



**Oxford Health**  
NHS Foundation Trust



Cotswold House specialist eating disorders

# Family Therapy

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## How can family therapy help?

Family therapy can help people in close relationships to better understand and support each other.

From time to time all families may go through difficult patches or have to cope with crises.

Family therapy can help improve communication and relationships.

Family therapy builds on a family's strengths and commitment to resolve difficulties and to help them make the changes they want for the future.

When a family member is finding things difficult this often affects people with whom they have a relationship.

Family therapists are interested in hearing everyone's views about the situation and to hear their ideas about how things can be different.

## Who can come?

The word 'family' means different things to different people; it may include parents, partners, children, siblings, or other important people, including friends and professionals.

At times it may be difficult to bring everybody in your 'family' to a session. We are able to offer sessions online if people are finding travel to Marlborough difficult.

# Why do we need family therapy?

Sometimes families say they don't feel family therapy will be helpful, there may be several reasons for this.

- They may have had a bad experience of family therapy in the past.
- Individuals may see their difficulties as being their responsibility which they should deal with, or they may feel they are being selfish in asking their family to come.
- Sometimes families think they are being offered family therapy because they have 'done something wrong' or 'are to blame'.

These are normal worries, but family therapy is not about blaming anyone, it aims to develop an understanding of the different ideas held by individuals in the family and to explore ways of resolving differences.

It may be helpful to discuss any concerns with your therapist.

## Evidence base for family therapy

Good practice in the UK recognises it is helpful to work with families as part of a treatment programme for people who have an eating disorder (AFT 2024).

Current research suggests family-based interventions, which support families to use their own strengths and resources are an effective alternative to inpatient treatment for younger people with anorexia, leading to improved rates of long-term recovery and lower rates of relapse.

From time-to-time family/ other relationships can be stressful for anyone; and having an eating disorder can put extra stress on family relationships.

Family members often struggle to know how to best help and support each other.

Family therapy offers a space for family members to talk together about how the eating disorder has affected them and their relationships, and how to re-connect with each other.

Sometimes families worry that sessions will cause arguments, however most families report that family therapy has been helpful in strengthening family relationships, supporting recovery, and encouraging honest and open expression of thoughts and feelings.

Family therapy sessions are offered at Savernake Hospital on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

If you would like to find out more about family therapy, please call the service on 01865 904099 and ask to speak to the family therapist.

# To find out more about family therapy

Association for Family Therapy and Systemic Practice : [About AFT - Association for Family Therapy and Systemic Practice](#)

What is family therapy: [What is Family Therapy and Systemic Practice? - Association for Family Therapy and Systemic Practice \(aft.org.uk\)](#)

Messages of hope: Stories, pictures and comments from people who have attended family therapy sessions: <https://www.aft.org.uk/page/hope?&hhsearchterms=%22messages+and+hope%22>

United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy: College of Family, Couple and Systemic Psychotherapy (CFCSP): [College of Family, Couple and Systemic Psychotherapy \(CFCSP\)](#)

# Resources

Reading:

Anorexia nervosa: A survival guide for families, friends and sufferers by Janet Treasure

Skills-based learning for caring for a loved one with an eating disorder: The new Maudsley method by Janet treasure.

Royal College of Psychiatrists has accessible, well-researched leaflets about eating disorders.

Beat carers forums: Beat offers online forums for carers to access, to talk to other people who have supported someone with an eating disorder.

[www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk](http://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk)

The New Maudsley Approach: This website provides parents and carers of people with eating disorders with a toolkit to help educate, empower and equip them to deal more effectively with the stressful caring role. The New Maudsley Approach website

Al Anon: help and support for family and friends of alcoholics: [al-anon.org/](http://al-anon.org/)

Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB): free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities.

Family lives [www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk)

Mental Health Foundation – working with those affected by mental health illness and their families: [mentalhealth.org.uk/](http://mentalhealth.org.uk/)

Mind – the mental health charity: [mind.org.uk/](http://mind.org.uk/)

OCD Action – the UK's largest charity helping those with obsessive compulsive disorder and their families: [ocdaction.org.uk/](http://ocdaction.org.uk/)

Papyrus: support, practical advice and information to people up to the age of 35 who are worried about how they are feeling or worried about another young person. Hopeline: 0800 068 4141

Relate: offers advice and relationship counselling. Telephone: 0300 003 2324 [Relate website.](http://relate.org.uk/)

Rethink: a charity dedicated to improving the lives of those affected by mental illness and their carers: [rethink.org/](http://rethink.org/)

Samaritans: A confidential listening service for people who are suicidal or in despair. [www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)

Sane: a charity which supports those with mental illness and those caring for them: [sane.org.uk/](http://sane.org.uk/)

We are with you: support for those experiencing problems with mental health, drugs or alcohol and their families in England and Scotland: [wearewithyou.org.uk/](http://wearewithyou.org.uk/)









# Accessibility

Patient information leaflets are available on our website:  
[www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/leaflets)

# Get in touch

Address            Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust  
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Website          [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)

# Feedback

Our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) provides advice and support to patients, families, and carers, helping to resolve any problems, concerns, or complaints you may have.

Phone             0800 328 7971  
Email             [PALS@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:PALS@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)

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