful adaptation that yielded improvements in relationship functioning, psychological distress, and financial communication. Implications for culturally responsive, couple-based financial and relational therapy will be discussed.

Long Description: LGBTQ+ couples face unique financial and relational stressors rooted in systemic discrimination, relationship invisibility, and family rejection, all of which undermine relational and emotional well-being. Financial strain compounds minority stress, contributing to conflict, anxiety, and reduced relationship satisfaction. The TOGETHER Program, an evidence-based, six-week intervention, integrates relationship education and financial coaching to strengthen couples' coping, communication, and problem-solving skills. Originally developed for low-income heterosexual couples, the program was adapted to address the needs of LGBTQ+ couples. This presentation reports findings from a preliminary outcome evaluation of the LGBTQ+ adaptation, using qualitative and quantitative data from couples in the Washington, DC area. Participants completed standardized measures of psychological distress, relationship functioning, and financial management. Results indicate high satisfaction with both relationship and financial facilitators, strong perceptions of program relevance, and improvements in psychological distress, conflict management, and relationship commitment. Partners reported that the program enhanced their ability to communicate about money and to view financial and relational health as interconnected. Findings demonstrate that financial therapy frameworks can be strengthened by integrating relationship education, particularly for marginalized couples navigating chronic stress and limited access to affirming financial systems. Implications for clinicians and family therapists include how to incorporate financial literacy and stress management into relational interventions, adapt programs to LGBTQ+ clients, and promote holistic models of couple well-being that address both emotional and financial resilience.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

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E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
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Presenter: Madeleine Fan

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: From Family Systems to Social Justice: Understanding Resilience Among Asian American Sexual and Gender Minority Individuals

Short Description: This presentation examines how family support shapes the psychological wellbeing of Asian American sexual and gender minorities and explores activism engagement as a protective factor. We explore considering cultural context and affirming intersecting identities when conceptualizing strengths and support needs, and in developing culturally responsive clinical approaches that foster resilience.

Long Description: Asian American sexual and gender minority (SGM) individuals experience unique psychological challenges shaped by intersecting systems of racism, heterosexism, and cultural expectations. Within many Asian American families, values such as collectivism, filial piety, and family obligation define belonging and identity. While these values can foster protection and connection, they may also constrain expressions of sexuality and gender, contributing to concealment, family conflict, and psychological distress. Despite growing research on SGM family dynamics, the experiences of Asian American SGMs remain underexamined, particularly regarding how cultural frameworks shape family support, resilience, and well-being. This session presents findings examining how family support predicts psychological well-being among Asian American SGMs and explores engagement in activism as a potential moderating factor that buffers the effects of limited family support. Guided by Minority Stress Theory and an intersectional framework, this research situates family experiences within broader sociocultural systems that shape mental health outcomes. Data are drawn from the Social Justice Sexuality Project, a national survey of over 5,000 SGM individuals. The current analysis focuses on 480 Asian American participants. Key measures include family support, activism engagement, and psychological well-being. Hierarchical linear regression analyses will test whether activism moderates the relationship between family support and psychological well-being. This session will explore how activism functions as both a potential coping strategy and a form of community-building among Asian American SGMs, addressing a critical gap in understanding resilience amid wavering family support. As one of the first studies to examine these dynamics, it expands limited research on intersecting minority identities. Clinical implications will focus on how therapists can integrate cultural values and intergenerational dynamics, recognize activism as a source of empowerment and meaning, and develop culturally responsive, strengths-based approaches that affirm both cultural heritage and individual authenticity in fostering resilience and healing.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Meng Fang

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Full-Time Children in China: Family Dynamics of Unemployed Co-Residence

Short Description: Using a systemic perspective, this semi-structured interview study examines Chinese families in which unemployed adults (30+) live with parents as “full-time children.” Thematic findings address role expectations, care/financial exchange, boundaries, stigma, and autonomy negotiations, with takeaways for clinicians working with these families and individuals.

Long Description: This study examined the emerging phenomenon of “full-time children”—unemployed adults aged 30 and above who co-reside with their parents, are primarily supported by family finances, and assume substantial household, caregiving, and coordination duties as a defined intra-family role. Unlike NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) (Rahmani et al., 2024) or “boomerang kids” (Tosi, 2020), the construct emphasizes role expectations and intra-family exchange rather than co-residence alone. Guided by a systemic perspective, we conducted in-depth interviews with 16 participants across China. Using reflexive thematic analysis, we explored interaction patterns, emotional bonds, boundary-setting, and adaptation processes under economic contraction and cultural norms of filial obligation. Anticipated contributions include: (1) a role-oriented description and preliminary typology that differentiates supportive interdependence from enmeshment; (2) process accounts of how families redistribute tasks, risks, and identity work while maintaining cohesion under contemporary economic and cultural conditions; and (3) practical implications for clinical work—focused assessment prompts, guidance for negotiating intergenerational role “contracts,” and strategies that support differentiation while preserving connection. Findings will refine theory on Chinese families’ adaptation to long-term co-residence amid the status incongruence of being higher-educated yet unemployed, and will inform clinicians, community services, and policymakers.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Meng Fang

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: LLMs and Love: Chinese Couples' Digital Relational Practices

Short Description: This brief presentation explores how Chinese couples use large language models (LLMs) to support daily coordination, reduce relational stress, and enhance communication. Through semi-structured interviews, the study highlights both benefits and concerns of LLM integration in intimate relationships in China.

Long Description: As AI tools like ChatGPT, Deepseek, and Doubao become more common in everyday life, Chinese couples are increasingly integrating large language models (LLMs) into their shared routines. This presentation draws on qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with Chinese couples in stable relationships who have used LLMs in various domestic, emotional, and logistical scenarios. While the study is exploratory, it offers early insight into how LLMs are reshaping relational habits in China—not through disruption, but through subtle support. This presentation will share emergent themes from the data and invite brief reflection on how therapists might discuss technology use with clients, particularly as relational tech becomes more pervasive in Chinese family life.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Tatjana Farley

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Perinatal Mental Health: the impact of infertility

Short Description: Perinatal mental health has experienced a shift in investment and interest. 13% of those who have given birth experience a mental disorder, but trauma is not always directly correlated to perinatal distress. It is important to understand the impact perinatal mental health and infertility have on interpersonal stress and relationships.

Long Description: Perinatal mental health has been a focus of interest for centuries, but until recently this interest has mainly focused on postpartum psychosis and depression. There has been a recent shift in investments in specialist outpatient and/or community perinatal mental health services and/or in mother and baby unit. Systematic reviews have shown that about 10% of pregnant women and 13% of those who have given birth experience some type of mental disorder, most commonly depression or anxiety (Hendrick, 1998). Many parents also report demoralization, feelings of helplessness and a sense of incompetence during early parenthood (Bobevski, 2015). Difficulties with mental health in the perinatal period is correlated to maternal and infant morbidity and mortality (Moureau et al., 2023; Stein et al., 2014), lifetime disadvantage for families and childhood adversity (Choi et al., 2019; Howard & Khalifeh 2020), with links also often made to intergenerational distress and illness (Roubinov et al., 2022; Kujawa et al., 2020). Trauma is not always directly correlated to perinatal distress (Asghari-Fard et al., 2014; Erickson et al., 2019), but it is plausible that experiences of perinatal mental illness may be more complicated by trauma, particularly attachment or relational trauma (Isobel, 2024). While trauma may complicate things, it is also important to understand how the experience of perinatal mental health may be traumatic and shift a parent's experience.

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William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Claire Farrell

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Systemic and Ethical Dimensions of Decision Making in Assisted Reproductive Technology: Systemic Approaches for MFT's

Short Description: Use of reproductive technologies to conceive uniquely impacts psychological and relational functioning. This presentation will examine stressors, key ethical dilemmas, identify gaps in the current research, and present systemic interventions that MFTs can use to support their clients as they navigate complex fertility journeys and decision making processes.

Long Description: This presentation will use both didactic content and clinical case examples to explore the multifaceted psychological, relational, and developmental impacts of ART on individuals, couples, and family systems. We will examine the unique ethical dilemmas that families who undergo ART are faced with long after the treatment process and discuss how MFTs are uniquely positioned to address these challenges. Evidence-based, culturally attuned interventions that utilize systemic approaches promote resilience will be outlined. Finally, we will identify gaps in the current research and disparities in access to fertility and mental health care. Infertility and assisted reproductive technologies (ART) are closely linked to many psychological symptoms, and research suggests a bidirectional relationship between psychological health and ART outcomes (Moutzouroulia et al., 2025). The complexity of decision making in this population presents unique clinical challenges for MFTs. The experience of navigating infertility and ART can induce a variety of psychological symptoms including depression, anxiety, guilt, resentment, and damage to self-concept. These symptoms, in turn, have been shown to negatively impact the success of ART. Individuals often experience a profound sense of loss of control over their lives, damaged identity, and reduced self-esteem (Moutzouroulia et al., 2025). Relationally, partners must navigate the mental and emotional toll of infertility and ART treatment on their relationship, while also managing the physical and financial stressors that accompany treatment (Robinson & Stewart, 1996). The emotional turmoil can wreak havoc in relationships, impacting relationship satisfaction and sexual intimacy. Ethical decisions that may have long-lasting impact on the family system compound the clinical picture. This particular recipe of factors and constraints necessitates that MFTs develop a specialized knowledge base to best support clients and their systems.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Roberta Farrugia Debono

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Developmental Narratives of Experienced Systemic Supervisors

Short Description: This presentation explores systemic supervisors' developmental processes and their evolving sense of competence, addressing the lack of empirical research on supervisory growth. Using transformational learning and narrative analysis, 12 master supervisors' experiences will be examined. Preliminary findings and interactive reflections aim to illuminate supervisors' developmental paths and evolving professional identities.

Long Description: The interest in supervisors' developmental processes became apparent in the 1990s, with several models being developed. (Alonso, 1983; Loganbill et al., 1982; Stoltenberg et al., 1994; Watkins, 1990, 1993). However, empirical research on these models is still lacking (Barker & Hunsley, 2014). Moreover, empirical research on the supervisors' understanding of their path to competency is scant, even more so in the context of systemic supervision (Butler et al., 2021; Rigazio-DiGilio, 2014; Storm & Todd, 2014). By giving a voice to experienced systemic supervisors, developmental narratives could serve as a gateway to understanding how self-perceived competence is developed. This qualitative study aims to provide an evidence-based account of the developmental paths of systemic supervisors. Using a transformational learning lens (Hoggan, 2016; Mezirow, 2012), the narratives of 12 master supervisors will be analysed using Reissman's narrative analysis method (Reissman, 2008). It is hoped that this research will explore systemic supervisors' developmental processes and, at the same time, shed light on the processes that allow for the development of self-perceived competence in supervisors. It is hoped that during this presentation, some preliminary results from this study will be presented. This will be an interactive presentation where those present will also have time to reflect on their own journeys as systemic supervisors and how their identity as supervisors developed across time alongside their sense of competence.

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William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

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Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Tiara Fennell

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Burnout in the Trenches: Unpacking the Systemic Forces Impacting Community Mental Health Clinicians

Short Description: This presentation explores community mental health clinicians' experiences of burnout through an interpretative phenomenological study. Using the Mental Health Systems Ecology model, it highlights systemic factors shaping clinician well-being and identifies opportunities for policy and practice reforms to strengthen mental health service delivery.

Long Description: Throughout United States history, mental health has often been overlooked or dismissed within the broader health care system. Despite significant financial investment over time—including an estimated \$352 billion by 2010—the demand for mental health services continues to far outpace the supply of qualified clinicians. This gap places immense strain on community mental health (CMH) providers, who frequently face overwhelming caseloads, limited resources, and systemic barriers to care. These pressures contribute to high rates of burnout among clinicians, marked by emotional exhaustion, reduced job satisfaction, diminished self-concept, and loss of concern for clients. This presentation draws from an interpretative phenomenological study exploring how CMH therapists experience and confront burnout in their daily practice. By centering the lived experiences of clinicians, the research highlights the complex interplay between individual struggles and systemic forces shaping professional well-being. Using the Mental Health Systems Ecology (MHSE) model as an additional framework, the study situates clinician burnout within the broader ecology of mental health services. This model underscores how interconnected factors—policy, organizational structures, financial constraints, and client needs—affect not only the delivery of services but also the sustainability of the clinical workforce. By amplifying the voices of CMH clinicians, this presentation invites critical reflection on how systemic conditions perpetuate burnout and what reforms are needed to strengthen both therapeutic practice and workforce resilience. Attendees will gain insight into the lived realities of clinicians, the systemic challenges they face, and the implications for shaping more responsive, sustainable, and equitable mental health services.

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William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Carlene Fider

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Strategies to Enhance Relationship Quality in Dementia: A Scoping Review of Couple-Based Interventions

Short Description: This scoping review synthesizes studies from 2014–2024 on interventions supporting couples affected by dementia. Strategies identified include shared activities, caregiver skill-building, and relationship reinforcement. Findings highlight both benefits and limitations, underscoring need for multifaceted, culturally responsive approaches to improve relationship quality, caregiver well-being, and patient life satisfaction.

Long Description: Couples in which one partner is living with dementia often experience significant relational and emotional strain. Many caregivers struggle to support their partners effectively due to limited knowledge, resources, or coping strategies. Evidence suggests that maintaining strong and healthy relationships may contribute to improved quality of life for both partners and potentially slow cognitive decline in the partner with dementia. This scoping review aimed to identify, map, and synthesize the range of interventions and programs designed to strengthen the relationship between couples affected by dementia over the past ten years. A comprehensive search was conducted in EBSCOhost, PsycINFO, and PubMed, focusing on studies published between 2014 and 2024. Eligible studies included interventions that targeted both the individual with dementia and their partner, with outcomes related to relationship quality, caregiver well-being, or patient life satisfaction. Data were extracted and thematically analyzed to identify core strategies used across interventions. Findings were organized into three major thematic categories: (1) shared activities that promote connection and engagement, (2) caregiver skill-building and burden reduction interventions, and (3) relationship reinforcement through shared emotions, memories, and communication strategies. Across these categories, interventions demonstrated varying benefits and challenges. Shared activities often enhanced emotional closeness but were limited by disease progression. Caregiver-focused programs effectively reduced stress but sometimes prioritized burden reduction over relationship quality. Interventions emphasizing shared feelings and memories were powerful in maintaining intimacy, though their effectiveness diminished in advanced stages of dementia. This review highlights the importance of multifaceted approaches that address both practical caregiving demands and relational dynamics. Programs that integrate skill development, emotional connection, and meaningful activity show the most promise in improving relationship quality, well-being, and life satisfaction for couples affected by dementia. Future research should explore hybrid models and long-term impacts, as well as culturally tailored interventions.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Ashley Figueroa

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: What Parents and Therapists Should Know About Hookup Culture and Emerging Adults' Intimacy

Short Description: Grounded in sexual script theory, this study examines how exposure to hookup culture shapes emerging adults' beliefs about intimacy and relationships. Gendered differences in coping and conformity motives highlight cultural pressures influencing sexual behavior. Findings provide context for parents and therapists to foster awareness and healthy conversations amid hookup culture.

Long Description: Grounded in sexual script theory, this study examined how exposure to hookup culture shapes emerging adults' beliefs about intimacy and relationships. Gendered differences in coping and conformity motives highlight cultural pressures influencing sexual behavior. Findings provide context for parents and therapists to foster awareness and healthy conversations amid hookup culture. Hookup culture has become increasingly accessible through dating apps and other digital platforms that normalize casual sexual encounters. These technological and social shifts have expanded exposure beyond direct participation, shaping how emerging adults perceive intimacy, gender roles, and relational expectations. This study explored how exposure to hookup culture relates to motivations for hooking up and beliefs about future relationships, with attention to gendered patterns. Data were drawn from a random sample of 105 undergraduate students (74.2% female) at a large Midwestern university. Participants completed standardized measures assessing exposure to hookup culture, hookup motivations, personality, psychological well-being, and emotional functioning. Descriptive analyses and a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ MANOVA revealed that males with higher exposure to hookup culture reported significantly greater conformity ($F = 4.36, p = .040$) and coping ($F = 5.39, p = .023$) motives compared to females. These findings suggest an association between gender socialization and motives within hookup culture. Males in the sample exhibited higher endorsements of conformity (e.g., fitting in, avoiding exclusion) and coping motives (e.g., alleviating loneliness) with increased exposure to hookup culture. Females' scores on these motives remained relatively stable. This contrast aligns with sexual script theory, which associates women's casual sexual behavior with stigma and social devaluation. For clinicians, the results emphasize attending to how gendered social scripts and coping processes influence sexual decision-making. For parents, the findings highlight the importance of fostering awareness and open conversations with their children about relational and sexual development in emerging adulthood.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Adam Fisher

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Bisexual Women in Heterosexual-Presenting Relationships: Mental Health Implications

Short Description: This presentation explores the lived experiences of bisexual women in heterosexual-presenting relationships through data from semi-structured interviews. Couple therapy implications include: (a) consideration of partner dynamics; (b) seeking validation and navigating invalidation; and (c) bisexual identity development journey. Implications underscore the need for affirming, identity-informed couples therapy.

Long Description: This presentation centers on a qualitative study that used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to explore the lived experiences of bisexual women in heterosexual-presenting couples. Bisexuality is a complex and evolving identity encompassing attraction to more than one gender (Feinstein & Dyar, 2017), often shaped by developmental stages (Brown, 2002) and influenced by social factors such as biphobia and bi-erasure (Boccone, 2016; Xavier Hall et al., 2021). Bisexual women in a heterosexual-presenting couple face unique mental health risks, including stress and identity concealment (Vencill et al., 2018), yet may experience resilience through community support and pride in their identity (Dorrell et al., 2024; Velasco et al., 2024). All these considerations can impact the larger relationship. Eight self-identified bisexual women partnered with cisgender men participated in semi-structured interviews. Three interconnected themes emerged. Through theme one, presenters will share how these women navigated complex partner dynamics—balancing emotional dualities, receiving and giving support, confronting past negative experiences, and negotiating straight-passing privilege—all while affirming their queer identities within their partnerships. Theme two illustrates how participants described both seeking and providing validation while navigating invalidation and bi-erasure from themselves and others. Finally, through theme presenters will describe how bisexual identity development is a personal, evolving journey marked by early self-discovery, internal and external struggles, repeated coming out experiences, and emotional complexity. Implication and application for mental health professionals, such as the need for affirming work, identity-informed counseling, and knowledge of bisexuality within couple's work will be explored.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Adam Fisher

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: The Systems Intelligence (SQ) Measure: Evaluating Systemic Thinking and Practice

Short Description: This project develops and pilots the Systems Intelligence (SQ) Measure, which assesses an individual's ability to understand and act within complex relational systems. Using vignettes and criterion-referenced coding, the study examines reliability, validity, and refinement across student and clinician samples to advance systemic thinking in research and clinical training.

Long Description: This project introduces a novel measure of Systems Intelligence (SQ), defined by Doherty (2024) as the capacity to effectively engage in multilateral relationships within families, work groups, and institutions. Existing instruments assess related domains such as emotional intelligence (Mayer et al., 2003), relational intelligence (Francisca & Gomez, 2022), social intelligence (Silvera et al., 2001), and family functioning (Olson, 2011), but none capture an individual's ability to conceptualize and act constructively within complex relational systems. SQ fills this gap by operationalizing systemic concepts such as triangulation, feedback loops, and boundary permeability into a measurable framework. The instrument includes vignettes depicting family or group situations. After each vignette, participants respond to two open-ended prompts: (1) "What do you see as key contributors to the problems in this situation?" (2) "What would need to happen to address the situation (aside from getting outside help)?" Responses are scored with a criterion-referenced rubric distinguishing four developmental levels of systemic understanding. For Question 1 (Key Contributors), levels progress from minimal engagement to systemic/multilateral analysis, reflecting movement from restating events to identifying complex dynamics such as loyalty binds or feedback cycles. For Question 2 (What Steps Might Help), levels progress from simple behavioral advice to systemic/multilateral shift with sequencing, emphasizing coordination, boundary-setting, and awareness of ripple effects. Pilot testing with undergraduate students and clinicians is underway to examine the measure's reliability, validity, and relevance across educational and clinical settings. Analyses include item statistics, rationale for items dropped or retained, and development of a refined scale. Reliability will be assessed through inter-rater and internal consistency, and validity through expert review and correlations with related constructs. This measure represents a validated effort to quantify Systems Intelligence, providing a foundation for future research, education, and clinical training in systemic theory and practice.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

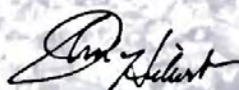
Presenter: Kara Fletcher

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

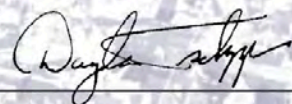
Title: Working with couples when conspiracy theories and disinformation are getting in the way

Short Description: This workshop will consider the potential of integrating attachment theory and narrative frameworks when working with couples where one partner has begun to adopt conspiracy theories and disinformation. Data from a completed pilot study will be used to inform our discussion and the possibilities for intervention.

Long Description: The current global socio-political environment has created a context for conspiratorial narratives about COVID-19, vaccines, medication, election fraud, and other counterfactual information. The widespread dissemination of misinformation on social media has played a major role in fuelling the spread of numerous conspiracy theories. Conspiratorial beliefs can detrimentally impact relationship satisfaction and cause emotional distance in intimate relationships. Partners in these relationships report distance and distress, however, they also describe a desire to understand their loved one and attempt to heal the relationship. Using results from a scoping review, systematic review, and pilot study, this presentation will discuss possibilities for working with couples who are experiencing relationship challenges as a result of conspiracy theories and disinformation. The integration of attachment theory and narrative frameworks will be proposed as a potential intervention strategy for working with couples in this context. Case examples and excerpts from interviews will be provided.



IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert



General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Jacqueline Fonseca de Abreu

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Intergenerational Healing: Creative Pathways to Overcome Trauma

Short Description: Intergenerational Healing: Creative Pathways to Overcome Trauma explores how families can collectively heal from generational trauma. Presented by a mother–daughter duo, this session introduces innovative, family-centered therapeutic approaches that stop the cycle of inherited pain, strengthen intergenerational bonds, and foster shared healing across age and experience.

Long Description: Intergenerational Healing: Creative Pathways to Overcome Trauma is a dynamic and deeply personal presentation led by a mother–daughter duo who bring both professional expertise and lived experience to the study of family healing. This session delves into the complex interplay of generational trauma, exploring how pain, patterns, and silence are transmitted—and how they can be consciously transformed through intentional, creative therapeutic work. Three key themes guide this presentation: 1. Generational Trauma and Stopping the Cycle – Understanding how trauma manifests across generations, how families unconsciously reenact unresolved pain, and how targeted interventions can break these inherited patterns. 2. Bonding Generations and Finding Common Ground – Exploring strategies to rebuild empathy and communication between family members of different ages, fostering mutual respect and emotional understanding through narrative and expressive practices. 3. New Methods to Work Through Trauma as a Family, Not as an Individual – Introducing innovative, collaborative approaches that engage the family as a unit—integrating art, storytelling, ritual, and systemic therapy—to create shared healing spaces and strengthen intergenerational resilience. This presentation blends clinical insights, creative modalities, and authentic family dialogue to illustrate how collective healing can reshape relational dynamics and restore hope across generations. Participants will leave with practical tools, fresh perspectives, and renewed inspiration to help families move from cycles of trauma toward cycles of connection, understanding, and growth.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

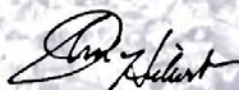
Presenter: Megan Ford

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

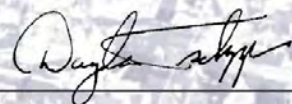
Title: The Couple Financial Conflict Scale: A New Tool for Therapists

Short Description: This presentation introduces the Couple Financial Conflict Scale (CFCS), an eight-item tool grounded in Couples and Finances Theory, designed to assess financial conflict between partners. Attendees will explore the current state of relational-financial issues, the importance of relational-financial assessment, and applications of the CFCS in various settings.

Long Description: Conflict over financial matters is a prevalent challenge among couples and can undermine relationship stability. Despite its significance, the availability of validated assessment tools to measure financial conflict within intimate relationships remains limited. Grounded in Couples and Finances Theory, this presentation introduces the development of the Couple Financial Conflict Scale (CFCS), an innovative, eight-item instrument designed to evaluate the presence and frequency of self-reported financial conflict between intimate partners. Attendees will be briefly introduced to the current state of relational-financial issues, learn why assessment of couple financial conflict matters, review current assessment tools available (including the Couple Financial Conflict Scale; CFCS), and learn how the assessment tool can be utilized in their practice settings.



IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert



General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Alex Franklin

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Keeping it 100: Sexual Communication in LGBTQ+ and non-monogamous relationships

Short Description: To date, most sexual communication research studies have focused on heterosexual couples. In our presentation, we highlight important variables that predict sexual and relational satisfaction in gender and sexual minorities, including non-monogamous relationships. We will share key practices of satisfied couples and discuss clinical applications of this research.

Long Description: A couple's communication about their shared sexual relationship has been shown to predict both relational and sexual satisfaction (MacNeil & Byers, 2009; Mark & Jozkowski, 2013). The ability to speak with one's partner about sex has been regarded by researchers as a relational skill that is separate from other types of relational communication (Jones, Robinson, & Seedall, 2017; MacNeil & Byers, 1997). While sexual communication has been examined in heterosexual couples, most studies examining sexual communication in sexual minority couples has focused on sexual safety. Little research to date examining sexual communication processes has used a sample that includes sexual orientation and gender identity minorities (LGBTQIA and non-monogamous) couples. In our presentation, we will present the findings of our research study on sexual and gender minority relationships that examined important aspects of romantic relationships including sexual communication processes, sexual satisfaction, relational satisfaction, health, risks, and sexual experiences with outside partners. We highlight the factors that influence sexual communication processes, the predictors of sexual and relationship satisfaction among marginalized sexual groups, and identify how sexual minority relationships are currently managing risk and promoting sexual, physical, and mental health. Last, we will discuss implications for clinicians working with marginalized relational dynamics such as LGBTQ+ and non-monogamous relationships.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Ronny Fyllingen Johnsen

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Infidelity: A complex clinical challenge testing the therapist's knowledge and therapeutic skills

Short Description: In this dialogical workshop, I share 15 years of clinical experience with couples facing infidelity, focusing on two interventions: "The Mathematics of Loss and Regaining of Trust" and "The Doodle Model of Crisis and Sorrow" to navigate relational rupture. Inspiration: systemic therapy, psychoeducation and Cullbergs theories of crisis.

Long Description: This presentation will begin with a brief outline of the socio-cultural context within which my clinical practice is situated, followed by a short introduction to the Norwegian Family Counselling Service (Familievernnet) and my professional background. Infidelity may manifest in diverse ways — physical, emotional, sexual, financial, verbal, and increasingly through digital channels. A consistent clinical observation is the asymmetry in the partners' subjective experiences. For one partner, the infidelity may represent an existential crisis, whereas the other may regard it as a temporary disturbance that will resolve over time. Such divergent perspectives introduce significant therapeutic complexity, necessitating the establishment of a shared conceptual framework that both partners can recognize and relate to. Individuals in acute crisis typically have limited cognitive and emotional capacity to process complex information. Therapeutic interventions at this stage must therefore be clear, accessible, and experientially meaningful. The workshop focuses on the initial phase of therapeutic work with couples following the disclosure of infidelity. The central aim in this phase is to construct a shared platform of understanding from which the couple can begin to address both the crisis experience and the loss of trust within the relationship. I will present my intervention "The Mathematics of Loss and Regaining of Trust," a simple, structured and accessible tool designed to facilitate mutual understanding and initiate the process of trust restoration. Participants will have the opportunity to engage actively with the intervention during the session. Furthermore, I will introduce "The Doodle Model of Crisis and Sorrow," my adapted model for illustrating typical crisis trajectories — both in general and specifically within the context of infidelity.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Nesteren Gazioglu

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Self of the Therapist in the Satir Model: The Therapist's Self as the Instrument of Transformational Change

Short Description: This presentation focuses on the use of self as an instrument of change within Satir Transformational Systemic Therapy. During the presentation through experiential exercises, participants will have a chance to develop self-awareness as a therapist, and develop an idea on how to bring congruence in professional practice.

Long Description: The concept of use of self is not peripheral but central and essential to Satir Transformational Systemic Therapy (STST). Satir explicitly emphasized that the therapist's greatest tool for therapeutic change is not technique, but their own authentic, congruent presence. This belief positioned the therapist as one of the primary instruments of change in the therapeutic process. The therapist's presence, congruence, and resources are the foundation of the therapeutic interaction with clients. This 45-minute presentation will explore the use of self as the therapist's primary instrument of change through a set of experiential exercises. Participants will be invited into experiential exercises to explore their internal processes. By the end of the presentation, participants will have a better understanding of conceptual clarity of self on the therapist concept. They will also have a practical skill set enhancing their therapeutic presence, developing self-awareness, and bringing congruence into their professional work.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Diane Gehart

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Collaborative Therapy Part 1: Theoretical and Practice Foundations

Short Description: Have you ever struggled to connect with someone whose worldview seems different from yours? In today's polarized, diverse, and rapidly changing world, such challenges are inevitable—whether in the therapy office, classroom, or community. Collaborative therapy offers a refreshing, humanizing approach to bridging these divides through dialogue that matters.

Long Description: Have you ever struggled to connect with someone whose worldview seems entirely different from your own? In today's polarized, diverse, and rapidly changing world, such challenges are inevitable—whether in the therapy office, classroom, boardroom, or community setting. Collaborative therapy offers a refreshing, humanizing approach to bridging these divides through dialogue that matters. At its heart, collaborative practice is grounded in social constructionist philosophy, which emphasizes the co-creation of meaning through language and relationships. Rather than positioning the therapist or professional as the sole expert, collaborative therapy shifts toward a stance of curiosity, not-knowing, and openness to uncertainty. This orientation transforms the therapeutic encounter into a generative space where new possibilities emerge—possibilities that neither party could have imagined alone. This workshop explores the contemporary applications of collaborative therapy in clinical contexts, highlighting how its principles can be used to navigate difference, foster inclusion, and inspire meaningful change. Participants will examine the philosophical underpinnings that guide this work while also engaging with practical strategies for applying collaborative dialogue in their own professional roles. Through case illustrations and experiential learning, attendees will gain tools for cultivating conversations that reduce impasses, invite multiple perspectives, and generate new solutions in even the most difficult situations. Ultimately, collaborative therapy invites us to rethink how we understand ourselves, others, and the transformative potential of dialogue—empowering us to meet today's challenges with humility, creativity, and connection.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Robin Glerum

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Beyond One Path: Systemic Reflections on Families in High Conflict

Short Description: Families in prolonged conflict after separation challenge both our understanding and our interventions. This presentation explores two contrasting yet complementary systemic approaches. Rather than presenting a singular solution, the presentation invites reflection on the multiplicity of therapeutic “ways in” to families in conflict.

Long Description: Families in prolonged conflict after separation challenge both our understanding and our interventions. What do we mean by “high conflict,” and how do systemic models respond to the complexity behind the label? This presentation explores two contrasting yet complementary systemic approaches: Strengthening Children in Two Homes (SC2H) from Norway and No Kids in the Middle (NKIM) from the Netherlands. SC2H is a resilience-oriented, child-inclusive therapy model that emphasizes parallel parenting and relational strengthening across two homes. NKIM is a multi-family group intervention that seeks to reduce negative impact of parental conflict to children through structured, dialogical processes involving both parents and children. Rather than presenting a singular solution, the presentation invites reflection on the multiplicity of therapeutic “ways in” to families in conflict. It examines how each model positions children, conceptualizes conflict, and supports change—while also questioning the assumptions embedded in the term “high conflict” itself. Drawing on clinical experience and implementation insights, the presenters will discuss how systemic therapists can navigate the tension between containment and empowerment, between protecting children and engaging parents, and between normative expectations and lived realities. The presenters will discuss some ‘cornerstones’ they find helpful and invite to reflect together on other potential ‘cornerstones’ that help to navigate. The presentation aims to foster dialogue about how we might rethink our responses to families whose conflicts resist resolution, and whose needs challenge conventional therapeutic pathways while taking into account the context of the health care system. Keywords: High-conflict divorce · systemic therapy · child positioning · resilience · containment · parallel parenting · multi-family intervention · SC2H · No Kids in the Middle

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Saki Goto

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Child-Rearing Support for Mothers Participating in a Parent-Child Interaction Program Requiring Developmental Guidance

Short Description: In Japan, various forms of support are provided for families raising children with congenital conditions or complications at birth. These include national legal systems, child-rearing support for children with medical or developmental needs, and support specifically directed at parents of children with severe disabilities.

Long Description: This study reports on the necessity of maternal support, based on interviews and field observations conducted within a university-based program that provides both play activities for children and support for their mothers. **Methods:** This ethically approved study was conducted between May 2023 and March 2024. Nine mother-child dyads participated, most of whom were raising children requiring medical care, such as tube feeding or oxygen monitoring. Mothers were interviewed regarding their perceptions of parenting, challenges faced, and their most pressing needs. Data were analyzed qualitatively using the SCAT (Steps for Coding and Theorization) method, developed by Japanese researcher Naohisa Ohtani. **Results:** Four main categories emerged from the interviews: 1. Life born with disability (e.g., surviving hypoxia, saved by medical technology). 2. Medical declarations (e.g., overwhelming grief, daily tears). 3. Daily parenting support (e.g., solitary struggles, lack of spousal cooperation, trial and error, support from peers with similar experiences, support from family members). 4. Future child-rearing (e.g., aging parents, national policy measures, anxiety about the child's future).

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

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Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Keri Grant

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: From Clinic to Classroom: Are MFT Doctoral Graduates Ready to Teach?

Short Description: This session will discuss marriage and family therapy doctoral graduates perception of preparedness to be higher education faculty, and factors contributing to their perceptions. Implications are offered for current MFT administrators and faculty to enhance doctoral training and equip the next generation of educators.

Long Description: Over half of all marriage and family therapy (MFT) doctoral graduates teach in higher education (Hines, 1996) or plan to do so (Miller & Lambert-Shute, 2010). This session will discuss how MFT doctoral graduates perceive their preparation to be higher education faculty, and what factors during their doctoral program contributed to their perception. This presentation is based on original research using a sequential explanatory mixed methods design. A total of 123 graduates participated in the initial survey, with 21 participants engaging in follow-up one-on-one interviews. Results revealed varying levels of perceived preparedness, with the most participants reporting a 5 out of 7 (very prepared). Additional findings highlighted themes of 1) modeling, 2) educator identity, 3) feedback, and 4) processing as contributing factors. Implications are offered for current MFT administrators and faculty to enhance doctoral training and equip the next generation of educators.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Anne Grasaasen

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Beyond findings: how research shapes our live supervisory practice

Short Description: We organize this workshop inspired by interesting findings from two recent research projects on live supervision in family therapy training, focusing on both students' and supervisors' perspectives. We invite participants to share experiences on live supervision, and to collaboratively explore how these experiences may resonate with findings from our studies.

Long Description: The workshop is planned together with Bill Northey and Mark Rivett and is intended to be part of the Supervision track. ----- We organize this workshop inspired by interesting findings from two recent research projects on live supervision carried out at the Counseling Center, a part of the training program in family therapy and systemic practice at VID Specialized University in Oslo. The Counseling Center provides a free and low-threshold service for individuals, couples and families, where supervisees can practice couples and family therapy under live supervision. In the first study we explored how supervisees experience live supervision at the Counseling Center and the relevance of this type of supervision for their development as family therapists. This study also prompted us to reflect on our own roles as live supervisors, leading to the second study, in which five supervisors conduct an autoethnographic study into their own experiences of providing live supervision to supervisees at the Center. Findings led us to make some general reflections about the challenges and opportunities related to ethical issues, self-reflexivity, power and pedagogical aspects that may be of interest for supervisors and supervisees. During the workshop we will briefly present our studies and related findings as a basis for further discussion on how engaging in this type of research has shaped our thinking and supervisory practice, both personally and professionally. We invite participants to share their own experiences and/or research on live supervision, either as supervisors, supervisees, or researchers, and to collaboratively explore how these experiences resonate with or challenge the findings from our studies. Diverging perspectives are welcome; we wish to promote a pluralistic and reflective dialogue.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Abraham Greeff

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: IsiXhosa-speaking Single Mothers' Experiences of Intlawulo (Paying the Damages)

Short Description: What are IsiXhosa-speaking single mothers' experiences of intlawulo (paying the damages)? Participants were non-randomly recruited and data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Participants' experiences varied (positively and/or negatively), and were often contingent upon whether their partners had acknowledged paternity and/or paid intlawulo to her family.

Long Description: Intlawulo ("paying the damages") is a custom within the African Xhosa culture that requires a man to pay compensatory money to a woman's family if he admits to having impregnated her outside of wedlock. It is premised on the notion that a man has damaged an unmarried woman's chastity, her reputation, and her future marriage prospects. This study investigated IsiXhosa-speaking single mothers' experiences of intlawulo, using an exploratory qualitative research design. Participants were recruited through snowball sampling, and data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews. Twelve IsiXhosa-speaking single mothers from the Cape Town Metropole, South Africa were interviewed until data saturation occurred. Data were analysed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems model was utilised as theoretical framework through which findings were explored and conceptualised. The findings indicate that participants' experiences of intlawulo varied greatly, and often were contingent upon whether their partners had acknowledged paternity and/or paid intlawulo to the woman's family. Positive experiences of intlawulo included: improved self-esteem; positive emotions (e.g., happiness, pride); and improvements in relationships and communication amongst the families. Participants who had positive experiences described the custom as valuable and important – as something that held cultural significance, or served as a means to connect two families. However, participants whose partners had not paid intlawulo, or acknowledged paternity, generally reported negative experiences of the custom, such as feelings of devaluation, stigmatisation, distress, anger, father-child separation, and conflict. These participants tended to have negative views of the custom, seeing it as disempowering women, or as something that held little importance and value. Among the identified barriers to intlawulo are financial constraints; scepticism over paternity claims; and differences in beliefs about and/or views on the custom.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Johan Inge Greff

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Decolonization of social work with indigenous peoples: Sami family therapy in the shadow of Norwegianization

Short Description: This presentation explores how social work can be decolonized through Sami family therapy. Rooted in the South Sami context and shaped by experiences of Norwegianization, it emphasizes nature, language, kinship, and historical awareness. Therapy promotes healing, identity, and cultural safety through systemic, restorative, and epistemologically diverse practice.

Long Description: This presentation explores how social work can be decolonized through a culturally grounded approach to Sami family therapy. Based in the South Sami region and informed by historical experiences of Norwegianization, it examines how structural oppression, language loss, and cultural marginalization continue to affect Sami families today. The presentation highlights how Sami family therapy integrates nature, language, kinship, and historical awareness into therapeutic practice. It argues that cultural competence, systemic thinking, and restorative practice are essential to meeting Sami families in a safe and meaningful way. Through practical examples and historical perspectives, the presentation demonstrates how therapy can support healing and strengthen identity. It further argues that social work must be grounded in multiple epistemological and ontological frameworks to be relevant in Indigenous contexts. This contribution is a call to action: to recognize and integrate Sami perspectives in social work—not as an add-on, but as equal foundations for knowledge and practice.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Darya Haitoglou

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Science of Hope: Application of the Satir Model to Mental Health

Short Description: This session presents PRISMA-based research on how Satir interventions reduce stress, anxiety, and depression across cultures. Dr. Haitoglou highlights short-term, measurable outcomes, links with neuroscience and parts/somatic work, and shows how the Satir Model offers a research-aligned, transformational approach to today's mental-health challenges.

Long Description: Around the world, rising levels of stress, anxiety, and depression signal a global mental-health crisis. Today's challenges demand more than symptom reduction—they call for approaches that activate inner transformation, resilience, and hope. This presentation introduces new research positioning the Satir Model as an evidence-informed and humanistic response to these modern pressures. Drawing from a PRISMA-guided systematic review and thematic synthesis, Dr. Darya Haitoglou examines how Satir-informed interventions are applied across cultures and populations to support mental-health outcomes. The research addresses three core questions: How does the Satir Model influence stress, anxiety, and depression? Which Satir interventions most consistently contribute to therapeutic change? And what implications does the model hold for practitioners seeking short-term yet transformational results? Key findings show that Satir tools—such as the Iceberg Metaphor, parts integration, sculpting, family-of-origin exploration, somatic awareness, and the cultivation of the Self (“I AM”)—produce measurable impact in both clinical and coaching contexts. Across diverse settings, short-term Satir interventions (4–8 sessions) were associated with improved emotional regulation, strengthened self-worth, and enhanced relational connection. The research further demonstrates how the Satir Model bridges contemporary therapeutic frameworks, including IFS, somatic therapies, polyvagal-informed work, trauma-focused practices, and systemic family approaches. The session also highlights future directions, including the potential integration of biomarkers, psychophysiological measures, and emerging neuroscience to deepen our understanding of how Satir processes support nervous-system regulation and resilience. Participants will gain an overview of global Satir research, thematic conclusions, and practical strategies for applying the model in mental-health settings. Ultimately, the “Science of Hope” presents the Satir Model as not only a powerful humanistic framework but a research-aligned, culturally adaptable, and forward-looking approach for the next generation of mental-health practitioners.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Ruth Chayil Haraldseid

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Understanding listening in a cultural and system therapy perspective

Short Description: Listening is viewed as one of the most important skills for therapists. This workshop is based on hermeneutics research to understand the nature of listening. The presenter will look at what it means in a western, family therapy setting, and compare it to how it's understood in other cultures.

Long Description: Listening is viewed as one of the most important skills of the therapist. Some even regard it as the most important. The presenter will go into depths to understand what listening means in a western, family therapy setting, and compare it to how it's understood in other cultures. Further, the presenter will address how listening can be understood as part of ontological being compared to a therapeutic skill. This workshop is based on hermeneutics research done by the presenter on the word listening. A scientific article is in the process of being produced and is planned to be published in 2026 if approved. Some of the questions that the presenter will explore, but not limited to, are: What does listening really mean, and are there differences in how we understand it across different cultures? How is response deeply connected to listening, and what may happen if it's not? What can hinder us from listening and what might the consequences be in a family therapy setting? The workshop will be an interactive process of lecture, dialog in different formats, and simple experiential exercises. The hope is that we together become more relational-aware and go back to our everyday life with some new or more expanded reflections regarding the profoundness of listening. Some journeys are never meant to end, and to listen more deeply to the complexity with great presence and humility, are one of those.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Christine Hargrove

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: The Couple Financial Conflict Scale: A New Tool for Therapists

Short Description: This presentation introduces the Couple Financial Conflict Scale (CFCS), an eight-item tool grounded in Couples and Finances Theory, designed to assess financial conflict between partners. Attendees will explore the current state of relational-financial issues, the importance of relational-financial assessment, and applications of the CFCS in various settings.

Long Description: Conflict over financial matters is a prevalent challenge among couples and can undermine relationship stability. Despite its significance, the availability of validated assessment tools to measure financial conflict within intimate relationships remains limited. Grounded in Couples and Finances Theory, this presentation introduces the development of the Couple Financial Conflict Scale (CFCS), an innovative, eight-item instrument designed to evaluate the presence and frequency of self-reported financial conflict between intimate partners. Attendees will be briefly introduced to the current state of relational-financial issues, learn why assessment of couple financial conflict matters, review current assessment tools available (including the Couple Financial Conflict Scale; CFCS), and learn how the assessment tool can be utilized in their practice settings.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: DeAnna Harris-McKoy

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Analyzing the Trajectories of Delinquency to Criminal Behavior

Short Description: We use the life course perspective to analyze the trajectories of delinquency into criminal behavior and to explore when delinquent behavior peaks.

Long Description: Delinquency and criminal behavior are concerns during the period of adolescence and young adulthood. However, previous studies suggest that delinquent behavior peaks during mid-adolescence or late-adolescence. We use the life course perspective to analyze the trajectories of delinquency into criminal behavior and to explore when delinquent behavior peaks. We used data from the Wave I, Wave II, and Wave IV of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) to analyze the trajectories of delinquent and criminal behavior. We analyzed the means were over Wave I, Wave II, and IV grouped by the age of participants at Wave I. We then separated the trajectories by age of participants at Wave I for participants in early adolescence, mid-adolescence, and late adolescence. Results suggest that delinquency increases from early adolescence to mid adolescence and decreases towards late adolescence and young adulthood. We then discuss the practical and clinical implications of the study.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Lindsey Hawkins

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Learning from Experience: Advice and Insights from Online Daters to New Users

Short Description: Online daters were surveyed to share advice for those who are new to online dating. Utilizing thematic analysis of 4,000 responses, users emphasized safety, patience, and authenticity. Ranging from success stories to warnings, users discussed challenges and rewards, with implications for research, policy, and practice.

Long Description: With over 320 millions users worldwide, dating apps have transformed the way people seek romantic connections. The fading stigma has been further accelerated by global usage and cross-cultural acceptance, making online dating a more viable and accepted avenue for many people (Hogan & Dutton, 2011). However, despite these positive trends, digital platforms are not without their challenges. Using thematic analysis, we analyzed over 4,000 responses to the question, “What advice would you give those who are new to online dating?” We uncovered that the advice given to newcomers in online dating reveals a mix of caution, encouragement, and practical wisdom. Many emphasize safety first, warning users to protect their boundaries, meet in public, and watch out for scams. Others focus on managing expectations, stressing that not every interaction will lead to love and that rejection should not be taken personally. Patience and persistence emerges, with reminders to take things slow and not get discouraged by low response rates or abandoned profiles. Additionally, many highlight the importance of keeping the experience fun and lighthearted, using humor and openness rather than treating apps too seriously. Many encourage authenticity and self-improvement, encouraging users to be genuine, consult friends for feedback, and see profile-building as a skill rather than a reflection of self-worth. Interestingly, the advice captures both success stories (“I found my husband on online dating,” “I met my partner on Hinge”) and warnings (“Don’t do it,” “You gotta weed em out”), illustrating the divided but insightful perspectives people hold. Together, these responses show that while online dating can be frustrating and challenging, it can also be rewarding when approached with caution, self-awareness, and a willingness to enjoy the process. We offer clinical implications based on our results as well as future research and community policy directions.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Li Hay

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Satir Human Validation Process Model: Applications to Indigenous Populations

Short Description: This presentation explores whether the Satir Human Validation Process Model can be culturally responsive when applied to therapeutic work with Indigenous families while highlighting a case study with a family from the Lummi Nation that integrates ceremony, storytelling, family sculpting, family reconstruction, and an exploration of incongruent communication stances.

Long Description: This presentation examines the integration of the Satir Human Validation Process Model (SHVPM) with Indigenous populations, focusing on a culturally grounded case study involving a Lummi Nation family. The SHVPM emphasizes congruent communication, self-worth, and experiential interventions such as family sculpting and reconstruction. These elements align meaningfully with Indigenous values of storytelling, ceremony, and relational interconnectedness. Through a detailed case illustration, we explore how the SHVPM was adapted to honor Indigenous spiritual and relational frameworks. The therapeutic process was treated as ceremony, incorporating traditional elements such as cedar, seawater, drumming, and ancestral prayer. Interventions were guided by metaphors like “mending the net,” which resonated with the family’s cultural worldview and facilitated healing from intergenerational trauma, emotional disconnection, and identity struggles. The presentation also addresses the broader social justice and intersectionality lens, acknowledging the historical and systemic challenges Indigenous communities face, including colonialism, cultural erasure, and underrepresentation in mental health literature. We critique the dominance of Western paradigms in family therapy and advocate for decolonizing practices that center Indigenous wisdom and relational healing. Participants will gain insight into: The core principles of the SHVPM and their alignment with Indigenous worldviews, practical strategies for adapting therapeutic models to be culturally congruent, and the importance of humility, cultural attunement, and ceremony in therapeutic work with Indigenous families. This session is ideal for couple and family therapists interested in cultural humility in family therapy, Indigenous mental health, experiential family therapy models, and the decolonization of family therapy. It invites reflection on how therapists can respectfully integrate traditional healing practices into contemporary clinical frameworks to foster deeper connection, resilience, and transformation.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Sarah Helps

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Family and Systemic Psychotherapy with People with medical Conditions: Evidence, practice and Developments

Short Description: In this workshop we describe the development of family and systemic psychotherapy for people with medical conditions. We review research, evidence-based practice and practice-based evidence regarding the use of systemic techniques and principles to support individuals, families and healthcare professionals through an often non-linear, harrowing journey.

Long Description: Based on our recently published book, in this workshop Jenny and Sarah describe the international development of family and systemic psychotherapy for people with medical conditions. We review research, evidence-based practice and practice-based evidence regarding the use of systemic techniques and principles to support individuals, families and healthcare professionals through what is often a non-linear, harrowing journey. Core themes arising from this work include the identity shifts illness can pose, sustaining relationships in situations of ongoing loss, trauma, uncertainty, and balancing loss, sadness and trauma with hope and resilience. Emphasis is placed on embodied experiences and the importance of addressing discrimination and diversity within healthcare. Supervision and systemic leadership are vital in developing the specialist and broader workforce and growing services. Clinical, supervisory and leadership examples will be presented from within our own practice. We will consider the importance of parity of esteem: and argue strongly for a bodymind joined up approach to providing healthcare services to people with medical conditions. During the workshop we will invite participants to consider their own relationship to health and illness, and to reflect on the state of family and systemic psychotherapeutic services in their country. We will invite discussions about research questions that will bolster our shared understanding of practice and will share some ideas about the use of systemic formulation together with suggestions for training our medical and nursing colleagues to think and practice more systemically.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



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1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
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Presenter: Alexandria Herron

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: An Exploration on How Religiosity Shapes Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors

Short Description: This study examined how religiosity influences approval of sexual behaviors beyond traditional sexual conservatism. Results suggest that highly religious individuals may express general acceptance of others' sexual behaviors while maintaining more conservative personal preferences, with gender differences and intrinsic religiosity correlating significantly with sexual attitudes.

Long Description: Religion and sexuality have often existed in tension, with varying degrees of acceptance across individuals and denominations. Because religions frequently include specific doctrines about appropriate sexual behavior, religiosity may significantly shape sexual attitudes and behaviors. The present study examined how religiosity influences approval of sexual behaviors that extend beyond what is traditionally considered sexually conservative. Participants ($N = 131$) aged 18 and older were recruited through the University of Central Oklahoma's SONA system and social media. Using a 2 (Religiosity: High, Low) x 2 (Story Type: Sexually Conservative, Sexually Liberal) between-subjects design, participants were randomly assigned to read a brief sexual anecdote and rate their approval of the behaviors described. Religiosity was measured using the Religious Commitment Inventory-10. A two-way ANOVA indicated no significant main effects of religiosity or story type and no significant interaction, suggesting that religiosity and sexual story content did not predict overall approval. However, post-hoc analyses revealed a significant negative correlation between religiosity and approval ratings, $r(130) = -.23$, $p = .008$, with intrinsic religiosity emerging as a slightly stronger predictor than extrinsic religiosity. When participants were asked about their own sexual preferences, there was a significant negative correlation between personal sexual preference and self-rated religiosity, $r(127) = -.32$, $p = <.001$. Additionally, gender differences appeared in the opposite direction of prior research, with females reporting higher approval for sexually liberal behaviors than males. Although the primary hypotheses were not supported, results suggest that highly religious individuals may express general acceptance of others' sexual behaviors while maintaining more conservative personal preferences. These findings may reflect shifting sexual attitudes among younger religious populations and highlight the complex relationship between religiosity, gender, and sexual openness.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Alexandria Herron

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Romantic Relationship Dynamics and Self-Blame in Women with Autism

Short Description: This study will compare self-blame in romantic relationships among autistic and neurotypical women. Using a sample of at least 150 participants, the study will explore whether autistic women experience higher levels of self-blame, offering insights to inform future research and interventions supporting relationship well-being for neurodiverse women.

Long Description: The diagnostic criteria for autism spectrum disorder includes deficits in social interaction which can carry into romantic relationships. Many autistic adults have a desire to participate in relationships but experience unique struggles compared to their neurotypical peers. For autistic women in particular, autistic traits are linked to struggles with self-esteem, self-compassion, and self-criticism which could complicate their experiences in relationships when conflict arises. Further research is necessary to address whether there are observable differences between women with autism and their neurotypical counterparts in terms of relationship dynamics. This study will specifically explore the extent to which women with autism blame themselves for the negative aspects at play within their romantic relationships. Our sample will consist of at least 150 women of differing neurotypes who have experienced at least one romantic relationship. Neurotype (autistic vs neurotypical) will act as the independent variable, and the dependent variable will be participant self-blame in romantic relationships. Group differences between neurotypes will be examined statistically to compare measures of self-blame. It is hypothesized that autistic women will display higher levels of self-blame regarding the negative aspects of their romantic relationships compared to neurotypical women. This study can offer necessary insights into the emotional experiences of autistic women within their relationships. Identifying these patterns can inform future research and improve interventions that will facilitate the well-being of individuals with autism.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Brian Higginbotham

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Integrating Relationship Education to Strengthen Therapists and Their Clients

Short Description: Post-webinar data from the Utah Marriage Commission shows that professionals overwhelmingly report relationship education webinars benefit their professional practice. This poster explores these perceptions and discusses how relationship education can enhance professional effectiveness and client outcomes.

Long Description: This poster presents findings from post-webinar evaluations conducted by the Utah Marriage Commission to assess the perceived professional value of relationship education webinars. Participants—comprising a range of helping professionals including counselors, educators, and social service providers—were asked to rate their agreement with the statement: “The material presented in this webinar will be of benefit to my professional services.” Results indicate that the vast majority of participants either strongly agreed or agreed, reflecting a clear perception that relationship education enhances their professional skills and service delivery. Many respondents also shared that the content improved their communication strategies, empathy toward clients, and ability to facilitate healthy relationship dynamics in their work. These findings underscore the relevance of relationship education not only for couples and families but also for professionals who serve them. Relationship skills—such as active listening, conflict resolution, and emotional regulation—are foundational competencies that strengthen professional practice across disciplines. The poster will also highlight how structured digital resources, produced in partnership with Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, can extend the benefits of these webinars by offering self-paced, evidence-based learning that professionals can share with clients to reinforce therapeutic and educational goals. By examining professionals’ own perceptions of value, this study contributes to a growing understanding of how relationship education supports both practitioner development and the well-being of the communities they serve.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Brian Higginbotham

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Systemically informed Psychoeducational Cohorts with At-Risk and Justice-Involved Populations

Short Description: This session explores trauma-informed and systemically formed psychoeducational cohorts for at-risk and justice-involved populations, using CBT constructs to strengthen families, emotional regulation, and reconnection. Practical strategies, real-world examples, and experience demonstrate how group interventions promote resilience, hope, and long-term positive change in complex family systems.

Long Description: This presentation examines the use of systemically informed psychoeducational cohorts as an innovative approach to strengthen families within at-risk and justice-informed and cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) frameworks. The session highlights how structured relationship and parenting education programs, such as the InsideOut Dad® and Smart Steps curriculum, help participants increase self-awareness, emotional regulation, and family engagement. Working with justice-involved men and women impacted by adversity, these group interventions focus on reshaping maladaptive thoughts, improving communication, and rebuilding trust across complex family systems. Participants are guided to identify negative cognitive patterns that contribute to conflict, guilt, or disengagement, and to reframe them through CBT-based exercises that promote accountability, empathy, and problem-solving. By emphasizing both insight and skill-building, the cohorts bridge clinical and educational approaches to foster sustainable behavior change. Case examples illustrate the transformative power of hope and connection as therapeutic tools. One participant reflected, “For the first time, I see that my kids still need me to show up, even if I’m not perfect.” This statement captures the essence of the program’s mission to help individuals rediscover purpose and agency within their family roles. Attendees will learn practical strategies for implementing psychoeducational groups in correctional and community settings, including facilitation methods that encourage engagement, manage group dynamics, and integrate trauma-informed principles. The presentation will also explore how to measure participant progress and translate institutional learning into community reintegration success. Ultimately, this session underscores the role of psychoeducation as a bridge between therapy and life practice. By combining research-based models with human connection and hope, psychoeducational cohorts empower participants to strengthen relationships, break intergenerational cycles, and create pathways for long-term family and personal resilience.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: William Hutter

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Holding Space: Culturally Responsive Therapy with LGBTQ+ Refugees

Short Description: Working with LGBTQ+ refugees in therapy requires a specialized approach recognizes the unique challenges they face,, due to their sexual orientation, gender identity and experiences as a refugee. This workshop will examine some of the key findings in providing therapy with LGBTQ+ refugees.

Long Description: Working with LGBTQ+ refugees in therapy requires a specialized approach recognizes the unique challenges they face,, due to their sexual orientation, gender identity and experiences as a refugee. This workshop will examine some of the key findings in providing therapy with LGBTQ+ refugees. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, refugees have an increased prevalence of depression, somatization, traumatic brain injuries, and panic attacks (8). Furthermore, refugee stressors can be organized into four categories: traumatic stress, resettlement stress, acculturation stress, and isolation stress. Understanding the trauma experienced by LGBT refugees allows clinicians to empathize and provide appropriate care. Patients will present with complex histories comprising trauma at home, in transit, and while acclimatizing to their new lives. In working with this community, broader social, cultural, and legal aspects of mental illness should be considered by the psychiatrist to understand the patient's experience. The role of therapy is two-fold: to navigate the past and prepare the client for the future.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Katarzyna Iwanicka

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Innovative Pathways for Transforming Addiction Treatment Through Family Participation: Polish and Indian Perspectives

Short Description: This study explores the perspectives of 76 Polish and 93 Indian clinicians specializing in substance use disorder treatment. It examines their strategies for involving families, addresses socio-cultural challenges, stigma, and highlights culturally sensitive approaches to improve addiction treatment outcomes.

Long Description: There seems to be a global urgency in addiction treatment communities to reduce harm to human life and relationships through developing innovative and effective treatments for substance use disorders (SUDs). Research consistently shows that when substance use decreases, families' overall interpersonal relationships and wellbeing improve, resources grow stronger, and patients' participation in addiction treatment increases. Furthermore, these changes lead to the family system's improved resilience, prevention of relapse, and strengthening of overall treatment outcomes (Steinglass, 2013; Copello et al., 2010; Nattala et al., 2010; O'Farrell & Clements, 2013; Roozen et al., 2010). However, most of these studies focused on the perspectives of patients and their families. Studies focusing on the perspectives of clinicians are scarce (Perumbilly & Anderson, 2015; Short et al., 2016; Van Boekel et al., 2014). To address the paucity in this area, this study explores and expands the perspectives of SUD-focused clinicians in Poland ($n = 76$) and India ($n = 93$), highlighting various strategies they use to involve families in treatment and the impact of socio-cultural differences. Furthermore, this study sheds light on overcoming the challenges stemming from societal attitudes and stigma, and on broadening culturally sensitive treatment approaches.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: John Jacob

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Promoting relationship satisfaction-The development and validation of the XY Theory Needs Assessment

Short Description: This presentation reviews the development, validation, and clinical application of the XY Theory Needs Assessment, a tool designed to help clinicians and couples identify relational needs, communication patterns, and pathways toward greater relationship satisfaction.

Long Description: Advances in needs assessment are beginning to illuminate not only who we are in relationship, but how we connect. This presentation reviews the development, validation, and clinical application of the XY Needs Assessment, a tool designed to help clinicians and couples identify relational needs, communication patterns, and pathways toward greater relationship satisfaction. Rooted in Jacob's (2011) framework emphasizing the balance between meeting partner needs and maintaining individuality, the XY Needs Assessment integrates principles of interpersonal cognition and dyadic adjustment to assess how partners understand and respond to each other's relational styles. We hypothesized that individuals who demonstrate greater awareness of their partner's needs and who possess stronger problem-solving and conflict-management and resolution skills would report higher levels of relationship satisfaction. To evaluate the psychometric properties of the XY Needs Assessment, data were collected from 311 romantic couples representing diverse relationship lengths and demographic backgrounds. Analyses focused on establishing internal consistency, construct validity, and predictive associations between assessment scores and reported satisfaction levels. Preliminary findings suggest that the XY Needs Assessment effectively captures key dimensions of relational understanding and adjustment. In addition to presenting these empirical results, the session will illustrate practical applications for clinicians. Case examples will demonstrate how the XY Assessment can be integrated into therapeutic practice to guide treatment planning, facilitate communication exercises, and support couples experiencing mild to severe relational discord. Participants will gain insight into how to administer, interpret, and apply the assessment to enhance clients' problem-solving capacities and promote balanced, mutually fulfilling partnerships.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Aida Jimenez

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Enduring Partnerships in Later Life: Keys to Relationship Longevity

Short Description: This presentation examines factors sustaining long-term relationships in older adults through a qualitative study of couples married over 30 years. Key elements include love, intimacy, communication, adaptability, support, and forgiveness. Findings inform strategies to enhance relationship satisfaction and well-being in aging populations.

Long Description: With the steady growth of the older adult population, it is essential to understand the elements that sustain long-term romantic partnerships. Objective: This study sought to examine the perspectives of older couples regarding the durability and fulfillment of their relationships. Method: A qualitative phenomenological design was employed. Participants were recruited through availability sampling and included nine heterosexual couples (N = 18) who had been married for over three decades. Ages ranged from 56 to 82 years. Data were gathered through 13 open-ended, semi-structured interview questions. Results: The primary themes emerging from the data highlighted factors associated with enduring and satisfying relationships: (1) love, (2) emotional closeness, (3) clear and open communication, (4) sexual connection, (5) adaptability and flexibility, (6) external social support, and (7) forgiveness. Discussion: Findings suggest that sustaining long-term partnerships in later life is a multifaceted process shaped by both positive and challenging dynamics. Among the most salient contributors to relationship stability were expressions of love, intimacy, and communication. Acknowledging these elements can guide the creation of programs and resources designed to strengthen relationship satisfaction and overall well-being in older adults.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Tracey Jane Johnston

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: The Evolved Nest: An Evolutionary, Neurobiological and Relationally Informed Family Therapy: Next Revolution

Short Description: This workshop aims to explore how integrating the Evolved Nest and Kinship Indigenous Worldview can significantly enhance Family Therapy. The workshop will outline nine practical ways for clinicians to assess and integrate the components of the Evolved Nest into Systemic Psychotherapy.

Long Description: ‘The Evolved Nest: An Evolutionary, Neurobiological and Relationally Informed Family Therapy’ Aim: In this workshop, we aim to examine how the ‘Evolved Nest’ combined with the ‘Kinship Indigenous Worldview’ profoundly enhances family therapy. Developed mainly by Darcia Narvaez, Professor Emerita, the ‘Evolved Nest’ refers to the natural caregiving conditions that support optimal human development and well-being. This evolutionary framework explains how this form of early life care impacts long-term health. In our view, the ‘Evolved Nest’ offers a very important contribution to Family Therapy as it moves us from a theoretical base to embed our practice in compelling current science-based ‘facts’ supported by converging evidence from several scientific fields. A) ‘Evolved Nest’ elements positively influence the oxytocin system, a key neurobiological system for social bonding and emotional regulation. These are key areas in Family Therapy. B) A deficit in ‘Evolved Nest’ experiences can produce stress-reactive nervous systems and issues with vagal regulation that very negatively impact family relationships. C) Promoting the ‘Evolved Nest’ components can enhance prosocial behaviours, empathy, compassion, overall well-being, and counter the effects of early stress and developmental deficits in families. D) The ‘Evolved Nest’ helps us move away from pathologising and individualising “trauma-informed” thinking to more relational “wellness-informed” practice congruent with Systemic Psychotherapy ethics and values. The workshop will explore how clinicians can integrate the ‘Evolved Nest’ into their therapeutic practice. It will cover how the 9 components of the Evolved Nest optimise human development and well-being, and explore ways of incorporating these into Family Therapy and Systemic Psychotherapy assessment and practice. The nine elements of the ‘Evolved Nest’ include Nature Connection, Healing Practices, Responsive Relationships, a Positive Social Climate, Self-directed Play, Positive Touch (No Negative Touch), Soothing Perinatal Experiences, alloparenting, and On-demand breastfeeding.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Adam Jones

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: The Embodied Therapist: Linking Physiology to Observed Systemic Skills

Short Description: This workshop discusses the connection between therapist physiology and observer rated systemic therapy skills. We present findings from a recent study with graduate students who completed the Facilitative Systemic Intervention Skills task by responding to challenging therapy scenarios. Implications for training therapist skills and physiological awareness will be discussed.

Long Description: Much of our attention in therapy training is devoted on helping developing therapists to 1) manage their anxiety in session and 2) respond appropriately to clients and produce change. While researchers have found that therapist's physiological experiences in session have an impact on client outcomes (Marci et al., 2007), the connection between therapists' physiological response and their therapeutic skills has not been explored. In the workshop, we'll review the relationship between a therapists' observed skills and their physiological responses before, during, and after responding to (fictional) clients. This workshop review the existing literature on how a therapist's only physiology is session has an impact on client outcomes. Vivid examples and experiential exercises for monitoring a therapists' own physiology in session will be presented. We'll then present findings from a recent study on the relationship between therapeutic skills and physiological responses. The study involved 21 graduate-level marriage and family therapy students who recorded their responses to challenging family therapy scenarios. After each vignette, participants recorded a response to the clients as their therapist, using their own personal style and approach. Using the newly developed Facilitative Systemic Intervention Skills (FSIS) measure, a team rated each response to the challenging vignettes. Our research question explores if a therapist's skills are associated with their physiology when they view and respond to challenging client vignettes. We hypothesize that therapists who demonstrate better therapeutic skills will have lower baseline-corrected physiological responses to the clients. Our findings have implications for the future research and training of physiological awareness and systemic therapist skills in therapists. The workshop will present promising avenues for supervising and training therapists to develop an effective therapeutic presence when working with couples and families.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Deborah Judge

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: From Herd to Community: How horses and other animals may inspire hopeful journeys in residential childcare.

Short Description: A reminder of the natural world, our relationships with ourselves and others -our place in the world. In working in residential childcare over the last 10 years, we highlight the value of bringing nature and animal assisted learning into the work in residential childcare for children and care professionals alike.

Long Description: As founding directors of Youthinc CIC and directors of Birribi – a residential child-care organisation based in Wales, Lisa Mellen and Deborah Judge originally set out 10 years ago to create a systemic approach within residential childcare. We named this organisation Birribi, an Aboriginal Australian word meaning both ‘meeting’ place and ‘crossing.’ As part of the organisation there is a school and a care-farm with a variety of farm animals and horses. Around the same time, we also continued our shared love of horses as qualified practitioners with the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA, 2025.) When we mean a systemic approach, we see children as individuals interconnected within multiple dynamic systems – personal, family, community and society. The ‘home’ community provides a small system where we can focus on patterns in relationships and strengthen the interactions that help the community to feel safe. Our core values at Birribi embed the importance of building positive relationships, creating therapeutic group homes – a sense of ‘place’ and safety – encouraging social learning and the daily routines of living with others as part of a small community. With a focus on horses, we remember what we have forgotten, the language of connection. We may rediscover the flow of tuning in with another, the wisdom of intuition and the strength of a more balanced nervous system. Wise, intuitive beings, they invite us to notice ourselves. They invite us to wonder at the experience of being – in relation to – and with – other.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Sari Kaarina Lindeman

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Family Stories of Substance Use and Recovery: Navigating Stigma, Stress, Love, and Complex Relationships

Short Description: Explores how family therapy processes and narrative research perspectives contribute to substance use recovery for the whole family, stressing the importance of understanding family dynamics and providing professional support for long-term healing.

Long Description: Problematic substance use and recovery impact not just the individual but the entire family. This presentation draws on research and clinical practice to show how family stories reveal the complex dynamics families manage, balancing trust and doubt, love and threats, life and death, and closeness and distance. Current approaches often focus narrowly on individuals, neglecting the family's crucial role in supporting recovery. Support services typically concentrate on the person experiencing difficulties, but it is vital to recognize the importance of social connections and supportive relationships in aiding recovery. Narrative interviews with Norwegian families illustrate how problematic substance use and societal attitudes can overshadow family dynamics. Many family members encounter shame and blame related to their loved one's struggles, causing withdrawal from social networks. This presentation reflects how these issues affect family life over time, even after recovery. Recovery is a non-linear process that requires ongoing adaptation and support from family members. Globally, problematic substance use is often viewed as an individual issue. Despite research documenting the impacts of family, long-term adaptations remain poorly understood. Systemic perspectives go beyond dominant discourses like "the addicted family", "codependency", and "tough love", which constrain possibilities for action and affect service provision. Systemic family therapy views families as evolving units that adapt to challenges, promoting improved understanding and support. Family therapy practices provide insights and support options, helping families navigate substance use challenges and develop resilience and recovery stories. Storytelling creates pathways to hope and change. As individuals and families build their narratives, they foster empowerment and grounding, opening doors to healing and a future less defined by past struggles. Insights from family stories assist therapists working with families facing complex challenges, where societal stigma further complicates their situations.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Alexandra Kakoudaki

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Parental Involvement in Systemic Interventions for Learning Disabilities and Autism: The Case of the Greek Family

Short Description: This paper explores the necessity and usefulness of parental involvement in systemic interventions with children with learning disabilities and autism. Focusing on the Greek family, it highlights both strengths and challenges, shaped by cultural philosophy, parental responsibility, and the strong influence of extended family and kinship networks.

Long Description: Systemic therapy emphasizes that children cannot be understood or supported in isolation but as part of the family system. In Greece, the family plays a particularly central role, with strong intergenerational bonds, high parental involvement, and a cultural philosophy that frames raising children as both a duty and a lifelong responsibility. Including parents in interventions for learning disabilities and autism is theoretically essential and practically unavoidable within this context. On the one hand, the Greek family offers significant strengths: close bonds, availability of extended family members, and a readiness to invest time and resources in the child's education and well-being. Such involvement allows strategies from therapy or school to be reinforced at home and supports the consistency that children with autism in particular require. On the other hand, these same dynamics can create challenges. Parental over-involvement may limit a child's autonomy, extended kinship networks may introduce conflicting views, and cultural expectations of parental sacrifice can sometimes intensify stress rather than reduce it. The worldview of Greek parents - seeing themselves as deeply responsible for both successes and difficulties of their children - shapes the therapeutic alliance in unique ways, requiring systemic therapists to navigate both support and overprotection. By situating parental inclusion within the cultural context of the Greek family, this paper argues that systemic interventions gain both opportunities and complexities. Without parental involvement, interventions risk fragmentation; with it, they become holistic, but demand cultural sensitivity to balance strengths and limitations. The Greek family thus provides a rich case study for understanding why parental presence is indispensable in systemic approaches to learning and developmental challenges.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Vivian Kannemeyer

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: "Utilizing the principles of the Circumplex Model to enhance understanding, provide support, and tailor effective interventions in Family Therapy."

Short Description: The Circumplex Model integrates principles from Family Systems Theory, Systems Theory, Family Therapy, and Communication Theory, creating a framework that helps clinicians to examine the dynamics within a family unit and linking symptoms to specific family types, increasing their ability to tailor interventions and treatment according to families specific needs.

Long Description: The Circumplex Model of family systems was developed by David H. Olson in the late 1970s as a way to better understand and assess family functioning. Drawing principles from Family Systems Theory, Systems Theory, Family therapy, and Communication Theory, Olson created a framework that helps clinicians to examine the dynamics within a family unit to increase their ability to create interventions and tailor treatment according to each families specific needs. The Circumflex Model emphasizes the relationship between family symptoms and the type of family system in which they occur. By identifying patterns of interaction, communication, and structure, therapists can use the model to guide effective interventions and support healthier functioning within families. The Circumflex Model focuses on three central dimensions of family functioning: Cohesion, Flexibility or Adaptability and Communication. Marital and Family Cohesion (Togetherness) is the emotional bonding members have toward one another, while Flexibility and Adaptability is the quality and expression of leadership and organization, role relationship and relationship rules and the ability of a marital or family system to change in response to situational and developmental stress. Communication is the facilitating vehicle that helps families move along the other two dimensions effectively. The Circumflex Model has originally identified 4 types of Family and Couples Cohesion: Disengaged, Separated, Connected and Enmeshed and 4 types of types of Family and Couples Flexibility and Adaptability: Rigid, Structured, Flexible and Chaotic. Each Family and Couple has its own way of related to each other and organize themselves according to their own ability to function and maintain the homeostasis. Although the Circumflex Model has changed and developed through the years, yet their principles are still essential to understand and support families, as the model takes in consideration ethnic and cultural diversity, focusing on optimal functioning instead of pathologizing families.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Michelle Keller

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Competent practice with refugee populations: Attending to post-settlement mental health needs

Short Description: Resettlement offers daunting challenges for refugees. This presentation draws from a scoping review and practitioner knowledge to advance understanding of refugees' mental health needs, thereby promoting competency in assessment and treatment for individuals while framing supports for displaced families

Long Description: Since 1975, the United States has welcomed over three million refugees from countries worldwide. Recent policy shifts have significantly reduced support from the US, leaving European nations as the primary relocation host for approximately 13.2 million refugees, with Syria being the second largest population. Recent data reveals that Norway alone houses 238,281 refugees and their family members. This vulnerable population is at high risk for developing post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and several other psychological conditions related to political or religious conflict in their home countries and often traumatizing migration journeys. Additionally, those who seek refugee status are exposed to adverse experiences during and post-settlement, secondary to cultural differences, including but not limited to language barriers, loss of autonomy, separation from family members, impression of cultural values, and stigma associated with refugee status. Although health screening protocols have been well established, the mental health needs of refugees post-settlement do not receive adequate focus in research and practice. Given the current trends and political landscape and the growing diversity within our borders, we are called upon to provide culturally adequate and effective treatment to promote the resilience and mental well-being of this often neglected population. This presentation reports on the results of a scoping review of the literature on the clinical approaches that support post-settlement well-being among adult refugees. The review includes 25 peer-reviewed articles from EBSCO, Web of Science, and ProQuest databases and identified three major themes in effective clinical services: resilience building, socio-cultural awareness and sensitivity, and strength-based approaches. The presentation further offers a practitioner lens in supporting families and aims to advance participants' understanding of the unique needs of refugees, thereby promoting competency and effectiveness in assessment, referral, and treatment.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Kelly Kendall

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Systemically informed Psychoeducational Cohorts with At-Risk and Justice-Involved Populations

Short Description: This session explores trauma-informed and systemically formed psychoeducational cohorts for at-risk and justice-involved populations, using CBT constructs to strengthen families, emotional regulation, and reconnection. Practical strategies, real-world examples, and experience demonstrate how group interventions promote resilience, hope, and long-term positive change in complex family systems.

Long Description: This presentation examines the use of systemically informed psychoeducational cohorts as an innovative approach to strengthen families within at-risk and justice-informed and cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) frameworks. The session highlights how structured relationship and parenting education programs, such as the InsideOut Dad® and Smart Steps curriculum, help participants increase self-awareness, emotional regulation, and family engagement. Working with justice-involved men and women impacted by adversity, these group interventions focus on reshaping maladaptive thoughts, improving communication, and rebuilding trust across complex family systems. Participants are guided to identify negative cognitive patterns that contribute to conflict, guilt, or disengagement, and to reframe them through CBT-based exercises that promote accountability, empathy, and problem-solving. By emphasizing both insight and skill-building, the cohorts bridge clinical and educational approaches to foster sustainable behavior change. Case examples illustrate the transformative power of hope and connection as therapeutic tools. One participant reflected, “For the first time, I see that my kids still need me to show up, even if I’m not perfect.” This statement captures the essence of the program’s mission to help individuals rediscover purpose and agency within their family roles. Attendees will learn practical strategies for implementing psychoeducational groups in correctional and community settings, including facilitation methods that encourage engagement, manage group dynamics, and integrate trauma-informed principles. The presentation will also explore how to measure participant progress and translate institutional learning into community reintegration success. Ultimately, this session underscores the role of psychoeducation as a bridge between therapy and life practice. By combining research-based models with human connection and hope, psychoeducational cohorts empower participants to strengthen relationships, break intergenerational cycles, and create pathways for long-term family and personal resilience.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Kelly Kendall

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Integrating Relationship Education to Strengthen Therapists and Their Clients

Short Description: Post-webinar data from the Utah Marriage Commission shows that professionals overwhelmingly report relationship education webinars benefit their professional practice. This poster explores these perceptions and discusses how relationship education can enhance professional effectiveness and client outcomes.

Long Description: This poster presents findings from post-webinar evaluations conducted by the Utah Marriage Commission to assess the perceived professional value of relationship education webinars. Participants—comprising a range of helping professionals including counselors, educators, and social service providers—were asked to rate their agreement with the statement: “The material presented in this webinar will be of benefit to my professional services.” Results indicate that the vast majority of participants either strongly agreed or agreed, reflecting a clear perception that relationship education enhances their professional skills and service delivery. Many respondents also shared that the content improved their communication strategies, empathy toward clients, and ability to facilitate healthy relationship dynamics in their work. These findings underscore the relevance of relationship education not only for couples and families but also for professionals who serve them. Relationship skills—such as active listening, conflict resolution, and emotional regulation—are foundational competencies that strengthen professional practice across disciplines. The poster will also highlight how structured digital resources, produced in partnership with Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, can extend the benefits of these webinars by offering self-paced, evidence-based learning that professionals can share with clients to reinforce therapeutic and educational goals. By examining professionals’ own perceptions of value, this study contributes to a growing understanding of how relationship education supports both practitioner development and the well-being of the communities they serve.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Rebecca Kenyon

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: POTT and Professional Accountability in a Tumultuous Time

Short Description: This presentation explores how Person-of-the-Therapist (POTT) reflexivity strengthens sociocultural attunement, ethical awareness, and therapist groundedness amid global unrest and inequity. Core components of the POTT model will demonstrate how therapists can sustain responsiveness and accountability across diverse client experiences in today's complex, rapidly changing world.

Long Description: This presentation will demonstrate how person-of-the-therapist (POTT) reflexivity allows for increased sociocultural attunement and ethical consideration—qualities essential for therapists practicing in times of heightened political tension and polarization. As therapists work to consider clients' intersecting systems of privilege, oppression, and trauma, the POTT model creates structure for therapeutic groundedness and responsiveness within the therapeutic alliance. By focusing on the therapist's use of self, the model emphasizes how therapist's personal awareness, emotional availability, and cultural humility are inseparable from clinical effectiveness. Participants will observe how the POTT model moves beyond theory into practical application. Core concepts such as signature theme, use of self in the moment, and relational congruence will be illustrated through clinical examples, showing how therapists can transform self-reflection into interventions that promote safety, connection, and repair. Through demonstration and discussion of reflexivity in the POTT process, presenters aim to deepen therapists' sociocultural attunement and expand their ethical lens. Presenters will speak from professional experience across various clinical, academic, and supervisory roles. Participants will examine how ongoing engagement with their own life narratives, values, and behaviors strengthens their capacity to meet clients with increased accountability to the therapeutic work. Attention will be given to how the POTT model equips therapists to remain emotionally present and professionally responsible when global or local crises enter the therapy room—whether through collective grief, identity-based stress, or ruptures in the social fabric. In a time when the personal, professional, and global are more intertwined than ever, the POTT model offers a timely and profound path toward ethical, relationally grounded, and socially responsive clinical practice.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Seon Kim

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Therapeutic Alliance and Videoconferencing in SUD Treatment: Moderating Effects During COVID

Short Description: This workshop explores how therapeutic alliance predicts treatment outcomes in substance use disorder care across in-person, videoconferencing, and hybrid modalities during COVID-19. Findings highlight implications for therapists using telehealth and strategies to strengthen alliance when working with clients in virtual or blended treatment settings.

Long Description: Therapeutic alliance (TA) has long been recognized as one of the strongest predictors of treatment outcomes (TO) in substance use disorder (SUD) treatment. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the use of clinical videoconferencing (CV), raising pressing questions about whether TA could be maintained when therapy occurs outside the traditional in-person context. This study examined the moderating effects of treatment modality (in-person, videoconferencing, and hybrid) and marital status on the TA–TO relationship using secondary data from an outpatient SUD treatment facility. Results demonstrated that therapeutic alliance remained a significant predictor of positive treatment outcomes across all modalities. However, the strength of the TA–TO association was weaker in videoconferencing compared to in-person sessions. Interestingly, hybrid models (combining in-person and videoconferencing) showed the strongest relationship, suggesting that integrating both formats may enhance alliance and improve retention and outcomes. Marital status also emerged as a moderator, indicating that relational and systemic contexts play an important role in how alliance translates into outcomes. This workshop will present the study’s findings and discuss practical implications for therapists working with individuals facing substance use challenges. Participants will consider strategies to strengthen alliance in virtual contexts, ways to integrate hybrid models effectively, and the broader implications for training, policy, and the future of telehealth across clinical practice.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

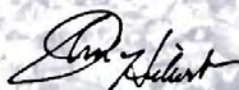
Presenter: Danel Koonce

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

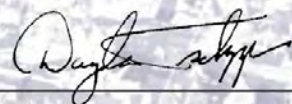
Title: Unwrapping the Lollipop 2.0: 10 seconds in and I am already sticky

Short Description: Therapists' and parents' ability to initiate sex talks is crucial for preparing youth for healthy sexual lives. Barriers like anxiety, shame, and lack of knowledge hinder communication. A national survey reveals effective strategies for therapists and parents to navigate this stage of development, fostering open and informed discussions.

Long Description: Therapists play a vital role in helping families navigate sensitive conversations about sex, promoting healthy relationships and reducing risks such as early sexual activity and STIs. However, both therapists and caregivers often feel anxious or underprepared for these discussions. Creating a safe, non-judgmental space and normalizing discomfort are key strategies to empower caregivers with the skills and confidence needed. Despite its importance, research on therapist-caregiver and caregiver-child dynamics remains limited. There is also a pressing need for inclusive conversations that embrace diverse sexual orientations and family structures. This presentation shares preliminary findings from a national survey examining therapist and parent comfort and skills in initiating sex-related conversations. Early results highlight a strong correlation between therapist and parent confidence. Attendees will receive a practical pamphlet with strategies to support these conversations in clinical and home settings.



IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert



General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Deborah Koons-Beauchamp

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Leading with Compassion: Developing the Next Generation of Family Therapy Leaders in Aging Services

Short Description: This session explores how family therapy principles inform compassionate leadership in aging services. Emphasizing interactional systems, it highlights how therapists can extend relational skills beyond the therapy room—supporting families, care teams, and communities facing the challenges of aging and intergenerational caregiving.

Long Description: As families worldwide experience the profound impacts of aging, the need for relationally attuned leaders in health, community, and senior living settings is urgent. Family therapists, grounded in interactional and systemic perspectives, are uniquely prepared to guide change—not only within therapy sessions but also within the organizations and care systems that serve families. This presentation introduces a model of compassionate, interactional leadership designed to prepare the next generation of family therapy leaders in aging services. Drawing from clinical and educational experiences in family therapy, the presenter integrates systemic thinking, relational leadership, and trauma-informed care to address the complexities of aging, caregiving, and intergenerational relationships. Participants will explore practical strategies for cultivating leadership skills rooted in therapeutic interactional principles—such as empathy, reflexivity, emotional attunement, and collaborative decision-making. The session highlights innovative educational practices from the Leadership in Senior Living and Aging Services initiative at Northern Illinois University, demonstrating how experiential coursework, interdisciplinary partnerships, and community engagement shape students into relational leaders who can navigate care systems with compassion and integrity. By linking family therapy methodologies with leadership development, this presentation invites practitioners and educators to expand the field's impact beyond the therapy room—into the broader systems that influence family well-being across cultures and generations. Attendees will gain actionable ideas for teaching, supervising, and practicing leadership that heals not only hurting families, but also the institutions that serve them.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Reyna Kot

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: The Psychological and Relational Impacts of Colorism: A Quantitative Study of Latino Adults

Short Description: This presentation introduces preliminary findings from a cross-sectional study of Latino adults investigating colorism, a type of discrimination based on skin tone, and how it shapes mental health, cultural identity, and family connectedness. Implications for family therapy and community practice will be presented.

Long Description: Colorism, or differential treatment based on skin tone, has been linked to disparities in a range of outcomes among racial minorities including but not limited to educational attainment, economic mobility, and poor mental health (Hunter, 2007; Monk, 2015). Yet limited research has examined its psychological, identity-related, and relational consequences, particularly within Latino individuals and families. This study addresses that gap by investigating how perceptions of colorism impact mental health, identity formation, and family connectedness among Latino adults aged 18 to 45. Participants completed an electronic survey in Qualtrics that was launched in June 2025. The survey contains validated scales measuring perceptions of colorism or everyday encounters with unfair treatment attributed to skin-tone along with scales measuring self-esteem, depressive symptoms, and cultural identity. Additional items assess family background, parental and sibling messaging, and emotional support—allowing for exploration of both individual and relational outcomes. Systemic dimensions, such as community and workplace experiences, are also incorporated to provide a holistic view of colorism's reach. Preliminary data from our ongoing survey will be presented to illustrate emerging demographic patterns and early trends. Attention will be given to how family dynamics can reinforce or buffer the mental health-related consequences of colorism, with implications for both identity development and relational health. By situating colorism within systemic, community, and intergenerational contexts, this study expands the field's understanding of how inequities intersect with family life. The presentation will also highlight implications for family therapy, including how clinicians can recognize the influence of colorism in clients' relational narratives, interrupt harmful intergenerational messages, and foster resilience and belonging. By blending quantitative evidence with systemic insights, this research contributes to advancing culturally responsive practice, training, and advocacy for vulnerable Latinos.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Reyna Kot

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Utilizing EMDR in Couples Treatment: Bridging Research and Clinical Practice

Short Description: This workshop provides a scoping review on EMDR in couples therapy, highlighting applications such as conjoint trauma processing, sequential partner sessions, and integration with other approaches. Presenters will share clinical cases, including infidelity, rupture of trust, and childhood trauma, and invite reflection on incorporating EMDR into clinical practice with couples.

Long Description: Relational distress is frequently shaped by past adverse experiences, with many couples in therapy reporting that at least one partner has a history of trauma. These experiences can erode emotional safety, disrupt communication, and strain attachment bonds, complicating the healing process. Established approaches such as Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) and Cognitive-Behavioral Couples Therapy (CBCT) address relational conflict, yet they may not fully resolve the enduring neurobiological imprint of trauma. Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), originally developed for individual trauma treatment, provides structured trauma memory reprocessing and is increasingly adapted for dyadic contexts. This workshop will provide a scoping review of the extant literature on the use of EMDR in couples therapy, followed by clinical case discussion on how the presenters use EMDR in couples treatment. Findings will showcase how EMDR has been utilized in several ways, including conjoint trauma processing, sequential partner sessions, and integration with other approaches such as EFT, Gestalt, and Imago therapy. Across these applications, EMDR supported trauma resolution, enhanced relational intimacy, and reduced distress, demonstrating its flexibility across therapeutic frameworks and relational contexts. The second half of the presentation will focus on clinical application. Presenters will share case examples from their own work, illustrating how EMDR can be integrated into couples' treatment to address relational trauma, including infidelity, ruptures of trust, and the impact of past childhood trauma. Case material will highlight clinical decision-making around pacing, adaptation, and coordination with systemic models. Participants will be invited into guided reflection and discussion on how EMDR might be incorporated into their own couples' work. By combining research findings with applied case material, participants will be able to deepen their understanding of both the evidence base and clinical application of EMDR in relational contexts.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Terhi Kotilainen

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Learning Reflective Skills: Self-Of-The-Therapist-Work in Family and Couple Therapy Trainings

Short Description: The workshop will present educational psychotherapy model for family and couple therapy trainings developed over 30 years of experience by the Family Therapy Trainers' Association of Central Finland. Model is linked to the theoretical and supervisory parts of training programme which highlight the importance of learning reflective skills in trainings.

Long Description: Getting to know one's self and developmental history is an important part of developing professional self-awareness in family and couple therapy training. Working in emotionally charged multi-party therapy sessions requires a special ability to observe interactions and understanding the thoughts and feelings that guide own actions of therapists. The personal process of the future family therapist is essential in order to them to have sufficient self-awareness to recognize what they are experiencing in the therapy sessions and how to harness these experiences for use in the therapy process. In the workshop, experiences of self-of-the-therapist work will be shared and linked to the theoretical ideas. It will be taken into account in the training program as a whole. Participants will be asked to reflect their own experiences of work with selves, both as trainees and as trainers. The workshop will present a 100 h educational psychotherapy model for family and couple therapy training developed by Family Therapy Trainers' Association of Central Finland implemented in small groups. The work of self in training consists of eleven days which form seven thematic seminars. Topics include childhood family and relatives, current life situation and professional identity. The work in the seminars is structured, collaborative and flexibly integrates different methods and approaches. In each seminar, trainees take turns as the main character, exploring questions related to the seminar theme with the help of the trainer psychotherapist and the trainees (small) group. Within the framework of each seminar theme, trainees can plan and influence the nature of the work to a large extent. Trainees can also invite their loved ones to some of the seminars in their turn. The seminars use materials prepared for them, such as genogram, pictures, letters, video recordings as well as various functional methods.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Aida L. Jiménez-Torres

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Electrical instability in Puerto Rico and its impact on families

Short Description: In Puerto Rico, recurring electrical instability has become a persistent structural barrier that undermines family well-being. This quantitative study examines the psychosocial and systemic effects of energy instability, emphasizing how these disruptions compound existing vulnerabilities and strain family relationships.

Long Description: Electrical instability remains a structural barrier that profoundly affects family well-being in Puerto Rico, a U.S. territory facing long-standing colonial and socioeconomic inequities. Power blackouts have become a part of daily life, particularly after the privatization of the electrical system and the collapse of critical infrastructure following Hurricane Irma and María. These outages disrupt emotional well-being, threaten physical health, and exacerbate socioeconomic stress within households, deepening existing vulnerabilities in an already marginalized population. This quantitative, cross-sectional, and descriptive study examines how recurrent electrical instability impacts family functioning, emotional health, and perceived quality of life among Puerto Rican families. Data collection is ongoing, and preliminary findings are based on responses from 139 participants aged 20 to 82 years ($M = 40.15$, $SD = 15.62$), most of whom identified as female (68.6%) and resided in urban areas (66.4%). Early analyses show that 59.7% of respondents experience power outages between three and five times per month, and 51.8% reporting outages lasting more than 24 hours in the past year. Bivariate correlations indicate that longer outages are significantly associated with adverse family outcomes, including emotional distress ($r = .590$, $p < .001$), interpersonal conflict ($r = .412$, $p < .001$), greater financial strain ($r = .515$, $p < .001$) and heightened safety concerns ($r = .485$, $p < .001$). Participants experiencing more frequent or prolonged blackouts also reported higher anxiety levels, as measured by the GAD-7 ($M = 8.64$, $SD = 5.73$). These preliminary findings highlight the psychological and social consequences of electrical instability on family well-being, underscoring that the issue extends beyond infrastructure to encompass equity, resilience, and quality of life. Future research should continue to explore these structural and psychological dimensions to inform policies that promote energy justice and family stability in Puerto Rico's ongoing recovery.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Tung Ying Lam

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Shadowed: Sibling's Subjective Experiences with Mentally Ill Individuals During Adolescence in Hong Kong and The Implications

Short Description: This study examines the impacts of growing up with a mentally ill sibling during adolescence in Hong Kong, revealing eroded self-concepts and post-traumatic growth in these "invisible children." Culturally sensitive, sibling-inclusive family therapy is suggested to address complicated grief and promote self-differentiation of these overlooked individuals.

Long Description: Growing up with a sibling experiencing mental illness during adolescence has profound and lasting impacts, yet such struggles often remain invisible in both research and clinical practice. This qualitative study addresses a critical gap of quantitative studies focusing on caregiver burdens and psychological outcomes by delving into the unique lived experiences of Hongkongers whose identities and emotional needs are overshadowed by their sibling's mental illness. Through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with five individuals who grew up with a sibling with mental illness during adolescence, this study explores how they navigate disenfranchised grief, emotional enmeshment, and struggles to define their own identity during a critical developmental period. The findings demonstrate that participants, often cast into the role of the "invisible child," grappled with unresolved grief and a shattered sense of self as their sense of self became entangled with their sibling's condition and the family dynamics. Cultural stigma and familial expectations in Hong Kong exacerbated their isolation, leaving their emotional labor unrecognized. Despite these challenges, participants displayed remarkable resilience, transforming adversity into post-traumatic growth and forging meaning through their experiences. This study challenges the dominant narratives of mental illness by centering siblings' subjective lived experiences, highlighting their dual role as both affected individuals and adaptive agents. These findings underscore the pressing need for culturally attuned, sibling-inclusive family therapy in Hong Kong that validates hidden grief, fosters healthy self-differentiation, and harnesses their potential for growth. By amplifying these silenced voices, this research calls for systemic changes in Hong Kong's mental health framework to acknowledge siblings as individuals navigating their own complex journeys, not merely bystanders. Keywords: Mental Health, Sibling, Adolescence, Subjective Experience, Family Dynamics, Disenfranchised Grief, Self-Differentiation, Post-Traumatic Growth, Hong Kong, Qualitative Research

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Judith Landau

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Family and Community Resilience - Why Integrative and Collaborative Family Therapy Is More Relevant Today Than Ever

Short Description: The changing political landscape across the globe has created concerns and challenges for systemic family therapists. This workshop will draw from collaborative dialogic practices to address how the political climate has impacted SFTs, explore strategies to mitigate concerns, and invite participants to share their clinical practice or training context.

Long Description: Systemic family therapists attend to the social context of families to engage in culturally appropriate and meaningful change (McDowell et al., 2022). However, the changing political landscape across the globe has created concerns and challenges for systemic family therapists. These efforts challenge foundational aspects of SFT including accreditation standards for graduate training program, codes of ethics, and best practices. For example, lack of statutory regulation in England can leave clients vulnerable to misconduct and abuse (Hall, 2024) and conservative family policies in Turkey challenge gender equity in couples and families (e.g., Kiliçer et al., 2020). Therapist in the United States have seen a rise in family cut off due to political differences in an increasingly divided country (e.g., Coleman & Johnson, 2024) and challenges between couples who are not politically aligned (Peacock & Pederson, 2022). SFTs are also navigating political disclosures by and with clients in therapy (Solomonov & Barber, 2018) and how to discuss political differences (Laszloffy & Platt, 2024). Drawing from collaborative dialogic practices of interconnected meaning making and relational responsiveness (Bava, 2022), this workshop will address how the political climate has impacted SFTs, explore strategies to mitigate concerns, and invite participants to share their context. The facilitators will begin by sharing their social location and recent experiences navigating politics and practice in the United States. We will briefly explore the three key pillars of collaborative-dialogic practice which include the politics of knowledge construction, language play, and participation (Bava, 2022). Throughout the workshop, attendees will be invited to participate in group discussion activities and invited to share ideas and strategies regarding politics relevant to their location and clinical practice or training context. This workshop will provide a space for generative conversation about the intersections of politics and systemic family therapy training and practice in varying global locations.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Glenn Larnar

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Deconstructing theory, engaging practice in systemic therapy for children and adolescents.

Short Description: This workshop will present an integrative approach to systemic work with children and adolescents grounded in the ethical-deconstructive writings of Derrida and Levinas. Practice vignettes will illustrate the theoretical approach, and participants will be invited to share their integrative ideas when working systemically with children and adolescents.

Long Description: In therapy today, there are varied ways of working with children and adolescents across multiple theories and approaches, whether systemic, narrative, evidence-based, modern psychology, and postmodern-informed collaborative therapies, and all can have relevance. When you have a child or teenager sitting in front of you, either as an individual or in the presence of other family members, the question arises: What is the most effective way to be of assistance, given everything you know as a therapist? What is required of us to respond as family therapists in terms of the theories and approaches we know about or follow, and even those that we don't but could? What is suggested is that in deconstructing theory, we engage practice and are in the best position to be effective therapists by drawing upon a range of therapeutic frameworks, perspectives, and approaches. The presentation considers how, as family therapists, we can apply a range of therapies in response to the complex needs of young persons with mental health issues within an overall systemic approach in the therapeutic relationship. It describes an integrative approach to systemic family therapy with children and adolescents grounded in the ethical-deconstructive writings of Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas. Practice vignettes will illustrate these ideas, and participants will be invited to share their integrative ideas when working systemically with children and adolescents.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Kyung-In Lee

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Opacity and Ambivalence: Exploring transition for transgender people of color

Short Description: Bridging the works of existentialism and psychoanalytic schools of thought, the workshop explores the psycho-existential experiences of transgender people of color and the systems they inhabit. In doing so, the workshop looks to expand clinical and academic knowledge to illustrate how family therapy can provide liberatory and transformative care.

Long Description: The present workshop aims to explore the experiences of gender transition for transgender people of color through the works of psychoanalytic and existential scholarship. Notably, the works of existentialists Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir along with the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan are brought into conversation with one another to explore the complexity, opacity, and ambivalence at the heart of gender transition. The integration of both psychoanalytic and existential schools of thought is critical, here, to explore a clinical ethic that is in dialogue with movements within queer theory; movements that look to create self-definitions and systems of care outside totalizing definitions in patriarchal structures of mental health (Saketopoulou & Pellegrini, 2023; Ruti, 2017; Esteban Muñoz, 2009; Edelman, 2003). Thus, the workshop explores the anxieties that arise for clients, their families, and the clinicians that treat them when working in the realm of gender transition. Drawing from existentialism of Sartre (1943) and de Beauvoir (1945), such anxieties are explored to present an illustration of gender transition that speaks to the authenticity of gender transition; one that allows the involved parties and systems to confront and take ownership of the oft conflicting affects that arise with gender transition. The workshop, moreover, takes up Lacan's (1992) ethics of psychoanalysis to present the intimate foreignness of gender transition—particularly in the context of White heterosexist hegemony—for transgender people of color. That is the workshop invites the presenters and participants to enter a discussion that explores the ways that transgender clients of color, their systems, and their clinicians can transform their relationships to gender.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Joshua Legg

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: A wounded man- how to forge masculinity and ignite passion

Short Description: The rate of divorce in families with a special needs child may be as high as 87%. This presentation is geared toward equipping and supporting men who are parenting children from hard places to rise above their own wounds, to heal, move from surviving to thriving and becoming fully present.

Long Description: Kids from hard places, just grow up to be adults from hard places. But what happens when those adults, particularly men, are faced with parenting a child who has special needs? Every infraction they have as an individual will be challenged. The rate of divorce in families with a special needs child may be as high as 87% in the US. In addition, nearly 1 in 10 men in the US experience depression or anxiety but less than half will receive treatment. Also worth noting, over 6 million men suffer from depression per year, but male depression often goes under diagnosed. Lastly, men are less likely to address previous traumatic experiences they have had. These statistics combined with parenting a special needs child can create a high stress atmosphere leaving lasting impacts on families and the men who love them. This presentation offers understanding and tools to equip and support men who are parenting children from hard places to rise above their own wounds, to heal, move from surviving to thriving and becoming fully present with their loved ones.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Charmaine Leong

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Supporting Divorcing Families in Singapore: Mandatory Co-Parenting Programme

Short Description: Singapore's Mandatory Co-Parenting Programme provides e-learning and consultation for divorcing families. Analysis of 600+ participants at 6-month follow-up showed significant improvements in parent wellbeing, resilience, child functioning, and reduced co-parenting conflict. However, declining child-parent relationships highlight areas for improvement. Findings inform policy development.

Long Description: Empirical works in the past four decades have shed light on the “what” and “how” of factors contributing to mental health difficulties in children of divorce. This presentation will provide an overview of the divorce support ecosystem, with a focus on the Mandatory Co-Parenting Programme (CPP) administered and funded by the Ministry of Social and Family Development, Singapore. CPP comprises an e-learning component and personalised consultation(s) with a counsellor, so that parents can make informed divorce decisions that prioritize their children’s wellbeing. Data from a battery of standardized client-reported psychometric scales was collected using an Outcome Monitoring (OM) platform for the Divorce Support Programme Ecosystem across three time-points (baseline, 6-month and 2-year post programme). The platform provided respondents with automated tailored feedback on areas of need to encourage them to seek appropriate support. More than 3000 adult clients have attended CPP between October 2022 to July 2025. The current presentation focuses on programme outcomes at the 6-month post programme. Findings showed statistically significant large programme effects. Post-hoc analyses revealed significant improvements in parent well-being and resilience, co-parenting conflict, and child psychosocial functioning. Notwithstanding the positive programme gains, the decline in child-parent relationship quality warrants attention. These findings have potential policy and practice implications in enhancing the divorce support programme ecosystem.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Catherine Lewis

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Systemic and Interpersonal Trauma in Foster Care: Integrative Therapeutic Strategies

Short Description: This workshop explores therapeutic strategies for families in foster care by centering both systemic and interpersonal trauma. Participants will consider how contextual factors shape family experiences and engagement with service providers. Video clips will illustrate the impact of these dynamics and demonstrate approaches that support compassionate collaboration and family reunification.

Long Description: Many parents whose children enter foster care in the United States carry histories of both systemic and interpersonal trauma. Separation from their children is often experienced as another trauma, prompting survival strategies such as rage, defensiveness, or withdrawal in interactions with service providers. This workshop explores a therapeutic approach that attends to both systemic and interpersonal trauma. Focusing solely on parenting “deficits,” without acknowledging the larger systemic forces shaping foster care placement—such as racism, inadequate resources, and inequitable child welfare policies—creates an incomplete narrative. This perspective can prolong foster care placements, deepen worker-parent impasses, and heighten parent-child estrangement. By integrating contextual and relational factors into working hypotheses about current family struggles, practitioners can engage with parents collaboratively and respectfully, naming oppressive systemic conditions while addressing safety and caregiving concerns. This dual awareness allows service providers to more effectively meet children’s emotional needs and support the goal of family reunification. Video examples of therapeutic practice will demonstrate these concepts in action.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Merethe Linn

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: When families carry heavy burdens, it concerns us all.

Short Description: As professionals, friends, or relatives, we meet families raising children with complex care needs. Understanding the balance between ordinary family life and the unique challenges of unpredictability, extra strain, worry, and grief helps us support each family's own path beyond typical development recognizing both the heavy and the bright.

Long Description: Across professions, friendships, and extended families, we meet parents raising children with complex care needs. Their everyday lives balance the ordinary routines of family life with extraordinary challenges—unpredictability, exclusion, extra strain, constant worry, and, at times, grief. Alongside these challenges, we also witness strength, creativity, and love. In the midst of everyday struggles, small victories and moments of joy often shine brightly. Understanding these realities is essential if we are to support these families. To strengthen this understanding, the well-established Norwegian couples' course *Hva med oss?* ("What About Us?"), designed for parents of children with disabilities, is now being digitalized. The digital version shows real parents who share their stories—of exhaustion and resilience, frustration and creativity, vulnerability and strength. Through their personal accounts, we gain insight into how families navigate the daily demands of caring for a child with significant needs, and how they find solutions, hope, and connection despite the challenges. Digitalization makes the course accessible to far more families than before: parents of young children, those whose child's condition makes in-person participation impossible, and families with diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. By removing barriers of geography, language, and logistics, *Hva med oss?* becomes a shared digital resource for inspiration, learning, normalization and hope. When professionals, relatives, and society at large listen to these stories, we develop a deeper empathy and understanding of what these families experience—their similarities and their differences. This awareness helps build a broader, more inclusive society where all families, regardless of their circumstances, are seen and supported. The digitalization and learning through *Hva med oss?* invite us all to reflect on what it means to live, care, and belong. It reminds us that inclusion begins with understanding—and that understanding grows when we dare to listen.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Zephon Lister

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Utilizing EMDR in Couples Treatment: Bridging Research and Clinical Practice

Short Description: This workshop provides a scoping review on EMDR in couples therapy, highlighting applications such as conjoint trauma processing, sequential partner sessions, and integration with other approaches. Presenters will share clinical cases, including infidelity, rupture of trust, and childhood trauma, and invite reflection on incorporating EMDR into clinical practice with couples.

Long Description: Relational distress is frequently shaped by past adverse experiences, with many couples in therapy reporting that at least one partner has a history of trauma. These experiences can erode emotional safety, disrupt communication, and strain attachment bonds, complicating the healing process. Established approaches such as Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) and Cognitive-Behavioral Couples Therapy (CBCT) address relational conflict, yet they may not fully resolve the enduring neurobiological imprint of trauma. Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), originally developed for individual trauma treatment, provides structured trauma memory reprocessing and is increasingly adapted for dyadic contexts. This workshop will provide a scoping review of the extant literature on the use of EMDR in couples therapy, followed by clinical case discussion on how the presenters use EMDR in couples treatment. Findings will showcase how EMDR has been utilized in several ways, including conjoint trauma processing, sequential partner sessions, and integration with other approaches such as EFT, Gestalt, and Imago therapy. Across these applications, EMDR supported trauma resolution, enhanced relational intimacy, and reduced distress, demonstrating its flexibility across therapeutic frameworks and relational contexts. The second half of the presentation will focus on clinical application. Presenters will share case examples from their own work, illustrating how EMDR can be integrated into couples' treatment to address relational trauma, including infidelity, ruptures of trust, and the impact of past childhood trauma. Case material will highlight clinical decision-making around pacing, adaptation, and coordination with systemic models. Participants will be invited into guided reflection and discussion on how EMDR might be incorporated into their own couples' work. By combining research findings with applied case material, participants will be able to deepen their understanding of both the evidence base and clinical application of EMDR in relational contexts.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Zephon Lister

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: From Sierra Leone to Kenya: Expanding Behavioral Health Capacity Through Teacher Training

Short Description: This study explores a cascading task-shifting model to address global mental health treatment gaps in low-resource settings. Non-specialist trainers prepared Kenyan teachers to deliver behavioral health interventions with teachers, students and parents. Findings highlight feasibility, engagement, and adaptability, while noting supervision, contextual adaptation, and sustainability challenges.

Long Description: Addressing the global mental health treatment gap requires innovative strategies to build capacity in low-resource settings. Task-shifting, training non-specialists to deliver evidence-informed interventions, has shown promise but requires careful attention to implementation processes. This presentation describes an international capacity-building effort to train and support teachers in Kenya to deliver behavioral health interventions. Five non-specialist trainers from Sierra Leone, previously trained in the Community Resiliency Model (CRM) and Families, Schools and Communities Engaged Together (FaSCET) program, provided 24 hours of initial training over four days to 16 Kenyan teachers across two urban schools. Teachers also completed an additional 18 hours of practice-based training before implementing a five-week school-based intervention. Evaluation of the trainers took place pre, post and at monthly intervals throughout the intervention. Approximately 20 additional teachers, 100 students and 60 parents were trained during the five-week intervention. Teacher trainers were provided weekly supervision throughout the course of the intervention. Preliminary reports from trainees suggest that non-specialist trainers were able to deliver quality training comparable to professional trainers. Findings demonstrate the feasibility of using task-shifting as a capacity building intervention. Kenyan teacher trainees reported strong engagement and adaptability in delivering the intervention. Using the Implementation Outcomes Framework as a guide, the presenters will discuss the feasibility, acceptability, and fidelity considerations, as well as challenges in supervision, contextual adaptation, and resource constraints. Lessons learned from this project include being mindful of workload burden of increasing teacher work responsibilities and implementing family-based interventions in settings where parents have less time flexibility. Nevertheless, this project underscores the potential for scaling behavioral health services in low-resource contexts through multi-tiered task-shifting models, while also identifying critical areas for refinement to ensure sustainability.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: David Lister

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Healing Through Music: A Narrative Review of the Role of Music Therapy in Adolescent and Young Adult PTSD

Short Description: This narrative review examined 15 studies from the past decade on music therapy for adolescents and young adults with PTSD. Evidence indicates music therapy reduces symptoms such as anxiety and intrusive thoughts while fostering resilience and emotional regulation. Findings highlight its promise as an effective, youth-centered intervention.

Long Description: Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is increasingly prevalent among adolescents and young adults, with symptoms such as hyperarousal, intrusive thoughts, and emotional dysregulation significantly impairing functioning and quality of life. Traditional treatments, including psychotherapy and pharmacotherapy, have shown effectiveness but are not universally accessible or appealing to younger populations. Music therapy, which uses active or receptive musical engagement to promote emotional expression and regulation, has emerged as a promising complementary intervention. However, its effectiveness in reducing PTSD symptoms among adolescents and young adults remains underexamined. This narrative review explores evidence from the past ten years on the role of music therapy in this population. Literature searches were conducted in EBSCOhost, PsycINFO, and PubMed for peer-reviewed studies published between 2013 and 2023. Inclusion criteria limited studies to adolescents and young adults (ages 13–25) diagnosed with PTSD or who recently experienced a traumatic event. Only studies examining music therapy as the primary intervention were included. Fifteen studies meeting these criteria were reviewed and narratively synthesized. Across the studies, music therapy was associated with reductions in PTSD symptoms, particularly intrusive memories, anxiety, and emotional dysregulation. Both active interventions (songwriting, improvisation, and group performance) and receptive approaches (guided listening and relaxation with music) were reported to enhance emotional expression, self-regulation, and social connectedness. Several studies highlighted the role of music therapy in fostering resilience, self-efficacy, and post-traumatic growth. While small sample sizes and methodological heterogeneity limit generalizability, the overall evidence suggests music therapy is a safe, acceptable, and effective adjunct for PTSD management in youth. Findings underscore the potential of music therapy as a viable intervention for adolescents and young adults with PTSD. Clinicians should consider integrating music therapy into trauma-informed care, while researchers should pursue larger, controlled trials to strengthen the evidence base and identify best practices.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Jonathan Lister

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Strategies to Enhance Relationship Quality in Dementia: A Scoping Review of Couple-Based Interventions

Short Description: This scoping review synthesizes studies from 2014–2024 on interventions supporting couples affected by dementia. Strategies identified include shared activities, caregiver skill-building, and relationship reinforcement. Findings highlight both benefits and limitations, underscoring need for multifaceted, culturally responsive approaches to improve relationship quality, caregiver well-being, and patient life satisfaction.

Long Description: Couples in which one partner is living with dementia often experience significant relational and emotional strain. Many caregivers struggle to support their partners effectively due to limited knowledge, resources, or coping strategies. Evidence suggests that maintaining strong and healthy relationships may contribute to improved quality of life for both partners and potentially slow cognitive decline in the partner with dementia. This scoping review aimed to identify, map, and synthesize the range of interventions and programs designed to strengthen the relationship between couples affected by dementia over the past ten years. A comprehensive search was conducted in EBSCOhost, PsycINFO, and PubMed, focusing on studies published between 2014 and 2024. Eligible studies included interventions that targeted both the individual with dementia and their partner, with outcomes related to relationship quality, caregiver well-being, or patient life satisfaction. Data were extracted and thematically analyzed to identify core strategies used across interventions. Findings were organized into three major thematic categories: (1) shared activities that promote connection and engagement, (2) caregiver skill-building and burden reduction interventions, and (3) relationship reinforcement through shared emotions, memories, and communication strategies. Across these categories, interventions demonstrated varying benefits and challenges. Shared activities often enhanced emotional closeness but were limited by disease progression. Caregiver-focused programs effectively reduced stress but sometimes prioritized burden reduction over relationship quality. Interventions emphasizing shared feelings and memories were powerful in maintaining intimacy, though their effectiveness diminished in advanced stages of dementia. This review highlights the importance of multifaceted approaches that address both practical caregiving demands and relational dynamics. Programs that integrate skill development, emotional connection, and meaningful activity show the most promise in improving relationship quality, well-being, and life satisfaction for couples affected by dementia. Future research should explore hybrid models and long-term impacts, as well as culturally tailored interventions.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Latisha Lister-Burgess

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: From Aspiration to Accountability: Implementing a Pilot Programme for Ethical Supervision in Bermuda

Short Description: In Bermuda, most mental health professionals do not have a local regulatory body that provides oversight and licensing. This presentation discusses a pilot program launched in 2024, that provided participants with an accredited nonprofit management certificate, and personal development modules focused on emotional intelligence, ethical supervision and navigating dual relationships.

Long Description: In Bermuda, there are currently only 3 categories of mental health professionals - psychiatrists, psychologists and drug and alcohol counselors - who have a local regulatory body that provides oversight and licensing. As a result, the vast majority of mental health professions are unlicensed, unregulated and often lacking ongoing supervision or professional education/training post-degree. This has been a long-standing issue of concern within the mental health community, and the lack of personal and professional standards and development have led to issues with dual relationships, confidentiality violations and mismanagement of cases. A pilot program was launched in 2024 by the Inter-Agency Committee for Children, Families and the Community (IAC) to begin to bridge that gap with the development of the "Introduction to Nonprofit Management Certificate Programme." The program ran for nine months involving weekly online learning and monthly live cohort sessions. Participants earned an accredited nonprofit management certificate from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and participated in personal development modules led by EAP Bermuda. The personal development component focused on emotional intelligence, how to properly supervise and mentor staff, and navigating dual relationships. This presentation will discuss the outcomes of this program, and its impact in Bermuda.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Priscila Llamosa

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Competent practice with refugee populations: Attending to post-settlement mental health needs

Short Description: Resettlement offers daunting challenges for refugees. This presentation draws from a scoping review and practitioner knowledge to advance understanding of refugees' mental health needs, thereby promoting competency in assessment and treatment for individuals while framing supports for displaced families

Long Description: Since 1975, the United States has welcomed over three million refugees from countries worldwide. Recent policy shifts have significantly reduced support from the US, leaving European nations as the primary relocation host for approximately 13.2 million refugees, with Syria being the second largest population. Recent data reveals that Norway alone houses 238,281 refugees and their family members. This vulnerable population is at high risk for developing post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and several other psychological conditions related to political or religious conflict in their home countries and often traumatizing migration journeys. Additionally, those who seek refugee status are exposed to adverse experiences during and post-settlement, secondary to cultural differences, including but not limited to language barriers, loss of autonomy, separation from family members, impression of cultural values, and stigma associated with refugee status. Although health screening protocols have been well established, the mental health needs of refugees post-settlement do not receive adequate focus in research and practice. Given the current trends and political landscape and the growing diversity within our borders, we are called upon to provide culturally adequate and effective treatment to promote the resilience and mental well-being of this often neglected population. This presentation reports on the results of a scoping review of the literature on the clinical approaches that support post-settlement well-being among adult refugees. The review includes 25 peer-reviewed articles from EBSCO, Web of Science, and ProQuest databases and identified three major themes in effective clinical services: resilience building, socio-cultural awareness and sensitivity, and strength-based approaches. The presentation further offers a practitioner lens in supporting families and aims to advance participants' understanding of the unique needs of refugees, thereby promoting competency and effectiveness in assessment, referral, and treatment.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Priscila Llamosa

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Navigating Difference Through Identity-Conscious Practice: Addressing Emotional Vulnerability and Advancing Epistemic Justice

Short Description: Identity mismatches between therapists and clients create relational vulnerabilities that constrain therapeutic engagement and effectiveness. Drawing from the Identity-Conscious Psychotherapy Framework, this presentation details four practices—reflexivity, relational skills, trauma-informed practice, and cultural humility—that synergistically operationalize epistemic justice by challenging hierarchies and centering clients' lived experiences.

Long Description: Despite the growing diversification of client populations, therapists' identities continue to represent dominant cultural groups, creating identity mismatches that can affect the efficacy of therapeutic work. Clients from minoritized communities frequently hesitate to disclose salient aspects of their identities when working with majority-culture therapists, citing concerns about prejudice, discrimination, and relational vulnerability (Brown, 2017; Wallace et al., 2016). To help address the persistent gaps in research on the therapeutic needs of marginalized populations (Murry & Anderson, 2020; Tseng et al., 2021), this presentation offers an identity-conscious psychotherapy framework that facilitates therapeutic engagement across difference. Identity-conscious psychotherapy is a decolonial, anti-oppressive, and identity-affirming approach that centers clients' lived experiences and ways-of-knowing as authoritative and central to therapeutic meaning-making. This framework addresses the emotional vulnerabilities that arise from identity mismatches—including clients' hesitancy to trust, disclose, or fully engage when they fear their identities may be misunderstood or pathologized. Four interrelated practices form the foundation of this approach: reflexivity (examining the self and building critical consciousness), relational competencies (decentering dominant narratives and engaging in collaborative power-sharing), trauma-sensitive practice (acknowledging potential past relational and generational traumas), and cultural humility (adopting a "not-knowing stance"). These practices function synergistically to cultivate relational safety by disrupting traditional therapeutic hierarchies, validating marginalized epistemologies, and restoring clients' authority over their own narratives. When applied together, these practices operationalize epistemic justice: the recognition and restoration of knowledge systems and voices that dominant therapeutic discourse has historically excluded, dismissed, or devalued. Participants will acquire practical strategies for applying these four practices to advance epistemic justice in therapeutic encounters and navigate identity mismatches with intentionality and humility in couple and family therapy practice.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Priscila Llamosa

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Reframing "Resistance" in Identity-Conscious Psychotherapy: From Pathology to Protection in Couple and Family Therapy

Short Description: This poster examines the concept of 'resistance' by tracing its colonial ideologies and reframing associated behaviors as clients safeguarding their cultural knowledge systems. Examples demonstrate how couple and family therapy concepts may pathologize culturally normative patterns and offer identity-conscious reframes grounded in epistemic justice.

Long Description: What therapists often label as "resistance"—non-compliance, guardedness, challenges to treatment—may actually be minoritized clients' legitimate protective responses to relational vulnerabilities. This poster critically examines the concept of "resistance" in psychotherapy, tracing its colonial roots from psychodynamic theory through contemporary family systems approaches, and offers an identity-conscious reframe grounded in epistemic justice. Traditional therapeutic concepts of "resistance" emerge from Western psychological frameworks that privilege individualism, emotional expression, nuclear and gendered family structures, and compliance with expert authority. When applied to minoritized clients, these frameworks risk pathologizing culturally normative behaviors and relational patterns. Drawing from the Identity-Conscious Psychotherapy Framework, this poster reframes "resistance" as epistemological self-preservation—clients' legitimate protection of their cultural knowledge systems, values, and ways of being. The poster presents detailed comparative tables examining how traditional couple and family therapy concepts (enmeshment, triangulation, parentification, lack of differentiation) may pathologize cultural differences, alongside clinical examples of behaviors commonly misidentified as "resistance" with identity-conscious reframes. Critical reflection questions guide practitioners in examining their assumptions about "healthy" family functioning, communication styles, and treatment compliance. This poster expands on the workshop presentation "Navigating Difference Through Identity-Conscious Practice: Addressing Emotional Vulnerability and Epistemic Justice" by providing historical and theoretical depth on the specific concept of resistance, offering couple and family therapy practitioners concrete visual examples for recognizing and reframing protective behaviors with cultural humility rather than pathologization.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Priscila Llamosa

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Fostering Inclusivity for Clients with Disabilities: Universal Design in Family Therapy

Short Description: An estimated 1.3 billion people globally live with significant disability, yet family therapy spaces often perpetuate ableism through inaccessible design. This poster presents Universal Design principles for creating inclusive therapeutic environments. Four case examples illustrate implementation strategies across intake processes, physical spaces, and therapeutic materials—benefiting all clients.

Long Description: An estimated 1.3 billion people globally live with some form of significant disability (WHO), yet many Marriage and Family Therapy training programs provide minimal education on disability competencies. Without recognizing able-bodied biases, therapists contribute to ableism—discrimination and prejudice toward people with disabilities. Drawing from Critical Disability Theory, this poster challenges the medical model and reframes disability as a social construct shaped by inaccessible environments. While disability rights legislation—including the Americans with Disabilities Act (U.S.), Equality Act 2010 (UK), and EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030—mandate accommodations, these are often "tacked on" as afterthoughts, requiring clients to disclose disabilities and risk stigmatization. Universal Design (UD) offers an alternative by building accessibility into therapeutic spaces, processes, and practices from the start. The poster presents the seven principles of Universal Design applied to family therapy clinical practice. Concrete strategies are illustrated across intake and assessment processes, physical space design, communication methods, and therapeutic materials through four different case examples: 1) Chronic illness, 2) Learning disabilities, 3) Trauma, and 4) Hearing loss/deafness. The "curb-cut effect" demonstrates how designing for disability benefits all clients globally. Implications for clinical practice include a call to action for therapists to critically reflect on ableist practices, proactively ask clients about accessibility needs, and design therapeutic spaces with disability in mind from the outset. By centering disability as diversity rather than deficit, family therapists fulfill their ethical obligation to honor all aspects of client identity.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Ashton Lofing

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Cultural Competency in Non-Native Bilingual Clinicians

Short Description: Presenters will discuss a qualitative content analysis exploring how bilingual mental health clinicians develop cultural competency while providing therapy in a second language. Themes will highlight strategies, challenges, and language influences shaping multicultural skill development, offering insight into how linguistic and cultural navigation impact therapeutic effectiveness and client connection.

Long Description: As the world becomes increasingly diverse, the demand for culturally and linguistically competent mental health care continues to grow. Yet, the mental health workforce continues to lack adequate diversity and preparation to meet the needs of multilingual and multicultural clients. While bilingual clinicians are uniquely positioned to bridge cultural divides, an often-overlooked subset—non-native speaking therapists—face additional challenges in achieving both cultural and linguistic competency. This study explores how non-native speaking clinicians who conduct therapy in their second language develop cultural competency and navigate barriers in clinical practice. Drawing from existing literature on multicultural competence, cultural humility, and bilingual therapy, this qualitative content analysis examines the tasks, strategies, and lived experiences of non-native speaking mental health clinicians. Semi-structured interviews with 5–10 non-native bilingual therapists will explore how language learning, self-reflection, supervision, and immersion in diverse cultural contexts contribute to their development as culturally responsive practitioners. Findings are expected to reveal how non-native clinicians cultivate awareness of their own cultural and linguistic identities, manage misunderstandings, and build trust with clients from differing cultural backgrounds. The study also highlights systemic barriers—such as limited bilingual supervision, resource gaps, and institutional inequities—that can hinder their growth and effectiveness. By amplifying the voices of non-native speaking clinicians, this research aims to enrich the understanding of what it means to practice cultural competency in multilingual therapeutic contexts. Implications will inform training programs, supervision models, and institutional policies that promote linguistic diversity, cultural humility, and equitable care across diverse client populations.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

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E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
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Presenter: Neeah Lofton

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: From Sierra Leone to Kenya: Expanding Behavioral Health Capacity Through Teacher Training

Short Description: This study explores a cascading task-shifting model to address global mental health treatment gaps in low-resource settings. Non-specialist trainers prepared Kenyan teachers to deliver behavioral health interventions with teachers, students and parents. Findings highlight feasibility, engagement, and adaptability, while noting supervision, contextual adaptation, and sustainability challenges.

Long Description: Addressing the global mental health treatment gap requires innovative strategies to build capacity in low-resource settings. Task-shifting, training non-specialists to deliver evidence-informed interventions, has shown promise but requires careful attention to implementation processes. This presentation describes an international capacity-building effort to train and support teachers in Kenya to deliver behavioral health interventions. Five non-specialist trainers from Sierra Leone, previously trained in the Community Resiliency Model (CRM) and Families, Schools and Communities Engaged Together (FaSCET) program, provided 24 hours of initial training over four days to 16 Kenyan teachers across two urban schools. Teachers also completed an additional 18 hours of practice-based training before implementing a five-week school-based intervention. Evaluation of the trainers took place pre, post and at monthly intervals throughout the intervention. Approximately 20 additional teachers, 100 students and 60 parents were trained during the five-week intervention. Teacher trainers were provided weekly supervision throughout the course of the intervention. Preliminary reports from trainees suggest that non-specialist trainers were able to deliver quality training comparable to professional trainers. Findings demonstrate the feasibility of using task-shifting as a capacity building intervention. Kenyan teacher trainees reported strong engagement and adaptability in delivering the intervention. Using the Implementation Outcomes Framework as a guide, the presenters will discuss the feasibility, acceptability, and fidelity considerations, as well as challenges in supervision, contextual adaptation, and resource constraints. Lessons learned from this project include being mindful of workload burden of increasing teacher work responsibilities and implementing family-based interventions in settings where parents have less time flexibility. Nevertheless, this project underscores the potential for scaling behavioral health services in low-resource contexts through multi-tiered task-shifting models, while also identifying critical areas for refinement to ensure sustainability.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Neeah Lofton

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: The Impact of Father-Daughter Relationships on Dating and Relationship Behaviors For African American Women : A Qualitative Analysis

Short Description: This qualitative study explores how African American father-daughter relationships shape daughters' dating and relationship behaviors. Through interviews with 15 women (ages 18-26), eight key themes emerged, highlighting the father's role as a positive influence and role model in shaping romantic expectations and partner choices.

Long Description: Behind every woman's understanding of love often stands the first man who showed her what it means, her father. This study examines how African American father-daughter relationships can impact their dating and relationship behaviors. This highlights an important role African American fathers play in shaping their daughter's development and expectations within romantic relationships. The research question for this study is for African American women, How does a woman's relationship with her father impact her dating and relationship behaviors? This qualitative study used a grounded theory approach to explore the experiences of 15 African American women ages 18-26. Key informants were recruited through purposive sampling and participated in 30-60 minute semi-structured interviews conducted via Zoom. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using constant comparative methods, with open, axial, and selective coding guiding theory development. The findings of this study indicate the impact of African American father involvement that influences their daughter's relationship and dating behaviors. Positive father involvement consists of 8 themes found which are: Emotions, Father as a Healthy Role Model, Boy Talk, Father's Advice About Boys, Desired Partner Traits from Father (conscious), Father-Partner Similarities (unconscious), Impact of a Positive Father Relationship. The study highlights the significance of fathers as positive role models and their impact on daughters' expectations in romantic relationships. Future research could examine how various paternal behaviors, such as expressions of love, respect, and support, influence daughters' relationship choices in different cultural and family settings.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Carlos Augusto Lopez Acevo

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Artificial Intelligence in Psychotherapy Training: Transcription, Analysis, and Supervised Learning

Short Description: This poster evaluates the use of artificial intelligence for session transcription, clinical analysis, and supervised learning in postgraduate psychiatry and couple and family therapy programs. It explores educational benefits, ethical safeguards, and faculty-guided AI tutoring in real clinical training contexts.

Long Description: The rapid integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into mental health care presents opportunities and challenges for postgraduate education in couple and family therapy. This findings from a pilot study involving five postgraduate students and the families they serve in clinical settings, evaluating the educational and clinical use of AI-assisted tools in psychotherapy training. The study examines AI implementation across three interconnected domains: automated transcription of psychotherapy sessions, AI-supported qualitative analysis of clinical interactions, and supervised tutoring of students using AI as an adjunct educational resource. Participants include psychiatry residents and master's-level students in couple and family therapy working with couple, and family cases under clinical supervision. AI systems were used to generate session transcriptions and to identify therapeutic themes, communication patterns, emotional processes, and potential intervention points. These outputs were not used independently or as clinical decision-makers; instead, they were integrated into a structured faculty-led supervision model. Students compared AI-generated analyses with their own clinical formulations, discussed divergences in supervision sessions, and reflected on clinical reasoning, bias, and ethical considerations. Faculty supervision emphasized informed consent, confidentiality, data protection, and the epistemic limits of AI in clinical judgment. Special attention was given to systemic perspectives, relational dynamics, and emotionally focused processes that may be oversimplified or misinterpreted by automated systems. Preliminary findings from this pilot suggest that AI-assisted transcription and analysis may enhance reflective practice, improve recall of session content, and support structured learning when embedded within rigorous supervision. However, results also highlight risks associated with overreliance, loss of clinical context, and ethical misuse if AI tools are not carefully regulated. This pilot study contributes to the emerging discourse on responsible AI integration in psychotherapy education, offering a supervised and ethically grounded model applicable to psychiatry and couple and family therapy training programs.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Dylann Lowery

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Perinatal Mental Health: the impact of infertility

Short Description: Perinatal mental health has experienced a shift in investment and interest. 13% of those who have given birth experience a mental disorder, but trauma is not always directly correlated to perinatal distress. It is important to understand the impact perinatal mental health and infertility have on interpersonal stress and relationships.

Long Description: Perinatal mental health has been a focus of interest for centuries, but until recently this interest has mainly focused on postpartum psychosis and depression. There has been a recent shift in investments in specialist outpatient and/or community perinatal mental health services and/or in mother and baby unit. Systematic reviews have shown that about 10% of pregnant women and 13% of those who have given birth experience some type of mental disorder, most commonly depression or anxiety (Hendrick, 1998). Many parents also report demoralization, feelings of helplessness and a sense of incompetence during early parenthood (Bobevski, 2015). Difficulties with mental health in the perinatal period is correlated to maternal and infant morbidity and mortality (Moureau et al., 2023; Stein et al., 2014), lifetime disadvantage for families and childhood adversity (Choi et al., 2019; Howard & Khalifeh 2020), with links also often made to intergenerational distress and illness (Roubinov et al., 2022; Kujawa et al., 2020). Trauma is not always directly correlated to perinatal distress (Asghari-Fard et al., 2014; Erickson et al., 2019), but it is plausible that experiences of perinatal mental illness may be more complicated by trauma, particularly attachment or relational trauma (Isobel, 2024). While trauma may complicate things, it is also important to understand how the experience of perinatal mental health may be traumatic and shift a parent's experience.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Dylann Lowery

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Echoes of Childhood: A Qualitative Study on ACEs and Co-Parenting Dynamics

Short Description: This study explores how adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) shape co-parenting relationships. Using qualitative interviews with parents who report high ACE scores, the research examines how trauma histories influence co-parents' relational processes. Findings aim to deepen understanding of intergenerational trauma and inform strategies that strengthen family systems.

Long Description: Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) remain a significant public health concern with lasting effects on families. In the United States, 63.9 percent of adults reported at least one ACE, and 17.3 percent reported four or more (Swedo et al., 2023). Research demonstrates that ACEs influence emotional regulation, attachment, and relational functioning across the life span (Daines et al., 2021; Hambrick et al., 2019; Herzog & Schmahl, 2018). These difficulties often arise in parenting, where unresolved trauma can affect both the parent-child relationship and the quality of co-parenting. Although research on ACEs has expanded, few studies have examined how trauma histories shape co-parenting relationships. Most work on co-parenting focuses on married or divorced parents, even though in 2023, 3.2 million children lived with cohabiting parents who were not married (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). Parents with trauma histories may experience heightened conflict, reduced collaboration, and difficulty supporting one another, which can increase instability for children (Lange et al., 2022; Tadros et al., 2022). This explanatory qualitative study explores how ACEs shape the realities of co-parenting. The aim of the study is to examine how individuals with ACEs describe the influence of these experiences on their co-parenting dynamics. Through semi-structured interviews with parents who report ACE scores of four or higher, this study uses interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith et al., 2022) to capture how ACEs surface in everyday co-parenting practices. Findings will highlight the ways trauma histories affect coparents' relational processes. By centering the lived experiences of co-parents, this study seeks to expand understanding of trauma-informed co-parenting and generate insights that can guide strategies to strengthen family systems and promote well-being for both children and parents.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Caileen Lubbe

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: IsiXhosa-speaking Single Mothers' Experiences of Intlawulo (Paying the Damages)

Short Description: What are IsiXhosa-speaking single mothers' experiences of intlawulo (paying the damages)? Participants were non-randomly recruited and data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Participants' experiences varied (positively and/or negatively), and were often contingent upon whether their partners had acknowledged paternity and/or paid intlawulo to her family.

Long Description: Intlawulo ("paying the damages") is a custom within the African Xhosa culture that requires a man to pay compensatory money to a woman's family if he admits to having impregnated her outside of wedlock. It is premised on the notion that a man has damaged an unmarried woman's chastity, her reputation, and her future marriage prospects. This study investigated IsiXhosa-speaking single mothers' experiences of intlawulo, using an exploratory qualitative research design. Participants were recruited through snowball sampling, and data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews. Twelve IsiXhosa-speaking single mothers from the Cape Town Metropole, South Africa were interviewed until data saturation occurred. Data were analysed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems model was utilised as theoretical framework through which findings were explored and conceptualised. The findings indicate that participants' experiences of intlawulo varied greatly, and often were contingent upon whether their partners had acknowledged paternity and/or paid intlawulo to the woman's family. Positive experiences of intlawulo included: improved self-esteem; positive emotions (e.g., happiness, pride); and improvements in relationships and communication amongst the families. Participants who had positive experiences described the custom as valuable and important – as something that held cultural significance, or served as a means to connect two families. However, participants whose partners had not paid intlawulo, or acknowledged paternity, generally reported negative experiences of the custom, such as feelings of devaluation, stigmatisation, distress, anger, father-child separation, and conflict. These participants tended to have negative views of the custom, seeing it as disempowering women, or as something that held little importance and value. Among the identified barriers to intlawulo are financial constraints; scepticism over paternity claims; and differences in beliefs about and/or views on the custom.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Rebecca Lucero Jones

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Keeping it 100: Sexual Communication in LGBTQ+ and non-monogamous relationships

Short Description: To date, most sexual communication research studies have focused on heterosexual couples. In our presentation, we highlight important variables that predict sexual and relational satisfaction in gender and sexual minorities, including non-monogamous relationships. We will share key practices of satisfied couples and discuss clinical applications of this research.

Long Description: A couple's communication about their shared sexual relationship has been shown to predict both relational and sexual satisfaction (MacNeil & Byers, 2009; Mark & Jozkowski, 2013). The ability to speak with one's partner about sex has been regarded by researchers as a relational skill that is separate from other types of relational communication (Jones, Robinson, & Seedall, 2017; MacNeil & Byers, 1997). While sexual communication has been examined in heterosexual couples, most studies examining sexual communication in sexual minority couples has focused on sexual safety. Little research to date examining sexual communication processes has used a sample that includes sexual orientation and gender identity minorities (LGBTQIA and non-monogamous) couples. In our presentation, we will present the findings of our research study on sexual and gender minority relationships that examined important aspects of romantic relationships including sexual communication processes, sexual satisfaction, relational satisfaction, health, risks, and sexual experiences with outside partners. We highlight the factors that influence sexual communication processes, the predictors of sexual and relationship satisfaction among marginalized sexual groups, and identify how sexual minority relationships are currently managing risk and promoting sexual, physical, and mental health. Last, we will discuss implications for clinicians working with marginalized relational dynamics such as LGBTQ+ and non-monogamous relationships.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Marisa Luciano

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Needs and experiences with mental health services among parents involved with the child welfare system

Short Description: This study's aim was to understand parents' experiences of therapy within the child welfare system (CWS) and present parents' mental health needs using data from a longitudinal study of families involved with CWS. Findings can help address research gaps on family therapy within the CWS and amplify parents' voices.

Long Description: A high demand for mental health services, long waitlists, and increased costs have limited access to effective mental healthcare around the world. Data from the United States' Department of Health and Human Services investigated over 3,081,715 child maltreatment allegations over the course of 2023. For approximately 85-90% of parents involved with the child welfare system (CWS), therapy is a requirement of their case plans, and parents must complete these requirements within, in many cases, a year to regain or maintain custody of their children. At least half of the cases involve substance use and/or behavioral health needs. This study's aim was to understand parents' perceptions of therapy within the CWS and reveal mental health needs as identified by parents. The poster will present data from the Power of Parents Study, a longitudinal study of families involved with the CWS across one U.S. state, a total of seventy-five parents. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected when families first became involved with the CWS and have been collected every 6 months thereafter across 18 months throughout a parents' involvement with the system. Codes regarding parents' experiences with therapy have been extracted from Waves 1 and 2. A descriptive analysis of quantitative data will be used to complement qualitative findings by providing parents' use of mental health services. Thematic analyses indicate key themes including significant mental health concerns, parents' perceptions of mandated services, a desire to engage in services but challenges accessing them, mistrust of providers, desire for systemic intervention approaches, and the growth that occurred after connecting with a trusted provider. Findings from this study can help inform practice and research on family therapy within the context of the CWS and amplify parents' voices to identify what parents believe they need from mental health providers.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Marisa Luciano

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Being under a microscope: The dynamics of parent systems when navigating the child welfare system

Short Description: Findings of this study portray relationships of parental units navigating the child welfare system (CWS). The data are from a longitudinal, mixed-methods study of families involved in the CWS. Results can inform future research into parenting relationships and assist program and service development for parents involved with the CWS.

Long Description: Navigating the child welfare system (CWS) presents unique challenges. Typically, when a parent becomes involved with the CWS, they are required to complete a case plan. The stress of the CWS and case plan activities can have a profound impact on individuals, couples, and families. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of the CWS on parents' relationships with each other. This relationship is important for both parent and child wellbeing. This study involved a longitudinal mixed-method design with a sample of parents involved in the CWS due to substantiated cases of maltreatment. Analyses focused on a subsample of parents who discussed the impact of the CWS on their partner or coparenting relationships (N = 67). We examined the dynamics of parent relationships, support within the relationships, how they navigated co-parenting, and external factors related to relationships. Some parents relied on the support of the co-parent to help with case plan tasks, whereas others terminated relationships to progress in their case plans. Results can inform future research and assist in the development of programs and systemic support services for parents involved with the CWS.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

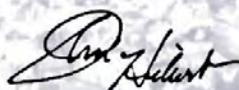
Presenter: Kevin Lyness

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

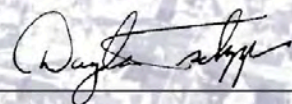
Title: The Role of Gendered Racism in Healing from Sexual Trauma for Black Women

Short Description: This workshop will highlight how gendered racism interplays with PTSD symptoms, self-perception, help-seeking behaviors, and healing for Black women following sexual trauma based on key findings from a mixed-methods study. Attendees will engage in discussion and knowledge-sharing on culturally responsive strategies and implications for systemic therapists.

Long Description: This workshop explores the impact of gendered racism and sexual trauma on Black women's well-being and the broader implications for healing within familial and social contexts. Grounded in Black Feminist Theory and hermeneutic phenomenology, key findings from a mixed-methods study on the lived experiences of 98 Black women across the United States will be reviewed. The workshop will highlight the unique sociocultural and historical contexts of Black female survivorship and how gendered racial socialization impacts self-perception, help-seeking behaviors, and pathways to healing. Attendees will engage in discussion and knowledge sharing on culturally responsive clinical interventions.



IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert



General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Kevin Lyness

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Eco-Informed Supervision: Navigating Climate, Nature and Interconnected Crises

Short Description: This presentation will discuss findings from a research project exploring eco-informed supervision. To support therapists facing and treating climate, nature, and interconnected crises, an overview of eco-informed supervision will be presented followed by practical applications and actionable recommendations for integrating an eco-informed perspective into existing supervision approaches.

Long Description: Systemic practice has been criticized for overlooking climate- and nature-related issues in therapy. This gap is increasingly problematic, as evidence shows that the climate crisis and disconnection from the natural world contribute to adverse physical and mental health outcomes. Moreover, social and environmental injustices create vulnerabilities that lead to unequal impacts when hazards such as wildfires, floods, or extreme temperatures occur. We are also living in a polycrisis, where climate challenges intersect with other threats like gender inequality, economic instability, and healthcare inaccessibility. In the Couple and Family Therapy field, neglecting these issues leaves a care gap for those experiencing ecological distress or related mental health challenges. Clinical supervision offers a pathway to address this gap by cultivating competence in working with climate, nature, and interconnected crises systemically. This presentation will discuss findings from a modified Delphi study that consulted experts to define and exemplify eco-informed supervision. Panelist perspectives helped clarify what eco-informed supervision involves and emphasized central importance the supervisor-supervisee relationship is. Climate- and nature-related issues as well as the broader effects of the polycrisis, will be discussed within the context of self-of-the-therapist issues. Eco-informed supervision is proposed as a more complete form of systemic supervision, designed to be accessible to all supervisors—whether adopted as an expansion of systemic practice or as a supplement to other supervisory models. Additionally, an eco-informed perspective provides a useful framework for supporting therapists in navigating climate- and nature-related issues both personally and professionally. This presentation will explore implications for supervision and offer practical recommendations for integrating an eco-informed perspective to strengthen therapists' preparedness and resilience in facing these complex challenges.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: So So Josephine Ma

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Non-resident Mothers' Voice in Divorce

Short Description: This presentation examines non-resident motherhood through qualitative interviews with 6 mothers. Findings highlight resilience in redefining maternal roles amid shifting identities, co-parenting dynamics, and social stigma. Implications stress culturally attuned family therapy and trauma-informed approaches. Cooperative co-parenting and support systems for non-resident mothers are advocated.

Long Description: Abstract Non-resident motherhood, a situation where mothers do not live with their children after divorce, a growing yet often underexplored global phenomenon, presents unique challenges arising from new juxtapositions in contexts where mothers are traditionally expected to be primary caregivers, as they face evolving family structures and diverse childcare arrangements. This qualitative study offers a nuanced exploration of the lived experiences of non-resident mothers, drawing from in-depth interviews with six non-resident mothers in Hong Kong. It examines their emotional journeys, shifts in maternal identity, evolving parent-child relationships, coping strategies, legal and financial considerations, and co-parenting dynamics. Through thematic and narrative analyses of these interviews. Findings highlight the mothers' remarkable resilience in navigating adversity, often by redefining their maternal roles, focusing on quality interactions with their children, and pursuing personal and professional development. While social stigma remains a concern for non-resident mothers, the study observed that its perceived intensity can vary, potentially influenced by evolving societal views on diverse caregiving roles. The research demonstrates that predictable visitation, cooperative co-parenting, and robust support from peers and social workers are pivotal for positive maternal adjustment and well-being. These insights have critical implications for family therapy practice, advocating for culturally attuned, trauma-informed interventions, strengthened co-parenting education, and inclusive family policies that reflect the diverse realities of motherhood in contemporary society.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Margaret MacLeod

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: POTT and Professional Accountability in a Tumultuous Time

Short Description: This presentation explores how Person-of-the-Therapist (POTT) reflexivity strengthens sociocultural attunement, ethical awareness, and therapist groundedness amid global unrest and inequity. Core components of the POTT model will demonstrate how therapists can sustain responsiveness and accountability across diverse client experiences in today's complex, rapidly changing world.

Long Description: This presentation will demonstrate how person-of-the-therapist (POTT) reflexivity allows for increased sociocultural attunement and ethical consideration—qualities essential for therapists practicing in times of heightened political tension and polarization. As therapists work to consider clients' intersecting systems of privilege, oppression, and trauma, the POTT model creates structure for therapeutic groundedness and responsiveness within the therapeutic alliance. By focusing on the therapist's use of self, the model emphasizes how therapist's personal awareness, emotional availability, and cultural humility are inseparable from clinical effectiveness. Participants will observe how the POTT model moves beyond theory into practical application. Core concepts such as signature theme, use of self in the moment, and relational congruence will be illustrated through clinical examples, showing how therapists can transform self-reflection into interventions that promote safety, connection, and repair. Through demonstration and discussion of reflexivity in the POTT process, presenters aim to deepen therapists' sociocultural attunement and expand their ethical lens. Presenters will speak from professional experience across various clinical, academic, and supervisory roles. Participants will examine how ongoing engagement with their own life narratives, values, and behaviors strengthens their capacity to meet clients with increased accountability to the therapeutic work. Attention will be given to how the POTT model equips therapists to remain emotionally present and professionally responsible when global or local crises enter the therapy room—whether through collective grief, identity-based stress, or ruptures in the social fabric. In a time when the personal, professional, and global are more intertwined than ever, the POTT model offers a timely and profound path toward ethical, relationally grounded, and socially responsive clinical practice.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Margaret MacLeod

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Reflexive Praxis for Systemic Change: Disrupting Power Through Therapeutic Self-Work

Short Description: Reflexivity isn't just self-awareness—it's a tool for disrupting systems of harm. This workshop supports therapists in using reflexive praxis to engage power, dismantle complicity, and align their work with liberation across therapy, supervision, and community care.

Long Description: What if reflexivity wasn't just a tool for insight—but a mechanism for systemic disruption? In this advanced workshop, we reimagine reflexive praxis not as a private or performative act, but as a critical intervention in the work of healing and social change. Drawing from decolonial thought, critical race theory, and liberation psychology, we position the therapist's social location, power, and identity as central to how systems are upheld or disrupted in therapeutic work. Participants will explore the difference between self-awareness and applied reflexivity, learning how reflexive praxis can be used to: Disrupt white dominant cultural norms in therapy and supervision Identify when systemic neutrality becomes complicity Create alignment between clinical practice, community care, and systems change Through experiential exercises, interdisciplinary frameworks, and case applications, attendees will critically examine their own positionalities and explore what it means to act from a place of justice—not just intention. We will look at clinical moments, supervisory relationships, and institutional settings through a reflexive lens—asking: What is required of us when we know better? Reflexivity becomes not just a mirror—but a compass toward liberatory practice.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Malavi Madhusudan

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: The “Curse” of the Mother-in-Law: Enmeshment and Power Struggles in an Indian Couple System

Short Description: This presentation will aim to understand the complex dynamics in an Indian family, regarding the in-law conflict. Intervention strategies using EFT and Transgenerational Therapy will be discussed. Prominent themes such as balancing emotional affection, deescalation and strengthening connection and attachment significance will be highlighted using clinical case vignettes.

Long Description: The discord between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law has been a long standing issue in human history, especially in India. Traditionally, sharing a kitchen and distribution of household responsibilities led to severe friction between the two. Women often entered the marriage and the family with little or no power whilst their mother-in-law operated with special privileges, especially with the decision making capability for the household. The men also traditionally, would often refer to their mothers as the primary decision makers, not just for household operations but emotional compatibility between the couple. The building animosity in the mother-in-laws is triggered by the emotional separation with her son and “sharing” him with his new partner and lover. This overarching tension cause the husbands often report feeling extreme distress and helplessness due as a result of being stuck or trapped between two very significant people. Recent research suggests that a positive relationship with the mother-in-law is said to directly impact the mental health of the daughter-in-law and the couple unit as a whole. In the recent years however, modernisation and emotional independence has yielded a significant shift in India where a number of couples choose to not live with their in-laws. However, even in such cases the problem of the “in-laws” still exists. The following presentation will aim to understand the complex systemic dynamics in an Indian Family, both Joint and Nuclear. Couples are entering therapy in India demanding a resolution in the in-law conflict and a smoother relationship. Intervention strategies using Emotion Focused Therapy and Transgenerational Therapy will be discussed. Prominent themes such as balancing emotional affection (for the men), deescalation and strengthening connection and attachment significance will be highlighted using clinical case vignettes.

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William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Reihaneh Mahdavishahri

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Beyond Conflict: A Quantitative Investigation of Coparenting, Gendered Economic Stress, and Child Adjustment After Divorce

Short Description: The presenters share findings from their study of 300 divorced or separated parents, examining associations among cooperation, conflict, triangulation, parental stress, economic strain, and child well-being. Results highlight the importance of systemic and feminist family therapy approaches that address relational dynamics alongside broader social and economic inequities.

Long Description: Divorce remains one of the most prevalent family transitions worldwide, with significant implications for both parents and children. Decades of research demonstrate that women often face marked economic decline following divorce, while men are more likely to maintain or improve financial stability (Weitzman, 1985; McLanahan & Percheski, 2008). Families of color experience compounded disadvantages due to systemic racism embedded within labor markets and family courts. Drawing on the Minority Stress Model (Meyer, 2003) and Feminist Family Therapy (Hare-Mustin, 1978), this study conceptualizes coparenting not solely as an interpersonal process but as one situated within broader systems of race, class, and gender inequality. We conducted a quantitative survey of 300 divorced or separated parents to examine associations among coparenting cooperation, conflict, parental stress, triangulation, and child well-being, alongside contextual factors such as custody arrangements, socioeconomic status, and race/ethnicity. Findings supported our hypotheses: (1) cooperation predicted more favorable child adjustment, while conflict predicted poorer outcomes; (2) triangulation partially mediated the relationship between conflict and child outcomes; and (3) women and parents of color reported higher levels of economic strain, which amplified the negative effects of conflict on children's adjustment. Cluster analysis further revealed distinct coparenting profiles—cooperative, conflictual, and parallel—each carrying unique implications for children's well-being and developmental trajectories. As divorce rates remain high globally, systemic and family therapists must be prepared to address not only relational dynamics but also the gendered and racialized inequities shaping post-divorce functioning. This study underscores the need for therapeutic interventions that reduce triangulation, buffer parental stress, and integrate feminist and culturally responsive practices. By centering systemic inequities, therapists can more effectively support children and parents navigating the complexities of divorce, particularly women and families of color who disproportionately face economic and social stressors in its aftermath.

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Presenter: Maria Marchetti-Mercer

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Navigating Distance and Digital Connection in Transnational African Migrant Families

Short Description: This paper examines how transnational African families use ICTs to maintain connections across distances. Despite economic barriers and unequal access, migrant families creatively engage digital tools to sustain relationships. Importantly “distance” is socially constructed, shaped by resources and migration paths, inviting therapists to consider technology’s role in migrant families.

Long Description: This paper explores how transnational African migrant families make use of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) to maintain familial relationships despite geographic separation. Drawing on findings from a multi-site research project, I examine the lived experiences of three distinct migrant groups: those who relocate from rural to urban areas within South Africa, those who immigrate from sub-Saharan Africa to South Africa, and those who emigrate from South Africa to destinations beyond the African continent. ICTs have become essential tools for maintaining emotional connection and engaging in family life across borders. However, while these technologies may offer a vital tool for communication, they do not eliminate the structural inequalities that shape access and usage. Economic inequalities often limit migrants’ ability to acquire smartphones or afford data, forcing difficult choices between digital connection and basic necessities such as food and rent. As a result, the intimacy typically associated with physical presence is often compromised, leaving a void in virtual interactions. A key insight which will be highlighted in this paper is that "distance" is not merely a physical measure—it is a socially constructed concept, deeply influenced by socio-economic status, migration trajectories, and technological access. The digital divide is especially evident among less affluent migrants, who face significant barriers to sustaining transnational family life. Despite these challenges, the study described in this paper reveals a consistent and powerful motivation among migrant families to remain connected. Participants demonstrated resilience and creativity in using whatever resources were available to fulfill familial responsibilities and preserve a sense of togetherness. This paper invites family therapists to consider how digital technologies both facilitate and complicate family relationships, and to reflect on how therapeutic practices can better support families navigating migration and digital mediation.

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Presenter: Alina Marin

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: From societal and family systems to psychopathology.

Short Description: Psychopathology is typically understood as an intraindividual phenomenon limited in its capacity to reflect systemic influences on mental health. This talk brings a clinical perspective on possible ways to expand its capacity to represent the phenomenological context of patients' stories and thus improve their care.

Long Description: Scholars describe three levels of depth and complexity when talking about psychopathology. The descriptive and clinical levels are rather informative and static while only the structural psychopathology really goes beyond description and diagnosis looking into the meaningful whole of mental illness. In looking for the psychopathological structure, psychiatry relays on psychopathology to explore the dynamic relationship between the parts of the societal and family system to which the patient belongs and their reciprocal expression. And yet, phenomenological psychopathology tends to focus primarily on the first-person experiences of mental disorders. We feel that the phenomenological method needs to address the explanatory power of the existential context accounting for interactional structures of families and social backgrounds in which experience is embedded. Psychiatry often runs short in explaining single symptoms endured by an individual by missing acknowledgment of this individual's whole of experience. When simply enrolling symptoms in categorically distinguished lists, the psychiatric diagnosis process remains often superficial and misleading. As such, it may constrain human existence in the wrong boxes failing to provide healing. A few authors have already invited professionals to understand psychiatric experiences and symptoms as result of the interaction of the surrounding world with the first-person experience. This approach needs to move beyond a theoretical realm towards increased impact on clinical care. We have chosen a few clinical examples to be discussed from a dialectical systemic perspective that reveals their complexity and offers comprehensive therapeutic solutions in real clinical world. The diagnoses of these patients span across different nosological categories along several mental dimensions. Clinical outcomes are followed for six months to one year.

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Presenter: Andrea Marinac

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Systemic Family Therapy Within Sociopolitical Crisis: Practitioner Roles and Shared Vulnerability

Short Description: This presentation explores family therapy with parents of students in Serbia amid political repression and social fragmentation. It shows how societal divisions shaped family bonds and how dialogue fostered emotional regulation, intergenerational understanding, and agency, while addressing therapists' ethical dilemmas as members of the affected community.

Long Description: This presentation explores the clinical and ethical dimensions of systemic family therapy conducted during a period of sociopolitical crisis in Serbia. Following a public tragedy and subsequent increase in state repression, the ROOT collective provided free psychotherapeutic support to parents of university students. The social climate was marked by polarization, heightened distrust, and the presence of conflicting political narratives within families. These dynamics demonstrated how macro-level division can permeate the microsystems of intimate relationships, challenging communication, belonging, and emotional safety. Therapeutic work emphasized the restoration of dialogue and emotional regulation, with a focus on helping family members recognize and tolerate divergent perspectives without rupturing relational bonds. Interventions supported parents in re-establishing connection and agency, while also addressing the emotional responses of fear, guilt, and uncertainty that accompanied broader social instability. A distinctive feature of this case is that the therapists themselves were not external observers to the crisis. Members of the therapeutic team were variously affected: one was directly involved in activist networks targeted by political pressure; one was a student from Croatia navigating cross-border narratives and identity tensions; and others were personally connected to the local community impacted by the tragedy. As a result, therapists encountered overlapping identities—as clinicians, citizens, and, at times, participants in collective distress. This raised questions regarding neutrality, ethical positioning, and the use of shared experience as a therapeutic resource. This work highlights the need for specialized supervisory frameworks for therapists operating under conditions of shared societal vulnerability, where the clinical stance is shaped by mutual exposure to crisis. The presentation concludes by calling for further research on: the clinical implications of overlapping therapist–citizen identities in contexts of repression; supervisory and collegial models that sustain therapist well-being.

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Presenter: Crystal Marroquin

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Acculturation and Romantic Relationships: The Role of Push and Pull Factors

Short Description: This study explores how acculturation and push-pull factors shape relational dynamics among Hispanic and Latinx individuals in romantic relationships, using a phenomenological approach. Findings aim to inform systemic practice, culturally responsive treatment, and policies supporting immigrant communities.

Long Description: Hispanic and Latinx culture is comprised of a wide range of traditions, customs, values, and ethnic backgrounds that span multiple countries, creating a diverse tapestry of communities with different perspectives on what it means to hold this identity. Cultural identity within these communities is multifaceted and can be shaped by values from their specific country of origin, with variation occurring based on different socialization or acculturation experiences across the lifespan (Rinderle & Montoya, 2008). Acculturation refers to the way in which groups or individuals from one culture engage with or adopt elements of another culture, resulting in changes to their values, behaviors, or patterns related to culture (Romero et al., 2013). Important aspects to note that can influence this process are push and pull factors. Push factors are known as elements of one's culture that may lead to immigration or acculturation. Pull factors on the other hand, may draw someone towards a different or more dominant culture (Wildsmith- Cromarty & Conduah, 2015). These shifts greatly impact couples and families, causing both expected and unexpected changes in relational dynamics. Using qualitative data, the current study will employ a phenomenological approach to explore the acculturative experiences of 17 Hispanic and Latinx immigrants in romantic relationships to better understand how they have navigated evolving relational dynamics after immigrating to the United States. Broader conceptualizations of the relational impacts of acculturation and their implications for systemic practitioners will be offered by answering the following research question: In what ways do acculturation processes and push and pull factors shape individuals' experiences of relational dynamics among Hispanic and Latinx couples? The results of this study can inform future research with immigrant populations, therapeutic practice, and public policy. This work is imperative for guiding practitioners in the development and implementation of culturally informed treatment plans and policies.

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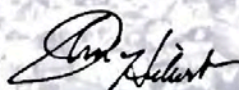
Presenter: Crystal Marroquin

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

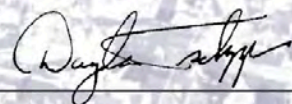
Title: Intersections of Care: A Latent Profile Analysis of Sandwiched Caregivers

Short Description: This poster explores the lived experiences of “sandwiched caregivers” who care for both children and aging parents. Using latent profile analysis with a national sample, results identify caregiver subgroups and highlight how structural and relational forces shape caregiver stress and strain in multigenerational families.

Long Description: This research poster will present findings related to the lived experiences of "sandwiched caregivers," individuals who simultaneously provide care for dependent children and aging parents. These caregivers navigate significant emotional, financial, and logistical demands that are shaped by intersecting structural inequities. Despite the increasing visibility of multigenerational caregiving in the United States, the experiences of sandwiched caregivers remain under-theorized in family therapy. Drawing data from a national sample, the study used latent profile analysis to identify caregiver subgroups based on patterns of support and strain. Our goal is to challenge individualizing discourses that pathologize caregiver stress and instead foreground the structural and relational forces that shape caregiver outcomes.



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Presenter: David Martinson

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: The Hagen Model: Collaborative Clinical Supervision in Family Counseling

Short Description: Collaborative Clinical Supervision, initially implemented at Hagen Behandlingsenhet in Veldre, Norway, has been further developed as a proactive, post-modern, clinical supervision strategy to help novice family counselors implement a feedback milieu in their work with families in the suburbs of Philadelphia. This has relevance for today's clinical supervisors.

Long Description: This presentation includes the 2012 results of a Scandinavian study at a treatment center utilizing feedback-informed, client collaborative practices, and collaborative clinical supervision strategies in Norway. It also discusses the current application of this research on further developing proactive, post-modern, collaborative clinical supervision approaches for clinical supervisors in the United States, which is currently being implemented in a university setting outside of Philadelphia. The presenter will give an overview of the specific tools that can be used in collaborative clinical supervision of family counseling students and offer examples of how these tools can help improve the effectiveness of clinical work with families. Transcultural implications will be discussed as well as what elements are necessary for clinicians to implement true client collaboration into practice. Two primary themes to be highlighted are true client collaboration and counselor positional stance in family counseling. Five sub-themes to be explored in the presentation include true acknowledgment of the client within the family system, a prestige-free attitude toward the clients, trusting the clients, flexibility in treatment, and willingness to negotiate counseling with clients in family systems. Opportunities for discussion will include how this applies to family counselors-in-training, practicing clinicians, supervisors-in-training, and clinical supervisors training family counseling students.

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Presenter: Nicole Massey-Hastings

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Systemic and Ethical Dimensions of Decision Making in Assisted Reproductive Technology: Systemic Approaches for MFT's

Short Description: Use of reproductive technologies to conceive uniquely impacts psychological and relational functioning. This presentation will examine stressors, key ethical dilemmas, identify gaps in the current research, and present systemic interventions that MFTs can use to support their clients as they navigate complex fertility journeys and decision making processes.

Long Description: This presentation will use both didactic content and clinical case examples to explore the multifaceted psychological, relational, and developmental impacts of ART on individuals, couples, and family systems. We will examine the unique ethical dilemmas that families who undergo ART are faced with long after the treatment process and discuss how MFTs are uniquely positioned to address these challenges. Evidence-based, culturally attuned interventions that utilize systemic approaches promote resilience will be outlined. Finally, we will identify gaps in the current research and disparities in access to fertility and mental health care. Infertility and assisted reproductive technologies (ART) are closely linked to many psychological symptoms, and research suggests a bidirectional relationship between psychological health and ART outcomes (Moutzouroulia et al., 2025). The complexity of decision making in this population presents unique clinical challenges for MFTs. The experience of navigating infertility and ART can induce a variety of psychological symptoms including depression, anxiety, guilt, resentment, and damage to self-concept. These symptoms, in turn, have been shown to negatively impact the success of ART. Individuals often experience a profound sense of loss of control over their lives, damaged identity, and reduced self-esteem (Moutzouroulia et al., 2025). Relationally, partners must navigate the mental and emotional toll of infertility and ART treatment on their relationship, while also managing the physical and financial stressors that accompany treatment (Robinson & Stewart, 1996). The emotional turmoil can wreak havoc in relationships, impacting relationship satisfaction and sexual intimacy. Ethical decisions that may have long-lasting impact on the family system compound the clinical picture. This particular recipe of factors and constraints necessitates that MFTs develop a specialized knowledge base to best support clients and their systems.

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Rock Island, Illinois 61201
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Presenter: Christi McGeorge

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Celebratory Views of Trans and Nonbinary Identities: Assistance from Christian Religious Leaders

Short Description: Given the centrality of religious beliefs in shaping non-affirming perceptions of marginalized gender identities, this exploratory qualitative study interviewed Christian religious leaders with the hope of better supporting family therapists and families in developing affirming and celebratory views of transgender and nonbinary identities. Implications for family therapists are discussed.

Long Description: When family therapists report a struggle working with transgender or nonbinary clients or negative attitudes towards transgender or nonbinary identities, they frequently cite their own religious beliefs (Campbell et al., 2019; Clarke et al., 2024; Paprocki, 2014). Although there are religious traditions that are affirming of marginalized gender identities, some religious therapists believe there are potential conflicts between following their ethical obligation to provide competent services to transgender and nonbinary clients and following the teachings of their faith tradition (Clarke et al., 2024). Additionally, when families and partners struggle to accept loved ones with a marginalized gender identity, they also frequently cite non-affirming religious beliefs (Rosenkrantz et al., 2020). Given the centrality of religious beliefs in shaping non-affirming perceptions of marginalized gender identities, this exploratory qualitative study sought to interview Christian religious leaders with the hope of better supporting family therapists and families in developing affirming and celebratory views of transgender and nonbinary identities. Nineteen religious leaders from diverse Mainline Christian Protestant traditions were interviewed. Queer theory-informed thematic analysis revealed four themes that reflect the insights that religious leaders in this study want to share with family therapists and individual families about transgender and nonbinary people: (1) Reject Dehumanizing Narratives about Transgender and Nonbinary Individuals and Identities, (2) Discuss the Misuse of Religious Theology, (3) Avoid Judgement and Offer Forgiveness, and (4) Be a living example (Use Personal Experience). The findings of this study provide insights that family therapists can use personally and professionally to increase life-saving affirmative beliefs of transgender and nonbinary individuals.

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Presenter: Rob McKinney

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Bisexual Women in Heterosexual-Presenting Relationships: Mental Health Implications

Short Description: This presentation explores the lived experiences of bisexual women in heterosexual-presenting relationships through data from semi-structured interviews. Couple therapy implications include: (a) consideration of partner dynamics; (b) seeking validation and navigating invalidation; and (c) bisexual identity development journey. Implications underscore the need for affirming, identity-informed couples therapy.

Long Description: This presentation centers on a qualitative study that used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to explore the lived experiences of bisexual women in heterosexual-presenting couples. Bisexuality is a complex and evolving identity encompassing attraction to more than one gender (Feinstein & Dyar, 2017), often shaped by developmental stages (Brown, 2002) and influenced by social factors such as biphobia and bi-erasure (Boccone, 2016; Xavier Hall et al., 2021). Bisexual women in a heterosexual-presenting couple face unique mental health risks, including stress and identity concealment (Vencill et al., 2018), yet may experience resilience through community support and pride in their identity (Dorrell et al., 2024; Velasco et al., 2024). All these considerations can impact the larger relationship. Eight self-identified bisexual women partnered with cisgender men participated in semi-structured interviews. Three interconnected themes emerged. Through theme one, presenters will share how these women navigated complex partner dynamics—balancing emotional dualities, receiving and giving support, confronting past negative experiences, and negotiating straight-passing privilege—all while affirming their queer identities within their partnerships. Theme two illustrates how participants described both seeking and providing validation while navigating invalidation and bi-erasure from themselves and others. Finally, through theme presenters will describe how bisexual identity development is a personal, evolving journey marked by early self-discovery, internal and external struggles, repeated coming out experiences, and emotional complexity. Implication and application for mental health professionals, such as the need for affirming work, identity-informed counseling, and knowledge of bisexuality within couple's work will be explored.

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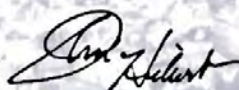
Presenter: Douglas McPhee

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

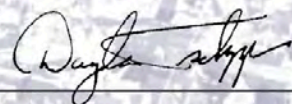
Title: Self (of-the-therapist) Evaluation

Short Description: "Am I good at my job? Am I providing effective therapy? How can I become better?" Therapists are consistently seeking to appraise their professional performance. Yet, holistic models to guide self-examination are scant. We offer a framework with which therapists can engage in self-evaluation.

Long Description: We can reasonably assume that therapists consistently self-appraise their professional performance. Yet, literature addressing and exploring therapists' self-examination is scant. Outside of established clinical competencies that have been used to shape and evaluate student therapists' training and competence (Nelson et al., 2007; Northey & Gehart, 2020), extant literature provides minimal guidance regarding how to approach self-evaluation as a therapist. In this workshop, we will present a novel, holistic framework to help direct therapist self-evaluation. We identify five major areas for self-assessment: client growth/progress, educational development, personal application, professional reputation & financial success, and personal & spiritual wellness. We also stress the importance of establishing realistic expectations and demonstrating self-compassion when engaging in this self-evaluation.



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Presenter: Lenore McWey

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Needs and experiences with mental health services among parents involved with the child welfare system

Short Description: This study's aim was to understand parents' experiences of therapy within the child welfare system (CWS) and present parents' mental health needs using data from a longitudinal study of families involved with CWS. Findings can help address research gaps on family therapy within the CWS and amplify parents' voices.

Long Description: A high demand for mental health services, long waitlists, and increased costs have limited access to effective mental healthcare around the world. Data from the United States' Department of Health and Human Services investigated over 3,081,715 child maltreatment allegations over the course of 2023. For approximately 85-90% of parents involved with the child welfare system (CWS), therapy is a requirement of their case plans, and parents must complete these requirements within, in many cases, a year to regain or maintain custody of their children. At least half of the cases involve substance use and/or behavioral health needs. This study's aim was to understand parents' perceptions of therapy within the CWS and reveal mental health needs as identified by parents. The poster will present data from the Power of Parents Study, a longitudinal study of families involved with the CWS across one U.S. state, a total of seventy-five parents. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected when families first became involved with the CWS and have been collected every 6 months thereafter across 18 months throughout a parents' involvement with the system. Codes regarding parents' experiences with therapy have been extracted from Waves 1 and 2. A descriptive analysis of quantitative data will be used to complement qualitative findings by providing parents' use of mental health services. Thematic analyses indicate key themes including significant mental health concerns, parents' perceptions of mandated services, a desire to engage in services but challenges accessing them, mistrust of providers, desire for systemic intervention approaches, and the growth that occurred after connecting with a trusted provider. Findings from this study can help inform practice and research on family therapy within the context of the CWS and amplify parents' voices to identify what parents believe they need from mental health providers.

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Presenter: Lenore McWey

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Being under a microscope: The dynamics of parent systems when navigating the child welfare system

Short Description: Findings of this study portray relationships of parental units navigating the child welfare system (CWS). The data are from a longitudinal, mixed-methods study of families involved in the CWS. Results can inform future research into parenting relationships and assist program and service development for parents involved with the CWS.

Long Description: Navigating the child welfare system (CWS) presents unique challenges. Typically, when a parent becomes involved with the CWS, they are required to complete a case plan. The stress of the CWS and case plan activities can have a profound impact on individuals, couples, and families. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of the CWS on parents' relationships with each other. This relationship is important for both parent and child wellbeing. This study involved a longitudinal mixed-method design with a sample of parents involved in the CWS due to substantiated cases of maltreatment. Analyses focused on a subsample of parents who discussed the impact of the CWS on their partner or coparenting relationships (N = 67). We examined the dynamics of parent relationships, support within the relationships, how they navigated co-parenting, and external factors related to relationships. Some parents relied on the support of the co-parent to help with case plan tasks, whereas others terminated relationships to progress in their case plans. Results can inform future research and assist in the development of programs and systemic support services for parents involved with the CWS.

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Presenter: Lenore McWey

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Echoes of Childhood: A Qualitative Study on ACEs and Co-Parenting Dynamics

Short Description: This study explores how adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) shape co-parenting relationships. Using qualitative interviews with parents who report high ACE scores, the research examines how trauma histories influence co-parents' relational processes. Findings aim to deepen understanding of intergenerational trauma and inform strategies that strengthen family systems.

Long Description: Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) remain a significant public health concern with lasting effects on families. In the United States, 63.9 percent of adults reported at least one ACE, and 17.3 percent reported four or more (Swedo et al., 2023). Research demonstrates that ACEs influence emotional regulation, attachment, and relational functioning across the life span (Daines et al., 2021; Hambrick et al., 2019; Herzog & Schmahl, 2018). These difficulties often arise in parenting, where unresolved trauma can affect both the parent-child relationship and the quality of co-parenting. Although research on ACEs has expanded, few studies have examined how trauma histories shape co-parenting relationships. Most work on co-parenting focuses on married or divorced parents, even though in 2023, 3.2 million children lived with cohabiting parents who were not married (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). Parents with trauma histories may experience heightened conflict, reduced collaboration, and difficulty supporting one another, which can increase instability for children (Lange et al., 2022; Tadros et al., 2022). This explanatory qualitative study explores how ACEs shape the realities of co-parenting. The aim of the study is to examine how individuals with ACEs describe the influence of these experiences on their co-parenting dynamics. Through semi-structured interviews with parents who report ACE scores of four or higher, this study uses interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith et al., 2022) to capture how ACEs surface in everyday co-parenting practices. Findings will highlight the ways trauma histories affect coparents' relational processes. By centering the lived experiences of co-parents, this study seeks to expand understanding of trauma-informed co-parenting and generate insights that can guide strategies to strengthen family systems and promote well-being for both children and parents.

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Presenter: Lenore McWey

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: The supports of families involved with CPS matter for child mental health outcomes

Short Description: Families involved with child protective services (CPS) are required to complete many services. In general, strong safety nets help protect families against risks; however, few studies examine support configurations of families involved with CPS. This poster will show how different support profiles relate to child and family outcomes over time.

Long Description: An estimated 1 in 7 U.S. children are maltreated annually (CDC, 2020), and approximately 600,000 U.S. maltreatment cases are substantiated each year (Child Trends, 2020). The risks for negative outcomes for children involved with child protective services (CPS) are widely documented, and family therapists are often called upon to help. However, there is surprisingly little systemic research on how family supports serve as risk and protective factors for mental health outcomes of families involved with CPS. This proposed study will present results of a project that identifies (a) parents' formal and informal support systems; and (b) links between family supports and children's mental health outcomes with a U.S. sample of families involved with CPS. Nearly a half a century of high-quality research shows that low-income vulnerable families in the general population benefit from strong support systems, and these supports inform the ways in which families access and capitalize on intervention services (Huang et al., 2014; Prelow et al., 2010). It is remarkable, however, that this research has not yet been extended to families involved with CPS. Given the many risks for negative outcomes for families involved with the CPS, it is critical that we begin to test these ideas with this population. The effectiveness of CPS-related intervention services is often modest at best. Because the consequences of ineffective services could mean permanent family dissolution and risk for future child maltreatment, it is important for us as interventionists to understand how families' support systems bolster or diminish mental health outcomes. This poster will show different configurations of parents' formal and informal supports and demonstrate how these different support constellations are longitudinally associated with mental health outcomes. The results have clear implications for clinical assessment and treatment of families involved with the CPS.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Anita Mehta

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: The Mental Health and Resiliency of Family Therapists: Recognizing the Importance of Self-assessment and Attunement

Short Description: This presentation discusses challenges therapists experience related to their own emotional and psychological well-being as they consistently offer support to others. We emphasize the importance of paying attention to one's own mental health and use case studies to illustrate evidence-based strategies for navigating challenges to support resilience.

Long Description: Background: Family therapists routinely engage with emotionally charged relational dynamics, often supporting clients through trauma, conflict, and crisis. While their work centers on healing others, the psychological toll on therapists themselves is frequently overlooked. Recent research reveals elevated rates of burnout, compassion fatigue, and vicarious trauma among practitioners, particularly those working in high-stress or trauma-focused environments. This presentation addresses the critical need to prioritize therapist mental health within the broader discourse of family therapy. Methods: Drawing on evidence based and clinically rich data, this session will explore the experiences of therapists who struggle with emotional exhaustion, ethical dilemmas, and systemic pressures. It will examine how factors such as organizational culture, supervision quality, and personal coping strategies shape therapists' well-being. The discussion highlights the paradox of emotional labor in the expectation to remain empathetic and composed while at times perhaps managing personal distress. It will underline how the therapist's mental health can directly influences therapeutic outcomes and client engagement. Discussion: This presentation advocates for a cultural shift in family therapy to one that recognizes therapist mental health not as a private concern, but as a professional priority essential to sustainable, effective care. It is critical to recognize and identify early indicators of burnout, secondary trauma, or professional fatigue in themselves and their colleagues. Outcomes: Attendees will leave with a deeper understanding of the psychological risks faced by family therapists, along with evidence-based strategies for promoting well-being. Practical tools for integrating mental health support into supervision and organizational policy will be shared, emphasizing self-care as an ethical imperative in therapeutic practice. Participants will be invited to share insights, challenges, and best practices from their own clinical contexts, creating a supportive context for mutual support and learning.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Lisa Mellen

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: From Herd to Community: How horses and other animals may inspire hopeful journeys in residential childcare.

Short Description: A reminder of the natural world, our relationships with ourselves and others -our place in the world. In working in residential childcare over the last 10 years, we highlight the value of bringing nature and animal assisted learning into the work in residential childcare for children and care professionals alike.

Long Description: As founding directors of Youthinc CIC and directors of Birribi – a residential child-care organisation based in Wales, Lisa Mellen and Deborah Judge originally set out 10 years ago to create a systemic approach within residential childcare. We named this organisation Birribi, an Aboriginal Australian word meaning both ‘meeting’ place and ‘crossing.’ As part of the organisation there is a school and a care-farm with a variety of farm animals and horses. Around the same time, we also continued our shared love of horses as qualified practitioners with the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA, 2025.) When we mean a systemic approach, we see children as individuals interconnected within multiple dynamic systems – personal, family, community and society. The ‘home’ community provides a small system where we can focus on patterns in relationships and strengthen the interactions that help the community to feel safe. Our core values at Birribi embed the importance of building positive relationships, creating therapeutic group homes – a sense of ‘place’ and safety – encouraging social learning and the daily routines of living with others as part of a small community. With a focus on horses, we remember what we have forgotten, the language of connection. We may rediscover the flow of tuning in with another, the wisdom of intuition and the strength of a more balanced nervous system. Wise, intuitive beings, they invite us to notice ourselves. They invite us to wonder at the experience of being – in relation to – and with – other.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Joanna Mendez-Pounds

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Response to ICE Raids: A Thematic Analysis of Community Conversations

Short Description: Presenters will review a thematic analysis of community responses to ICE raids since the start of the Trump Administration. Presenters will discuss themes extracted from public commentary from BIPOC people who discuss their responses to ICE raids and their engagement with forum commentators. Implications for clinical practice discussed.

Long Description: In a recent ruling issued by the U.S. Supreme Court, *Noem v. Vazquez Perdomo* (2025), the Supreme Court overruled a District Court and permitted the Trump administration to question anyone they suspect of being undocumented based on the way they look, how they speak, and where they work. In the last 10 months, social media and public discussions have given ample examples of the ways that racial profiling targets BIPOC with countless videos of ICE agents violently subduing people to detain them. As such, some have described, just as Justice Sotomayor's dissent of the ruling, that these experiences subjugate Latinos into second class citizenship. While literature identifies the resourcefulness and resilience of immigrant families as they live with undocumented status, there is also significant research noting the hardships of immigrants' lives in the U.S., especially in recent years where it seems more permissible for people to openly vilify and discriminate undocumented people. However, the enforcement of immigration policy our communities witnessed in the first Trump administration drastically differs with the escalation of violence currently seen in communities since the start of Trump's second term. Many community members seek to spotlight injustices via their recordings of violent ICE encounters, while others voice their concern and desperation about what they see and experience. Therefore, it is essential to amplify community voices of those who openly share their responses to immigration enforcement tactics by the current administration. Thus, this presentation will review a thematic analysis of community responses to ICE raids. Presenters will discuss themes extracted from public commentary from BIPOC who discuss their responses to ICE raids and their engagement with forum commentators. Using the emergent themes, presenters will also describe clinical considerations for mental health practitioners working with people who are negatively affected by socio-political movements.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: John Miller

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Sino-American Family Therapy: Unique Family Dilemmas and Treatment Approaches in the Chinese Context

Short Description: Family therapy originated in Western cultures, and is now flourishing throughout China. This presentation will explore special treatment approaches developed by students and graduates at the Sino-American Family Therapy Institute (SAFTI) to address Chinese family therapy issues in ways that fit with unique elements of the Chinese culture.

Long Description: Family therapy originated in Western cultures, and is now flourishing throughout China. This presentation will explore special treatment approaches developed by students and graduates at the Sino-American Family Therapy Institute (SAFTI) to address Chinese family therapy issues in ways that fit with unique elements of the Chinese culture. NARRATIVE OF PRESENTATION PLAN: The presenters will discuss how they developed unique treatment approaches in real clinical contexts to address special treatment issues in the Chinese context. These include family therapy with elderly patients in nursing home settings, family therapy for school refusal, unique reflecting team methods in China. The presenters will discuss current international social sciences scholarly discussions regarding the intricacies of exporting complex clinical models to other contexts. What parts of clinical intervention can be meaningfully transplanted to another cultural context without much modification? What clinical intervention strategies are unique to the culture under consideration (indigenous) and must remain unique to that culture? Can certain modes of therapy be carefully adapted to other cultures and what are some guiding principles for the exportation for this endeavor? The presenters will discuss these questions during the presentation, with some suggestions for the future development.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Shyrea Minton

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Finding Hope in the Current Geo-Socio-Political Context: Self-Care for Clinicians, Supervisors, & Educators

Short Description: Critical self-reflection and acknowledgement of the intersection of one's personal identity factors and professional roles support clinicians, supervisors, and educators to recognize signs of burnout and compassion fatigue in a volatile geo-socio-political context. This workshop will offer ideas for grounded self-care practice to bolster hope.

Long Description: Presenters will explore the intersection of personal and professional experiences related to finding hope in the ever-volatile geo-socio-political context. As clinicians, supervisors, and educators who continue to personally experience and witness persistent and multiple crises (pandemic, anti-Blackness, anti-Asian hate, legislative attacks against LGBTQIA+ and women, immigration disparities, and many others) during the last 5+ years, we have developed various strategies to mitigate our personal and professional responses. Our responses must align with both our professional ethics and standards as well as our personal values and commitment to socially just practices. In order to remain present in our multiple roles, we must acknowledge that the varied crises within our socio-political environment have serious implications not only for our clients, students and supervisees, but also for our own mental health and functioning. The presenters will share key lessons learned: 1) The importance of our attunement to the personal impact of the current geo-socio-political climate with our intersectional identities; 2) The power of creating community to explore and process current events and how they impact our work with clients, students, and supervisees; and 3) Leveraging the parallel process that forms in our relationship with students and supervisees to model the essentialness of nurturing ourselves to reduce both theirs and our own compassion fatigue or burnout. We will share some activities that may help others who occupy multiple roles, to nurture yourselves while supporting others (clients, students, supervisees). During this workshop, the presenters will facilitate dialogue with participants to conceptualize establishing a collaborative and critically conscious community as mental health clinicians, supervisors, and educators.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

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Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Deborah Montoya

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: The Lion Played Ball with the Dolphins: Creating Therapeutic Relationships with Children

Short Description: This workshop will explore playful, art-filled ways to help children feel safe in therapy. We'll use our imaginations to create the beginning of safety in relationship. The land of make-believe can eventually open the door to the place where feelings, fears, and lived experiences are held.

Long Description: We know that creating a therapeutic relationship with a child is different than getting to know a new adult client. In this workshop we will explore ways to remember who we were as children and use those memories to inform the way we create relationships with our younger clients. Make-believe land is an interesting place to get to know young clients. When I create a fantastical place with my client, we get to share our honest and imaginative responses to an idea. In this workshop we will explore playful art making that promotes a sense of safety, using containment and connection. The rituals and rhythms of play and art that we create in the therapy room provide a landing space for the stories we all hold, to emerge. The therapeutic connection with a child can grow strong enough to hold all stories. Stories that are sometimes magical, and as trust develops, very real. What stories are waiting to emerge from your playfulness, brought to life from a place of childhood's wonder?

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Edgardo Morales-Arandes

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Giving passion a field to practice: The uses of artistic creation in therapy and supervision.

Short Description: This presentation explores how artistic passion and creation can serve as transformative resources in clinical supervision and therapy. Doctoral students and their supervisor will illustrate how their use facilitates the connection between identity, personal growth, and therapeutic skill development, enhancing the learning process in supervision and generating therapeutic change.

Long Description: This presentation delves into the processes of passion and artistic creation, exploring their potential to generate internal and relational resources in therapeutic practice and clinical supervision. We will discuss how a learning space based on trust and openness can be co-created in supervision and how this can be used to connect students with their sources of artistic passion, play, and creativity. The presenters, a supervisor and two clinical students at the University of Puerto Rico, practice in an archipelago in the Caribbean, distinguished by its cultural richness nourished by art in its various forms. These artistic expressions are integral to our traditions, serving as pillars of our identity and cultural diversity. The arts in all their manifestations have stood as tools of liberation and resistance to processes of colonization, providing spaces for re-imagining our identity, fostering possibilities, while sustaining complex memories, relational patterns, and emotions. In the context of clinical supervision and psychotherapy, reconnecting students with their sources of passion, their potential, and their practices of artistic creation and expression allows them as therapists to reaffirm their identity as performers capable of connecting with others, being patient and curious, enjoying the process, and trusting their inventiveness for provoking generative change. Through this, the space of clinical supervision and therapy becomes an opportunity to construct a therapeutic identity that recognizes and values the qualities and creative processes that nurture students and supervisors outside their academic and professional identities, treating them as rich resources for clinical training. In this presentation, we will discuss and provide examples of how artistic passion and creation can be evoked, nurtured, and utilized in the context of supervision and psychotherapy as a performative and metaphorical resource for navigating the learning experience and accessing resources that enrich the abilities and capacities of future clinicians.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Amy Morgan

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Rebuilding Together: Designing a Relationship Intervention for Couples Navigating Reentry

Short Description: This session highlights Rebuilding Together, a couples-based program for couples impacted by incarceration. We present findings from qualitative interviews with couples navigating reentry, and invite dialogue on applying these insights to design a culturally responsive, trauma-informed intervention that strengthens couple relationships during the transition from incarceration to community.

Long Description: Couples navigating reentry face profound challenges, including stigma, disrupted trust, unresolved trauma, external stressors, and the lingering impact of incarceration. These stressors strain relationships at a time when couple support can be a powerful protective factor for well-being and successful reintegration. Research consistently shows that strong, supportive relationships reduce stress, promote healthier coping, and lower the risk of recidivism. Yet reentry services remain largely focused on individuals, with few empirically tested interventions designed to strengthen couples' resilience during this critical transition. We are developing Rebuilding Together, a couples-based relationship program that integrates evidence-informed strategies for managing reentry-related challenges and fostering healthy, enduring partnerships. To ensure the intervention is grounded in the lived experiences of couples most affected, we conducted qualitative interviews with five heterosexual couples ($n = 10$) recruited through community partners in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The session will be organized in three parts. First, we will highlight gaps in reentry interventions and discuss the rationale for centering the couple relationship in supporting successful reentry. Second, we will present our findings from five qualitative interviews, highlighting couples' perspectives on reentry stressors, communication challenges, trust and conflict shaped by stigma and systemic barriers, and their recommendations for program content and delivery. Third, we will shift to a dialogue-style discussion with the audience about the proposed Rebuilding Together intervention for couples preparing for and navigating reentry, and practical considerations for implementation in diverse justice-impacted communities. This format will engage attendees as co-thinkers in refining the intervention for cultural relevance and trauma-informed delivery. Participants will leave with a deeper understanding of the relational needs voiced by incarceration-impacted couples, insight into how qualitative findings can guide program design, and practical ideas for embedding couple-centered strategies in community-based reentry programming.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Evdoxia Mpras

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Thriving Together: Healing Postpartum Distress as a Couple

Short Description: Considering the prevalence of postpartum adjustment distress and its impact on couple relationships and infants, clinicians must be able to identify maladaptive functioning in couple dynamics as they adapt to parenthood. This presentation will equip attendees to help couples find relief in the lifecycle stage of early parenthood.

Long Description: Couples face considerable challenges in the transition to parenthood such as significant role shifts, navigating increased responsibilities, and changes in emotional and sexual intimacy. Without support, couples often develop maladaptive coping skills to these challenges. If these relational patterns go unaddressed and untreated, they may continue over time and affect each member of the family system. It is imperative that clinicians recognize the systemic root and impact of postpartum distress. Individual treatment of postpartum distress can be helpful yet limited in its impact to helping couples and families thrive in postpartum and beyond. Early couple interventions can be a protective factor long-term as partners can use coping and relational skills learned in the early parenthood stage when facing future developmental challenges. This session will be organized in three sections: First, I will share an overview of the environmental, biological, and emotional challenges that couples face in the postpartum stage, as well as the gaps in care for couples. Second, I will illustrate how to identify maladaptive relationship coping skills that regularly present during the perinatal period. Finally, I will offer accessible interventions to help couples maintain connection as they navigate postpartum stressors. This presentation will encourage attendees to shift perspective from viewing postpartum distress as an individual issue to a relational issue. Participants will leave with a useful roadmap of how to identify and meet the needs of couples in the postpartum stage in order to help support healthy family functioning in this critical period of family life.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Langston Myers

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Engaging Loved Ones in the Recovery of Adolescents and Young Adults Experiencing Homelessness

Short Description: Most unaccompanied youth (14-24 years) living on the streets report some contact with supportive others (SOs). Yet, efforts to engage SOs in their recovery are limited. In this presentation, the process for engaging SOs using Community Reinforcement and Family Training (CRAFT) and family systems therapy will be presented.

Long Description: Homelessness is still a major problem and is devastating for youths. Diagnosed alcohol and drug use disorders range from 50% to 86% (Burke et al., 2023) which is of concern since substance use has been associated with a lower likelihood of exiting the streets. The homeless service system for youth is woefully underfunded and enormous service gaps exist in being able to engage, treat and house the increasing numbers of youth experiencing homelessness (YEH). Engaging the family members and/or supportive others of individuals with a SUD has consistently been shown effective at reducing SUD and associated mental health problems (Bufford & Lappan, 2024). While studies have documented the social network characteristics of unaccompanied YEH, no study has developed an intervention to engage a family/social network member to facilitate and support that youths' substance use treatment. Supportive others (SOs) can include a family member or friend (chosen family) over the age of 15 years with no history of abuse or exploitation of the YEH. Engaging SOs in the YEH's SUD treatment could have significant implications for substance use outcomes, but also for housing and mental health. Therefore, the current study provides a first step towards addressing these devastating conditions through engaging SOs of these youth which can also confer significant benefit to SO. The intervention consists of the Community Reinforcement and Family Training (CRAFT; Myers et al., 2002) which targets supportive others of unmotivated persons with SUD, offering approximately 12 sessions with the goal to engage the substance user into treatment. In addition, family systems therapy focuses on improving family/SO interaction patterns. The process for adapting and implementing these interventions to the unique family and social relationships of YEH will be described, using a case example.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Langston Myers

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Love Hurts: When Relationships Reinforce Risk Among Homeless Youth

Short Description: Youth experiencing homelessness exhibit high rates of substance use, often influenced by partner behaviors. This presentation explores how romantic relationships shape marijuana use among youth and discusses findings showing that partner use predicts higher individual use. Clinical implications emphasize relationship-focused, harm-reduction approaches to support youth stability and wellbeing.

Long Description: Romantic relationships play a pivotal role in the lives of youth experiencing homelessness (YEH), often serving as one of the few stable sources of connection and emotional support. However, these relationships can also reinforce risk behaviors when partners engage in substance use (Rice et al., 2007; Green et al., 2013). Substance use among YEH is frequently intertwined with the broader social and emotional context of these relationships and many use substances to cope with the chronic stressors of street life, including food insecurity, violence, and lack of social support (Kidd & Carroll, 2007; Tyler & Melander, 2015). Marijuana, in particular, is one of the most commonly used substances in this population (Bender et al., 2015; Santa Maria et al., 2018). Understanding how romantic relationships shape these substance use behaviors is critical for identifying both protective and risk processes that may inform clinical and intervention efforts. Research focused on housed populations has long shown that intimate partners reciprocally influence one another's substance use, both positively and negatively (Homish & Leonard, 2005; Rhule-Louie & McMahon, 2007). However, YEH are largely excluded from this literature, despite evidence that peer and partner substance use predicts individual substance use patterns (Rice et al., 2012). Given the high rates of substance use and the importance of interpersonal dynamics in perpetuating and resolving substance use, understanding the role of relationships among YEH is essential for effective substance use treatment. Preliminary findings from a longitudinal analysis suggest that YEH with substance-using partners, compared to those without, report higher marijuana use which increases over time and partner drug use positively predicted individual marijuana use, even after controlling for wave. While romantic partnerships can offer emotional support and stability, substance using romantic partners appear to increase risk for YEH's substance use.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Emma Myers Worth

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: The Systems Intelligence (SQ) Measure: Evaluating Systemic Thinking and Practice

Short Description: This project develops and pilots the Systems Intelligence (SQ) Measure, which assesses an individual's ability to understand and act within complex relational systems. Using vignettes and criterion-referenced coding, the study examines reliability, validity, and refinement across student and clinician samples to advance systemic thinking in research and clinical training.

Long Description: This project introduces a novel measure of Systems Intelligence (SQ), defined by Doherty (2024) as the capacity to effectively engage in multilateral relationships within families, work groups, and institutions. Existing instruments assess related domains such as emotional intelligence (Mayer et al., 2003), relational intelligence (Francisca & Gomez, 2022), social intelligence (Silvera et al., 2001), and family functioning (Olson, 2011), but none capture an individual's ability to conceptualize and act constructively within complex relational systems. SQ fills this gap by operationalizing systemic concepts such as triangulation, feedback loops, and boundary permeability into a measurable framework. The instrument includes vignettes depicting family or group situations. After each vignette, participants respond to two open-ended prompts: (1) "What do you see as key contributors to the problems in this situation?" (2) "What would need to happen to address the situation (aside from getting outside help)?" Responses are scored with a criterion-referenced rubric distinguishing four developmental levels of systemic understanding. For Question 1 (Key Contributors), levels progress from minimal engagement to systemic/multilateral analysis, reflecting movement from restating events to identifying complex dynamics such as loyalty binds or feedback cycles. For Question 2 (What Steps Might Help), levels progress from simple behavioral advice to systemic/multilateral shift with sequencing, emphasizing coordination, boundary-setting, and awareness of ripple effects. Pilot testing with undergraduate students and clinicians is underway to examine the measure's reliability, validity, and relevance across educational and clinical settings. Analyses include item statistics, rationale for items dropped or retained, and development of a refined scale. Reliability will be assessed through inter-rater and internal consistency, and validity through expert review and correlations with related constructs. This measure represents a validated effort to quantify Systems Intelligence, providing a foundation for future research, education, and clinical training in systemic theory and practice.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Sarah Nashashibi

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Emotionally Focused Therapy and the Healing of Developmental Trauma in Couples and Family Systems

Short Description: This presentation explores how Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) supports healing developmental and relational trauma within couples and family systems. Drawing on clinical practice in Greece and internationally, it highlights key processes that foster emotional safety and resilience

Long Description: Developmental trauma profoundly shapes adult attachment patterns and emotional safety. Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT), grounded in attachment theory and systemic understanding, offers a framework for transforming these patterns through emotional engagement and attunement. Drawing from clinical experience with individuals, couples, and blended families, this presentation explores how early relational wounds re-emerge in adult interactions and how EFT interventions can access and restructure these experiences. Participants will learn to recognize interactional cycles that sustain distress, work with primary emotion safely, and integrate trauma-informed awareness into systemic conceptualization. As both a therapist and educator at a systemic family therapy institute, I apply EFT principles to relational trauma in multicultural practice. Case vignettes illustrate how emotional presence and responsiveness create corrective experiences that restore connection and resilience. The aim is to deepen understanding of how relational trauma can be transformed into moments of safety and responsiveness, demonstrating the capacity of EFT to foster healing within the couple and family system

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Nancy Ng

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Supporting Divorcing Families in Singapore: Mandatory Co-Parenting Programme

Short Description: Singapore's Mandatory Co-Parenting Programme provides e-learning and consultation for divorcing families. Analysis of 3000+ participants at 6-month follow-up showed significant improvements in parent wellbeing, resilience, child functioning, and reduced co-parenting conflict. However, declining child-parent relationships highlight areas for improvement. Findings inform policy development.

Long Description: Empirical works in the past four decades have shed light on the “what” and “how” of factors contributing to mental health difficulties in children of divorce. This presentation will provide an overview of the divorce support ecosystem, with a focus on the Mandatory Co-Parenting Programme (CPP) administered and funded by the Ministry of Social and Family Development, Singapore. CPP comprises an e-learning component and personalised consultation(s) with a counsellor, so that parents can make informed divorce decisions that prioritize their children’s wellbeing. Data from a battery of standardized client-reported psychometric scales was collected using an Outcome Monitoring (OM) platform for the Divorce Support Programme Ecosystem across three time-points (baseline, 6-month and 2-year post programme). The platform provided respondents with automated tailored feedback on areas of need to encourage them to seek appropriate support. More than 3000 adult clients have attended CPP between October 2022 to July 2025. The current presentation focuses on programme outcomes at the 6-month post programme. Findings showed statistically significant large programme effects. Post-hoc analyses revealed significant improvements in parent well-being and resilience, co-parenting conflict, and child psychosocial functioning. Notwithstanding the positive programme gains, the decline in child-parent relationship quality warrants attention. These findings have potential policy and practice implications in enhancing the divorce support programme ecosystem.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Karianne Nguyen Knudsen

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: SYSTEMIC TRUST-BUILDING IN LEADERSHIP: THE TAORA FRAMEWORK FOR A RELATIONAL PRACTICE AND BURNOUT PREVENTION

Short Description: This presentation introduces the TAORA framework and its TILLITT/TRRUSTT model, a systemic leadership approach integrating trust, dialogue, structure, and ecology. Drawing on experiences from competence environments, it demonstrates how systemic trust-building can prevent burnout, strengthen relational resilience, and create sustainable cultures in both therapeutic and organizational contexts.

Long Description: Burnout is increasingly recognized as a systemic phenomenon, rooted not only in individual vulnerability but also in organizational and relational patterns. While systemic family therapy highlights the importance of relational safety, meaning, and ecological awareness, leadership models often lack an integrated framework for trust-building and burnout prevention. The TAORA framework was developed by Karianne Nguyen Knudsen after 18 years of experience from public services in clinical work with families and with management of professional and competence development. With inspiration from Gregory Bateson's systemic epistemology, family therapy traditions, and cultural anthropology, a new practical framework was created. TAORA represents four dimensions of systemic practice: Atmo (relational safety), Ora (meaning and co-creation), Tao (balance and accountability), and Ecology (context and sustainability). Within this frame, the seven-step TRUST model guides leaders through a progressive learning program, and the TAORA code consists of eight values and systemic principles that help leaders foster trust, build culture, create meaning, set boundaries, and take responsible action. The example illustrates experiences in leading an organizational competence environment. Feedback showed increased psychological safety, stronger team cohesion, and reduced strain by making workload discussions transparent and anchored in shared responsibility. This presentation illustrates how systemic trust-building can serve as a preventive intervention against burnout. By equipping leaders with a systemic-relational framework, organizations can move beyond individual stress management to structural and cultural resilience. For the systemic therapy community, the TAORA framework offers a bridge from clinical family systems to organizational leadership, showing how systemic principles can foster health, sustainability, and relational coherence in wider contexts. The framework will be piloted in different organizations in 2026 and evaluated by Norwegian research centers to ensure quality and further development. Keywords: innovation, interdisciplinary, cross-dimensional, systemic leadership, relational support, burnout prevention, organizational systems, systemic resilience

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Maria Nichterlein

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Bateson and his discontents: Deleuzian thought and differences that make a difference

Short Description: This presentation explores the recursive resonances provided by an encounter between the anthropological and cybernetical investigations of Bateson, the biological and neurophysiological investigations of Maturana and the philosophical investigations of Deleuze. This process affirms a genuinely systemic gaze, which facilitates our engagement with the challenges of clinical work.

Long Description: In 1956, Gregory Bateson and the Palo Alto group published Towards a Theory of Schizophrenia. This paper was a landmark in psychiatry and provided a conceptual base for the vibrant emergence of family therapy. Bateson had come to psychiatry from anthropology with concerns about what he considered dead ends in the social sciences and saw in the then emerging science of cybernetics a solution to his misgivings. It is 70 years since this event and mental health practice continues to struggle with severe presentations and it is doing so in increasingly compromised circumstances. It seems timely to take stock of Bateson's ambivalent presence in the field. For despite his hopes Bateson was to become increasingly disillusioned with the uptake of his contributions, and he left the field of mental health in the early 1960s. This presentation will start with a review of the current centrality of social constructionist ideas in the field so as to identify their shortcomings, shortcomings that are typified by the occlusion of the contributions of the neurophysiologist Humberto Maturana. These insights will then be put to work with what I call 'Bateson's discontents', both before his involvement with the promise of cybernetics and after his departure from the field and his further work in ecological and immanent forms of understanding life. These considerations will serve as a guiding light in the search for what might be called a systemic episteme. Such a framework would strive to incorporate converging lines of enquiry in the distinctive work of the French philosophers Michel Foucault and, in particular, Gilles Deleuze, whose work toward a philosophy of Difference challenges our traditional forms of knowledge and stresses the importance of thought within a processual and fully postmodern metaphysics.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Julie Noack Skærbæk

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Educating and training systemic family therapy in a child and adolescent psychiatry setting

Short Description: This presentation is about educating SFT in the setting of child and adolescent psychiatry in Region Sjælland, Denmark. It will be pointed why SFT is very relevant in today's child and adolescent psychiatry. Benefits and obstacles in teaching SFT in the context of psychiatry will be presented

Long Description: In the mid-1990s while studying psychology at the University of Copenhagen, I became interested in systemic family therapy. This interest was sparked by a Norwegian psychologist -a friend of my mother. At the time systemic family therapy was not in the academic curriculum at the University of Copenhagen. Thus in 1999, I took a study trip to Norway. I visited Tromsø, where I met Tom Andersen and gained insight into how systemic therapy was practiced within a psychiatric ward. Later I traveled to Oslo, where I observed family therapy in a non-psychiatric setting at a family center led by Gert Henrik Vedeler and Kirsti R. Haaland. In 2000—the year I graduated—I attended the IFTA World Family Therapy Congress in Oslo. Since then systemic theory and practice have continued to shape and enrich my professional path, which has consistently centered on children, adolescents, and families—both within and outside psychiatric contexts. Throughout my career, I have worked in settings where the systemic perspective was not the prevailing or accepted approach. Since 2020, I have been working in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at a small psychotherapy clinic in Roskilde, Region Zealand, Denmark. The clinic is dedicated to supporting the quality and practice of psychotherapy for children and adolescents. We provide supervision, education, and therapy. I am responsible for the supervision and training in systemic psychotherapy, including leading a two-year specialist training program for doctors and psychologists working within child and adolescent psychiatry. I will present my approach to educating and training in systemic family therapy, along with the challenges I encounter both within and outside the psychiatric system. I will argue that these challenges highlight the vital importance of systemic family therapy within psychiatric settings, as well as beyond them.

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William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: William Northey

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: What Good Am I? Confessions of a Systemic Meta-Supervisor

Short Description: This workshop explores the vulnerable, often invisible work of meta-supervision. Through candid “confessions,” participants examine systemic challenges in supervising supervisors, including parallel process, role confusion, and organizational pressures. Attendees will gain practical tools for shifting supervisory stance, navigating layered systems, and strengthening meta-supervisory effectiveness.

Long Description: Meta-supervision—supervising supervisors—demands a level of systemic awareness often overlooked in traditional supervision training. This workshop uses a reflective, confessional framework to illuminate the unique challenges of working one level removed from clinical practice. Participants will explore how recursive interactions among families, clinicians, supervisors, and organizations create confusion about “which system” is being supervised, and how parallel process replicates patterns across multiple supervisory layers. The session addresses the emotional realities of meta-supervision, including moments of self-doubt, the pressure to appear competent, and the tension between relational attunement and gatekeeping responsibilities. Through case examples and systemic self-reflection, attendees will learn strategies for intervening indirectly, supporting supervisory leadership, mapping layered systems, and recognizing when organizational dynamics—not clinical ones—are shaping supervisory dilemmas. The workshop reframes the question “What good am I?” as an invitation to deepen systemic clarity, humility, and influence within complex supervisory ecosystems.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

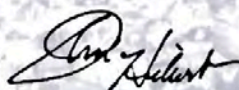
Presenter: William Northey

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

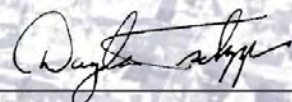
Title: Supervising Systemically for Success: A Moderated Discussion

Short Description: In this closing workshop for the supervision track, we will consider how the research, experience, and theory influence systemic supervision. This interactive session will explore the impact of the ideas presented during the Supervision Track and how they will influence their supervisory practice, and dive deeper into the ideas posed.

Long Description: With presentations focused on social justice, developmental narratives, research, efficacy, and self-reflection, this workshop will allow participants to explore and advance ideas about the future of clinical systemic supervision and the ways that the concepts presented will and can inform clinical supervisors. The Supervision Track aims to not only advance the competence of systemic supervisors, but will also expand the traditional frame to explore the role of research, self-of-the-supervisor, lived experience, meta-supervision, and social justice. Given the range of topics covered on the Supervision Track, this moderated discussion will lead to a lively and insightful discussion of systemic supervision now and into the future.



IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert



General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

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Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Maxine Notice

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Trauma-Informed Relational Therapy: Teaching Systemic Approaches in Trauma Education

Short Description: This session introduces a forthcoming textbook that bridges theory and practice in trauma-informed relational therapy. Concepts of case conceptualization and deliberate practice activities will be presented. This textbook offers educators and students an comprehensive, practice-oriented approach to integrating trauma-informed interventions and cultural sensitivity into family therapy training.

Long Description: As the field of Marriage/Couple and Family Therapy (MFT/CFT) evolves, the need for trauma-informed relational approaches has become increasingly important. From global crises to personal adversity, trauma profoundly impacts individual, couple, and family systems. In response, systemic education programs are called to integrate trauma-informed content and training into their curricula. This presentation introduces a forthcoming textbook designed to meet that need. The text provides a detailed exploration of systemic trauma-informed approaches in family therapy specifically adapted to MFT/CFT education. The text bridges systemic theory and trauma-informed practice. Its chapters aim to introduce students to practical interventions, case examples, and relational models to address trauma effectively across diverse contexts. Distinct from existing publications, this text centers developing microskills, and trauma-informed systemic treatment planning. Each chapter connects theoretical principles with hands-on clinical strategies that students can implement as they begin their clinical practice. Additionally, the text prioritizes cultural sensitivity and inclusivity so that trauma-informed interventions are responsive to the diverse experiences of clients and families. Attendees will familiarize themselves with the structure and pedagogical approach of the book, understand how it supports training in trauma-informed relational therapy, and explore ways to integrate these concepts into graduate courses. Ultimately, this resource seeks to prepare future family therapists to deliver culturally responsive, ethically grounded, and trauma-informed care that promotes healing and systemic well-being.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Keith O'Reilly

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Joining the dots: Connecting children with their families and facilitating conversations about sexual abuse

Short Description: The workshop proposes to show the benefit of the family therapy team approach with families affected by sexual abuse with reference to a case example.

Long Description: The Alders Unit, Children's Health Ireland is a multi – disciplinary clinical service, based in Dublin, Ireland that offers therapeutic intervention to children and families who have experienced child sexual abuse. Family therapy is one of the interventions offered to children and families who attend. Systemic consultation is also provided to other agencies by the family therapy team. A systemic, team approach is adopted including reflecting team. The workshop proposes to show the benefit of the family therapy team approach with families affected by sexual abuse with reference to a case example. Family therapy can offer the prospect of family members being able to negotiate a supportive and protective environment for the child who has been sexually abused. Working therapeutically from a relational perspective can re – empower the relationships between the child and other family members, facilitating the family to become a safe and nurturing environment. The team has observed that focus on the relational between the child and other family members can nurture a source of positive interpersonal experiences that may enhance a child's positive narrative which is supported in the familial context. We also recognise that the child and or family members may need some individual and therapeutic intervention to process their own thoughts and feelings in the aftermath of child sexual abuse. The team attempts to work collaboratively with families where sexual abuse has occurred, due to the child and family experiencing violation of trust as well as control and manipulation being exercised over them. There will be opportunities for reflection and feedback from participants. We will draw on the ideas of Michael White, Alan Jenkins, Marcia Sheinberg and Peter Fraenkel to illustrate how we support families to have conversations about sexual abuse.

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William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

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Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Kristi Olsen

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: A multi-family approach to children who have experienced domestic violence

Short Description: The multi-family group in Kristiansand, Norway, is a treatment for children who have experienced domestic violence. It has run annually since 2005. Research and feedback show that this is an effective and meaningful way to meet children's trauma. We will present the way we work with this group.

Long Description: The multi-family treatment group that has run annually since 2005. It is a collaboration project between Sørlandet Hospital/ABUP and Vest-Agder Family Counselling Office, both situated in the city of Kristiansand, Norway. The group was initiated by Psy.S. Heine Steinkopf. The group participants are the children from several families, together with one or more parent figure(s) to whom they feel safe together with. All the children have experienced domestic violence. Either directly, or indirectly as witnesses. Each group consists of 15-20 two-hour sessions. The treatment is anchored in both systemic and psychodynamic therapy, as well as general trauma psychology. The main difference from single family therapy is that this setting enables the families to go beyond their own perspectives and make use of the resources of other families. Through role play, playing games and symbolic rituals, they can look back at their own experiences as well as their hopes for the future. This might help to feel less alone in the world, lead to a greater openness and less reluctance to explore possible changes that need to be undertaken. Through the principle of "therapist-de-centralisation", the families become therapeutic to each other, building on the resources and strengths of the families. In this workshop, we will outline the theoretical concepts, the structure and organization of the treatment approach through case examples and practical demonstration of interventions. - Kristi Olsen, family therapist, social worker - Asbjørn A. Heskestad, family therapist, social worker

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William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

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USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Michael Olson

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Cross-Training MedFTs and Physicians in Brief MI and Biofeedback for Integrated Behavioral Health

Short Description: This presentation outlines a cross-training model where MedFT and other mental health trainees and family medicine residents learn brief motivational interviewing and biofeedback, enhancing collaborative care in integrated behavioral health settings through co-visits, supervision, and shared skill development.

Long Description: Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a well-researched, evidence-based approach that helps patients resolve ambivalence and move toward behavior change—especially applicable in healthcare settings. This presentation introduces a cross-disciplinary training model that includes Medical Family Therapy (MedFT) and other mental health trainees with family medicine residents to learn and apply brief MI and biofeedback techniques in integrated behavioral health (IBH) environments. Training occurs through shared didactics, co-visits, and group supervision, allowing mental health trainees to observe physicians using MI in real-time and provide micro-teaching and feedback. This reciprocal learning fosters skill development across disciplines and enhances patient-centered care. Biofeedback tools are introduced as brief, somatic interventions that complement MI and medical treatment plans, offering trainees and physicians a shared language for addressing stress, anxiety, and chronic conditions. Qualitative feedback from residents to date highlights increased confidence, collaboration, and perceived value of MI and biofeedback in clinical encounters. Some highlights from these data will be shared as a part of the presentation.

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William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Monica Osterbauer

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Weight Talk and Body Weight Perception Through the Lens of Attachment Theory

Short Description: This presentation explores how attachment theory can inform clinical understanding of weight talk and body weight perception in parent–child relationships, highlighting links to insecure attachment and emotional feeding. It offers a framework for clinicians and suggests future research directions within marriage and family therapy.

Long Description: Conversations about weight have emerged within society as a prevalent topic between social influencers, professionals, and families. Researchers have identified a connection between parental insecure attachment behaviors, emotional feeding, and overeating with their children. However, examining weight talk and body weight perception through the lens of attachment theory has yet to be conceptualized within the field of marriage and family therapy. This presentation examines attachment theory as a framework to conceptualize weight talk and body weight perception within parent–child relationships. The connections between attachment theory, insecure attachment, and various forms of weight talk and body weight perception within the family system are reviewed. This presentation aims to provide clinicians with a framework for understanding weight-related conversations and body weight perception from an attachment perspective to support and strengthen parent–child relationships in clinical settings. Recommendations are made for future research directions within weight talk and body weight perception literature.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Carson Outler

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Acculturation and Romantic Relationships: The Role of Push and Pull Factors

Short Description: This study explores how acculturation and push-pull factors shape relational dynamics among Hispanic and Latinx individuals in romantic relationships, using a phenomenological approach. Findings aim to inform systemic practice, culturally responsive treatment, and policies supporting immigrant communities.

Long Description: Hispanic and Latinx culture is comprised of a wide range of traditions, customs, values, and ethnic backgrounds that span multiple countries, creating a diverse tapestry of communities with different perspectives on what it means to hold this identity. Cultural identity within these communities is multifaceted and can be shaped by values from their specific country of origin, with variation occurring based on different socialization or acculturation experiences across the lifespan (Rinderle & Montoya, 2008). Acculturation refers to the way in which groups or individuals from one culture engage with or adopt elements of another culture, resulting in changes to their values, behaviors, or patterns related to culture (Romero et al., 2013). Important aspects to note that can influence this process are push and pull factors. Push factors are known as elements of one's culture that may lead to immigration or acculturation. Pull factors on the other hand, may draw someone towards a different or more dominant culture (Wildsmith- Cromarty & Conduah, 2015). These shifts greatly impact couples and families, causing both expected and unexpected changes in relational dynamics. Using qualitative data, the current study will employ a phenomenological approach to explore the acculturative experiences of 17 Hispanic and Latinx immigrants in romantic relationships to better understand how they have navigated evolving relational dynamics after immigrating to the United States. Broader conceptualizations of the relational impacts of acculturation and their implications for systemic practitioners will be offered by answering the following research question: In what ways do acculturation processes and push and pull factors shape individuals' experiences of relational dynamics among Hispanic and Latinx couples? The results of this study can inform future research with immigrant populations, therapeutic practice, and public policy. This work is imperative for guiding practitioners in the development and implementation of culturally informed treatment plans and policies.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
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Rock Island, Illinois 61201
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www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Carson Outler

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Intersections of Care: A Latent Profile Analysis of Sandwiched Caregivers

Short Description: This poster explores the lived experiences of “sandwiched caregivers” who care for both children and aging parents. Using latent profile analysis with a national sample, results identify caregiver subgroups and highlight how structural and relational forces shape caregiver stress and strain in multigenerational families.

Long Description: This research poster will present findings related to the lived experiences of "sandwiched caregivers," individuals who simultaneously provide care for dependent children and aging parents. These caregivers navigate significant emotional, financial, and logistical demands that are shaped by intersecting structural inequities. Despite the increasing visibility of multigenerational caregiving in the United States, the experiences of sandwiched caregivers remain under-theorized in family therapy. Drawing data from a national sample, the study used latent profile analysis to identify caregiver subgroups based on patterns of support and strain. Our goal is to challenge individualizing discourses that pathologize caregiver stress and instead foreground the structural and relational forces that shape caregiver outcomes.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Krista Parker

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Examining the Relationship Between Bicultural Stress and Mental Well-being Among Second-Generation Filipino Americans Living in the United States

Short Description: This workshop explores the influence of bicultural stress on mental health of second-generation Filipino Americans. Drawing from original research, research findings linking bicultural stress to depression, stress, and low self-esteem will be presented. Clinicians will be equipped with practical strategies for delivering culturally responsive care.

Long Description: Research investigating the bicultural and mental health experiences of Filipino Americans, the third largest Asian American group in the United States, are consistently overlooked, with second-generation Filipino Americans (SGFAs) facing greater risk of adverse mental health outcomes. This quantitative study addresses a critical gap in research by examining the relationship between bicultural stress and mental well-being among SGFAs living in the U.S. Using a cross-sectional survey design, a multivariate regression analysis examined the relationship between bicultural stress and four mental health constructs (as measured by depression, anxiety, stress, and self-esteem) among 302 SGFA participants. Results from this study strongly supported all five hypotheses, indicating that bicultural stress significantly predicts adverse mental health outcomes among SGFAs. Overall, SGFA participants experiencing higher levels of bicultural stress were more likely to report elevated symptoms of anxiety, general stress, depression, and lower levels of self-esteem. By examining the bicultural and mental health experiences of SGFAs, this study provides evidence-based insights to inform culturally responsive care for a subgroup that are seeking therapy at higher rates than their first-generation counterparts.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Jennifer Patterson

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Beyond Conflict: A Quantitative Investigation of Coparenting, Gendered Economic Stress, and Child Adjustment After Divorce

Short Description: The presenters share findings from their study of 300 divorced or separated parents, examining associations among cooperation, conflict, triangulation, parental stress, economic strain, and child well-being. Results highlight the importance of systemic and feminist family therapy approaches that address relational dynamics alongside broader social and economic inequities.

Long Description: Divorce remains one of the most prevalent family transitions worldwide, with significant implications for both parents and children. Decades of research demonstrate that women often face marked economic decline following divorce, while men are more likely to maintain or improve financial stability (Weitzman, 1985; McLanahan & Percheski, 2008). Families of color experience compounded disadvantages due to systemic racism embedded within labor markets and family courts. Drawing on the Minority Stress Model (Meyer, 2003) and Feminist Family Therapy (Hare-Mustin, 1978), this study conceptualizes coparenting not solely as an interpersonal process but as one situated within broader systems of race, class, and gender inequality. We conducted a quantitative survey of 300 divorced or separated parents to examine associations among coparenting cooperation, conflict, parental stress, triangulation, and child well-being, alongside contextual factors such as custody arrangements, socioeconomic status, and race/ethnicity. Findings supported our hypotheses: (1) cooperation predicted more favorable child adjustment, while conflict predicted poorer outcomes; (2) triangulation partially mediated the relationship between conflict and child outcomes; and (3) women and parents of color reported higher levels of economic strain, which amplified the negative effects of conflict on children's adjustment. Cluster analysis further revealed distinct coparenting profiles—cooperative, conflictual, and parallel—each carrying unique implications for children's well-being and developmental trajectories. As divorce rates remain high globally, systemic and family therapists must be prepared to address not only relational dynamics but also the gendered and racialized inequities shaping post-divorce functioning. This study underscores the need for therapeutic interventions that reduce triangulation, buffer parental stress, and integrate feminist and culturally responsive practices. By centering systemic inequities, therapists can more effectively support children and parents navigating the complexities of divorce, particularly women and families of color who disproportionately face economic and social stressors in its aftermath.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

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Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

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Rock Island, Illinois 61201
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Presenter: Jennifer Patterson

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Queer Dyads and Ethical Non-Monogamy: An Experiential Framework Integrating AEDP and IFS

Short Description: This presentation introduces a theory of practice integrating AEDP and IFS in work with queer couples navigating ethical non-monogamy. Through an experiential lens, it highlights how emotional risk-taking, parts work, and relational safety can support identity attunement, connection, and relational growth without defaulting to normative models of care.

Long Description: This presentation outlines a theory of practice integrating Accelerated Experiential Dynamic Psychotherapy (AEDP) and Internal Family Systems (IFS) in relational therapy with queer couples navigating ethical non-monogamy. The framework centers emotional attunement, internal parts work, and relational presence to support connection, differentiation, and healing. Ethical non-monogamy is not treated as a clinical problem but as an invitation to explore emotional safety, autonomy, attachment, and relational needs. AEDP techniques such as undoing aloneness and moment-to-moment tracking support emotional risk-taking and co-regulation. IFS strategies like parts mapping, unblending, and Self-to-part connection promote internal clarity and reduce reactivity. When integrated, these approaches offer a structured but flexible pathway for supporting relational coherence. This model views transformation as a process that occurs through emotional accompaniment and relational safety. Protective strategies are honored as adaptive responses rather than pathologized, and the therapist holds a grounding role in pacing, containment, and repair. Throughout the process, the couple is supported in navigating emotional intensity and relational restructuring while maintaining access to both Self and partner connection. Participants will learn how to integrate experiential methods that affirm diverse expressions of love and connection. The framework emphasizes clinical responsiveness, emotional depth, and relational flexibility while avoiding prescriptive or one-size-fits-all models. This presentation is intended for clinicians working with queer clients seeking to support relational exploration in an identity-affirming and emotionally attuned way.

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William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
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1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Felicia Payton

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: “Trauma, Neurobiology, and Addiction: A Systemic Approach to Collegiate Education”

Short Description: This presentation examines the systemic and neurobiological effects of trauma, highlighting its long-term impact on the autonomic nervous system and its role in addiction and chronic health problems. This is to promote trauma-informed education at the college level, providing future educators with tools to recognize, prevent, and respond.

Long Description: This presentation delves into the systemic and neurobiological effects of trauma, highlighting its enduring impact on the autonomic nervous system and its contributions to addiction and long-term physical health issues. Drawing from clinical experiences in trauma-focused environments, including detention facilities and psychiatric hospitalization units, alongside current research, the session will analyze how trauma triggers the amygdala and nucleus accumbens. This activation can lead to hypervigilance and is associated with substance use disorders as well as physical health challenges such as hypertension and cancer, particularly in individuals with complex PTSD and epigenetic vulnerabilities. These factors may contribute to the misdiagnosis of ADHD, resulting in premature medication prescriptions that increase the risk of addiction. The objective of this session is to promote trauma-informed education at the collegiate level, providing future therapists and educators with essential tools to recognize, prevent, and address trauma-related behaviors. Additionally, it will emphasize the necessity of incorporating neuroscience, family systems theory, and intergenerational trauma into academic curricula.

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William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



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1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
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USA
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Presenter: Felicia Payton

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Distinguishing Trauma-Related Responses from ADHD Symptomatology: The Critical Role of ACEs Screening in Accurate Diagnosis and Intervention

Short Description: Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) can mimic ADHD symptoms, increasing risk of misdiagnosis and ineffective treatment. This session examines overlaps between trauma responses and ADHD, emphasizing accurate screening, trauma-informed assessment, and multidisciplinary collaboration. Clinicians will learn practical strategies and case-based insights to improve diagnostic accuracy, treatment planning.

Long Description: Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) exert profound and lasting effects on child development, often manifesting in behavioral, cognitive, and emotional dysregulation. These trauma-related responses can closely resemble the symptom presentation of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), including inattention, hyperactivity, impulsivity, and difficulties with self-regulation. As a result, children with elevated ACE scores are at significant risk of being misdiagnosed with ADHD, leading to treatment plans that may overlook the root cause of their distress and hinder long-term recovery. This presentation will explore the nuanced overlap between trauma responses and ADHD symptomatology, highlighting the importance of accurate screening and differential diagnosis in clinical practice. Attendees will be introduced to evidence-based frameworks for identifying trauma-related behaviors, distinguishing them from neurodevelopmental markers of ADHD, and understanding when comorbidity may be present. Emphasis will be placed on the use of structured screening tools, trauma-informed interviewing techniques, and multidisciplinary collaboration to ensure comprehensive assessment. Clinical implications will be discussed in detail, including how misdiagnosis can perpetuate cycles of ineffective treatment, stigmatization, and unaddressed trauma. Strategies for integrating trauma-informed care into diagnostic decision-making will be provided, equipping clinicians with practical approaches to refine their evaluations. Case vignettes will illustrate common diagnostic challenges and demonstrate how a trauma-sensitive lens can shift treatment planning toward more effective, holistic interventions. By the conclusion of the session, participants will be better prepared to recognize the intersection between ACE-related trauma and ADHD symptoms, apply screening practices that reduce diagnostic error, and implement strategies that support resilience and healing. This work underscores the critical role of trauma-informed clinical practice in fostering accurate diagnosis, tailored interventions, and improved outcomes for vulnerable children.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Anthony Pennant

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Culturally Attuned Structural Family Therapy: Promoting Social Justice with Global Majority and Unique Needs Communities

Short Description: This workshop explores Structural Family Therapy (SFT), a model developed for families of color in the 1960s. It will teach SFT's core principles and social justice foundations, demonstrating their relevance. Participants will learn to apply SFT to dismantle systemic inequalities, addressing trauma, oppression, and migration through culturally attuned interventions.

Long Description: Structural Family Therapy (SFT), pioneered by Salvador Minuchin, offers a powerful framework for understanding and intervening in family systems by focusing on the organization of the family, its subsystems, and the boundaries between them. SFT was born in the 1960s based on the need to create a model of therapy that reflected the norms of families of color who were non-responsive to traditional and limited models of therapy at that time. This workshop will teach the core principles of SFT and highlight its foundations of social justice, demonstrating their profound relevance in addressing the nuanced challenges faced by global majority and unique needs communities currently. Participants will explore how SFT concepts such as enmeshment, disengagement, hierarchies, and alliances can be critically applied to understand and dismantle systemic inequalities and promote equitable family dynamics. The workshop will move beyond traditional applications to address issues like intergenerational trauma, the impact of systemic oppression (e.g., racism, ableism, classism), migration experiences, and the unique strengths and challenges within diverse cultural contexts. Lastly, the concepts of the workshop will be accompanied by case studies with video demonstrations of techniques.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Nelson Perez

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: “Experiences in Teaching Micro-therapeutic Skills in MFT Master/Doctoral Practicum Courses: A Constructivist-Narrative approach.”

Short Description: This presentation describes the instructional strategies used by two family therapy educators to teach essential therapeutic micro-skills during MFT master’s and doctoral internships. These instructors utilize a constructive narrative approach that emphasizes students’ active engagement and collaborative development of effective dialogues and clinical practices

Long Description: This presentation explains how two MFT instructors help master's and doctoral students learn important therapy skills during their internships. The instructors employ a positive storytelling method that engages students and encourages them to collaborate on creating therapeutic conversations and effective working methods. The instructors also assess how far students have progressed in their training and utilize class activities to help them transition from basic to more advanced therapy skills. Aligning with collaborative narrative approaches, educators invite students to narrate their supervisory goals. Each student writes a brief self-narrative as a therapist, including how they perceive changes, their role as a therapist, and one problematic clinical story they would like to address. Educators could have students pair up with another student or work in a group setting. The partner needs to provide three scaffolding questions that invite students to offer alternative meanings or exceptions to the identified problematic clinical story. The others can act as a reflection team to share their observations and reflections, enriching students’ original narratives. In addition, educators recognize students’ personal, professional, and sociocultural backgrounds, and professional development levels. Educators have students role-playing beginning (e.g., active listening, open questions, attending behaviors), intermediate (e.g., reflection of therapeutic process, further inquiries), and advanced (e.g., intentional use or integration of model-specific interventions with self-awareness) micro-therapeutic skills in triads (therapist, client, and observer). Students intentionally practice one level of skills at a time and reflect on their progress before moving into the next level. After each set of practice, the triads give feedback and share their reflections. As students practice micro-therapeutic skills and reflect on these experiential activities, educators highlight their importance for social dialogues, shaping students’ identity as a clinician, establishing supervision alliances, and developing relational lenses in their clinical work.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
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Presenter: Alanna Perlin

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Longitudinal Integrated Behavioral Health Training for Family Medicine Residents

Short Description: Behavioral health interventions in medicine are often done by mental health providers. This project reviews the value to Family Medicine residents in having real-time training with a BH provider. This is done through pre-clinic coaching related to BH interventions, seeing patients together, and reviewing outcomes during precepting.

Long Description: Primary care physicians (PCPs) are often the first to identify mental health concerns during routine visits, yet many feel underprepared to address them. Integrated Behavioral Health (IBH) helps bridge this gap by embedding mental health services into primary care, improving access and outcomes—especially for patients with chronic conditions or from underserved communities. However, many clinics do not have easy access to mental health providers, often due to workforce shortages, and patients may be reluctant to seek treatment even when recommended. Training physicians in behavioral health interventions provides a benefit to both the provider and the patients, and providers report increased confidence and competence when IBH is implemented. With over 64% of PCPs reporting burnout in 2023, the integration of behavioral health into primary care settings is increasingly seen as a strategy to reduce stress. Despite this, consistent training remains a challenge. Residency programs play a key role yet lack standardized behavioral health curricula. Recognizing this, the Wellstar Douglas Family Health Residency program revised its behavioral health curriculum in fall 2023 to include a more longitudinal, hands-on training approach. This includes weekly, supervised sessions where residents practice behavioral health skills with patients, aiming to build a more competent and confident workforce ready to deliver integrated care beyond residency. Data was collected from patients, residents, and faculty members over 6 months. Each group completed anonymous surveys assessing perceptions of the behavioral health clinic curriculum. Initial data collection shows that almost 95% of patients reported a positive experience with the addition of behavioral health to their routine visits and 100% of patients still felt their primary concern was addressed. Three-quarters of residents found participation in weekly behavioral health clinics to be helpful, 87.5% reported increased confidence, and 62% indicated more willingness to use BH tools on their own.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
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Presenter: Thomas Persson

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Knowledge and Attitude Programme (KAP) - Talks for Parents of Children with Disabilities

Short Description: Being the parent of a child with a disability usually means a lifestyle change with increased pressures and new demands. Parents are faced with specific parenting challenges and are assumed to need specialised support. KAP conversations is presented in a role play.

Long Description: Parents of children with disabilities need to acquire knowledge about the child's disability, diagnosis, and specific needs. Parents must be able to cope with the emotional strain of having a child with a disability and deal with the environment's negative attitudes towards disabilities and diagnosis. Parents may experience loss and trauma and feel stigmatised. The parents are assumed to need specialised support with the specific challenges they face. KAP consists of eight themes focusing on central aspects of parenting a child with a disability. KAP is implemented in the form of two 1-1,5 hour sessions with one or two parents together with one or two counsellors. During the conversations parents are given the opportunity to reflect on their own parenthood and thoughts, feeling about their child's disability and diagnosis. KAP's goal is to help parents to improve their parenting skills by both increasing their knowledge and improving their attitudes towards their child's disability and diagnosis. The counsellor is taking on a not-knowing position to investigate with curiosity the experiences, thoughts, feelings and actions of the parents. Counsellor is to be a conversations leader, not an expert on diagnosis and disabilities. KAP is based on Milan group's ideas on the relational implications of a diagnosis, Michael White's narrative therapy and externalisation, as well as Lev Vygotsky's concept zone of proximal development.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

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Rock Island, Illinois 61201
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Presenter: Sebastian Perumbilly

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Innovative Pathways for Transforming Addiction Treatment Through Family Participation: Polish and Indian Perspectives

Short Description: This study explores the perspectives of 76 Polish and 93 Indian clinicians specializing in substance use disorder treatment. It examines their strategies for involving families, addresses socio-cultural challenges, stigma, and highlights culturally sensitive approaches to improve addiction treatment outcomes.

Long Description: There seems to be a global urgency in addiction treatment communities to reduce harm to human life and relationships through developing innovative and effective treatments for substance use disorders (SUDs). Research consistently shows that when substance use decreases, families' overall interpersonal relationships and wellbeing improve, resources grow stronger, and patients' participation in addiction treatment increases. Furthermore, these changes lead to the family system's improved resilience, prevention of relapse, and strengthening of overall treatment outcomes (Steinglass, 2013; Copello et al., 2010; Nattala et al., 2010; O'Farrell & Clements, 2013; Roozen et al., 2010). However, most of these studies focused on the perspectives of patients and their families. Studies focusing on the perspectives of clinicians are scarce (Perumbilly & Anderson, 2015; Short et al., 2016; Van Boekel et al., 2014). To address the paucity in this area, this study explores and expands the perspectives of SUD-focused clinicians in Poland ($n = 76$) and India ($n = 93$), highlighting various strategies they use to involve families in treatment and the impact of socio-cultural differences. Furthermore, this study sheds light on overcoming the challenges stemming from societal attitudes and stigma, and on broadening culturally sensitive treatment approaches.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

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Rock Island, Illinois 61201
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Presenter: Sebastian Perumbilly

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Individuation in Families: A Jungian Path to Facilitate Connection and Autonomy

Short Description: This presentation demonstrates how Jungian psychology enriches family systems therapy by fostering autonomy and connection in culturally grounded families. Using a Hispanic immigrant family case, it highlights shadow, archetypes, and individuation as tools for symbolic healing, cultural attunement, and transforming family conflict into opportunities for collective growth.

Long Description: Jungian theory emphasizes individuation—the process by which individuals integrate unconscious aspects of the psyche, such as the shadow and archetypes, to achieve greater wholeness (Bekteshi & Kang, 2020; Bologna, Trede, & Patton, 2020; Rayburn, McWey, Gonzales-Backen, 2021; Van Hook & Glick, 2020). This presentation explores the integration of Jungian psychology into family systems therapy to foster both autonomy and connection in culturally grounded families. Jungian concepts provide a depth-oriented lens for understanding family dynamics, reframing symptoms not as pathology but as symbolic expressions calling for transformation. We illustrate this approach through a clinical case of a Hispanic immigrant family in the U.S. navigating unemployment, depression, and adolescent anger. The father's job loss and withdrawal reflect a collapse of the paternal archetype; the mother embodies the warrior-mother archetype, risking over-identification; the teenage daughter externalizes the family's repressed rage as the trickster; and the younger son mirrors emotional disconnection as the helpless child. These dynamics demonstrate how family members unconsciously enact archetypal roles and project them onto each other. Therapeutic interventions emphasize symbolic expression, projection awareness, shadow work, and archetypal reflection. Techniques include family genograms as archetypal maps, amplification, active imagination, and dialogical exercises allowing members to communicate from inner figures. The aim is to support individuation while honoring familismo, promoting both authentic self-expression and relational connection. This Jungian-systemic framework offers a powerful tool for transforming family conflict into opportunities for growth, particularly within collectivist cultures. By attending to archetypes, the shadow, and symbolic meaning, therapists can integrate imagination, culture, and spirituality into family therapy, supporting both personal development and collective healing (Bekteshi & Kang, 2020; Bologna, Trede, & Patton, 2020; Renzaho, Dhingra, & Georgeou, 2017; Rohde-Brown, 2023).

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Samuel Phelps

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Integrating Relationship Education to Strengthen Therapists and Their Clients

Short Description: Post-webinar data from the Utah Marriage Commission shows that professionals overwhelmingly report relationship education webinars benefit their professional practice. This poster explores these perceptions and discusses how relationship education can enhance professional effectiveness and client outcomes.

Long Description: This poster presents findings from post-webinar evaluations conducted by the Utah Marriage Commission to assess the perceived professional value of relationship education webinars. Participants—comprising a range of helping professionals including counselors, educators, and social service providers—were asked to rate their agreement with the statement: “The material presented in this webinar will be of benefit to my professional services.” Results indicate that the vast majority of participants either strongly agreed or agreed, reflecting a clear perception that relationship education enhances their professional skills and service delivery. Many respondents also shared that the content improved their communication strategies, empathy toward clients, and ability to facilitate healthy relationship dynamics in their work. These findings underscore the relevance of relationship education not only for couples and families but also for professionals who serve them. Relationship skills—such as active listening, conflict resolution, and emotional regulation—are foundational competencies that strengthen professional practice across disciplines. The poster will also highlight how structured digital resources, produced in partnership with Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, can extend the benefits of these webinars by offering self-paced, evidence-based learning that professionals can share with clients to reinforce therapeutic and educational goals. By examining professionals’ own perceptions of value, this study contributes to a growing understanding of how relationship education supports both practitioner development and the well-being of the communities they serve.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Warwick Phipps

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Beyond the Symptoms: Systemic Perspectives on Menopause and Late-Onset Bipolar Disorder.

Short Description: A case-based presentation demonstrating Systemic Theoretical thinking through the application of the Integrative Interactional Approach to Psychotherapy, offering diagnostic clarity between late-onset bipolar disorder and menopause as well as provide multi-layered treatment strategies for holistic care.

Long Description: This presentation addresses the complex and often overlooked intersection between menopause and late-onset bipolar disorder, highlighting the unintentional yet unavoidable challenges that arise from siloed health care systems. Utilising the Integrative Interactional Approach to Psychotherapy—an application of Systemic Theoretical thinking—this session examines a complex, multi-diagnostic case to illustrate the value of systemic perspectives in clinical practice. Through a detailed case analysis, the presentation demonstrates how systemic thinking facilitates diagnostic clarification, enabling clinicians to accurately differentiate between the psychological and organic manifestations of menopause and those of late-onset bipolar disorder. This distinction is critical, as misdiagnosis or delayed intervention can lead to significant psychological distress, suboptimal health management, and breakdowns within family and community systems. The session further explores multi-level systemic treatment interventions, advocating for a holistic and integrative approach to care. By addressing the broader relational and systemic contexts in which individuals experience these conditions, the presentation underscores the importance of timely, collaborative, and comprehensive health care strategies. Ultimately, this highlights how an integrative systemic formulation and holistic treatment interventions can mitigate the adverse impacts of misdiagnosis, reduce the burden on public health systems, and promote optimal wellness for families and communities. Attendees will gain practical insights into the application of systemic theory in differential diagnosis and treatment planning, as well as strategies for fostering integrative care pathways that support both individual and family wellbeing.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Prabashny Pillay

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Social Justice and Trauma - informed Supervision

Short Description: To explore the impact of trauma on supervisors and supervisees and the stories around social justice that inform the positions we take. In developing conversations about power in our supervisory positions we find versions of the self which fits our ethical stance and diminish the impact of burn out.

Long Description: In the workshop we will think about the impact of trauma in our work as supervisors, and consider what it means to take a social justice stance in our supervisory practice. Little is written about the impact of Trauma on the supervisory process for both supervisor and supervisee, and this is something we would like to explore. We would like to create a dialogue to support participants to further develop ideas from their own experiences of holding power and being powerless. We want to think about the stories we tell that build the self of the supervisor. How do we build a supervisory self that fits with our sense of our personal ethical position? What do you stand for as a supervisor? How can these ideas have a bigger presence in supervision? We will develop these ideas through descriptions of our own clinical supervision, and from our teaching together at the Institute of Family Therapy London.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Alexis Pizzulo

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Engaging Loved Ones in the Recovery of Adolescents and Young Adults Experiencing Homelessness

Short Description: Most unaccompanied youth (14-24 years) living on the streets report some contact with supportive others (SOs). Yet, efforts to engage SOs in their recovery are limited. In this presentation, the process for engaging SOs using Community Reinforcement and Family Training (CRAFT) and family systems therapy will be presented.

Long Description: Homelessness is still a major problem and is devastating for youths. Diagnosed alcohol and drug use disorders range from 50% to 86% (Burke et al., 2023) which is of concern since substance use has been associated with a lower likelihood of exiting the streets. The homeless service system for youth is woefully underfunded and enormous service gaps exist in being able to engage, treat and house the increasing numbers of youth experiencing homelessness (YEH). Engaging the family members and/or supportive others of individuals with a SUD has consistently been shown effective at reducing SUD and associated mental health problems (Bufford & Lappan, 2024). While studies have documented the social network characteristics of unaccompanied YEH, no study has developed an intervention to engage a family/social network member to facilitate and support that youths' substance use treatment. Supportive others (SOs) can include a family member or friend (chosen family) over the age of 15 years with no history of abuse or exploitation of the YEH. Engaging SOs in the YEH's SUD treatment could have significant implications for substance use outcomes, but also for housing and mental health. Therefore, the current study provides a first step towards addressing these devastating conditions through engaging SOs of these youth which can also confer significant benefit to SO. The intervention consists of the Community Reinforcement and Family Training (CRAFT; Myers et al., 2002) which targets supportive others of unmotivated persons with SUD, offering approximately 12 sessions with the goal to engage the substance user into treatment. In addition, family systems therapy focuses on improving family/SO interaction patterns. The process for adapting and implementing these interventions to the unique family and social relationships of YEH will be described, using a case example.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

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Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Alexis Pizzulo

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: When Home is a Person: A Case Exploration on Psychotherapy with Young Couples Experiencing Homelessness

Short Description: Romantic partnerships serve as important resources, offering emotional support, social connection, and financial stability. Yet, specific challenges posed by housing insecurity leave many young people uniquely underresourced, increasing the reliance and strain on their romantic partnerships. This case presentation will discuss considerations for cognitive therapy with young couples experiencing homelessness.

Long Description: A growing number of young adults experience homelessness (YAEH) due to stagnant wages, rising costs, and lack of access to supportive services (Cleveland, 2020). YAEH have higher rates of substance use and victimization before and during homelessness, and are at greater risk of experiencing mood disorders and traumatic events than their housed peers (Burke et al., 2022). Further, housing insecurity is a compounding risk, with those who experience it at a younger age having exponentially greater risk of prolonged homelessness (Parpouchi et al., 2021). These hurdles exacerbate the instability inherent to emerging adulthood, when many young people are still forming their personal identities and cultivating their social and economic independence (Arnett, 2000). At this life stage, interpersonal relationships are critical to an individual's emotional and psychosocial development (O'Connor et al., 2011). Romantic partnerships, in particular, help to establish self-worth and interdependence (Barry et al., 2009), and also allow for pooling of financial and other resources—a notable benefit for resource-limited individuals, including YAEH. Further, for those with unreliable social networks, a romantic partner may be one of the only supportive people in their life. Social support for YAEH is often insufficient, due to conflict, victimization, and marginalization (Milburn et al., 2024). Importantly, connectedness is a protective factor for suicidal risk—a leading cause of death for YAEH (Bao et al., 2000). Thus, when stress is high and supportive others are rare, many YAEH enter romantic partnerships. To serve the mental health needs of YAEH, providers must tailor treatment to recognize the multifaceted contributors to their mental and relational health. Using case examples, this presentation will outline clinical considerations for psychotherapy with romantically partnered YAEH. Special attention will be given to suicide prevention cognitive therapy and YAEH couples reporting suicidal ideation, including common themes and intervention recommendations.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Lauren Power

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Adult attachment, trait mindfulness, and sexual outcomes within the LGBT community

Short Description: This study investigates the interplay between adult attachment, trait mindfulness, sexual desire, and sexual satisfaction, aiming to challenge heteronormative assumptions in family science while fostering inclusive, culturally responsive clinical practices that honor and amplify the diverse experiences of LGBT individuals, couples, and families.

Long Description: Heteronormativity, or the implicit moral assumption that heterosexuality is the preferred or natural sexual orientation, remains pervasive in the field of family therapy and creates significant challenges for researchers and therapists. Its dominance narrows the generalizability of study findings and risks guiding clinical decisions with frameworks that inadequately reflect the realities and lived experiences of LGBT individuals, couples, and families. To resist this limitation, it is imperative to expand family science research with diverse samples that confront and disrupt heteronormativity while supporting more effective, culturally responsive treatment options. Although prior work has linked adult attachment, trait mindfulness, sexual desire, and sexual satisfaction, these variables have largely been studied in isolation and primarily within heterosexual samples. This gap is critical, as sexual concerns such as low sexual desire or low sexual satisfaction transcend sexual orientation and gender identity, influencing wellbeing and relationships across communities. Addressing this oversight, the present study explores the interplay between adult attachment, trait mindfulness, sexual desire, and sexual satisfaction within the LGBT community. A sample of individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender completed self-report measures assessing attachment anxiety and avoidance, trait mindfulness, sexual desire, and sexual satisfaction. By integrating these constructs into a single model, this study contributes new insight into the dynamics of sexuality and relational processes beyond heteronormative frames. Furthermore, this study seeks to expand dialogue within family science and clinical practice, highlighting the necessity of inclusive clinical approaches. Ultimately, this research aims not only to challenge the dominance of heteronormativity but also to foster conversations that honor and amplify the diverse lived experiences of LGBT individuals, couples, and families.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
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Presenter: Josephine Rabb

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Uncovering the Unexpected: Supporting Families Affected By Surprise DNA Discoveries

Short Description: This presentation explores therapeutic approaches for families affected by surprise DNA discoveries, known as Misattributed Parentage Experiences (MPE). It will address emotional and relational challenges in the family system and offer practical strategies for clinicians to support clients and navigate difficult family conversations.

Long Description: The rapid rise in direct-to-consumer genetic testing has introduced a new and complex landscape into family life. Clients are increasingly presenting in therapy after uncovering shocking biological truths—misattributed parentage, unknown siblings, or concealed donor conception. These “surprise DNA discoveries” can profoundly disrupt family systems, leading to ruptures in trust, identity confusion, loyalty conflicts, and long-term relational strain (Right to Know, n.d.; Riley, 2012). This presentation will focus on how mental health professionals can clinically address the family dynamics that emerge in the wake of such revelations. Drawing on systemic family therapy principles, this session will equip clinicians with a beginning conceptual framework and entry-level practical tools needed to support families navigating the emotional and relational upheaval that often accompanies these discoveries. Through examining a case study and conceptual discussion, we will examine how to work with families, and special attention will be given to intergenerational communication, secrecy and disclosure, and role renegotiation that influence family meaning-making. **Background and Significance:** The phenomenon of surprise DNA discoveries is no longer rare. An estimated 10% of people who take at-home DNA tests uncover unexpected genetic information that reshapes their understanding of familial relationships (Regalado, 2019). The implications reach beyond the individual—rippling through immediate and extended family systems, often triggering psychological crises and relational fractures that impact people’s sense of belonging as well as identity. Despite its growing prevalence, this issue remains underexplored in clinical literature and professional training. Therapists are often unprepared to address the unique combination of identity shock, grief, secrecy, and relational betrayal that clients may face. Clinicians need a robust, ethically grounded framework to hold these experiences and guide families toward healing and reorganization.

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William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
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Rock Island, Illinois 61201
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Presenter: Afarin Rajaei

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: AI in the Clinical World: Navigating Challenges and Embracing Opportunities

Short Description: This session explores how artificial intelligence is shaping the clinical landscape. From diagnostic tools to therapeutic chatbots, AI presents both ethical dilemmas and practical opportunities. Participants will engage in discussion on how clinicians can critically and responsibly integrate AI into practice while maintaining relational, systemic, and culturally attuned care.

Long Description: The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into clinical practice is rapidly transforming the way mental health services are delivered, documented, and accessed. While AI offers unprecedented opportunities—such as enhancing diagnostic accuracy, expanding access to care, and streamlining documentation—it also raises critical questions about ethics, relational depth, equity, and the future role of the therapist. This presentation provides a balanced, systemic exploration of both the promises and the pitfalls of AI in the clinical world. Drawing from current literature, practical examples, and real-world applications, we will examine how AI tools are being used in therapy settings, including assessment platforms, symptom tracking systems, and language-based models like ChatGPT for psychoeducation or skill reinforcement. We will also explore the limitations of AI, such as risks to confidentiality, dehumanization of care, cultural bias embedded in datasets, and the need for clinical oversight. The session will offer clinicians a framework to think critically and ethically about AI integration, including how to assess clinical appropriateness, maintain therapeutic presence, and support systemic goals. Attendees will leave with practical considerations for navigating the shifting landscape, as well as recommendations for continuing education, client conversations, and interdisciplinary collaboration. This presentation aligns with IFTA's emphasis on innovation, inclusion, and responsiveness to global trends in therapy. It is designed for practitioners, supervisors, educators, and policy influencers who are seeking to engage with AI not from a place of fear or hype—but from a grounded, systemic, and ethically informed perspective.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

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Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
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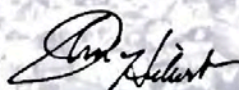
Presenter: Afarin Rajaei

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

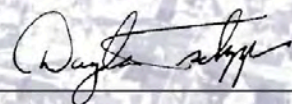
Title: Publishing Without Panic: A Therapist's Guide to Academic Journals

Short Description: This session offers practical guidance for therapists, students, and researchers seeking to publish their work in academic journals. Participants will explore common challenges in the publication process and learn accessible strategies for developing, submitting, and revising manuscripts while maintaining their clinical voice and systemic perspective.

Long Description: This session offers practical guidance for therapists, students, and researchers seeking to publish their work in academic journals. Participants will explore common challenges in the publication process and learn accessible strategies for developing, submitting, and revising manuscripts while maintaining their clinical voice and systemic perspective.



IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert



General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Ashley Rakela

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Satir Human Validation Process Model: Applications to Indigenous Populations

Short Description: This presentation explores whether the Satir Human Validation Process Model can be culturally responsive when applied to therapeutic work with Indigenous families while highlighting a case study with a family from the Lummi Nation that integrates ceremony, storytelling, family sculpting, family reconstruction, and an exploration of incongruent communication stances.

Long Description: This presentation examines the integration of the Satir Human Validation Process Model (SHVPM) with Indigenous populations, focusing on a culturally grounded case study involving a Lummi Nation family. The SHVPM emphasizes congruent communication, self-worth, and experiential interventions such as family sculpting and reconstruction. These elements align meaningfully with Indigenous values of storytelling, ceremony, and relational interconnectedness. Through a detailed case illustration, we explore how the SHVPM was adapted to honor Indigenous spiritual and relational frameworks. The therapeutic process was treated as ceremony, incorporating traditional elements such as cedar, seawater, drumming, and ancestral prayer. Interventions were guided by metaphors like “mending the net,” which resonated with the family’s cultural worldview and facilitated healing from intergenerational trauma, emotional disconnection, and identity struggles. The presentation also addresses the broader social justice and intersectionality lens, acknowledging the historical and systemic challenges Indigenous communities face, including colonialism, cultural erasure, and underrepresentation in mental health literature. We critique the dominance of Western paradigms in family therapy and advocate for decolonizing practices that center Indigenous wisdom and relational healing. Participants will gain insight into: The core principles of the SHVPM and their alignment with Indigenous worldviews, practical strategies for adapting therapeutic models to be culturally congruent, and the importance of humility, cultural attunement, and ceremony in therapeutic work with Indigenous families. This session is ideal for couple and family therapists interested in cultural humility in family therapy, Indigenous mental health, experiential family therapy models, and the decolonization of family therapy. It invites reflection on how therapists can respectfully integrate traditional healing practices into contemporary clinical frameworks to foster deeper connection, resilience, and transformation.

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William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Adél Ras-Coetzee

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Beyond the Symptoms: Systemic Perspectives on Menopause and Late-Onset Bipolar Disorder.

Short Description: A case-based presentation demonstrating Systemic Theoretical thinking through the application of the Integrative Interactional Approach to Psychotherapy, offering diagnostic clarity between late-onset bipolar disorder and menopause as well as provide multi-layered treatment strategies for holistic care.

Long Description: This presentation addresses the complex and often overlooked intersection between menopause and late-onset bipolar disorder, highlighting the unintentional yet unavoidable challenges that arise from siloed health care systems. Utilising the Integrative Interactional Approach to Psychotherapy—an application of Systemic Theoretical thinking—this session examines a complex, multi-diagnostic case to illustrate the value of systemic perspectives in clinical practice. Through a detailed case analysis, the presentation demonstrates how systemic thinking facilitates diagnostic clarification, enabling clinicians to accurately differentiate between the psychological and organic manifestations of menopause and those of late-onset bipolar disorder. This distinction is critical, as misdiagnosis or delayed intervention can lead to significant psychological distress, suboptimal health management, and breakdowns within family and community systems. The session further explores multi-level systemic treatment interventions, advocating for a holistic and integrative approach to care. By addressing the broader relational and systemic contexts in which individuals experience these conditions, the presentation underscores the importance of timely, collaborative, and comprehensive health care strategies. Ultimately, this highlights how an integrative systemic formulation and holistic treatment interventions can mitigate the adverse impacts of misdiagnosis, reduce the burden on public health systems, and promote optimal wellness for families and communities. Attendees will gain practical insights into the application of systemic theory in differential diagnosis and treatment planning, as well as strategies for fostering integrative care pathways that support both individual and family wellbeing.

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William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Jorund Birgitte Reme Jolstad

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: The Therapist as a living instrument

Short Description: How can we as therapists use ourselves more consciously within the therapeutic space? In this workshop we explore the therapist as a living instrument through empathic resonance, authentic connection and awareness of bodily signals. This is an invitation to listen with your whole being, through experiential exercises and reflection.

Long Description: The Therapist as Instrument In Emotion-Focused Therapy and other experiential approaches, the therapist is not a neutral observer, but an active, living instrument in the therapeutic process. This workshop explores how empathic resonance, authentic connection and intuitive bodily awareness can deepen therapeutic presence and emotional attunement. Working in this way is both powerful and demanding. It calls for openness, vulnerability, and emotional availability — qualities that also require grounding and self-care. Together we will explore what it takes to sustain this depth of engagement: how to stay connected to oneself while staying attuned to the client, and how to use our own emotional and bodily signals without becoming overwhelmed. Through experiential exercises, reflection and dialogue, we will practice recognizing the subtle balance between resonance and regulation. The workshop invites you to explore not only how you use yourself as a therapeutic instrument, but also how you care for that instrument.

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William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

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Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
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www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Eleanor Riesen

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: VERY RIGHT AND VERY ALONE: NAVIGATING DEFENSIVE BLOCKS IN EMOTIONALLY FOCUSED COUPLE THERAPY

Short Description: This presentation explores defensiveness through the lens of attachment theory and EFCT. Participants will learn to recognize the varied forms of defensiveness and understand the attachment strategies and relational cycles that sustain it. Emphasis will be placed on therapeutic interventions while gently accessing the underlying vulnerable emotions.

Long Description: Defensiveness is one of the most common yet misunderstood dynamics in relationships and therapy. Often seen as resistance or obstruction, defensiveness is, at its core, a protective response to perceived threat, shame, or disconnection. This presentation explores defensiveness through the lens of attachment theory and Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy (EFCT), reframing it as a survival strategy rather than a flaw. Participants will learn to recognize the varied forms of defensiveness—counterattack, withdrawal, intellectualization, and minimization—and understand the attachment strategies and relational cycles that sustain it. Emphasis will be placed on therapeutic interventions that validate the protective intent of defensive responses while gently accessing the underlying vulnerable emotions. By shifting from judgment to curiosity and compassion, clinicians can help clients transform defensive reactions into opportunities for openness, connection, and repair. This session provides both conceptually grounding and practical tools for working with defensiveness in clinical practice.

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William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

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www.ifta-familytherapy.org

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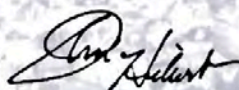
Presenter: Mark Rivett

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

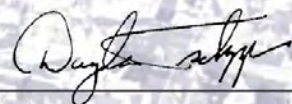
Title: Supervising Systemically for Success: A Moderated Discussion

Short Description: In this closing workshop for the supervision track, we will consider how the research, experience, and theory influence systemic supervision. This interactive session will explore the impact of the ideas presented during the Supervision Track and how they will influence their supervisory practice, and dive deeper into the ideas posed.

Long Description: With presentations focused on social justice, developmental narratives, research, efficacy, and self-reflection, this workshop will allow participants to explore and advance ideas about the future of clinical systemic supervision and the ways that the concepts presented will and can inform clinical supervisors. The Supervision Track aims to not only advance the competence of systemic supervisors, but will also expand the traditional frame to explore the role of research, self-of-the-supervisor, lived experience, meta-supervision, and social justice. Given the range of topics covered on the Supervision Track, this moderated discussion will lead to a lively and insightful discussion of systemic supervision now and into the future.



IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert



General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

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Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

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Rock Island, Illinois 61201
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Presenter: Jade Roberts

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Response to ICE Raids: A Thematic Analysis of Community Conversations

Short Description: Presenters will review a thematic analysis of community responses to ICE raids since the start of the Trump Administration. Presenters will discuss themes extracted from public commentary from BIPOC people who discuss their responses to ICE raids and their engagement with forum commentators. Implications for clinical practice discussed.

Long Description: In a recent ruling issued by the U.S. Supreme Court, *Noem v. Vazquez Perdomo* (2025), the Supreme Court overruled a District Court and permitted the Trump administration to question anyone they suspect of being undocumented based on the way they look, how they speak, and where they work. In the last 10 months, social media and public discussions have given ample examples of the ways that racial profiling targets BIPOC with countless videos of ICE agents violently subduing people to detain them. As such, some have described, just as Justice Sotomayor's dissent of the ruling, that these experiences subjugate Latinos into second class citizenship. While literature identifies the resourcefulness and resilience of immigrant families as they live with undocumented status, there is also significant research noting the hardships of immigrants' lives in the U.S., especially in recent years where it seems more permissible for people to openly vilify and discriminate undocumented people. However, the enforcement of immigration policy our communities witnessed in the first Trump administration drastically differs with the escalation of violence currently seen in communities since the start of Trump's second term. Many community members seek to spotlight injustices via their recordings of violent ICE encounters, while others voice their concern and desperation about what they see and experience. Therefore, it is essential to amplify community voices of those who openly share their responses to immigration enforcement tactics by the current administration. Thus, this presentation will review a thematic analysis of community responses to ICE raids. Presenters will discuss themes extracted from public commentary from BIPOC who discuss their responses to ICE raids and their engagement with forum commentators. Using the emergent themes, presenters will also describe clinical considerations for mental health practitioners working with people who are negatively affected by socio-political movements.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Peter Robinson

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: The Evolved Nest: An Evolutionary, Neurobiological and Relationally Informed Family Therapy: Next Revolution

Short Description: This workshop aims to explore how integrating the Evolved Nest and Kinship Indigenous Worldview can significantly enhance Family Therapy. The workshop will outline nine practical ways for clinicians to assess and integrate the components of the Evolved Nest into Systemic Psychotherapy.

Long Description: ‘The Evolved Nest: An Evolutionary, Neurobiological and Relationally Informed Family Therapy’ Aim: In this workshop, we aim to examine how the ‘Evolved Nest’ combined with the ‘Kinship Indigenous Worldview’ profoundly enhances family therapy. Developed mainly by Darcia Narvaez, Professor Emerita, the ‘Evolved Nest’ refers to the natural caregiving conditions that support optimal human development and well-being. This evolutionary framework explains how this form of early life care impacts long-term health. In our view, the ‘Evolved Nest’ offers a very important contribution to Family Therapy as it moves us from a theoretical base to embed our practice in compelling current science-based ‘facts’ supported by converging evidence from several scientific fields. A) ‘Evolved Nest’ elements positively influence the oxytocin system, a key neurobiological system for social bonding and emotional regulation. These are key areas in Family Therapy. B) A deficit in ‘Evolved Nest’ experiences can produce stress-reactive nervous systems and issues with vagal regulation that very negatively impact family relationships. C) Promoting the ‘Evolved Nest’ components can enhance prosocial behaviours, empathy, compassion, overall well-being, and counter the effects of early stress and developmental deficits in families. D) The ‘Evolved Nest’ helps us move away from pathologising and individualising “trauma-informed” thinking to more relational “wellness-informed” practice congruent with Systemic Psychotherapy ethics and values. The workshop will explore how clinicians can integrate the ‘Evolved Nest’ into their therapeutic practice. It will cover how the 9 components of the Evolved Nest optimise human development and well-being, and explore ways of incorporating these into Family Therapy and Systemic Psychotherapy assessment and practice. The nine elements of the ‘Evolved Nest’ include Nature Connection, Healing Practices, Responsive Relationships, a Positive Social Climate, Self-directed Play, Positive Touch (No Negative Touch), Soothing Perinatal Experiences, alloparenting, and On-demand breastfeeding.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
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Presenter: Sarah Rose

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Systemic Therapy Meets Neurofeedback and EMDR: Advancing Integrative Clinical Practice

Short Description: This presentation introduces an integrative framework combining systemic therapy, Neurofeedback, and EMDR. Together, these modalities enhance trauma recovery, emotional regulation, and relational healing. Case examples illustrate how neurobiological recalibration and memory reprocessing align with systemic practice, offering clinicians practical strategies for multi-layered interventions that foster resilience and lasting change.

Long Description: This presentation highlights the innovative convergence of systemic therapy with two evidence-based modalities—Neurofeedback and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR). While each has a strong track record for addressing trauma, anxiety, and dysregulation, their integration creates a synergistic pathway for deeper and more sustainable therapeutic change. Neurofeedback leverages neuroplasticity to recalibrate brainwave activity and enhance emotional regulation, while EMDR facilitates the adaptive reprocessing of distressing experiences. When situated within a systemic framework, these modalities not only promote individual healing but also illuminate the relational contexts that shape symptom expression and recovery. Participants will explore practical strategies for weaving these approaches together in clinical work, with an emphasis on tailoring interventions to both neurobiological patterns and relational dynamics. Case illustrations will demonstrate how this multi-layered integration fosters resilience, accelerates symptom reduction, and enriches therapeutic outcomes across diverse populations.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
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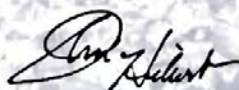
Presenter: Taylor Ross

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

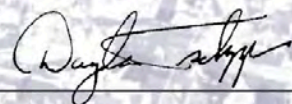
Title: Procreative desire discrepancy

Short Description: This poster explores the changes in reproductive desires over the past few decades, and educates clinicians on theoretical approaches and decision-making processes between partners who disagree on whether or not to have (more) children.

Long Description: "Reproductive trends in affluent countries—including the United States—have shifted substantially in past decades. The average age of women's first conception has increased, individuals and couples are having less children on average, and more individual and couples are electing to remain childless than ever before (Boivin et al., 2018). With these changes, it is important for mental health professionals to be informed of theoretical approaches and decision-making models when counseling couples with differences in their respective desires to have children. Effective practice also requires an understanding of cultural stigmas surrounding childbearing or the lack thereof, and awareness of one's own personal biases."



IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert



General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Joanna Rzadkowska

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Our emotional relation to things: Analyzing material realities in research and therapy.

Short Description: Socioeconomic conditions and material possessions are a vital part of our lives. When our clients and research participants share experiences about their realities, how do we best understand what they communicate? In this presentation, we propose a “New materialist template” to analyze the connections between emotions, relations and material realities.

Long Description: Both in Norway and internationally, inequality is on the rise and groups living in poverty are growing (Gyüre and Lylum 2024; Meyer et al. 2025). Low socioeconomic status is associated with marital distress, divorce, mental health issues and developmental difficulties in children. As therapists and researchers, we meet couples and families who experience material deprivation. How do we understand their words, when they are talking about bread, clothes, lunch boxes and cars? How do we interpret their stories, when they tell us about starving themselves to afford Easter sweets or losing control over certain expenses? The theoretical framework New materialism (Coole & Frost, 2010; Tuin & Dolphijn, 2012) has emerged as a critique of the “linguistic turn” and postmodern approaches to in research. Researchers using New materialism aim to understand the networks of things that form our daily lives and the socioeconomic conditions that determine our resources and possibilities. Until now, much of the writing in New materialism has been theoretical and philosophical, without clear links to systemic research and practice. The examples used in the presentation are based on interviews with couples undergoing couple and family treatment at the Family Unit, Modum Bad Psychiatric Centre in Norway. Based on 18 interviews with 9 couples, we aim to show how to use a template, inspired by the New materialist framework to both analyze qualitative interviews in an innovative way and facilitate novel understandings of these understudied phenomena. These phenomena include overconsumption, creditor avoidance and financial triggers which are important parts of a person’s mental health and life quality. The New materialist template will be used to show how you can create visual networks of material objects and the emotional relation people have to them, drawn over a timeline.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

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Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

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Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Joanna Rzadkowska

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Couple and family therapy with clients facing financial distress: The knowledge base

Short Description: There are about a hundred papers written on therapy with low-income clients. What does this research teach us and where are the gaps in knowledge? We present studies we consider most useful to systemic practitioners to improve the help given to clients who face financial distress and low income.

Long Description: In this lecture, we present and review the current knowledge base on therapy with low-income clients, with a special focus on how this affects children, couples and families. We summarize the papers under the following topics: a) Accessibility and barriers to therapy, b) Psychotherapy outcomes, c) Power and class differences between therapist and clients, d) The balance between therapeutic and practical interventions, e) Building alliances with other helpers, e) Advocacy and activism in the community, f) Working for systemic and political change. We are also going to address theoretical frameworks that obscure the socioeconomic struggles our clients face, both from the field of clinical psychology and family therapy. These can include theories of change that exclusively address internal processes such as thoughts and emotions, or metatheories such as postmodernism or social constructivism who also might ignore this important factor (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988). While these have made useful and significant contribution to their respective fields, the time has come to address our blind spots that might affect us as systemic researchers and therapists alike. We present a list of ten pieces of advice to start working constructively with financial distress in therapy.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Lilian Saage

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: “Mapping relationships with clarity—empowering therapists, inspiring couples, transforming connection.”

Short Description: Discover a clear framework for mapping relationships that enhances therapist confidence and fosters couples’ ownership of change. This session provides practical tools to assess, guide, and empower partners on their growth journey, supported by my book "Me, you and everything in between" and workbook, which introduces fresh, transformative therapeutic concepts.

Long Description: Mapping Relationships with Clarity—Empowering Therapists, Inspiring Couples, Transforming Connection Lilian Saage One of the greatest challenges in couples therapy is helping partners truly understand their relationship dynamics—what works well, what requires attention, and which hidden patterns shape their interactions. Without a structured process, therapists may struggle to assess strengths and challenges with confidence, or to provide couples with actionable steps for change. This session introduces a practical blueprint for relationship mapping, offering therapists a clear and adaptable framework to evaluate couples, identify areas for growth, and empower partners to take ownership of their transformation. Participants will learn how to: Conduct structured relationship assessments to uncover and reinforce core strengths. Analyze skill gaps in communication, emotional regulation, intimacy, and conflict resolution. Recognize and decode relational patterns that either support or undermine connection. Map out a therapeutic process that guides couples from awareness to meaningful action. Provide couples with self-guided tools that extend progress beyond sessions. Through interactive discussions, case examples, and practical strategies, therapists will refine their ability to engage couples in a process that is both systematic and empowering. By fostering couples’ active ownership of change, therapists can enhance connection, inspire collaboration, and achieve deeper, lasting outcomes. This session is supported by Lilian Saage’s forthcoming book *Me, You and Everything in Between* (2025, in English) and a newly developed companion workbook, which introduces an innovative concept to strengthen therapeutic practice further. Together, these resources provide therapists with expanded tools to work efficiently while helping couples feel understood, supported, and inspired in their journey of growth. This session is ideal for therapists seeking clarity, confidence, and a fresh, actionable roadmap for guiding couples toward resilient and intentional relationships.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

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www.ifta-familytherapy.org

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Rock Island, Illinois 61201
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Presenter: Keegan Salisbury

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: A Constructive "Criticism" of Systemic Therapy and Recurrent Themes of Social Construction

Short Description: Systemic therapy emphasizes understanding individual contexts, but often overlooks comprehensive cultural competence. Prioritizing "evidence" over lived experience reinforces marginalization of clients. True systemic work requires deconstructing oppressive epistemologies, validating diverse experiences without trying to prove that it matters, and redesigning practice to be inclusive, socially responsive, and culturally autodidactic.

Long Description: In the field of systemic therapy and fields that implement systemic foundations in their practice emphasize the importance of "systemic thinking." Systemic thinking, in a basic sense, is the philosophy of observing and active comprehension of interactions between an individual and their world. In addition, systemic therapists integrate several important concepts connected with social justice and deconstruction. Although this is a general perspective, professionals' individual integration of systemic thought into their therapeutic work with clients, and this process continues to lack a very important element amongst many: expansive cultural competence. In our efforts to address systemic issues of power and privilege we often neglect the client's lived and yet-to-be-lived experiences in favor of critiquing "larger" social systems. Cultural competence is complicated, requiring consistent efforts to grow and change. A core function of developing cultural competence is witnessing and redesigning cognitive schemas rooted in oppressive, misinformed, and uninformed directives. Within the field, especially within research, we centralize our work on measurable, evidence-based content; however, this contributes to the oppression of marginalized communities. To do the work we say we're doing, we need to be prioritizing this information for comprehensive, efficacious practice and decentralizing the oppressive need to validate problems to "treat" clients. The act of statisticizing pain and suffering to make it worthy of prioritizing is direct invalidation of experience; an exploitation of those with limited social power for the purpose or reinforced, empowering, and elevating the violent forces of power and privilege. In this session, we will begin deconstructing these restricted approaches to clinical practice and constructively redesign comprehensive systemic therapy.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



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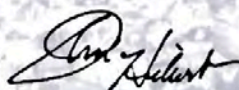
Presenter: Danielle Samuel

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

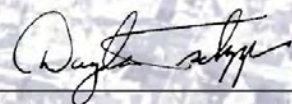
Title: The Role of Gendered Racism in Healing from Sexual Trauma for Black Women

Short Description: This workshop will highlight how gendered racism interplays with PTSD symptoms, self-perception, help-seeking behaviors, and healing for Black women following sexual trauma based on key findings from a mixed-methods study. Attendees will engage in discussion and knowledge-sharing on culturally responsive strategies and implications for systemic therapists.

Long Description: This workshop explores the impact of gendered racism and sexual trauma on Black women's well-being and the broader implications for healing within familial and social contexts. Grounded in Black Feminist Theory and hermeneutic phenomenology, key findings from a mixed-methods study on the lived experiences of 98 Black women across the United States will be reviewed. The workshop will highlight the unique sociocultural and historical contexts of Black female survivorship and how gendered racial socialization impacts self-perception, help-seeking behaviors, and pathways to healing. Attendees will engage in discussion and knowledge sharing on culturally responsive clinical interventions.



IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert



General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

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Rock Island, Illinois 61201
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Presenter: Senem Zeytinoglu Saydam

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: VERY RIGHT AND VERY ALONE: NAVIGATING DEFENSIVE BLOCKS IN EMOTIONALLY FOCUSED COUPLE THERAPY

Short Description: This presentation explores defensiveness through the lens of attachment theory and EFCT. Participants will learn to recognize the varied forms of defensiveness and understand the attachment strategies and relational cycles that sustain it. Emphasis will be placed on therapeutic interventions while gently accessing the underlying vulnerable emotions.

Long Description: Defensiveness is one of the most common yet misunderstood dynamics in relationships and therapy. Often seen as resistance or obstruction, defensiveness is, at its core, a protective response to perceived threat, shame, or disconnection. This presentation explores defensiveness through the lens of attachment theory and Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy (EFCT), reframing it as a survival strategy rather than a flaw. Participants will learn to recognize the varied forms of defensiveness—counterattack, withdrawal, intellectualization, and minimization—and understand the attachment strategies and relational cycles that sustain it. Emphasis will be placed on therapeutic interventions that validate the protective intent of defensive responses while gently accessing the underlying vulnerable emotions. By shifting from judgment to curiosity and compassion, clinicians can help clients transform defensive reactions into opportunities for openness, connection, and repair. This session provides both conceptually grounding and practical tools for working with defensiveness in clinical practice.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

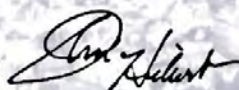
Presenter: Wendell Scanterbury

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

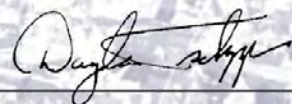
Title: The Price of Erasure: Advancing Relational Wellbeing in the Face of Systemic Harm

Short Description: Political trends and the COVID-19 pandemic revisited profound systemic harm from historical traumas on minoritized families in the United States. This workshop applies systems thinking and critical family therapies to examine the relational consequences of devaluation. Participants will identify actionable, ethical responses to advance healing and relational well-being.

Long Description: This workshop explores how social narratives and personal experiences are inextricably shaped by larger political and economic structures. The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent political trends have not only exposed significant health and economic disparities but have also reinforced historical traumas that are particularly damaging for minoritized individuals and families. To address these realities, this session applies systems thinking and concepts from feminist, critical, and narrative family therapies to examine the relational consequences of both historic and contemporary devaluation and erasure. Participants will collaboratively identify actionable and ethical responses for the therapeutic encounter, community-based work, and broader structural environments, ultimately advancing healing and relational well-being in the face of systemic harm.



IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert



General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Kristel Scoresby

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: AI Tools for Group Facilitation: Enhancing Training for Family Therapists

Short Description: This presentation explores how AI can support students and new clinicians in group therapy training. Using simulations and feedback tools, AI offers scalable and ethical practice environments. A proposed model integrates AI into therapy education, balancing technological innovation with oversight to prepare future practitioners for complex group dynamics.

Long Description: As artificial intelligence (AI) rapidly transforms mental health practice, its potential as a training tool for group therapy remains under explored. This presentation proposes a model for integrating generative AI into the training of group facilitators, particularly to enhance the development of core interpersonal, ethical, and leadership skills. Training in group facilitation is a core competency (Northey & Gehart, 2019) yet many emerging clinicians report feeling unprepared to lead groups. Although traditional approaches such as didactic instruction and role plays have well-established value, they are often constrained by time, access, and variability in practice opportunities (Warkentin, 2016). AI offers a promising supplement to these methods by providing low-risk, scalable, and flexible training experiences. Drawing from interdisciplinary pedagogies and emerging AI technologies, this session will introduce a range of AI tools that can enhance experiential learning for aspiring group leaders. We will explore how AI can support students in analyzing group dynamics, practicing interventions, and reflecting on their communication styles. Participants will leave with a practical guide for thoughtfully integrating AI into group training, including recommended tools, implementation strategies, and key ethical considerations. This work is especially timely for family therapy educators and supervisors seeking innovative ways to prepare practitioners for complex relational work in diverse cultural and technological landscapes. Northey, W. F., & Gehart, D. R. (2020). The Condensed MFT Core Competencies: A Streamlined Approach for Measuring Student and Supervisee Learning Using the MFT Core Competencies. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 46(1), 42–61 Warkentin, B. (2016). Teaching social work with groups: Integrating didactic, experiential and reflective learning. *Social Work With Groups*, 40(3), 233–243.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Kristel Scoresby

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Fostering Inclusivity for Clients with Disabilities: Universal Design in Family Therapy

Short Description: An estimated 1.3 billion people globally live with significant disability, yet family therapy spaces often perpetuate ableism through inaccessible design. This poster presents Universal Design principles for creating inclusive therapeutic environments. Four case examples illustrate implementation strategies across intake processes, physical spaces, and therapeutic materials—benefiting all clients.

Long Description: An estimated 1.3 billion people globally live with some form of significant disability (WHO), yet many Marriage and Family Therapy training programs provide minimal education on disability competencies. Without recognizing able-bodied biases, therapists contribute to ableism—discrimination and prejudice toward people with disabilities. Drawing from Critical Disability Theory, this poster challenges the medical model and reframes disability as a social construct shaped by inaccessible environments. While disability rights legislation—including the Americans with Disabilities Act (U.S.), Equality Act 2010 (UK), and EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030—mandate accommodations, these are often "tacked on" as afterthoughts, requiring clients to disclose disabilities and risk stigmatization. Universal Design (UD) offers an alternative by building accessibility into therapeutic spaces, processes, and practices from the start. The poster presents the seven principles of Universal Design applied to family therapy clinical practice. Concrete strategies are illustrated across intake and assessment processes, physical space design, communication methods, and therapeutic materials through four different case examples: 1) Chronic illness, 2) Learning disabilities, 3) Trauma, and 4) Hearing loss/deafness. The "curb-cut effect" demonstrates how designing for disability benefits all clients globally. Implications for clinical practice include a call to action for therapists to critically reflect on ableist practices, proactively ask clients about accessibility needs, and design therapeutic spaces with disability in mind from the outset. By centering disability as diversity rather than deficit, family therapists fulfill their ethical obligation to honor all aspects of client identity.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Kristel Scoresby

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: AI in Systemic Family Therapy Education: A Co-Constructive Pedagogical Approach

Short Description: This presentation offers an integrative model for harnessing AI in SFT pedagogy. Students engage AI to generate and co-analyze complex family case studies. This approach positions AI as a facilitator, supporting learners in recognizing systemic principles through the lens of peers and AI to create developed and appropriate assessments.

Long Description: Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping the landscape of education, yet its role in developing systemic thinking within family therapy remains largely understudied (Aviram, 2025). This presentation proposes a conceptual framework for integrating AI into Systemic Family Therapy (SFT) pedagogy as a collaborative learning partner that enhances students' ability to think systemically, as well as to critically evaluate AI output. Current pedagogy relies on role-plays and didactic methods to learn frameworks. Despite the strength of these methods, role-plays have limitations (Natrajan-Tyagi, 2016). Students are also entering professional practice by utilizing AI without having learned how to evaluate or engage with this advanced technology critically (Aviram, 2025; Reamer, 2023). This presentation offers an integrative model for harnessing AI in SFT pedagogy. In this model, students engage AI to generate complex case studies that reflect core SFT principles. Small groups of learners analyze these AI-created cases, apply systemic concepts, and then compare their interpretations both with one another and with AI's synthesized case study reflections. Through an iterative process, students examine the family system within the case, co-construct systemic meaning with peers, and ethically co-evaluate AI output. This approach positions AI as a facilitator, supporting learners in recognizing systemic principles through the lens of their peers and AI to create developed and appropriate assessments. Integrating AI offers a novel pedagogical pathway for cultivating systemic fluency in students and critically co-evaluating AI output. This framework reframes both technology and the classroom as co-constructive systems, expanding the possibilities for how SFT can be taught and learned in contemporary contexts. Ultimately, this framework invites educators and students to engage AI as a reflective collaborator. Students learn to verify outputs, examine and develop systemic reasoning, and cultivate critical judgment for professional practice.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Zain Shamoon

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: POTT and Professional Accountability in a Tumultuous Time

Short Description: This presentation explores how Person-of-the-Therapist (POTT) reflexivity strengthens sociocultural attunement, ethical awareness, and therapist groundedness amid global unrest and inequity. Core components of the POTT model will demonstrate how therapists can sustain responsiveness and accountability across diverse client experiences in today's complex, rapidly changing world.

Long Description: This presentation will demonstrate how person-of-the-therapist (POTT) reflexivity allows for increased sociocultural attunement and ethical consideration—qualities essential for therapists practicing in times of heightened political tension and polarization. As therapists work to consider clients' intersecting systems of privilege, oppression, and trauma, the POTT model creates structure for therapeutic groundedness and responsiveness within the therapeutic alliance. By focusing on the therapist's use of self, the model emphasizes how therapist's personal awareness, emotional availability, and cultural humility are inseparable from clinical effectiveness. Participants will observe how the POTT model moves beyond theory into practical application. Core concepts such as signature theme, use of self in the moment, and relational congruence will be illustrated through clinical examples, showing how therapists can transform self-reflection into interventions that promote safety, connection, and repair. Through demonstration and discussion of reflexivity in the POTT process, presenters aim to deepen therapists' sociocultural attunement and expand their ethical lens. Presenters will speak from professional experience across various clinical, academic, and supervisory roles. Participants will examine how ongoing engagement with their own life narratives, values, and behaviors strengthens their capacity to meet clients with increased accountability to the therapeutic work. Attention will be given to how the POTT model equips therapists to remain emotionally present and professionally responsible when global or local crises enter the therapy room—whether through collective grief, identity-based stress, or ruptures in the social fabric. In a time when the personal, professional, and global are more intertwined than ever, the POTT model offers a timely and profound path toward ethical, relationally grounded, and socially responsive clinical practice.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Zain Shamoon

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Reflexive Praxis for Systemic Change: Disrupting Power Through Therapeutic Self-Work

Short Description: Reflexivity isn't just self-awareness—it's a tool for disrupting systems of harm. This workshop supports therapists in using reflexive praxis to engage power, dismantle complicity, and align their work with liberation across therapy, supervision, and community care.

Long Description: What if reflexivity wasn't just a tool for insight—but a mechanism for systemic disruption? In this advanced workshop, we reimagine reflexive praxis not as a private or performative act, but as a critical intervention in the work of healing and social change. Drawing from decolonial thought, critical race theory, and liberation psychology, we position the therapist's social location, power, and identity as central to how systems are upheld or disrupted in therapeutic work. Participants will explore the difference between self-awareness and applied reflexivity, learning how reflexive praxis can be used to: Disrupt white dominant cultural norms in therapy and supervision Identify when systemic neutrality becomes complicity Create alignment between clinical practice, community care, and systems change Through experiential exercises, interdisciplinary frameworks, and case applications, attendees will critically examine their own positionalities and explore what it means to act from a place of justice—not just intention. We will look at clinical moments, supervisory relationships, and institutional settings through a reflexive lens—asking: What is required of us when we know better? Reflexivity becomes not just a mirror—but a compass toward liberatory practice.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Kayce Shepard

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Promoting relationship satisfaction-The development and validation of the XY Theory Needs Assessment

Short Description: This presentation reviews the development, validation, and clinical application of the XY Theory Needs Assessment, a tool designed to help clinicians and couples identify relational needs, communication patterns, and pathways toward greater relationship satisfaction.

Long Description: Advances in needs assessment are beginning to illuminate not only who we are in relationship, but how we connect. This presentation reviews the development, validation, and clinical application of the XY Needs Assessment, a tool designed to help clinicians and couples identify relational needs, communication patterns, and pathways toward greater relationship satisfaction. Rooted in Jacob's (2011) framework emphasizing the balance between meeting partner needs and maintaining individuality, the XY Needs Assessment integrates principles of interpersonal cognition and dyadic adjustment to assess how partners understand and respond to each other's relational styles. We hypothesized that individuals who demonstrate greater awareness of their partner's needs and who possess stronger problem-solving and conflict-management and resolution skills would report higher levels of relationship satisfaction. To evaluate the psychometric properties of the XY Needs Assessment, data were collected from 311 romantic couples representing diverse relationship lengths and demographic backgrounds. Analyses focused on establishing internal consistency, construct validity, and predictive associations between assessment scores and reported satisfaction levels. Preliminary findings suggest that the XY Needs Assessment effectively captures key dimensions of relational understanding and adjustment. In addition to presenting these empirical results, the session will illustrate practical applications for clinicians. Case examples will demonstrate how the XY Assessment can be integrated into therapeutic practice to guide treatment planning, facilitate communication exercises, and support couples experiencing mild to severe relational discord. Participants will gain insight into how to administer, interpret, and apply the assessment to enhance clients' problem-solving capacities and promote balanced, mutually fulfilling partnerships.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Lin Shi

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Whose Security Matters More? Self and Partner Attachment in Clinical Couples

Short Description: Using 277 therapy-seeking couples, this study examined self and partner attachment insecurity as predictors of relationship satisfaction. Findings revealed gender differences: men's satisfaction reflected their own insecurity, while women's was influenced by both self and partner factors. Implications for tailoring interventions to attachment patterns are discussed.

Long Description: In clinical settings, attachment patterns often lie at the core of couple distress. Attachment theory has long explained how anxiety and avoidance shape relationship satisfaction, yet questions remain about how each partner's attachment contributes to relationship satisfaction and how these effects may differ by gender. Clarifying these patterns within clinical couples can deepen our understanding and improve therapeutic interventions. This study examined self and partner attachment anxiety and avoidance as predictors of relationship satisfaction in 277 heterosexual couples seeking therapy at a university-based mental-health clinic. Participants completed the Experiences in Close Relationships – Revised (ECR-R) and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS). Hierarchical multiple regression with bootstrapping was used to explore self and partner effects on relationship satisfaction. Results revealed gender-specific patterns. For men, satisfaction was most strongly associated with their own attachment anxiety and avoidance, whereas for women, avoidance emerged as the dominant predictor, with partners' anxiety contributing secondarily. Across genders, avoidance was a stronger predictor than anxiety. These findings suggest that clinical couples may experience relationship distress through distinct yet complementary attachment pathways. Men's satisfaction appears to hinge on their internal sense of security, suggesting that interventions promoting emotional regulation and self-soothing may be particularly beneficial. In contrast, women's satisfaction is more relationally contingent, influenced by both their own and their partners' avoidance, underscoring the importance of addressing emotional withdrawal and fostering engagement. These results highlight the importance of integrating self-regulation and emotional engagement as complementary therapeutic targets in couple work.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: D. Scott Sibley

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Contextual Therapy: A Unique Clinical Framework for Intervening with Adolescents and Emerging Adults

Short Description: This workshop will teach participants how to incorporate a contextual therapy framework in their clinical work with adolescents and emerging adults (18-29 year-olds). The most basic tenets of contextual therapy such as fairness, entitlements, and relational ethics are highly applicable when working with adolescents and emerging adults clinically.

Long Description: This workshop will teach participants how to incorporate a contextual therapy framework in their clinical work with adolescents and emerging adults (18-29 year-olds). Some of the most basic tenets of contextual therapy such as fairness, entitlements, and relational ethics are highly applicable when working with adolescents and emerging adults clinically. This particular clinical population also seems to benefit from having their violations of love, trust, and loyalty validated. By learning to recognize multiple perspectives adolescents and emerging adults can potentially improve their relationships, especially with members of their family of origin. The purpose of this presentation is to provide participants with (a) a contextual-based framework for conceptualizing systemic challenges faced by clients during adolescence and emerging adulthood and (b) basic contextual interventions that can be used in addressing specific issues that adolescents and emerging adults often face. Contextual therapy is a foundational theory of systemic family therapy that provides new and seasoned therapists alike with the ability to conceptualize a wide variety of clinical cases by acknowledging that the human experience is composed of both individual and relational realities (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986). Unfortunately, in recent years there has been a decline in the amount of clinicians using contextual therapy in their clinical work. As Rosenberg and Sandberg (2004) described, contextual therapy has been put “on the endangered species list of psychotherapeutic and family-oriented treatment approaches” (p. 389). Contextual therapy is often dismissed for seeming too complex (Rosenberg & Sandberg, 2004), and contextual therapy seems to remain underutilized by individual, couple, and family therapists. The presenter will also discuss contraindications of contextual therapy such as the importance of clients being somewhat inclined towards seeking insight into the nature of their problems and motivated to make behavioral changes. Group discussion and small group work will accompany this presentation.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Kei Skeide

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Consent Under Extraction: SHIFTing AI Practices for Queer and Trans Care in Diverse Therapy Environments

Short Description: Using a new model to navigate conversations on AI, this talk examines consent and connection in systemic therapy for trans communities worldwide. The talk highlights refusal rights, data sovereignty, and linguistically legible consent, translating tech pessimism into everyday ethical practice across diverse jurisdictions and care settings.

Long Description: AI now mediates help-seeking, triage, documentation, and even “companionship” across borders, often without meaningful, culturally legible consent, especially for trans and otherwise minoritized people. This session introduces a practice-ready, tech-pessimist framework grounded in Kei Skeide’s SHIFT model to support equitable, context-sensitive care internationally. We focus on how clinicians can examine their tools and geopolitical context, protect the right to refuse AI without penalty, and craft consent processes that are trauma-aware, multilingual, and plain-language. Attention is given to the realities that shape consent in different regions: cross-border data transfers, hosting location and third-party access, data retention, vendor incentives, and the uneven enforcement of privacy and anti-discrimination laws. Rather than celebrating optimization, we emphasize relational accountability, naming the limits of confidentiality with AI tools, and preserving authentic human connection, especially where clients face surveillance, criminalization, or infrastructural barriers. Through common clinical scenarios such as intake chatbots, predictive flagging, AI-generated notes, and “AI companions,” participants practice drafting globally aware consent language that specifies where data live, who can see them, what harms are plausible, and what non-AI alternatives are available. The session equips therapists, supervisors, and organizational leaders with adaptable decision rubrics and de-implementation checklists that translate tech pessimism into everyday ethics, linking moment-to-moment clinical choices with governance, audit, and policy actions. The aim is straightforward: safeguard autonomy, connection, and safety for trans and other marginalized communities worldwide, prioritizing equity and collective well-being over speed, scale, and data extraction.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Trude Skoglund

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: When families carry heavy burdens, it concerns us all.

Short Description: As professionals, friends, or relatives, we meet families raising children with complex care needs. Understanding the balance between ordinary family life and the unique challenges of unpredictability, extra strain, worry, and grief helps us support each family's own path beyond typical development recognizing both the heavy and the bright.

Long Description: Across professions, friendships, and extended families, we meet parents raising children with complex care needs. Their everyday lives balance the ordinary routines of family life with extraordinary challenges—unpredictability, exclusion, extra strain, constant worry, and, at times, grief. Alongside these challenges, we also witness strength, creativity, and love. In the midst of everyday struggles, small victories and moments of joy often shine brightly. Understanding these realities is essential if we are to support these families. To strengthen this understanding, the well-established Norwegian couples' course Hva med oss? ("What About Us?"), designed for parents of children with disabilities, is now being digitalized. The digital version shows real parents who share their stories—of exhaustion and resilience, frustration and creativity, vulnerability and strength. Through their personal accounts, we gain insight into how families navigate the daily demands of caring for a child with significant needs, and how they find solutions, hope, and connection despite the challenges. Digitalization makes the course accessible to far more families than before: parents of young children, those whose child's condition makes in-person participation impossible, and families with diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. By removing barriers of geography, language, and logistics, Hva med oss? becomes a shared digital resource for inspiration, learning, normalization and hope. When professionals, relatives, and society at large listen to these stories, we develop a deeper empathy and understanding of what these families experience—their similarities and their differences. This awareness helps build a broader, more inclusive society where all families, regardless of their circumstances, are seen and supported. The digitalization and learning through Hva med oss? invite us all to reflect on what it means to live, care, and belong. It reminds us that inclusion begins with understanding—and that understanding grows when we dare to listen.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Natasha Slesnick

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Engaging Loved Ones in the Recovery of Adolescents and Young Adults Experiencing Homelessness

Short Description: Most unaccompanied youth (14-24 years) living on the streets report some contact with supportive others (SOs). Yet, efforts to engage SOs in their recovery are limited. In this presentation, the process for engaging SOs using Community Reinforcement and Family Training (CRAFT) and family systems therapy will be presented.

Long Description: Homelessness is still a major problem and is devastating for youths. Diagnosed alcohol and drug use disorders range from 50% to 86% (Burke et al., 2023) which is of concern since substance use has been associated with a lower likelihood of exiting the streets. The homeless service system for youth is woefully underfunded and enormous service gaps exist in being able to engage, treat and house the increasing numbers of youth experiencing homelessness (YEH). Engaging the family members and/or supportive others of individuals with a SUD has consistently been shown effective at reducing SUD and associated mental health problems (Bufford & Lappan, 2024). While studies have documented the social network characteristics of unaccompanied YEH, no study has developed an intervention to engage a family/social network member to facilitate and support that youths' substance use treatment. Supportive others (SOs) can include a family member or friend (chosen family) over the age of 15 years with no history of abuse or exploitation of the YEH. Engaging SOs in the YEH's SUD treatment could have significant implications for substance use outcomes, but also for housing and mental health. Therefore, the current study provides a first step towards addressing these devastating conditions through engaging SOs of these youth which can also confer significant benefit to SO. The intervention consists of the Community Reinforcement and Family Training (CRAFT; Myers et al., 2002) which targets supportive others of unmotivated persons with SUD, offering approximately 12 sessions with the goal to engage the substance user into treatment. In addition, family systems therapy focuses on improving family/SO interaction patterns. The process for adapting and implementing these interventions to the unique family and social relationships of YEH will be described, using a case example.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Margaret Smith

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Acculturation and Romantic Relationships: The Role of Push and Pull Factors

Short Description: This study explores how acculturation and push-pull factors shape relational dynamics among Hispanic and Latinx individuals in romantic relationships, using a phenomenological approach. Findings aim to inform systemic practice, culturally responsive treatment, and policies supporting immigrant communities.

Long Description: Hispanic and Latinx culture is comprised of a wide range of traditions, customs, values, and ethnic backgrounds that span multiple countries, creating a diverse tapestry of communities with different perspectives on what it means to hold this identity. Cultural identity within these communities is multifaceted and can be shaped by values from their specific country of origin, with variation occurring based on different socialization or acculturation experiences across the lifespan (Rinderle & Montoya, 2008). Acculturation refers to the way in which groups or individuals from one culture engage with or adopt elements of another culture, resulting in changes to their values, behaviors, or patterns related to culture (Romero et al., 2013). Important aspects to note that can influence this process are push and pull factors. Push factors are known as elements of one's culture that may lead to immigration or acculturation. Pull factors on the other hand, may draw someone towards a different or more dominant culture (Wildsmith- Cromarty & Conduah, 2015). These shifts greatly impact couples and families, causing both expected and unexpected changes in relational dynamics. Using qualitative data, the current study will employ a phenomenological approach to explore the acculturative experiences of 17 Hispanic and Latinx immigrants in romantic relationships to better understand how they have navigated evolving relational dynamics after immigrating to the United States. Broader conceptualizations of the relational impacts of acculturation and their implications for systemic practitioners will be offered by answering the following research question: In what ways do acculturation processes and push and pull factors shape individuals' experiences of relational dynamics among Hispanic and Latinx couples? The results of this study can inform future research with immigrant populations, therapeutic practice, and public policy. This work is imperative for guiding practitioners in the development and implementation of culturally informed treatment plans and policies.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Michele Smith

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Longitudinal Integrated Behavioral Health Training for Family Medicine Residents

Short Description: Behavioral health interventions in medicine are often done by mental health providers. This project reviews the value to Family Medicine residents in having real-time training with a BH provider. This is done through pre-clinic coaching related to BH interventions, seeing patients together, and reviewing outcomes during precepting.

Long Description: Primary care physicians (PCPs) are often the first to identify mental health concerns during routine visits, yet many feel underprepared to address them. Integrated Behavioral Health (IBH) helps bridge this gap by embedding mental health services into primary care, improving access and outcomes—especially for patients with chronic conditions or from underserved communities. However, many clinics do not have easy access to mental health providers, often due to workforce shortages, and patients may be reluctant to seek treatment even when recommended. Training physicians in behavioral health interventions provides a benefit to both the provider and the patients, and providers report increased confidence and competence when IBH is implemented. With over 64% of PCPs reporting burnout in 2023, the integration of behavioral health into primary care settings is increasingly seen as a strategy to reduce stress. Despite this, consistent training remains a challenge. Residency programs play a key role yet lack standardized behavioral health curricula. Recognizing this, the Wellstar Douglas Family Health Residency program revised its behavioral health curriculum in fall 2023 to include a more longitudinal, hands-on training approach. This includes weekly, supervised sessions where residents practice behavioral health skills with patients, aiming to build a more competent and confident workforce ready to deliver integrated care beyond residency. Data was collected from patients, residents, and faculty members over 6 months. Each group completed anonymous surveys assessing perceptions of the behavioral health clinic curriculum. Initial data collection shows that almost 95% of patients reported a positive experience with the addition of behavioral health to their routine visits and 100% of patients still felt their primary concern was addressed. Three-quarters of residents found participation in weekly behavioral health clinics to be helpful, 87.5% reported increased confidence, and 62% indicated more willingness to use BH tools on their own.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: John Smyth

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Intergenerational Trauma in Refugee Families: Understanding, Resilience, and Healing

Short Description: This interactive workshop explores the complex phenomenon of intergenerational trauma in refugee families, examining how trauma is transmitted across generations, the resilience factors that enable healing, and effective interventions to reduce its impact. Drawing on interdisciplinary research, participants will engage in reflective exercises and discussions to deepen understanding and practice.

Long Description: Intergenerational trauma in refugee families arises from a complex interplay between historical and communal trauma and family relational processes, where trauma originates both outside and within the family system. This cyclical influence profoundly shapes family functioning, parent-child attachment, and community cohesion. This workshop examines mechanisms of trauma transmission across generations, resilience factors that can buffer harm, and intervention approaches that foster healing within a systemic, family-centered context. Drawing on interdisciplinary research from psychological, sociocultural, and family therapy perspectives, the session explores key transmission mechanisms, including parenting styles, family communication patterns, and the influence of historical and communal experiences. It highlights how silence, disrupted narratives, and ongoing social stressors can reinforce trauma across generations. Resilience is presented as a dynamic process fostered by family members who maintain well-being despite adversity, strong marital bonds, community connectedness, and cultural continuity. Reframing family relationships within the context of larger community and historical trauma and empowering collective storytelling emerge as critical pathways to relational healing and identity reconstruction. Participants will learn about trauma-informed, culturally sensitive, systemic approaches supported in the literature, including family- and community-based interventions such as multifamily therapy and parenting programs. The clinical utility of genograms for mapping family trauma histories and resilience strengths will be discussed, alongside intergenerational family therapy principles that support open communication, attachment repair, and systemic resilience. Through brief reflective exercises and case examples, attendees will deepen their understanding of intergenerational trauma's complexity and explore evidence-informed strategies to support refugee families across clinical, community, and policy settings. The session emphasizes integrated relational approaches that honor cultural context and foster healing within multidimensional social systems.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: John Smyth

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: From Resilience to Rupture: Understanding and Addressing Delayed-Onset Trauma Among Refugees After Resettlement

Short Description: Many refugees initially appear well but later experience family and systemic ruptures as trauma resurfaces post-resettlement. Drawing on trauma-informed, culturally grounded, and family-systems approaches, the presentation examines early trauma assessment and systemic interventions that strengthen family resilience and prevent delayed-onset psychological distress among refugees.

Long Description: Refugee resettlement is often framed as the endpoint of displacement; yet for many families, it marks the beginning of new psychological and relational challenges. Refugees arrive with complex histories of violence, persecution, and loss that are rarely explored during initial medical and settlement screenings. Early resettlement efforts understandably prioritize immediate physical and logistical needs housing, employment, language acquisition, and family reunification. During this phase, many individuals and families appear resilient and functional, masking deep emotional and relational distress. However, as stability increases and survival pressures ease, unresolved trauma often resurfaces, disrupting family dynamics and straining support systems. Clinicians and service providers are frequently confronted with sudden presentations of severe depression, post-traumatic stress, or psychotic symptoms that emerge years after arrival. At Resilia Community Wellness Centre, we have observed these patterns across refugee families in Manitoba, Canada. Our approach integrates trauma-informed, culturally grounded, and faith-sensitive practices with a systemic lens that recognizes the family as a central unit of healing and adaptation. Early trauma assessments conducted within safe, culturally responsive environments allow practitioners to identify both individual and family-level vulnerabilities and strengths. These assessments inform collaborative care plans that emphasize relational connection, intergenerational understanding, and community-based supports. This presentation shares insights from Resilia's family-systems approach to refugee mental health, illustrating how trauma, culture, and adaptation intersect within family and community networks. Drawing on clinical experience, community partnerships, and case examples, we demonstrate how culturally, and systemically attuned interventions can strengthen family resilience, reduce stigma, and prevent long-term psychological and relational deterioration. We argue that early, context-sensitive, and family-centered screening must become a standard component of resettlement to promote collective well-being and sustainable integration.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Lior Somech

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: From Ego to Eco: A Theory U Framework for Parental Transformation

Short Description: This presentation introduces the first systematic adaptation of Theory U to parenting, offering an integrative framework for parental transformation in families coping with conduct disorders. The U shaped model integrates attachment, mentalization, and polyvagal theories, framing change as a developmental journey from reactive, ego based patterns to responsive, ecosystemic awareness.

Long Description: While behavioral parent training programs are widely used for childhood conduct problems, research indicates significant limitations, including dropout rates exceeding 50%, challenges in long-term maintenance, and reduced effectiveness with high-risk families. Many interventions emphasize external behavior management while giving relatively less attention to deeper emotional, reflective, and neurobiological dimensions of parenting. This presentation introduces the first systematic adaptation of Scharmer's Theory U—originally developed for organizational transformation—to the parenting domain. The proposed integrative framework synthesizes attachment, mentalization, and polyvagal theories within Theory U's consciousness-based methodology. The U-shaped model conceptualizes parental transformation as a developmental journey through four distinct phases: (1) Parental Survival, characterized by reactive fight–flight–freeze patterns rooted in defensive nervous system states; (2) Parental Pain, encountering underlying trauma, grief, and attachment disruptions; (3) Parental Hope, reconnecting with vision, vitality, and core values; and (4) Parental Fulfillment, embodying consistency, creativity, and attuned care in daily interactions. Movement among phases is facilitated by cultivating four developmental capacities: Regulation (creating reflective space between stimulus and response), Vulnerability (the transformative turn at the bottom of the U involving suspension of defensive structures), Cooperation (translating internal shifts into collaborative family patterns), and Fluctuation (sustaining integration while normalizing regressions). The framework's distinctive contribution lies in demonstrating how neurobiological regulation, attachment security, reflective functioning, and parental consciousness develop synergistically through transformative proximal processes. Unlike interventions focusing on single domains, this model addresses the multi-layered complexity of conduct disorders through integrated development across these dimensions. A detailed clinical case illustrates the model's application across 16 therapy sessions with parents of a child with severe conduct problems, showing progression from coercive cycles to co-regulation and earned security. The presentation concludes with clinical guidelines, cultural considerations, and research directions for this innovative theoretical integration.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Katherine Spurling

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Being under a microscope: The dynamics of parent systems when navigating the child welfare system

Short Description: Findings of this study portray relationships of parental units navigating the child welfare system (CWS). The data are from a longitudinal, mixed-methods study of families involved in the CWS. Results can inform future research into parenting relationships and assist program and service development for parents involved with the CWS.

Long Description: Navigating the child welfare system (CWS) presents unique challenges. Typically, when a parent becomes involved with the CWS, they are required to complete a case plan. The stress of the CWS and case plan activities can have a profound impact on individuals, couples, and families. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of the CWS on parents' relationships with each other. This relationship is important for both parent and child wellbeing. This study involved a longitudinal mixed-method design with a sample of parents involved in the CWS due to substantiated cases of maltreatment. Analyses focused on a subsample of parents who discussed the impact of the CWS on their partner or coparenting relationships (N = 67). We examined the dynamics of parent relationships, support within the relationships, how they navigated co-parenting, and external factors related to relationships. Some parents relied on the support of the co-parent to help with case plan tasks, whereas others terminated relationships to progress in their case plans. Results can inform future research and assist in the development of programs and systemic support services for parents involved with the CWS.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Katie Spurling

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Needs and experiences with mental health services among parents involved with the child welfare system

Short Description: This study's aim was to understand parents' experiences of therapy within the child welfare system (CWS) and present parents' mental health needs using data from a longitudinal study of families involved with CWS. Findings can help address research gaps on family therapy within the CWS and amplify parents' voices.

Long Description: A high demand for mental health services, long waitlists, and increased costs have limited access to effective mental healthcare around the world. Data from the United States' Department of Health and Human Services investigated over 3,081,715 child maltreatment allegations over the course of 2023. For approximately 85-90% of parents involved with the child welfare system (CWS), therapy is a requirement of their case plans, and parents must complete these requirements within, in many cases, a year to regain or maintain custody of their children. At least half of the cases involve substance use and/or behavioral health needs. This study's aim was to understand parents' perceptions of therapy within the CWS and reveal mental health needs as identified by parents. The poster will present data from the Power of Parents Study, a longitudinal study of families involved with the CWS across one U.S. state, a total of seventy-five parents. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected when families first became involved with the CWS and have been collected every 6 months thereafter across 18 months throughout a parents' involvement with the system. Codes regarding parents' experiences with therapy have been extracted from Waves 1 and 2. A descriptive analysis of quantitative data will be used to complement qualitative findings by providing parents' use of mental health services. Thematic analyses indicate key themes including significant mental health concerns, parents' perceptions of mandated services, a desire to engage in services but challenges accessing them, mistrust of providers, desire for systemic intervention approaches, and the growth that occurred after connecting with a trusted provider. Findings from this study can help inform practice and research on family therapy within the context of the CWS and amplify parents' voices to identify what parents believe they need from mental health providers.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Máire Stedman

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Navigating Societal Marginalisation in Therapy : an exploration of the Journey of Unaccompanied Refugee Young People & their Therapist

Short Description: Is it possible to construct a narrative across cultures, spiritual belief systems, and life experiences in the context of a culture, which excludes and dehumanises? • The significance of a trusting relationship • Cultural and spiritual influences facilitating or hindering coping efforts • The therapy we provide is determined by models we use.

Long Description: The author has extensive therapeutic experience of working collaboratively with unaccompanied refugee young people around their experiences of torture, organised violence, and imprisonment, and, in some cases, of being a child soldier. Therapy has taken place in London at the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture (now known as Freedom From Torture); the Refugee Council and at the Helen Bamber Foundation, with young people from refugee and asylum-seeking communities. The following themes will be addressed: • Is it possible to construct a narrative across cultures, spiritual belief systems and life experiences in the context of a culture, which excludes and dehumanises? • The significance of a trusting relationship as a means of facilitating therapeutic change. • Cultural and spiritual influences that may facilitate or hinder coping efforts in a given context - developing a secure and positive identity, based on culture of origin and spiritual beliefs, as well as learning the 'language' and meanings of the new culture in order to facilitate a sense of integration. • The use we make of particular models for understanding young people's experiences will determine the kind of therapy that we provide. What are the models of helping and therapy that most facilitate the therapeutic change and where do concepts such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, spirituality and culture bereavement fit in the context of collaborative and self-empowering practices? Despite the gravity of the circumstances, humour, culturally appropriate metaphors, and a willingness to engage in the re-authoring of stories and therefore of lives, has taken place in a context of great sensitivity to culture, spiritual beliefs, life experiences and losses.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Ingvild Stjernen Tisløv

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Couple and family therapy with clients facing financial distress: The knowledge base

Short Description: There are about a hundred papers written on therapy with low-income clients. What does this research teach us and where are the gaps in knowledge? We present studies we consider most useful to systemic practitioners to improve the help given to clients who face financial distress and low income.

Long Description: In this lecture, we present and review the current knowledge base on therapy with low-income clients, with a special focus on how this affects children, couples and families. We summarize the papers under the following topics: a) Accessibility and barriers to therapy, b) Psychotherapy outcomes, c) Power and class differences between therapist and clients, d) The balance between therapeutic and practical interventions, e) Building alliances with other helpers, e) Advocacy and activism in the community, f) Working for systemic and political change. We are also going to address theoretical frameworks that obscure the socioeconomic struggles our clients face, both from the field of clinical psychology and family therapy. These can include theories of change that exclusively address internal processes such as thoughts and emotions, or metatheories such as postmodernism or social constructivism who also might ignore this important factor (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988). While these have made useful and significant contribution to their respective fields, the time has come to address our blind spots that might affect us as systemic researchers and therapists alike. We present a list of ten pieces of advice to start working constructively with financial distress in therapy.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Jan Stokkebek

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Beyond One Path: Systemic Reflections on Families in High Conflict

Short Description: Families in prolonged conflict after separation challenge both our understanding and our interventions. This presentation explores two contrasting yet complementary systemic approaches. Rather than presenting a singular solution, the presentation invites reflection on the multiplicity of therapeutic “ways in” to families in conflict.

Long Description: Families in prolonged conflict after separation challenge both our understanding and our interventions. What do we mean by “high conflict,” and how do systemic models respond to the complexity behind the label? This presentation explores two contrasting yet complementary systemic approaches: Strengthening Children in Two Homes (SC2H) from Norway and No Kids in the Middle (NKIM) from the Netherlands. SC2H is a resilience-oriented, child-inclusive therapy model that emphasizes parallel parenting and relational strengthening across two homes. NKIM is a multi-family group intervention that seeks to reduce negative impact of parental conflict to children through structured, dialogical processes involving both parents and children. Rather than presenting a singular solution, the presentation invites reflection on the multiplicity of therapeutic “ways in” to families in conflict. It examines how each model positions children, conceptualizes conflict, and supports change—while also questioning the assumptions embedded in the term “high conflict” itself. Drawing on clinical experience and implementation insights, the presenters will discuss how systemic therapists can navigate the tension between containment and empowerment, between protecting children and engaging parents, and between normative expectations and lived realities. The presenters will discuss some ‘cornerstones’ they find helpful and invite to reflect together on other potential ‘cornerstones’ that help to navigate. The presentation aims to foster dialogue about how we might rethink our responses to families whose conflicts resist resolution, and whose needs challenge conventional therapeutic pathways while taking into account the context of the health care system. Keywords: High-conflict divorce · systemic therapy · child positioning · resilience · containment · parallel parenting · multi-family intervention · SC2H · No Kids in the Middle

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Dana Stone

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Finding Hope in the Current Geo-Socio-Political Context: Self-Care for Clinicians, Supervisors, & Educators

Short Description: Critical self-reflection and acknowledgement of the intersection of one's personal identity factors and professional roles support clinicians, supervisors, and educators to recognize signs of burnout and compassion fatigue in a volatile geo-socio-political context. This workshop will offer ideas for grounded self-care practice to bolster hope.

Long Description: Presenters will explore the intersection of personal and professional experiences related to finding hope in the ever-volatile geo-socio-political context. As clinicians, supervisors, and educators who continue to personally experience and witness persistent and multiple crises (pandemic, anti-Blackness, anti-Asian hate, legislative attacks against LGBTQIA+ and women, immigration disparities, and many others) during the last 5+ years, we have developed various strategies to mitigate our personal and professional responses. Our responses must align with both our professional ethics and standards as well as our personal values and commitment to socially just practices. In order to remain present in our multiple roles, we must acknowledge that the varied crises within our socio-political environment have serious implications not only for our clients, students and supervisees, but also for our own mental health and functioning. The presenters will share key lessons learned: 1) The importance of our attunement to the personal impact of the current geo-socio-political climate with our intersectional identities; 2) The power of creating community to explore and process current events and how they impact our work with clients, students, and supervisees; and 3) Leveraging the parallel process that forms in our relationship with students and supervisees to model the essentialness of nurturing ourselves to reduce both theirs and our own compassion fatigue or burnout. We will share some activities that may help others who occupy multiple roles, to nurture yourselves while supporting others (clients, students, supervisees). During this workshop, the presenters will facilitate dialogue with participants to conceptualize establishing a collaborative and critically conscious community as mental health clinicians, supervisors, and educators.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Karee Stosich

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Revisiting Virginia Satir's Self Mandala: An Exploration of The Self Using Expressive Arts

Short Description: Core concepts of this workshop include exploring parts of the self through Virginia Satir's Self Mandala and Natalie Roger's expressive arts modality.

Long Description: Using the core concepts of growth and self-worth that Satir embodied, we revisit the perspective of ourselves with many parts that contribute to a greater whole. The whole person, with all its parts, contribute to the "I Am" present oriented person that Satir envisioned in her work as a founding family therapist. To apply a current perspective of the self mandala to clinical work, I simplify the mandala to 7 categories: Social, relational, physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and the true self. I organize it into 7 concentric circles and use Ideas from Natalie Roger's expressive arts work to encourage creativity and imagination that help clients focus on building relationships with each of their different parts. The core concept being that as we develop an understanding of ourselves, we will have more capacity to develop relationships with others. A 45-minute presentation on developing the mandala would consist of having audience members participate in the activity themselves. We would entertain the idea that each of the parts of the self (Social, relational, physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and the true self) are worthy of focus and exploration. Each part contains space on the mandala. Moving through the concentric circles from the outside in will give audience members a way to identify and conceptualize their "true self" at the center of the mandala. The purpose being understanding and acceptance of all of their respective parts in the present moment. Audience members can then take this activity to back to their work with individuals and families or use it as a means of personal self care.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Steinar Sunde

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Littsint.no: A Free Multilingual Online Self-Help Portal for Trust-Based Parenting

Short Description: Littsint.no is a free, multilingual self-help portal offering research-based anger management guidance in 11 languages. Developed within family counseling, it helps parents shift from fear-based to trust-based parenting through films, exercises, and digital tools—empowering families worldwide with accessible, evidence-based support.

Long Description: Violence against children is more common and harmful than previously assumed, as shown in Norwegian research (Mossige, 2007; Filetti, 1998). In response, Littsint was developed within family counseling, supported by the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) and the Child Welfare Services (Bufetat). The initiative aligns with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which emphasizes parenting based on trust rather than fear. Littsint.no is a free, multilingual self-help portal that disseminates research-based therapy and parenting guidance in 11 languages. The overarching goal is to enhance parents' emotional regulation and support the transition to trust-based parenting. The program includes sixteen films, an app, PowerPoint presentations, and practical exercises mirroring the first four anger-management sessions offered at family counseling offices. The resource is intended both for independent self-help and as a complement to professional services. Parents are guided to family counseling offices, child welfare services, or Brøset groups if further support is needed. Over the past five years, the portal has reached approximately 20,000 new users annually, with daily new access ranging between 60 and 100 across all languages. Implementation has been ensured through nationwide workshops (2012, 2014, 2022), with over 90% of family counseling offices trained in its use. Weekly online guidance sessions ("Open Teams") support continued professional engagement. The material is also integrated into public health nurse programs such as I trygge hender ("In Safe Hands") to prevent, detect, and avert violence. This presentation will demonstrate Littsint.no interactively, showing how digital, free, and multilingual resources can effectively strengthen parents' regulatory skills and contribute to safer, trust-based family relations worldwide.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Rolf Sundet

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: An ontology of difference: Speculations on family therapy, difference and ethical realism

Short Description: Historically, research and practice of psychotherapy, including family therapy, have been conducted within conceptual frameworks defined in terms of theoretical models. With difference as the central arena of therapy, it will be argued that we still do not know what family therapy work can become.

Long Description: Historically, research and practice of psychotherapy, including family therapy, have been conducted within conceptual frameworks defined in terms of theoretical models. The image of psychotherapy that underpins much contemporary practice is a broadly scientific-medical idea of therapy as an intervention or treatment that involves the application of empirically validated procedures and theory. This part of Western science and philosophy focus on identity and similarities with following generalisations as an aim of research. The idea is that if one knows about the many, one knows what to do with and for the one. Here difference arises when comparing identities and is secondary to identities. Drawing on the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari, and “differences that make a difference” as stated by Gregory Bateson, this workshop will challenge this view, and explore an ontology of difference building on the experience as family therapists, researchers and teachers. There will always be difference, and identities are secondary to difference. Therefore, rather than suggesting standardized answers, knowledge is useful for speculating, experimenting and bringing forth innovative answers to what could be helpful therapy for the individual family. Within this, family therapy is presented as processes of making that increases a much-needed diversity of practice. With difference as the central arena of therapy it will be argued that we still do not know what family therapy work can become. For such practice, stated as ethical realism, the central question will always be; what can therapy become?

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Ljubica Tasić Kennedy

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Systemic Family Therapy Within Sociopolitical Crisis: Practitioner Roles and Shared Vulnerability

Short Description: This presentation explores family therapy with parents of students in Serbia amid political repression and social fragmentation. It shows how societal divisions shaped family bonds and how dialogue fostered emotional regulation, intergenerational understanding, and agency, while addressing therapists' ethical dilemmas as members of the affected community.

Long Description: This presentation explores the clinical and ethical dimensions of systemic family therapy conducted during a period of sociopolitical crisis in Serbia. Following a public tragedy and subsequent increase in state repression, the ROOT collective provided free psychotherapeutic support to parents of university students. The social climate was marked by polarization, heightened distrust, and the presence of conflicting political narratives within families. These dynamics demonstrated how macro-level division can permeate the microsystems of intimate relationships, challenging communication, belonging, and emotional safety. Therapeutic work emphasized the restoration of dialogue and emotional regulation, with a focus on helping family members recognize and tolerate divergent perspectives without rupturing relational bonds. Interventions supported parents in re-establishing connection and agency, while also addressing the emotional responses of fear, guilt, and uncertainty that accompanied broader social instability. A distinctive feature of this case is that the therapists themselves were not external observers to the crisis. Members of the therapeutic team were variously affected: one was directly involved in activist networks targeted by political pressure; one was a student from Croatia navigating cross-border narratives and identity tensions; and others were personally connected to the local community impacted by the tragedy. As a result, therapists encountered overlapping identities—as clinicians, citizens, and, at times, participants in collective distress. This raised questions regarding neutrality, ethical positioning, and the use of shared experience as a therapeutic resource. This work highlights the need for specialized supervisory frameworks for therapists operating under conditions of shared societal vulnerability, where the clinical stance is shaped by mutual exposure to crisis. The presentation concludes by calling for further research on: the clinical implications of overlapping therapist–citizen identities in contexts of repression; supervisory and collegial models that sustain therapist well-being.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Allan Tate

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Clinical Implications of Stress Family Typologies in a Diverse Community-Based Sample

Short Description: Chronic and acute stress are linked to biopsychosocial health yet little is known about stress variability. The current study characterized groups of stress variability in a diverse, community-based sample of parents ($n=631$) to identify stress typologies and to explore associations with individual and family wellbeing.

Long Description: Background: Chronic and acute stress are linked to biopsychosocial health yet little is known about stress variability. The current study characterized groups of stress variability in a diverse, community-based sample of parents to explore associations with individual and family wellbeing. Methods: Ecological momentary assessment (EMA) self-report data from the Family Matters Study ($n=631$ adults) was used to operationalize participant stress level and variability (i.e., daily mean and diurnal slope of stress, average between-survey change, standard deviation of survey-stress change, and volatility of daily change variability over a one-week EMA period). Latent class analysis was used to group participants based on stress characteristics. Using baseline survey data, multinomial logistic regression was used to identify predictors of class membership and cross-sectional associations with wellbeing. Results: A 3-class model best fit the data (entropy = 0.821) and demonstrated qualitatively distinct classes (low, medium, and high stress variability). Using the low stress variability group as a reference, higher anxiety ($O R=1.55$), overall baseline stress ($O R=1.25$), and lower family functioning ($O R=1.96$) predicted membership in the medium stress variability class. Higher number of recent stressful events ($O R=1.24$), anxiety ($O R=2.34$), and overall stress ($O R=1.35$) predicted membership in the high stress variability group versus the reference group. Coping, self-esteem, and resilience did not predict class membership. Mean levels of pain, energy, depression, and adverse childhood experiences were correlated with typologies, but effect sizes were small (r^2 range = 0.01-0.07). Conclusion: High stress variability had strong links with elevated anxiety and recent stressful events. Future research should prospectively examine stress variability on biopsychosocial health to develop systemic and family-level interventions that buffer against momentary stress on wellbeing.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Carlos Temperini

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Genogram in Executive Coaching: Transgenerational Patterns and Their Impact on Professional Identity and Leadership

Short Description: The genogram, a systemic family therapy tool, is applied in executive coaching to map transgenerational patterns, roles, and family loyalties that influence professional identity, career choices, and leadership styles. Its use enhances self-awareness, reframes narratives, and supports more authentic and integrated leadership development.

Long Description: Executive coaching has increasingly expanded its methodological repertoire by integrating tools grounded in systemic and clinical frameworks. Among these, the genogram—a central instrument in family therapy—has proven to be a powerful resource for understanding intergenerational dynamics that shape professional identity, career pathways, leadership styles, and decision-making processes. This work presents a theoretical-practical reflection on the use of genograms in executive coaching interventions, exploring how family narratives, roles, loyalties, and transgenerational mandates influence executives' behavioral patterns, career trajectories, and leadership development. Guided by a systemic and multigenerational perspective, genograms were applied in coaching processes with executives facing leadership challenges, career transitions, succession dilemmas, and identity-related conflicts in organizational contexts. Findings indicate that elements such as invisible loyalties, family expectations, legacies of success and failure, parenting models related to work, sibling positioning, symbolic alliances, and intergenerational silences operate as unconscious organizing forces that significantly shape career choices, risk tolerance, performance pressure, conflict management styles, and relational dynamics in leadership roles. When these implicit patterns are made visible through genogram mapping, coachees demonstrate increased self-awareness, emotional differentiation, cognitive flexibility, and capacity to re-author their professional narratives. The genogram also enables a deeper working alliance in coaching, enriching reflective processes and supporting targeted interventions—particularly in cases involving recurring career cycles, burnout, leadership impasses, over-adaptation, or conflicts between belonging and autonomy in professional contexts. This work concludes that integrating the genogram into executive coaching expands the field's epistemological boundaries, situating leadership development within a relational and historical framework. It reinforces coaching as a space for elaborating inherited narratives, transforming intergenerational patterns, and fostering more authentic, conscious, and self-determined forms of leadership.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Hege Theodorsen

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: How to use routine outcome monitoring in couple therapy

Short Description: This workshop presents findings from implementing routine outcome monitoring (ROM) in family counseling. Drawing on recorded sessions and therapist interviews, we explore how ROM informs clinical decision-making. Participants will gain practical insights into using ROM as a conversational tool to enhance therapeutic dialogue and facilitate change.

Long Description: Routine outcome monitoring (ROM) has gained increasing attention in recent decades as a means to strengthen the quality of mental health care and family counseling. International research suggests that systematic feedback can enhance therapeutic outcomes, support client participation, and foster greater responsiveness in therapy. However, less is known about how ROM is actually used in family counseling practice, and how therapists make decisions when they bring feedback tools into conversations. In this workshop, we will present findings from our ongoing implementation of ROM at a family counseling office. Therapists have introduced the Couple Rating Scale (CRS; Anderson et al., 2021) and the Intersession Alliance Measure (IAM; Anderson et al., 2024) in their work with couples and families. Sessions where ROM was used have been video recorded, and therapists have been interviewed about how they interpreted and applied the feedback in concrete therapeutic moments. Preliminary results indicate that ROM provides more than just symptom and relationship information; the tools can serve as conversational entry points to important themes, help clarify different perspectives among family members, and strengthen the therapeutic alliance. At the same time, therapists encounter challenges, particularly when feedback highlights difficult or conflicting experiences that need to be addressed constructively in the session. This workshop will offer participants practical insights into effective ways of using ROM as a conversational tool in therapy, and into how implementation influences clinical decision-making. We will also discuss the organizational and methodological conditions required for ROM to contribute to sustainable quality development in family counseling.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

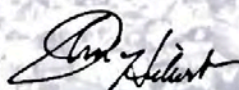
Presenter: Kristina Tollisen Aasen

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

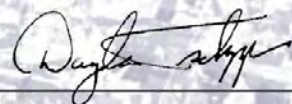
Title: The Therapist as a living instrument

Short Description: How can we as therapists use ourselves more consciously within the therapeutic space? In this workshop we explore the therapist as a living instrument through empathic resonance, authentic connection and awareness of bodily signals. This is an invitation to listen with your whole being, through experiential exercises and reflection.

Long Description: The Therapist as Instrument In Emotion-Focused Therapy and other experiential approaches, the therapist is not a neutral observer, but an active, living instrument in the therapeutic process. This workshop explores how empathic resonance, authentic connection and intuitive bodily awareness can deepen therapeutic presence and emotional attunement. Working in this way is both powerful and demanding. It calls for openness, vulnerability, and emotional availability — qualities that also require grounding and self-care. Together we will explore what it takes to sustain this depth of engagement: how to stay connected to oneself while staying attuned to the client, and how to use our own emotional and bodily signals without becoming overwhelmed. Through experiential exercises, reflection and dialogue, we will practice recognizing the subtle balance between resonance and regulation. The workshop invites you to explore not only how you use yourself as a therapeutic instrument, but also how you care for that instrument.



IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert



General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Aníbal Torres Bernal

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Simple Yet Complex: What Makes Some Therapists More Effective Than Others?

Short Description: Why do some therapists consistently achieve better results than others? Research shows that treatment models explain surprisingly little about client outcomes. This session discusses and teaches practical, evidence-based relational skills to strengthen connections with and between clients to achieve better results in any therapeutic setting.

Long Description: Therapy is both simple and complex. The simple part: research consistently shows that relationships — not treatment models — are the strongest predictors of client outcomes. The complex part: creating, sustaining, and repairing those relationships requires intentional, learnable skills. This interactive workshop provides MFTs with practical tools to focus on what matters most: connection. Drawing from the latest research on common factors, therapeutic alliance, and family systems, participants will learn how to: -Build strong alliances quickly by aligning goals and negotiating tasks collaboratively. -Repair ruptures early with clear, structured strategies that restore trust and treatment momentum. -Facilitate healthier relationships between clients in family and couple therapy to create systemic change. -Enhance engagement and adherence through empathy, attunement, and cultural responsiveness. We'll also explore evidence showing that while treatment models contribute minimally to outcomes, relational factors are powerful, actionable levers of success. Through discussions, guided exercises, and real-world examples, participants will leave with specific, evidence-based techniques they can integrate seamlessly into their practice. Whether you are an early-career clinician or an experienced MFT, this session offers a clear, practical roadmap for becoming a more effective, confident, and impactful therapist — by focusing less on what model you use and more on how you connect.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: SOLE TORRES CARROLL

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Giving passion a field to practice: The uses of artistic creation in therapy and supervision.

Short Description: This presentation explores how artistic passion and creation can serve as transformative resources in clinical supervision and therapy. Doctoral students and their supervisor will illustrate how their use facilitates the connection between identity, personal growth, and therapeutic skill development, enhancing the learning process in supervision and generating therapeutic change.

Long Description: This presentation delves into the processes of passion and artistic creation, exploring their potential to generate internal and relational resources in therapeutic practice and clinical supervision. We will discuss how a learning space based on trust and openness can be co-created in supervision and how this can be used to connect students with their sources of artistic passion, play, and creativity. The presenters, a supervisor and two clinical students at the University of Puerto Rico, practice in an archipelago in the Caribbean, distinguished by its cultural richness nourished by art in its various forms. These artistic expressions are integral to our traditions, serving as pillars of our identity and cultural diversity. The arts in all their manifestations have stood as tools of liberation and resistance to processes of colonization, providing spaces for re-imagining our identity, fostering possibilities, while sustaining complex memories, relational patterns, and emotions. In the context of clinical supervision and psychotherapy, reconnecting students with their sources of passion, their potential, and their practices of artistic creation and expression allows them as therapists to reaffirm their identity as performers capable of connecting with others, being patient and curious, enjoying the process, and trusting their inventiveness for provoking generative change. Through this, the space of clinical supervision and therapy becomes an opportunity to construct a therapeutic identity that recognizes and values the qualities and creative processes that nurture students and supervisors outside their academic and professional identities, treating them as rich resources for clinical training. In this presentation, we will discuss and provide examples of how artistic passion and creation can be evoked, nurtured, and utilized in the context of supervision and psychotherapy as a performative and metaphorical resource for navigating the learning experience and accessing resources that enrich the abilities and capacities of future clinicians.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

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Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Chris Troutt

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: FASD and the Family System

Short Description: Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders are on the rise. As practitioners it's our duty to gain a better understanding on how this organic brain damage effects a person's life, and the families who love them. You will gain understanding of FASD and tools to help individuals and families thrive.

Long Description: Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs) are a group of conditions that can occur in a person exposed to alcohol before birth. These conditions can affect each person in different ways and can range from mild to severe. People with FASDs can have lifelong effects, including problems with behavior and learning as well as physical problems. FASDs are preventable if a developing baby is not exposed to alcohol. There is no known safe amount of alcohol during pregnancy or when trying to get pregnant. FASD's are often misunderstood and misdiagnosed. Practitioners can miss the signs of FASD due to a lack of education. The impact on a family can be challenging and at times, overwhelming. It is particularly difficult when an individual has not been correctly diagnosed. Siblings are affected and parents can become isolated and weary. This presentation is designed to raise awareness for participants regarding the dangers of drinking alcohol during childbearing years and promote early recognition, diagnosis and treatment of individuals and families who have been affected by prenatal exposure to alcohol.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

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Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
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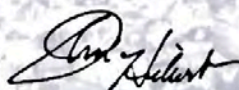
Presenter: Chris Troutt

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

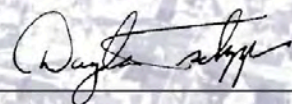
Title: A wounded man- how to forge masculinity and ignite passion

Short Description: The rate of divorce in families with a special needs child may be as high as 87%. This presentation is geared toward equipping and supporting men who are parenting children from hard places to rise above their own wounds, to heal, move from surviving to thriving and becoming fully present.

Long Description: Kids from hard places, just grow up to be adults from hard places. But what happens when those adults, particularly men, are faced with parenting a child who has special needs? Every infraction they have as an individual will be challenged. The rate of divorce in families with a special needs child may be as high as 87% in the US. In addition, nearly 1 in 10 men in the US experience depression or anxiety but less than half will receive treatment. Also worth noting, over 6 million men suffer from depression per year, but male depression often goes under diagnosed. Lastly, men are less likely to address previous traumatic experiences they have had. These statistics combined with parenting a special needs child can create a high stress atmosphere leaving lasting impacts on families and the men who love them. This presentation offers understanding and tools to equip and support men who are parenting children from hard places to rise above their own wounds, to heal, move from surviving to thriving and becoming fully present with their loved ones.



IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert



General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Wai Hung Wallace Tsang

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Engaging Mothers in Supporting Husbands' Fatherhood in Chinese Families - A Co-parenting Intervention Group

Short Description: This is a pioneering project called 'CO-MUST', which is a co-parenting intervention group launched in Hong Kong. CO-MUST was designed to engage mothers in supporting their husbands in adopting positive co-parenting. The CO-MUST intervention protocol, clinical cases and outcomes will be presented in the presentation.

Long Description: Mothers' engagement with their husbands in co-parenting is an important agenda for promoting family well-being. This is a pioneering project called 'CO-MUST', which is a co-parenting intervention group launched in Hong Kong. CO-MUST was designed to engage mothers in supporting their husbands in adopting positive fatherhood in co-parenting. It adopts a psycho-educational format, led by two trained group facilitators. The CO-MUST intervention protocol will be presented with clinical cases will be discussed in the presentation. Interactive exercises related to CO-MUST will be shared in the workshop. Forty mothers from kindergarten and primary schools participated in the CO-MUST intervention groups from September 2023 to June 2024. A mixed research approach was adopted to evaluate the outcomes. Quasi-experimental design was used to measure changes in some psychometric variables before and after their participation in the group. Focus groups were also conducted to explore the in-depth experiences of including their husbands in co-parenting. When comparing with the control group, CO-MUST intervention group was found to be effective in enhancing mothers' behavior of accepting and recognizing their husbands' roles and performance in parenting. Besides, the groups could enhance mothers' parenting efficacy, reduce parenting stress and psychological distress, and promote the couple's relationship. The findings also concluded that mothers' inclusion and acceptance of fathers in co-parenting contribute to positive outcomes in enhancing and supporting fathers' involvement in co-parenting.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Wai Hung Wallace Tsang

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Divorce Discernment Counseling in Hong Kong: A Clinical Conceptual Framework with the 4Rs

Short Description: This presentation introduces a clinically adapted framework—the 4Rs Model—to guide Divorce Discernment Counseling practice within Hong Kong’s socio-cultural landscape.

Long Description: Divorce discernment counseling (DDC) serves couples on the brink of separation by helping them gain clarity and confidence about the future of their marriage. While DDC has developed conceptually in Western contexts, its application in Hong Kong presents unique cultural and relational dynamics rooted in collectivist values, filial obligations, and evolving marital expectations. This presentation introduces a clinically adapted framework—the 4Rs Model—to guide DDC practice within Hong Kong’s socio-cultural landscape. The framework comprises four interrelated processes: 1) Reconnection of Self, where individuals explore personal values, emotions, and relational positions beyond reactive decision-making; 2) Revisiting Marriage, which facilitates reflective understanding of marital history, patterns of interaction, and unmet needs; 3) Reconciliation, emphasizing empathy and emotional closure through guided dialogue; and 4) Responsible Choice*, supporting each partner in making an informed, respectful, and sustainable decision regarding the relationship’s continuation or dissolution. Clinical cases drawn from counseling practice in Hong Kong will illustrate the model’s practical application and therapeutic value. Through these cases, the paper demonstrates how the 4Rs framework enables counselors to balance neutrality, cultural sensitivity, and emotional containment while addressing clients’ ambivalence. The approach integrates systemic, psychodynamic, and mindfulness-informed techniques suited to Hong Kong’s sociocultural context, where saving face, family roles, and intergenerational expectations strongly influence marital decisions.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

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Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

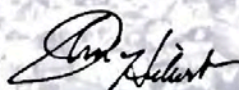
Presenter: Agnieszka Tulowiecka

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

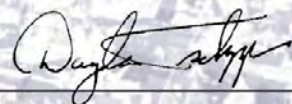
Title: Unwrapping the Lollipop 2.0: 10 seconds in and I am already sticky

Short Description: Therapists' and parents' ability to initiate sex talks is crucial for preparing youth for healthy sexual lives. Barriers like anxiety, shame, and lack of knowledge hinder communication. A national survey reveals effective strategies for therapists and parents to navigate this stage of development, fostering open and informed discussions.

Long Description: Therapists play a vital role in helping families navigate sensitive conversations about sex, promoting healthy relationships and reducing risks such as early sexual activity and STIs. However, both therapists and caregivers often feel anxious or underprepared for these discussions. Creating a safe, non-judgmental space and normalizing discomfort are key strategies to empower caregivers with the skills and confidence needed. Despite its importance, research on therapist-caregiver and caregiver-child dynamics remains limited. There is also a pressing need for inclusive conversations that embrace diverse sexual orientations and family structures. This presentation shares preliminary findings from a national survey examining therapist and parent comfort and skills in initiating sex-related conversations. Early results highlight a strong correlation between therapist and parent confidence. Attendees will receive a practical pamphlet with strategies to support these conversations in clinical and home settings.



IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert



General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Markie Twist

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: International Statement on ‘sex addiction’ and compulsive sexual behaviours

Short Description: Statement on “sex addiction” by international team of scholars/clinicians, including presenter, in an international peer-reviewed journal will be presented. Purpose of statement to clarify scientific evidence on sexual compulsivity, in line with ICD-11 diagnostic criteria of compulsive sexual behaviour disorder. Implications for international systemic practices also provided.

Long Description: Statement on “sex addiction” by international team of scholars/clinicians, including presenter, in an international peer-reviewed journal will be presented. Purpose of statement to clarify scientific evidence on sexual compulsivity, in line with ICD-11 diagnostic criteria of compulsive sexual behaviour disorder (CSBD). The ICD-11 diagnostic criteria of CSBD offered much clarity in the assessment of sexual compulsivity, yet, mental health practitioners, including systemic clinicians, continue to be confused, using CSBD and “sex addiction” interchangeably, and thus offering addiction-oriented treatments, despite the recommendation against it by the sexual medicine field. The presenter will present an overview of documented evidence of addiction-oriented treatments being iatrogenic, and why we think the term “sex addiction” and its related treatments should no longer be used, and not used interchangeably with CSBD. Implications for international systemic practices, based on the statement, will also be detailed. The recommended practices are in alignment with sexual medicine recommendations, as well as a research-informed sexological lens, multi-modality-based systemic practices, and within a framing that is sex-positive

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Marsha Vaughn

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: The Prefascist Personality and Its Ties to Authoritarian Parenting: Implications for Family Therapists

Short Description: After the Holocaust, the American Jewish Committee funded research for sociologists and psychologists to solve prejudice. The team found “prefascist” biases learned within authoritarian households. These include authoritarian aggression, authoritarian submission, and conventionalism. We will analyze the concept’s implications for family therapists and how to challenge those biases.

Long Description: After the Holocaust, the American Jewish Committee created a Department of Scientific Research to find a workable answer to eliminate racial/ethnic prejudice. They believed that if they could discover the root of Germany’s submission to Hitler, then they could devise a prevention strategy. From this Department came Sanford et al’s (1950) “Measure for Antidemocratic Personality Trends.” This measure was devised by a team of sociologists and psychologists to identify antidemocratic, or “prefascist”, personality traits. These prefascist personality traits made individuals susceptible to fascist ideology. They may explain how so much of the German population was swayed into accepting dictatorship. Associated with these personality traits are authoritarian parenting styles, strict adherence to middle-class norms, and hatred of sexual minorities. These biases can be categorized as: authoritarian aggression, authoritarian submission, and conventionalism. The measure used concepts such as Projected Aggression to illustrate how individuals use fascist authority figures to act out revenge fantasies. Importantly, the study found personality trends that started in reaction to parenting styles. Family therapists are acquainted with the harms of authoritarian parenting. Children brought up to follow orders instead of asking questions become adults who find comfort in submitting to “strongman” authority figures. Similarly, children raised to hate women and sexual minorities will often become adults who seek to punish those they find promiscuous. Research also suggests that authoritarian personality traits are correlated with accepting corporal punishment of children as an effective discipline strategy (Clemens et al., 2020). Using Sanford et al’s (1950) work, we will be discussing how family therapists have seen these prefascist trends in their clinical, educational, and activist work. We will then be sharing techniques on challenging these prejudices when they arise within a system. These include encouraging nuanced thinking, “tender-mindedness,” acceptance of diversity, and psychological flexibility.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Neil Venketramen

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Integrative Systemic Therapy: Next Steps When Models Don't Work

Short Description: How can therapists meaningfully integrate diverse models of family therapy? This presentation offers Integrative Systemic Therapy (IST), a framework refined over five decades to bring cultural nuance and clinical depth to work with couples and families. Participants will gain insight into a flexible, practice-based method of integration.

Long Description: Marriage and family therapists often face challenges too complex for any single model, issues that are multi-layered, intergenerational, and deeply embedded in cultural and relational contexts. Clinical challenges such as chronic communication breakdowns, trauma, blended family struggles, or severe clinical disorders cannot always be addressed by a single model of therapy. The key question then is, when a specific models fall short, what do we do next? This creates a pressing need for integration, a way to draw from multiple approaches while maintaining treatment fidelity and clinical depth. At the same time, therapists face real challenges when attempting integration. Risks include superficial blending of models, inconsistent application of interventions, or requiring clinicians to master every therapeutic tradition. Without a clear framework, integration can leave therapy fragmented and potentially undermine treatment effectiveness. Integrative Systemic Therapy (IST) offers an option to address the complexity presented by clients. Developed and refined over four decades, at The Family Institute at Northwestern University and used in clinical practice and taught in graduate training, IST provides a framework for integrating diverse models in a clinically relevant way. Rather than requiring therapists to learn and master every therapeutic school, IST equips them with a method of integration grounded in systemic principles. Therapists learn to map intrapsychic and interpersonal patterns, assess across multiple systemic levels, and adapt interventions responsively. In this presentation, participants will explore how IST functions as a meta framework for integration in couples and family therapy. Drawing from decades of application, we will examine how IST has been used to address complex relational problems and integrate cultural and contextual factors into treatment. The session will highlight how IST makes integration not only possible, but clinically effective in helping therapists maintain clarity while flexibly weaving together the strengths of multiple models for real-world practice.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

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www.ifta-familytherapy.org

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Presenter: Mary Christine Ward

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Evaluating Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) Techniques Used to Train Exceptional Athletes to Elite Success and Research Their Family Support Systems

Short Description: This presentation analyses using Cognitive Behavioral Therapy techniques to coach exceptional young athletes to exemplary performances. A qualitative research project is included examining how family behaviors impact athletes. Mary Ward, gymnastics coach (50 years) and therapist (30 years), combines both roles to explore navigation of the pressures of competition.

Long Description: Evaluating Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) Techniques used to Train Exceptional Young Athletes To Elite Success and Research Their Family Support Systems Mary Christine Ward - USA Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is instrumental in training athletes for tremendous improvements. This theory promotes techniques applicable for visual, auditory, or tactile learners. Through CBT, each type can adapt strategies that assist them in thinking differently, which moves them toward more optimistic feelings, and powerful behavioral modifications that promote amazing performances. This therapy is a type of cognitive restructuring designed to eliminate unhelpful thinking, ruinous thought patterns, and other cerebral distortions. Athletes can decrease their anxieties with deep breathing, meditation, and insightful new ideas for training, and more effective communication. Many athletes suffer from anxiety and stress. Talk therapy helps develop quick mental images that change how they approach practicing sports skills. A qualitative research included interviews with ten excellent athletes about how CBT changed the outcomes of their competitions. The interviews also surveyed how parents influenced their success through positive or negative involvement. Supportive parents who attended meets or games without compulsively reviewing routines, or critiquing performances, promoted better mental health for the athletes. Parents who lived vicariously through their children may do so because they were athletes themselves or were not athletic at all. This emotionally overwhelming type of parent can also learn to use Cognitive Behavioral Therapy techniques to change their harmful behaviors. In conclusion, athletes enjoy the sports experiences, become more resilient competitors, and flourish. The athletic pressures of competition have been difficult to navigate throughout history in every country of the world. Athletes taught to embrace Cognitive Behavioral Therapy have succeeded at much higher levels. Testimonies from athletes with similar theoretical family supports in CBT thrive psychologically with healthier family relationships during their athletic careers and after.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Deborah Watson

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: The Inside and Out of Triangles

Short Description: The concept of triangles and triangling will be discussed. According to Bowen (1988) triangles are everywhere and nobody is immune from triangling. As tension in a relationship system increases the equilibrium of triangles is interrupted and a predictable process of triangling begins creating insiders and outsiders of the triangles.

Long Description: The concept of triangles and triangling from Bowen Family Systems Theory will be discussed. According to Bowen (1988) triangles are everywhere and no one is immune from triangling. He describes relational triangles as the smallest stable relationship unit and considered triangles the foundation “or cement” that integrated his concepts into a single theory (Bowen, 1978 in Kerr & Bowen, 1988 pp. 378 -379). The concept of the triangle provides the theoretical framework to understand the functioning of family emotional processes. The joining of a third person in a two-person relationship shifts, interrupts, or alleviates anxiety in the two-person relational system. Kerr (2019) states the creation of a triangle is an effort to find a solution to the instability of a two-person system. As tension, anxiety, and/or stress increases, the equilibrium of a triangle is interrupted and a predictable process of triangling begins. Two people inside the triangle attempt to generate togetherness and comfort, while a third person absorbs the anxiety. This process creates two insiders and an outsider. The two people that move towards one another to find comfort are considered insiders while the third person this is distanced becomes the outsider. High stress environments (e.g. war, systemic oppression, etc.) or significant events (births, deaths, onset of illness) may intensify triangling behaviors that can span generations. Bringing greater awareness of historical, contextual, and current factors as individuals move inside and outside of interlocking triangles can be a helpful way to elicit awareness of the ways we relate to self and others possibly facilitating development of strategies to increase differentiation of self.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Madison White

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: An introduction to the founders and systemic principles of EFT.

Short Description: This presentation reviews the history and theoretical basis of Emotionally Focused Therapy. It focuses on how systemic theory guides EFT's process of transforming relational distress into secure emotional connections.

Long Description: This presentation offers a comprehensive introduction to the foundational history and theoretical framework of Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT). Developed by Dr. Sue Johnson and Dr. Les Greenberg in the early 1980s, EFT integrates systemic theory with attachment theory and experiential emotion-focused techniques to address relational distress. Participants will gain insight into the contributions of these pioneering founders, understanding how their collaboration shaped EFT into a widely respected approach for couples, families, and individuals. The session highlights how systemic theory serves as a core framework within EFT by viewing relationship problems not as individual failings but as patterns of interaction within a relational system. By focusing on these interaction cycles, EFT helps clients identify and shift negative communication and emotional responses that perpetuate distress. The presentation details how EFT leverages attachment needs, such as the need for safety, closeness, and emotional responsiveness, to restructure these patterns and build secure, lasting emotional bonds. Attendees will also learn about the three stages of EFT: de-escalation of conflict, restructuring interactions through emotional engagement, and consolidation of new relational patterns. The integration of systemic theory throughout these stages allows therapist to help clients externalize the problem, foster mutual understanding, and transform their relational dynamics. This session is designed for clinicians, students, and professionals interested in evidenced-based approaches to relational therapy. It offers practical knowledge on how EFT's systemic lens enhances therapeutic effectiveness and promotes emotional healing and connection. By the end, participants will have a clearer understanding of EFT's origins, theoretical foundation, and its role in supporting healthy, secure relationships.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Katheryn Whittaker

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Systemic Therapy Meets Neurofeedback and EMDR: Advancing Integrative Clinical Practice

Short Description: This presentation introduces an integrative framework combining systemic therapy, Neurofeedback, and EMDR. Together, these modalities enhance trauma recovery, emotional regulation, and relational healing. Case examples illustrate how neurobiological recalibration and memory reprocessing align with systemic practice, offering clinicians practical strategies for multi-layered interventions that foster resilience and lasting change.

Long Description: This presentation highlights the innovative convergence of systemic therapy with two evidence-based modalities—Neurofeedback and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR). While each has a strong track record for addressing trauma, anxiety, and dysregulation, their integration creates a synergistic pathway for deeper and more sustainable therapeutic change. Neurofeedback leverages neuroplasticity to recalibrate brainwave activity and enhance emotional regulation, while EMDR facilitates the adaptive reprocessing of distressing experiences. When situated within a systemic framework, these modalities not only promote individual healing but also illuminate the relational contexts that shape symptom expression and recovery. Participants will explore practical strategies for weaving these approaches together in clinical work, with an emphasis on tailoring interventions to both neurobiological patterns and relational dynamics. Case illustrations will demonstrate how this multi-layered integration fosters resilience, accelerates symptom reduction, and enriches therapeutic outcomes across diverse populations.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Kristoffer James Whittaker

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: How to use routine outcome monitoring in couple therapy

Short Description: This workshop presents findings from implementing routine outcome monitoring (ROM) in family counseling. Drawing on recorded sessions and therapist interviews, we explore how ROM informs clinical decision-making. Participants will gain practical insights into using ROM as a conversational tool to enhance therapeutic dialogue and facilitate change.

Long Description: Routine outcome monitoring (ROM) has gained increasing attention in recent decades as a means to strengthen the quality of mental health care and family counseling. International research suggests that systematic feedback can enhance therapeutic outcomes, support client participation, and foster greater responsiveness in therapy. However, less is known about how ROM is actually used in family counseling practice, and how therapists make decisions when they bring feedback tools into conversations. In this workshop, we will present findings from our ongoing implementation of ROM at a family counseling office. Therapists have introduced the Couple Rating Scale (CRS; Anderson et al., 2021) and the Intersession Alliance Measure (IAM; Anderson et al., 2024) in their work with couples and families. Sessions where ROM was used have been video recorded, and therapists have been interviewed about how they interpreted and applied the feedback in concrete therapeutic moments. Preliminary results indicate that ROM provides more than just symptom and relationship information; the tools can serve as conversational entry points to important themes, help clarify different perspectives among family members, and strengthen the therapeutic alliance. At the same time, therapists encounter challenges, particularly when feedback highlights difficult or conflicting experiences that need to be addressed constructively in the session. This workshop will offer participants practical insights into effective ways of using ROM as a conversational tool in therapy, and into how implementation influences clinical decision-making. We will also discuss the organizational and methodological conditions required for ROM to contribute to sustainable quality development in family counseling.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Elizabeth Wieling

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Narrative Exposure Therapy for Treating Complex Posttraumatic Stress

Short Description: Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET) is an evidence-based treatment for trauma-spectrum disorders in survivors of complex trauma. The workshop will: (a) introduce theoretical underpinnings and exposure protocol; (b) discuss clinical implications for using multi-component NET + systemic models; and c) share dissemination and implementation strategies across community settings.

Long Description: Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET) is an evidence-based treatment for trauma-spectrum disorders in survivors of multiple and complex trauma. NET builds on the theory of the dual representation of traumatic memories (Schauer, Neuner & Elbert, 2011). It is thought to contextualize the particular associative elements of the fear network, the sensory, affective and cognitive memories of trauma to understand and process the memory of a traumatic event in the course of the particular life of a client. Therefore, in NET, the client, with the assistance of the therapist, constructs a chronological narrative of their life story with a focus on the traumatic experiences. Fragmented reports of the traumatic experiences will be transformed into a coherent narrative. Empathic understanding, active listening, congruency and unconditional positive regard are key components of the therapist's behavior. For traumatic stress experiences the therapist asks in detail for emotions, cognitions, sensory information, physiological responses and probes for respective observations. The patient/client is encouraged to relive these emotions while narrating without losing their connection to the "here and now" using permanent reminders that the feelings and physiological responses result from memories, the therapist links the experiences to episodic facts, (i.e., time and place). In this way reprocessing, meaning-making and integration is facilitated. At the end of treatment the recorded autobiography may be used for human rights advocacy. NET is consistently reviewed as one of the best supported interventions for the treatment of refugees and people who have been exposed to multiple traumatic events over their lifetime (Nose et al., 2017; McPherson, 2012; Robjant & Fazel, 2010; Crumlish & O'Rourke, 2010).

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Elizabeth Wieling

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Clinical Implications of Stress Family Typologies in a Diverse Community-Based Sample

Short Description: Chronic and acute stress are linked to biopsychosocial health yet little is known about stress variability. The current study characterized groups of stress variability in a diverse, community-based sample of parents (n=631) to identify stress typologies and to explore associations with individual and family wellbeing.

Long Description: Background: Chronic and acute stress are linked to biopsychosocial health yet little is known about stress variability. The current study characterized groups of stress variability in a diverse, community-based sample of parents to explore associations with individual and family wellbeing. Methods: Ecological momentary assessment (EMA) self-report data from the Family Matters Study (n=631 adults) was used to operationalize participant stress level and variability (i.e., daily mean and diurnal slope of stress, average between-survey change, standard deviation of survey-stress change, and volatility of daily change variability over a one-week EMA period). Latent class analysis was used to group participants based on stress characteristics. Using baseline survey data, multinomial logistic regression was used to identify predictors of class membership and cross-sectional associations with wellbeing. Results: A 3-class model best fit the data (entropy = 0.821) and demonstrated qualitatively distinct classes (low, medium, and high stress variability). Using the low stress variability group as a reference, higher anxiety (O R=1.55), overall baseline stress (O R=1.25), and lower family functioning (O R=1.96) predicted membership in the medium stress variability class. Higher number of recent stressful events (O R=1.24), anxiety (O R=2.34), and overall stress (O R=1.35) predicted membership in the high stress variability group versus the reference group. Coping, self-esteem, and resilience did not predict class membership. Mean levels of pain, energy, depression, and adverse childhood experiences were correlated with typologies, but effect sizes were small (r^2 range = 0.01-0.07). Conclusion: High stress variability had strong links with elevated anxiety and recent stressful events. Future research should prospectively examine stress variability on biopsychosocial health to develop systemic and family-level interventions that buffer against momentary stress on wellbeing.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Suet Kwan Wu

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Self-Harm Experiences of Hong Kong Youth: Trauma, Coping and Implications

Short Description: This qualitative study explores the subjective experiences of self-harm behavior among Hong Kong youth aged 18 to 24. Through in-depth interviews, it examines trauma and subjective coping strategies, aiming to better understand and promote more effective professional interventions for young people facing self-harm challenges and their families.

Long Description: This qualitative study investigates the subjective experiences of self-harm behavior among Hong Kong youth aged 18 to 24. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with six participants who currently engage in self-harm, focusing on their personal narratives and exploring both observable behavioral patterns and subjective experiences. The study also examines existing support measures to better understand the needs of those affected. Special attention is given to the participants' trauma histories, the impacts of these traumatic experiences, and their subsequent responses. The research reveals that, under the constraints and limited resources then, self-harm was often perceived by participants as a creative adjustment—a coping strategy for emotional dysregulation and overwhelming stress. Participants provided complex interpretations of self-harm, highlighting their struggles with emotional regulation, helplessness, and alignment of their understanding with prevailing societal attitudes towards self-harm. The study also highlights the dominance of the biomedical model in Hong Kong's health and social services, which emphasizes individual pathology and medication. Professionals often respond to self-harm by conducting risk assessments and recommending medical interventions. However, participants questioned the effectiveness of hospitalization and disclosed that they continued with self-harm behavior, often adapting their methods to different environments. Narrative analysis further explores the interplay between trauma, secondary trauma, professional support, and self-harming behavior. The experience of one participant illustrates the grave consequences of secondary trauma and inadequate professional support. Dehumanized crisis management and unnoticed trauma led to introjection and the repeated re-enactment of trauma, which reinforced a long-term reliance on self-harm and maladaptive coping behavior. By amplifying the voices of affected youth, this study seeks to increase public awareness of youth self-harm and recommends more holistic, trauma-informed interventions and consistent policies to better support their development.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Yitong Wu

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Full-Time Children in China: Family Dynamics of Unemployed Co-Residence

Short Description: Using a systemic perspective, this semi-structured interview study examines Chinese families in which unemployed adults (30+) live with parents as “full-time children.” Thematic findings address role expectations, care/financial exchange, boundaries, stigma, and autonomy negotiations, with takeaways for clinicians working with these families and individuals.

Long Description: This study examined the emerging phenomenon of “full-time children”—unemployed adults aged 30 and above who co-reside with their parents, are primarily supported by family finances, and assume substantial household, caregiving, and coordination duties as a defined intra-family role. Unlike NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) (Rahmani et al., 2024) or “boomerang kids” (Tosi, 2020), the construct emphasizes role expectations and intra-family exchange rather than co-residence alone. Guided by a systemic perspective, we conducted in-depth interviews with 16 participants across China. Using reflexive thematic analysis, we explored interaction patterns, emotional bonds, boundary-setting, and adaptation processes under economic contraction and cultural norms of filial obligation. Anticipated contributions include: (1) a role-oriented description and preliminary typology that differentiates supportive interdependence from enmeshment; (2) process accounts of how families redistribute tasks, risks, and identity work while maintaining cohesion under contemporary economic and cultural conditions; and (3) practical implications for clinical work—focused assessment prompts, guidance for negotiating intergenerational role “contracts,” and strategies that support differentiation while preserving connection. Findings will refine theory on Chinese families’ adaptation to long-term co-residence amid the status incongruence of being higher-educated yet unemployed, and will inform clinicians, community services, and policymakers.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: + 1-309-786-4491
Fax: + 1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Rie Yabuki-DiCorcia

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: The Psychological Dynamics of International Marriage: Insights from Studies on Japan–US Couples

Short Description: International marriage, defined as unions between different nationalities. Based on two decades of qualitative research on Japanese–American couples: globalization enabled cross-border intimacy; marital culture is negotiated amid national, linguistic, and religious differences; mobility reshapes careers and parenting; language asymmetries and class misrecognition drive divorce; value congruence sustains stability.

Long Description: This study defines “international marriage” as a union between partners of different nationalities. Building on two decades of qualitative research with Japanese–American couples, it advances seven interrelated findings. (1) International marriage among Japanese citizens became more common with globalization in the 1990s. Expanded cross-border mobility and diffusion of digital networks facilitated intimate relationships across national borders. (2) All marriages constitute arenas in which spouses’ cultures meet, contest, and negotiate. Couples co-construct a shared “marital culture.” Each partner also reconstructs his or her individual culture. In international marriages, differences in nationality, language, customs, and religion and the historical, political, economic, and cultural relations between the spouses’ countries, systematically shape these dynamics. (3) Many families circulate between the spouses’ countries across the life course, most commonly to support children’s multilingual and multicultural education, which in turn restructures household routines and kinship ties. (4) Cross-national moves complicate and diversify career formation. Mobility often produces power asymmetries between the host-country spouse and the foreign spouse through differential access to legal status, social capital, and labor-market credentials. (5) Childrearing is a central challenge. Decisions about the home language can generate alliances within the family system. Differing parenting strategies, along with school selection, become recurrent sites of negotiation and conflict. (6) Major drivers of divorce include: marrying without recognizing each partner’s class position in their home society; unequal language competence during conflict resolution; difficulties in acculturation for the foreign spouse. (7) Marital stability is sustained foremost by value congruence that transcends cultural gaps and asymmetries in language ability, supported by deliberate communication and shared long term goals. These findings refine family psychological accounts of international marriage by linking macro-level globalization to micro-level marital processes, and they suggest practical implications for counseling, education, and policy.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Samuel Yu

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: What Parents and Therapists Should Know About Hookup Culture and Emerging Adults' Intimacy

Short Description: Grounded in sexual script theory, this study examines how exposure to hookup culture shapes emerging adults' beliefs about intimacy and relationships. Gendered differences in coping and conformity motives highlight cultural pressures influencing sexual behavior. Findings provide context for parents and therapists to foster awareness and healthy conversations amid hookup culture.

Long Description: Grounded in sexual script theory, this study examined how exposure to hookup culture shapes emerging adults' beliefs about intimacy and relationships. Gendered differences in coping and conformity motives highlight cultural pressures influencing sexual behavior. Findings provide context for parents and therapists to foster awareness and healthy conversations amid hookup culture. Hookup culture has become increasingly accessible through dating apps and other digital platforms that normalize casual sexual encounters. These technological and social shifts have expanded exposure beyond direct participation, shaping how emerging adults perceive intimacy, gender roles, and relational expectations. This study explored how exposure to hookup culture relates to motivations for hooking up and beliefs about future relationships, with attention to gendered patterns. Data were drawn from a random sample of 105 undergraduate students (74.2% female) at a large Midwestern university. Participants completed standardized measures assessing exposure to hookup culture, hookup motivations, personality, psychological well-being, and emotional functioning. Descriptive analyses and a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ MANOVA revealed that males with higher exposure to hookup culture reported significantly greater conformity ($F = 4.36, p = .040$) and coping ($F = 5.39, p = .023$) motives compared to females. These findings suggest an association between gender socialization and motives within hookup culture. Males in the sample exhibited higher endorsements of conformity (e.g., fitting in, avoiding exclusion) and coping motives (e.g., alleviating loneliness) with increased exposure to hookup culture. Females' scores on these motives remained relatively stable. This contrast aligns with sexual script theory, which associates women's casual sexual behavior with stigma and social devaluation. For clinicians, the results emphasize attending to how gendered social scripts and coping processes influence sexual decision-making. For parents, the findings highlight the importance of fostering awareness and open conversations with their children about relational and sexual development in emerging adulthood.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Mo Yuen Han

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Advancing Digital Competencies in Social Work Education: Insights, Innovations, and Practical Approaches

Short Description: This presentation explores digital competencies in social work education, highlighting a study on digital self-efficacy among social service practitioners. It emphasizes a Hong Kong course teaching digital skills using AI, VR, and metaverse, enhancing students' digital competence through innovative methods like digital games and virtual therapy for client needs.

Long Description: This presentation is about the sharing of education and training of therapists within a social work bachelor degree education program. The presentation will begin by sharing a recent research study about exploring digital competencies and digital self-efficacy of social service practitioners. The aim of the study is to explore the link between digital self-efficacy, general self-efficacy, and technology use among social service practitioners. An online survey revealed positive relationships among these variables. Educational level influenced both general and digital self-efficacy, with digital self-efficacy having a stronger impact on technology usage. A validated digital self-efficacy scale was developed for the social services sector. Covering diverse social service areas, the findings offer valuable insights into practitioners' technology adoption and highlight the importance of enhancing digital self-efficacy to improve technology integration in social services. Recognizing the importance of digital self-efficacy for social service practitioners, a course titled "Digital Technology in Social Work Practice" is offered in Hong Kong to prepare future social workers with essential digital skills and technological knowledge. This course aims to meet client needs amid social digitalization. The presentation will showcase various methods, including AI chatbots, virtual reality story models, metaverse platforms, and Matterport used to enhance students' digital competence. Examples include designing digital games for older adults and children, utilizing metaverse galleries for reminiscence therapy, and implementing virtual reality story models to train emotional regulation in children with hyperactivity. The presentation will also allow audience to try out some of the games or virtual reality story model that have been used in social work education program.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Brendan Yukins

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: The Prefascist Personality and Its Ties to Authoritarian Parenting: Implications for Family Therapists

Short Description: After the Holocaust, the American Jewish Committee funded research for sociologists and psychologists to solve prejudice. The team found “prefascist” biases learned within authoritarian households. These include authoritarian aggression, authoritarian submission, and conventionalism. We will analyze the concept’s implications for family therapists and how to challenge those biases.

Long Description: After the Holocaust, the American Jewish Committee created a Department of Scientific Research to find a workable answer to eliminate racial/ethnic prejudice. They believed that if they could discover the root of Germany’s submission to Hitler, then they could devise a prevention strategy. From this Department came Sanford et al’s (1950) “Measure for Antidemocratic Personality Trends.” This measure was devised by a team of sociologists and psychologists to identify antidemocratic, or “prefascist”, personality traits. These prefascist personality traits made individuals susceptible to fascist ideology. They may explain how so much of the German population was swayed into accepting dictatorship. Associated with these personality traits are authoritarian parenting styles, strict adherence to middle-class norms, and hatred of sexual minorities. These biases can be categorized as: authoritarian aggression, authoritarian submission, and conventionalism. The measure used concepts such as Projected Aggression to illustrate how individuals use fascist authority figures to act out revenge fantasies. Importantly, the study found personality trends that started in reaction to parenting styles. Family therapists are acquainted with the harms of authoritarian parenting. Children brought up to follow orders instead of asking questions become adults who find comfort in submitting to “strongman” authority figures. Similarly, children raised to hate women and sexual minorities will often become adults who seek to punish those they find promiscuous. Research also suggests that authoritarian personality traits are correlated with accepting corporal punishment of children as an effective discipline strategy (Clemens et al., 2020). Using Sanford et al’s (1950) work, we will be discussing how family therapists have seen these prefascist trends in their clinical, educational, and activist work. We will then be sharing techniques on challenging these prejudices when they arise within a system. These include encouraging nuanced thinking, “tender-mindedness,” acceptance of diversity, and psychological flexibility.

IFTA Secretariat
William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp



International Family Therapy Association

Tel: +1-309-786-4491
Fax: +1-309-786-0205
E-mail: wjhiebert@aol.com
www.ifta-familytherapy.org

1800 3rd Avenue, Suite 512
Rock Island, Illinois 61201
USA
www.ifta-congress.org

Presenter: Katalin Topolánszky Zsindely

Date: March 26 - March 28, 2026

Title: Systemically Oriented Complex Early Childhood Developmental Diagnostics in a Transdisciplinary Team: The Bethesda KIDSz modell (Budapest)

Short Description: The Bethesda KIDSz model introduces a systemic, transdisciplinary approach to early childhood developmental diagnostics. It views diagnostics as a relational, co-constructed process between families and professionals. Integrating medical, psychological, pedagogical, and therapeutic perspectives, the model promotes shared understanding, coherent planning, and family empowerment through collaboration.

Long Description: This presentation introduces the conceptual development and methodological structure of the Bethesda KIDSz model for early childhood developmental diagnostics. The model was developed to address the fragmentation of traditional diagnostic processes by integrating a systemic and transdisciplinary perspective. Methods: The KIDSz model brings together professionals from pediatrics, psychology, special educating, pedagogy, and therapy within a shared systemic framework. Diagnostics are conducted as a relational and communicative process in which observation, dialogue, and joint meaning-making with families play a central role. The process aims not only to identify developmental challenges but to reveal contextual factors, interactional patterns, and resources that shape a child's development. Results: Clinical practice with the KIDSz model shows that transdisciplinary systemic diagnostics lead to richer developmental formulations and more coherent intervention planning. Families experience greater participation and empowerment, and professionals develop a shared understanding that bridges disciplinary boundaries. Implications: This model reframes diagnostics as a dialogical and co-constructive process, offering a paradigm for family-centered, context-sensitive assessment. The presentation discusses how this systemic framework can inform international practices of early childhood developmental diagnostics and interprofessional collaboration. Keywords: Systemic diagnostics, early childhood development, transdisciplinary teamwork, family-centered practice, KIDSz model

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William Hiebert

General Event Manager
Doug Tschopp