

11th EFTA CONFERENCE IN LJUBJANA, SLOVENIA
7-10 September 2022

Systemic resonances and interferences
in a (post) pandemic, climate change and migration context in Europe



Systemic Therapists in the Addiction Field
have to adapt their work for changing contexts, such as
family violence and COVID

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- Systemic trainer at IPEC, France
- Psychologist at an Outpatients Addiction Service
 - Addicted persons and their families come to their appointments to consult with nurses, educators, psychologists and doctors.
 - This Outpatients Service doesn't normally work with complexity and systemic theory. I'm the only person qualified in this kind of working.

- Case study
 - Example of
 - Family complexity with an archaic functioning
 - Necessity of inter institutional collaboration
 - Necessity of institutional supervision \neq clinical supervision

Summary :

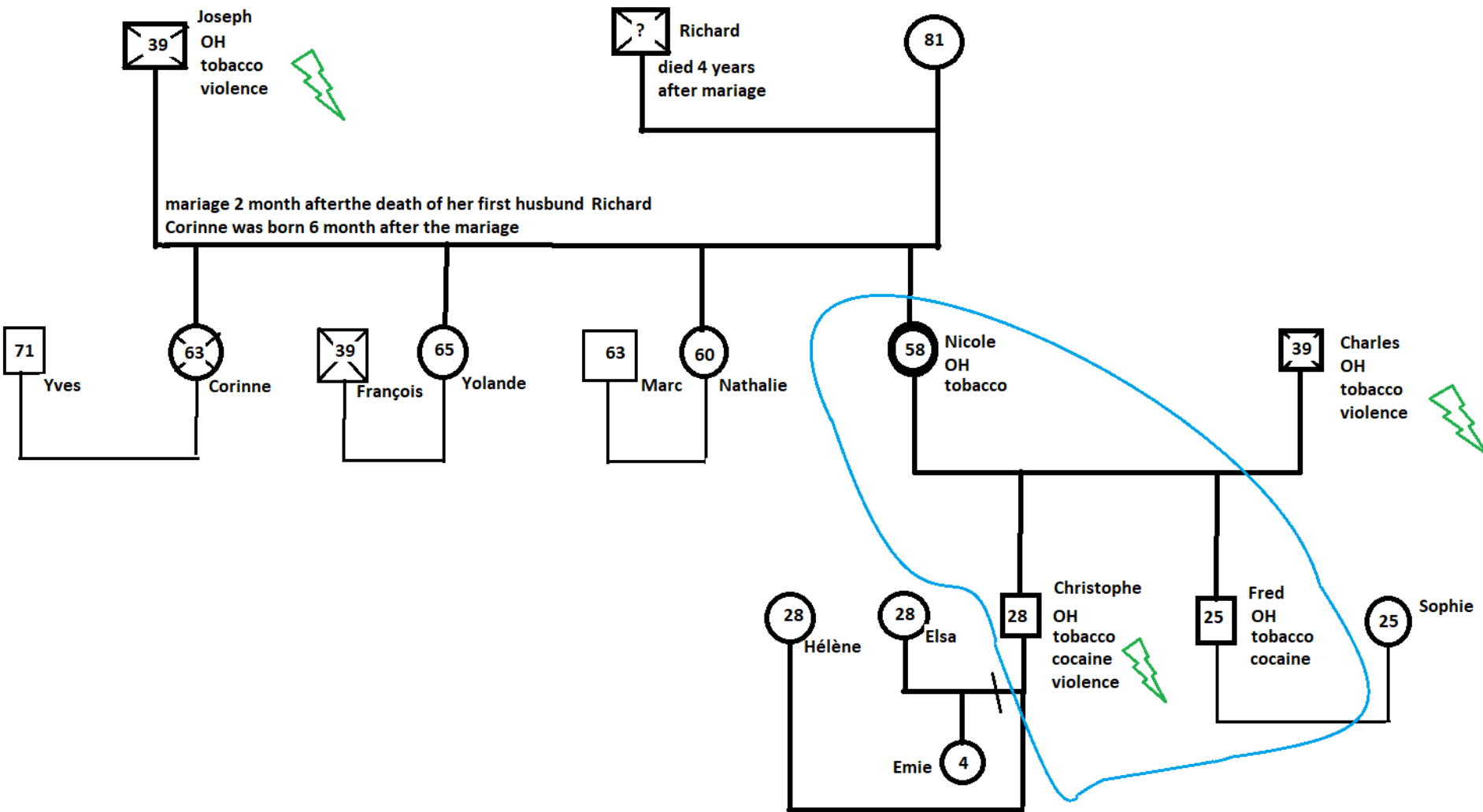
- 1) *Brief presentation of the Outpatients Addiction Service*
- 2) **Brief presentation of the clinical situation: family April**
(including model EFTA 2010)
- 3) *First project and initial therapeutic setting*
- 4) *Family violence → new project and therapeutic setting*
- 5) *Impact of COVID → another way of working, family therapy at the family's home*

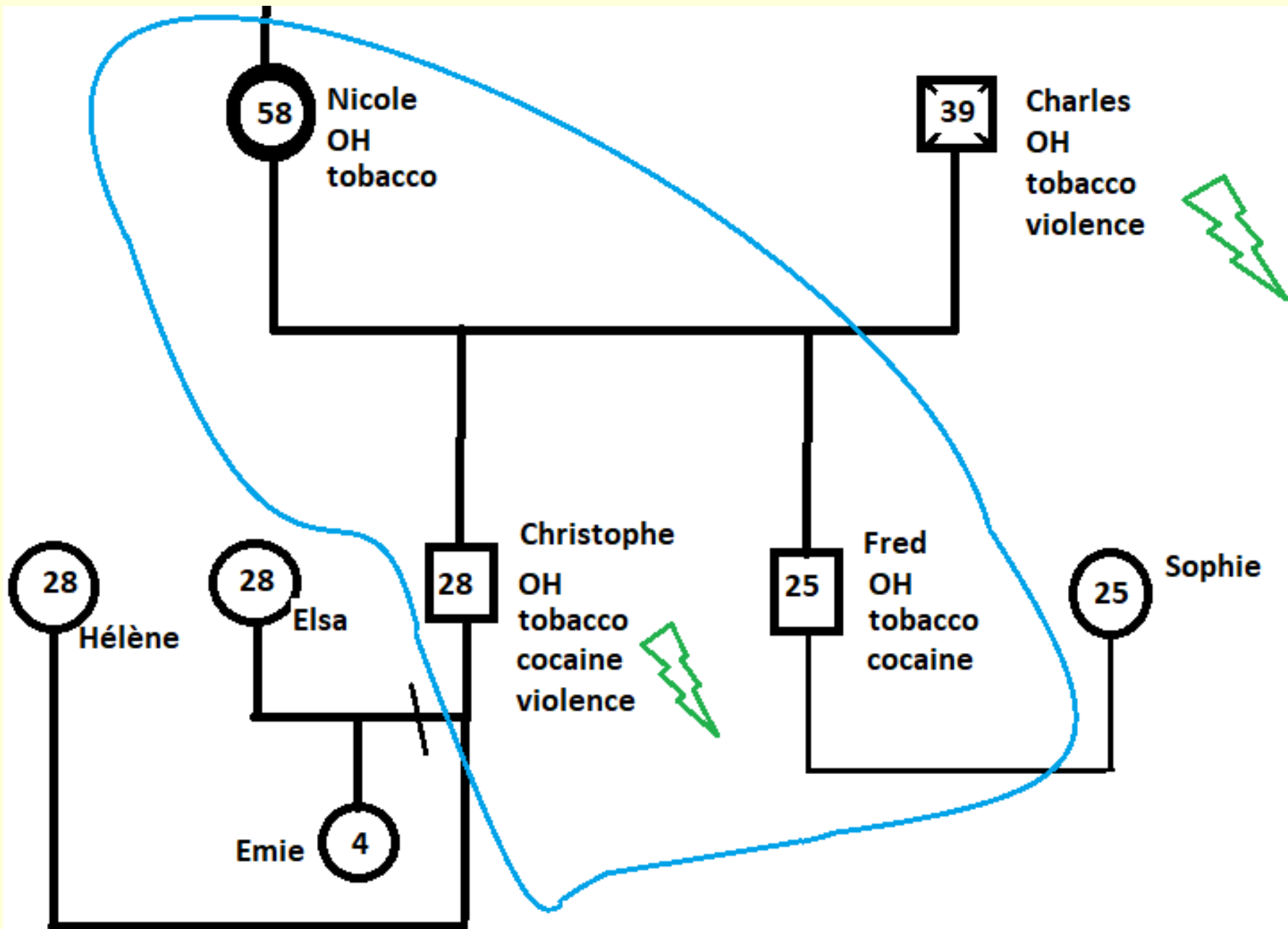
Family April

20 years ago:

- Nicole's husband died at the age of 39 in a motorcycle accident
- Her sons were 8 & 5 years old
- Mrs April was 38 years old

Genogram Family April





Very brief presentation/some clinical aspects

- At the 7th **EFTA Conference, PARIS**, in 2010:
(slides 19-36)

→ **“5 doors” or “5 keys”** that can help to **understand and act** in situations with **addiction issues** (sorry, it's in French, but you can [contact me for English translation](#))

→ I am going to use this **“5 doors/5 keys model”** to introduce the family April

“5 doors” or “5 keys” that can help to understand and act in situations with addiction issues

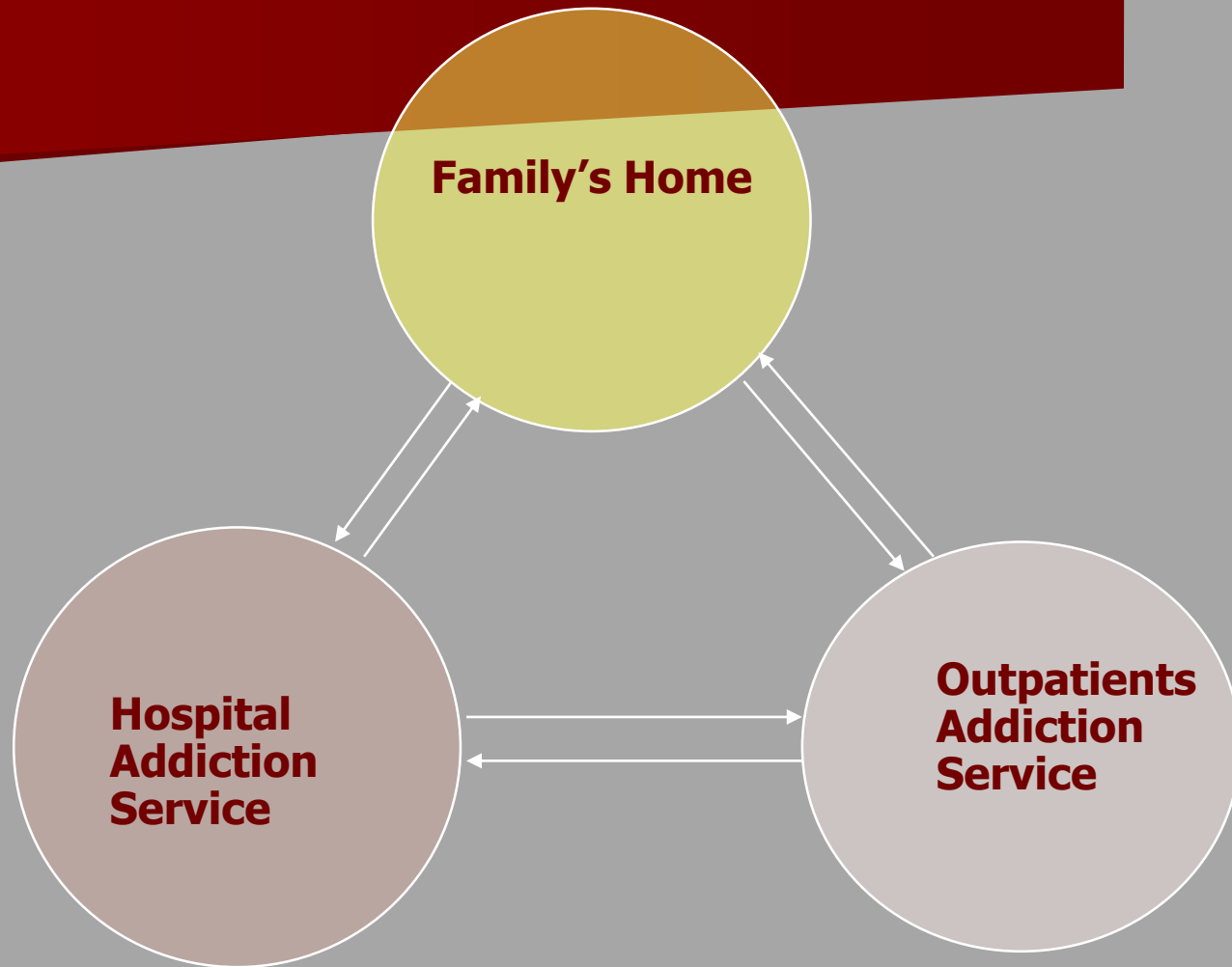
1st door or 1st key: Time is stuck (stopped)

(Blocage temporel)

- Such family systems always come back to the **initial point**. It seems that these systems are “**timeless**”, → without any possibility of **2nd order change***. “Eternal repetitions...”
- It happens that these systems **move between several different states and/or places**. Example:
 - ✓ Mrs. April goes to 2 different Addiction Services (one is an Hospital, the other is an Outpatients Addiction Service).
 - ✓ There are alternate periods of **consumption & abstinence**. (**1st order change***: logic of “battle or control”, “unhappy abstinence”)
 - ✓ The older son replaces cocaine with alcohol (**1st order change***)

* **1st & 2nd order change** cf. **EFTA Athens 2016** (slides 11-22) → conference in English

The path of Mrs. April's movements



“5 doors” or “5 keys” that can help to understand and act in situations with addiction issues

1. Time is stuck (stopped)

(Blocage temporel)

2. Difficulties in finding a place; between belonging to the family and having a personal identity

Difficulté au niveau appartenance et identité :

3. Difficulties on the level of law and interactional rules; example : confusion between familial ≠ professional level

Difficultés au niveau des règles relationnelles, confusion de niveaux relationnels familial ≠ professionnel

4. Confusion at the level of representations;

Example: concerning dope;

Confusion or replacement of subject (person) and object (dope)

Enfermement au niveau des représentations concernant produits psychoactifs, confusion sujet ≠ objet

5. Difficulties in dealing with emotions

Difficultés de verbaliser des émotions

2nd Key: Difficulties in finding a place, tension between belonging to the family and having personal identities

3rd Key: Difficulties on the level of law and interactional rules:
examples confusion between familial ≠ professional level; generational level; level of Boundaries = borders, limits, framework

Difficulté au niveau **appartenance et identité** (place); Difficultés au niveau des règles relationnelles, confusion de niveaux relationnels familial ≠ professionnel

Confusing Family ≠ professional relations, rules and places
They have a family company.

- At her husband's death (20 years ago) Mrs. April did both jobs: agricultural business (her husband's job: family company) and her own job as a teacher. *"I can't go away because I have to replace my husband as **chief of the family**"* → that also means **head of the company**
- When both sons had finished their instruction (studies) they joined the company as joint chiefs.

Continuation

2nd Key: places, belonging to the family and personal identities

3rd Key: Difficulties on the level of law and interactional rules:

example confusion between familial ≠ professional level;
generational level; level of Boundaries = borders, limits,
framework

Difficulté au niveau appartenance et identité (place)

Difficultés au niveau des règles relationnelles, confusion de niveaux relationnels
familial ≠ professionnel

- **Inter-Generational** rules were **confused**:
 - The older son played the role of “**family man**”, as if there was a “couple mother & son”
- **Breaking rules, breaking law** by family violence
- The sons work at the farm where their mother lives, (they **had to go there**), **but it was forbidden** for the aggressor (the older son) to approach his mother.

4th key: Confusion at the level of structuring representations;

- a) Example: confusion concerning relations and dope;
- b) Confusion or replacement of subject (person) and object (dope)
- c) Using violence (acting) instead of using structuring words; lack of symbolism

Confusion au niveau des représentations; exemple concernant relations et produits psychoactifs, confusion sujet \neq objet; passages à l'acte, absence de *symbolique*

- *It's her fault that I used violence; if she hadn't been drunk so many times; I never would have used violence* → he uses no structuring words; he only justifies his violent acting (c)
- *Alcohol is my "best friend"* (a+b)

5th Key: Difficulties to deal with emotions

Difficultés de verbaliser des émotions

- All members of this family use Alcohol or drugs to deal with **emotions**.
- They use them as a **'crutch'**.
- **Mrs. April feels guilty for the death of her husband.**

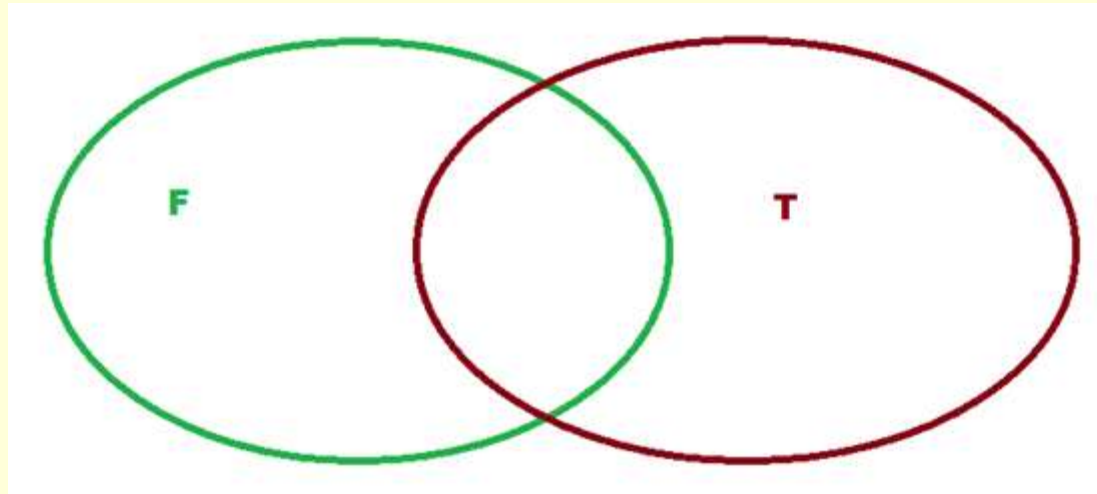
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First project and initial therapeutic setting

- **2 family therapists** working in **2 distinct Addiction Services (one in a Hospital, the other in an Outpatients Addiction Service)**
- That needs an **inter institutional agreement and contract** between 2 health services & 2 different administrations, As you surely know administrative work is usually hard work for psychologists (like me). But we achieved our aim...
- Students and colleagues were our ***reflecting team***

Initial therapeutic setting



$$n + 1 = F + T$$

$$n = F$$

Including **F = Family** &
T = therapists + reflecting team

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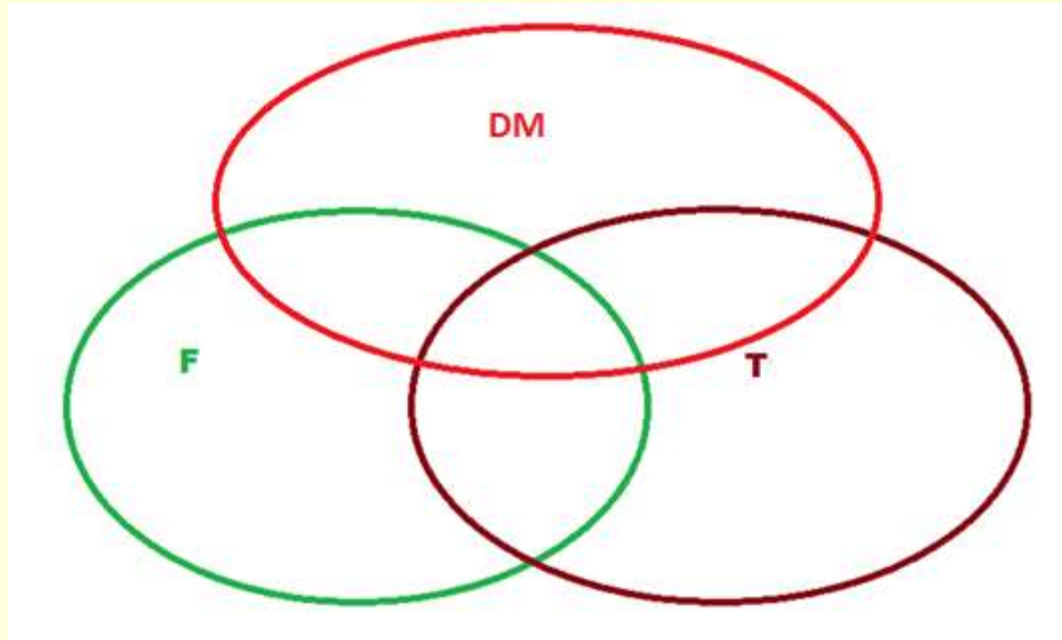
Intrusion/irruption of violence

- Because of intrusion/irruption of **intra family violence our therapeutic setting was no longer available.**
- The verdict didn't allow the aggressor (the son) to approach the victim (the mother).
- The therapists couldn't break **legal law** and in the same time pretend strengthen or boost **symbolic law** (rules, respect) for the family.

Intrusion/irruption of violence

- **Thus** we had to invent a new therapeutic setting
- In this very special and experimental context we had to work together with the probation service (2 Probation officers) to allow us **a derogatory measure related to the court order**

Meta therapeutic setting or **Derogatory experimental Measure**



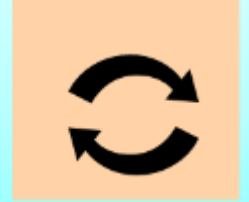
$$n + 2 = F + T + DM$$

Including **family** & **therapists** &
Derogatory experimental Measure

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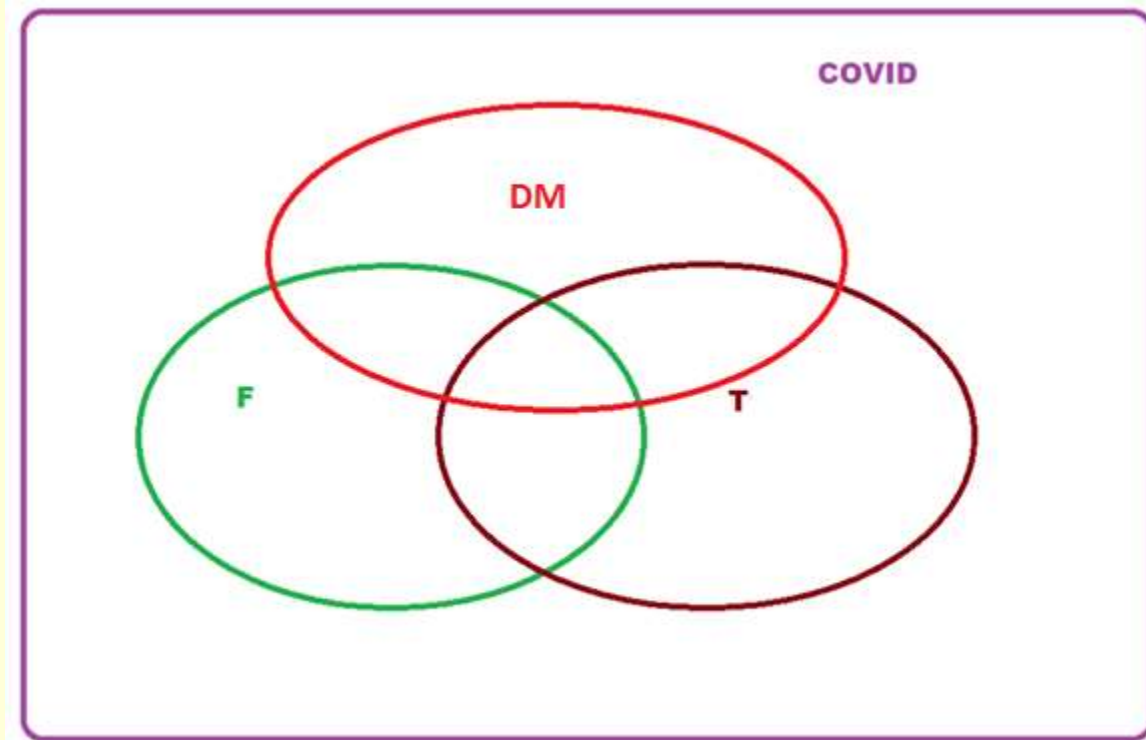
Impact of COVID on society (and its rules) And society's adaptation to COVID



- Our Family Therapy Room was not big enough for 7 persons
- We moved to the family's home.
- The members of the reflecting team watched us on Visio

**Impact of COVID → another way of working:
family therapy at the family's home**

Meta Meta therapeutic or Meta derogatory or COVID setting



$$n + 3 = F + T + DM + COVID$$

Including **family** & **therapists** &
Derogatory (experimental)
Measure & **COVID setting**

CONTEXT

- General aim or general target:
 - Understand the interinstitutional level and innovate or invent a setting in favour of the therapeutic aims
- Therapeutic aims or targets
 - Understand the family's functioning
 - Help this family to replace acting with verbal expression
 - Overcome intra family violence (in words or acts)
 - Give a place to “structuring words”
 - Help this family to adopt or achieve the “symbolic level”

Weakness & failure

- **Family level**
 - Family violence, mutual disqualifications
 - Archaic operating / functioning
 - Different kind of confusions
 - Acting out
 - Deficiency (lack) of legal and symbolic law

Weakness & failure

- **Level of institutions**

- As I said before, the outpatient service didn't work with complexity theory.
- Contamination by the family's archaic functioning (isomorphism)
- The hospital team was too far away (100 km) to help us
- COVID made it difficult to meet each other and to be helped by the colleagues
- The reflecting team was just beginning a systemic way of observing. They watched only clinical aspects and not in institutional contexts.

Weakness & failure

- **Level of representatives of law**
 - The representatives of the law = 2 Probation Officers, one: representative of the experimental setting
The other: a “classical” Probation Officer
 - Too few verbal exchanges; the meaning of the Derogatory Measure (experimental setting) certainly, wasn't very clear to the 2nd Officer
 - COVID made the appointments difficult between the older son and his Officer. If I remember well, they met only once during the COVID → the rest of the time it was by email ...

Weakness & failure

- **Level of representatives of law (2)**
 - There were a lot of heavier, more difficult situations for the Officer
 - The “light” aspect/appearance of this situation (the young man was socially integrated: had a job, a wife, a daughter...)
 - The electronic bracelet was delayed until after the harvest (about 4 months after the violence)

Weakness & failure

- **Level of COVID**

- These previous remarks show that it was difficult to gain a “structuring distance” in this situation
 - ➔ for each member of the family
 - ➔ for the therapeutic team and their colleagues
 - ➔ for the 2 Probation Officers

- COVID forced us to adopt a new framework

Weakness & failure

- **Level of COVID (2)**

- COVID forced us to adopt a new framework :
COVID didn't allow us to bring together 7 people in our little room that we use for family therapies.
Thus we chose to continue this therapy at the family's home. They had a room, big enough for 2 therapists and the members of the family (in COVID conditions).
You know, going to a family's home for therapy is not an easy job, especially for finding a structuring distance. In case of archaic functioning it is even more difficult...
- As you can imagine, the family had some difficulties in respecting this new therapeutic framework at their home.
Example: the boys working at the farm once came late, sometimes there were "uninvited" guests... other attacks of the frame

Very short discussion

- The path of Mrs. April's movements : family home + Hospital + Outpatients Addiction Service is similar to the path of the professionals : we also went to the family's home
- **Institutional supervision:** Working on ourselves helps us to understand family systems and inter-institutional systems.
- We are our best facilitator, clarifier, mediator, intermediate.
- After a Marathon (42 km), 10 km seem to be a stroll (a little walk). Future situations will certainly be easier...

Thank you for listening

- Now it's your turn, it's up to you to ask questions and also to tell us how you deal with such situations
- For further information, you can contact me or have a look at the website

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www.ipec-formation.fr

**The full conference and also the old ones
are on**

www.ipec-formation.fr

**The systemic goose/law game to facilitate
a way to autonomy**

Le jeu de l'oie/loi systémique en alcoologie et addictologie pour favoriser
une démarche vers l'autonomie

7th EFTA CONFERENCE, PARIS 2010

7^{ème}
**CONGRÈS
D'EFTA**  **PARIS 2010**
29, 30, 31 OCTOBRE
PALAIS DES CONGRÈS



Abstinence or autonomy?

What tools to facilitate a change?

Reflections on a second order change in addiction

9th EFTA CONFERENCE, Athens 2016

The END