



Communication with families

Experiences from research and clinical practice in the treatment of young people with functional disorders

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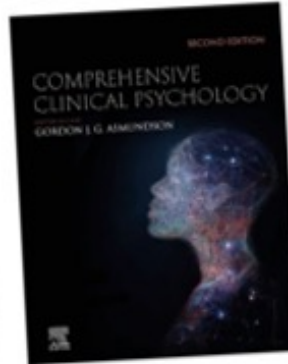
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Agenda

- Etiology – the role of the family when a child has symptoms
- Understanding the family perspective
- Communication with children and their parents in treatment



5.26 Somatic Symptom and Related Disorders in Children and Adolescents

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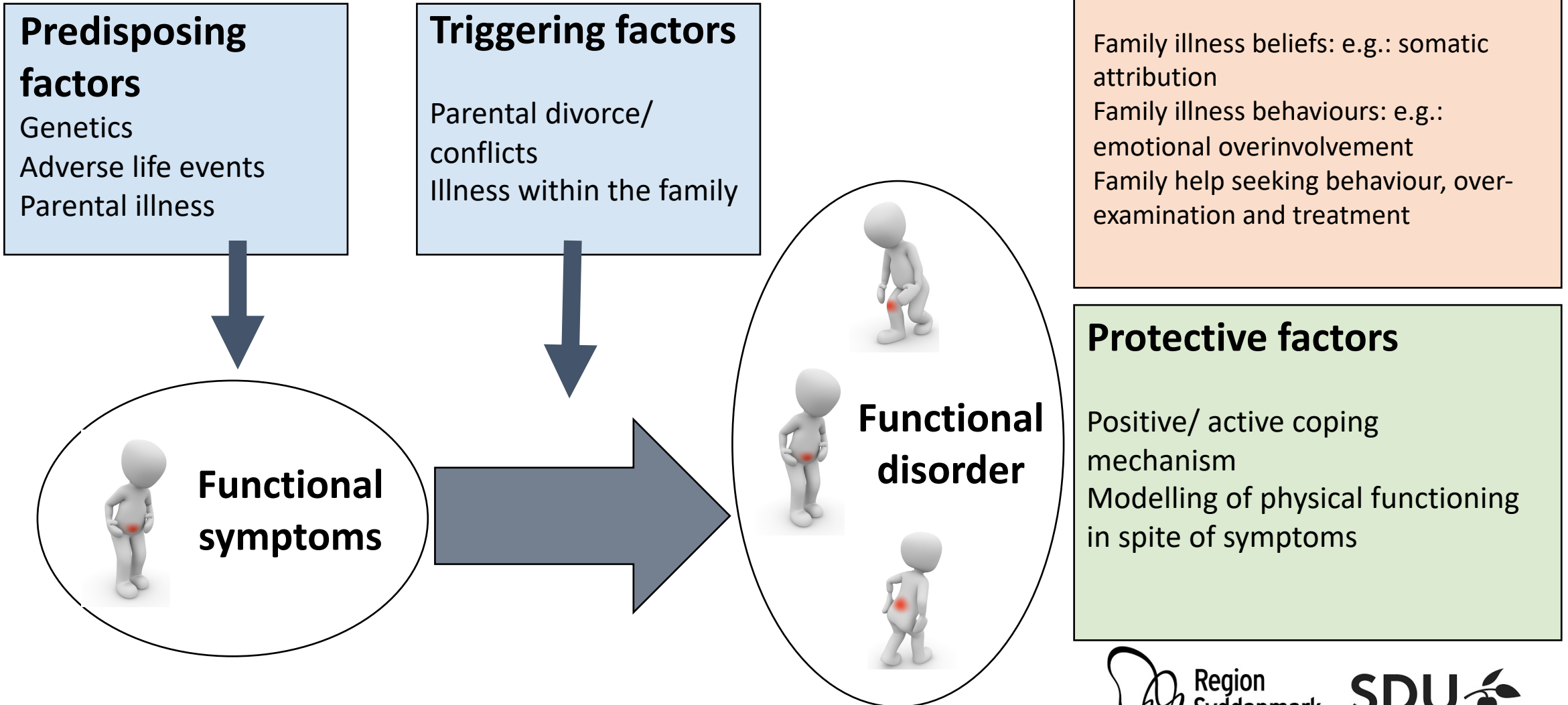


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Etiology – family factors



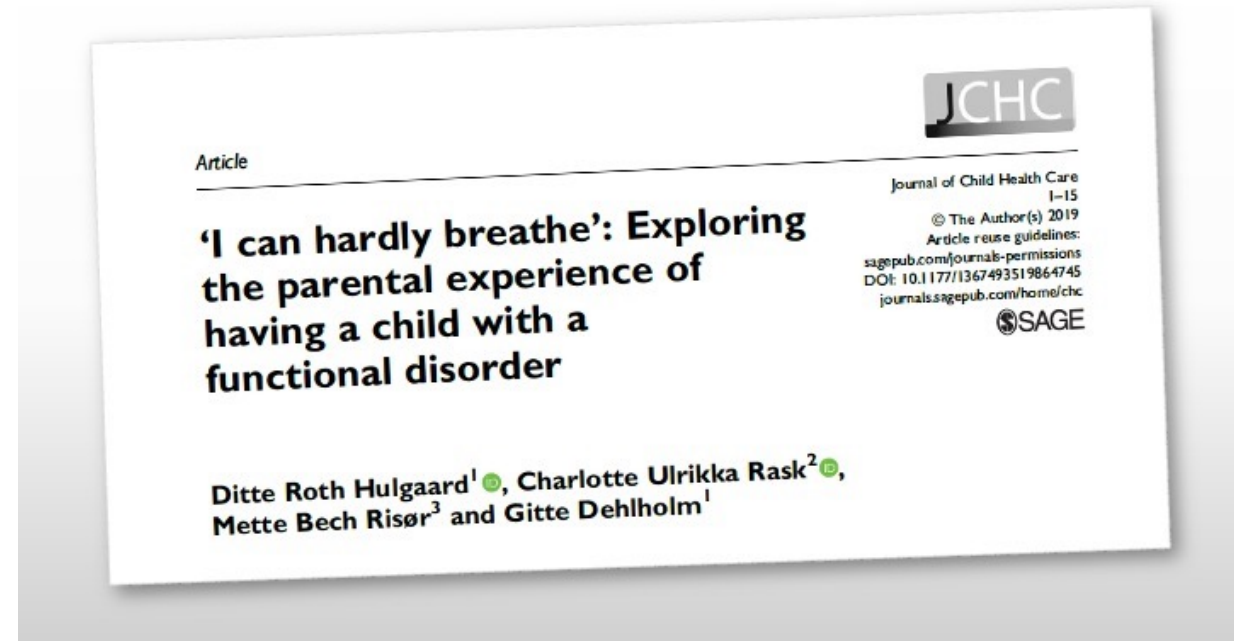


Understanding the family perspective



Counterintuitive parenting

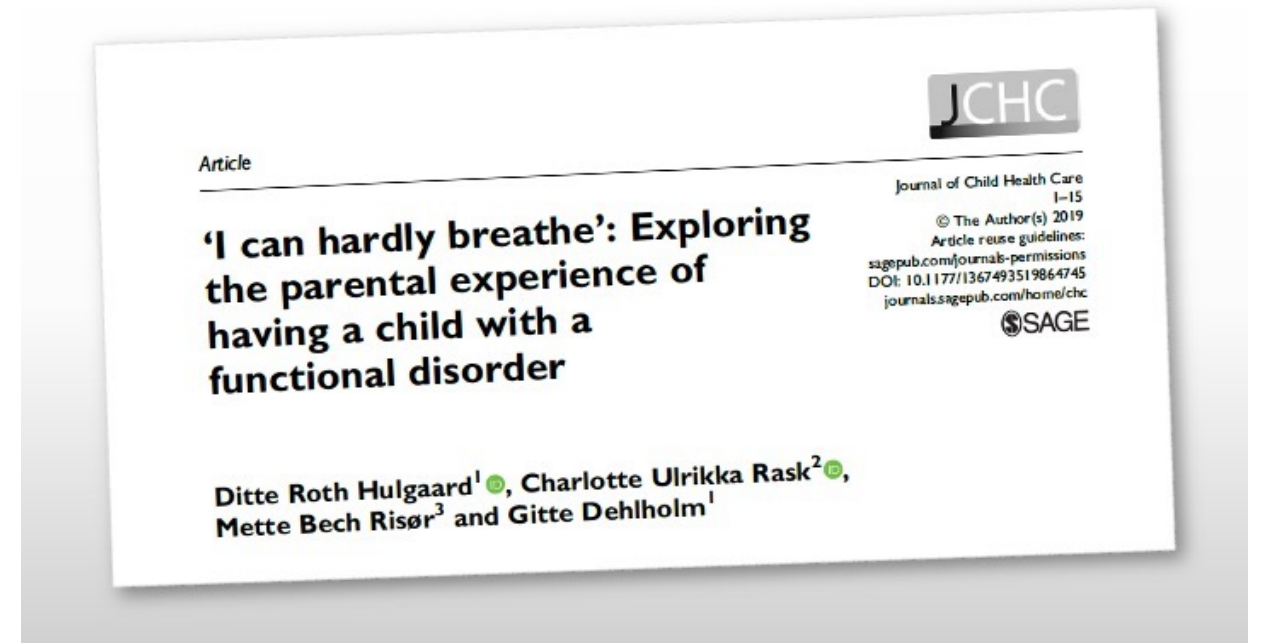
‘And she [the neighbour] said after 10 minutes, we have to call an ambulance. And I said we couldn’t do that, we are simply not allowed to. Because it is not dangerous. I think that is difficult, really difficult. It is really difficult because they say that it isn’t dangerous. [. . .] And that is a huge responsibility to give to us [the parents]’.





Challenging parental identity

‘All along, I had a feeling that they have been looking for some kind of trauma, which isn’t there. [. . .] And then it comes, between the lines, that I am overprotective, right? And damn, that is just [PAUSE] I can hardly breathe’.





Health anxiety by proxy

- Health anxiety by proxy is a newly described clinical phenomenon
- Characterised by obsessive parental worries about their child's health, leading to preoccupation with symptoms and fear that health professionals overlook serious illness in the child



Lockhart E (2016) Health anxiety in children and parents. *BMJ* 353: i2891

Thorgaard MV, Frostholm L, Walker L, et al. (2017b) Health anxiety by proxy in women with severe health anxiety: a case control study. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders* 52: 8–14.



Original Article

Health anxiety by proxy – through the eyes of the parents

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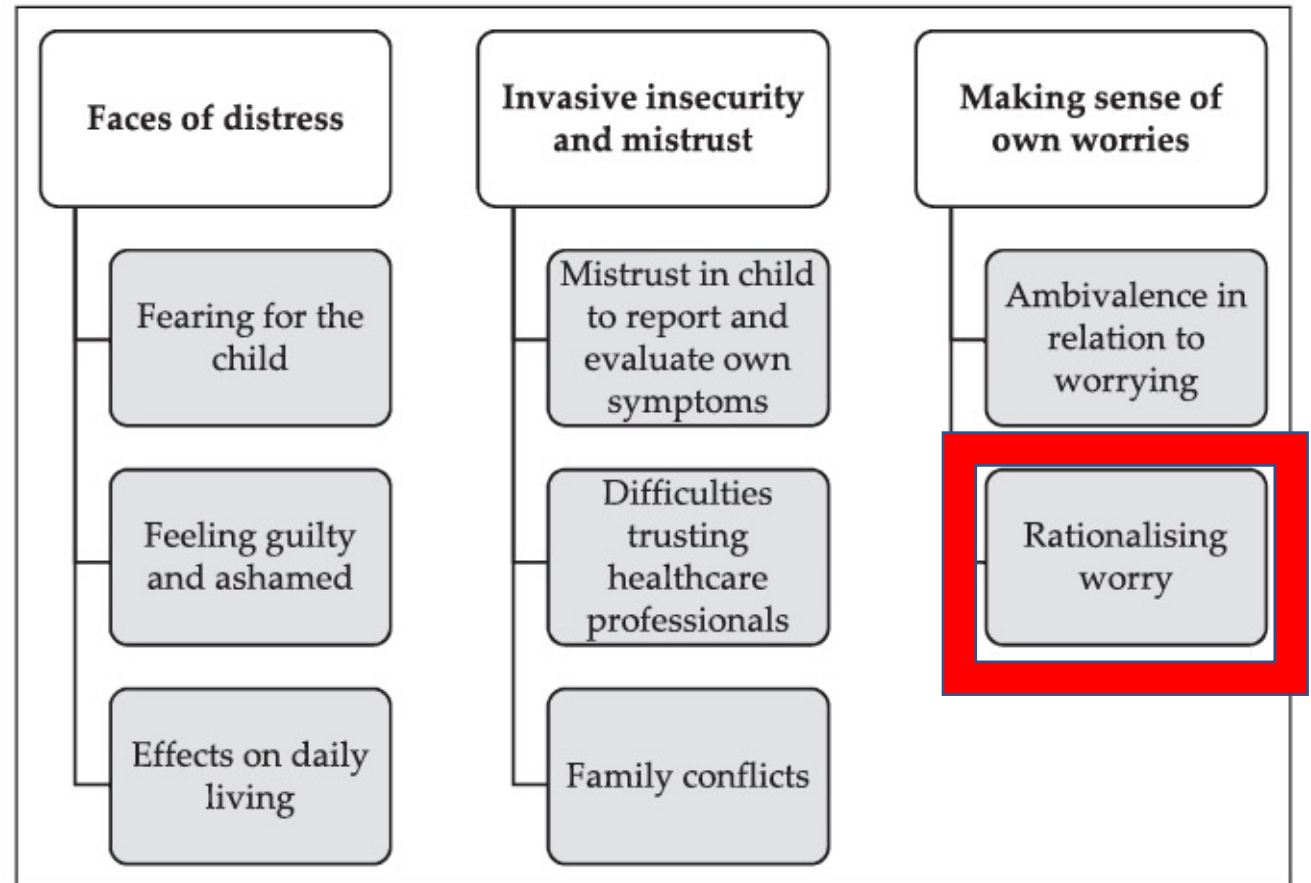
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Results

‘Like, if I don’t react on this, do I risk that he will become seriously ill? It is also like: I feel like I am not taking proper care of my child by saying "oh this is probably nothing." So, there is a conflict there because I sort of ...’
(William)





Parents as part of the solution

How do we include parents in the treatment



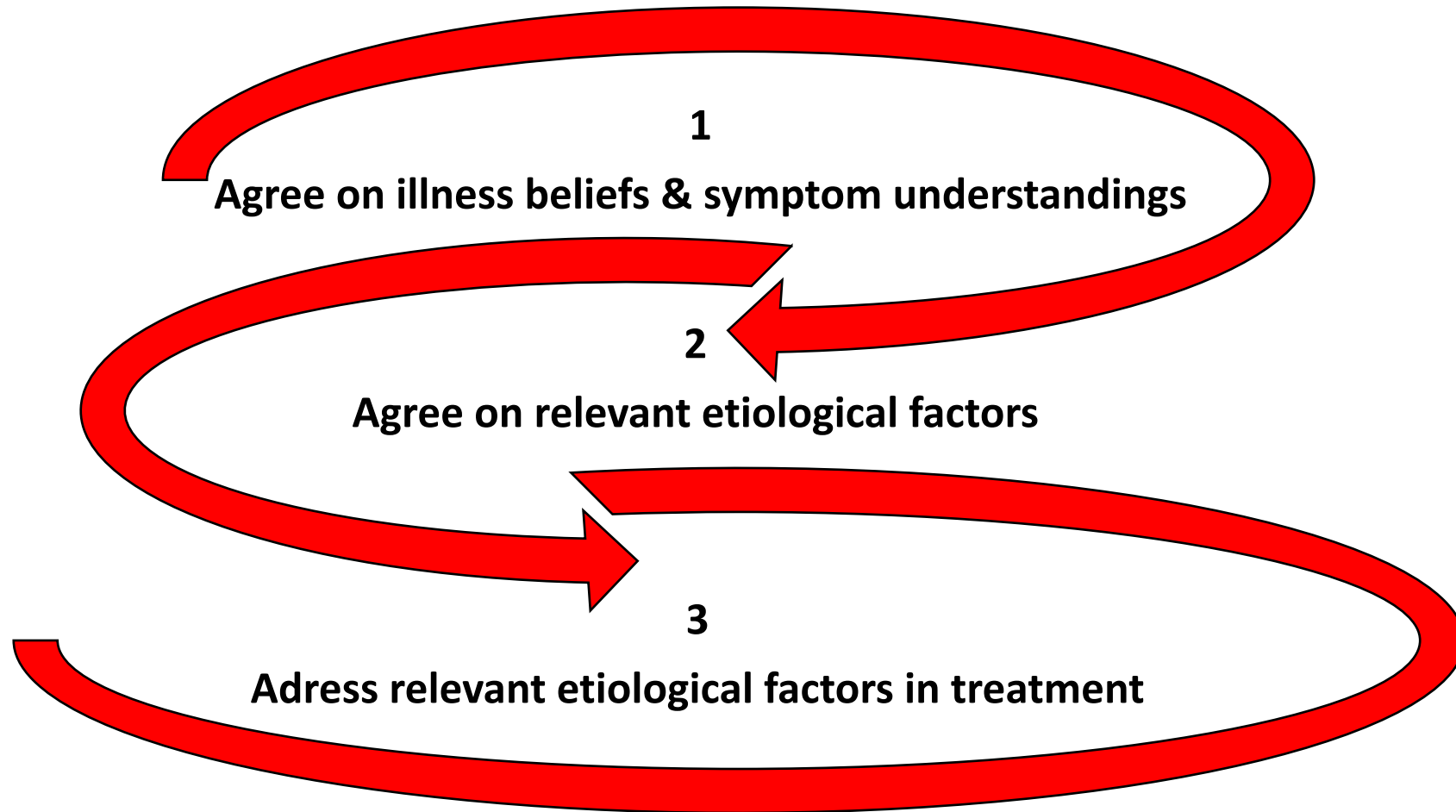
Family based interventions



- Research about family based interventions for functional disorders is scarce
- The best quality studies are based on CBT
- The psychological foundation for treatment influences illness explanations
- Studies agree that addressing family illness beliefs, behaviors, including somatic attribution, is important

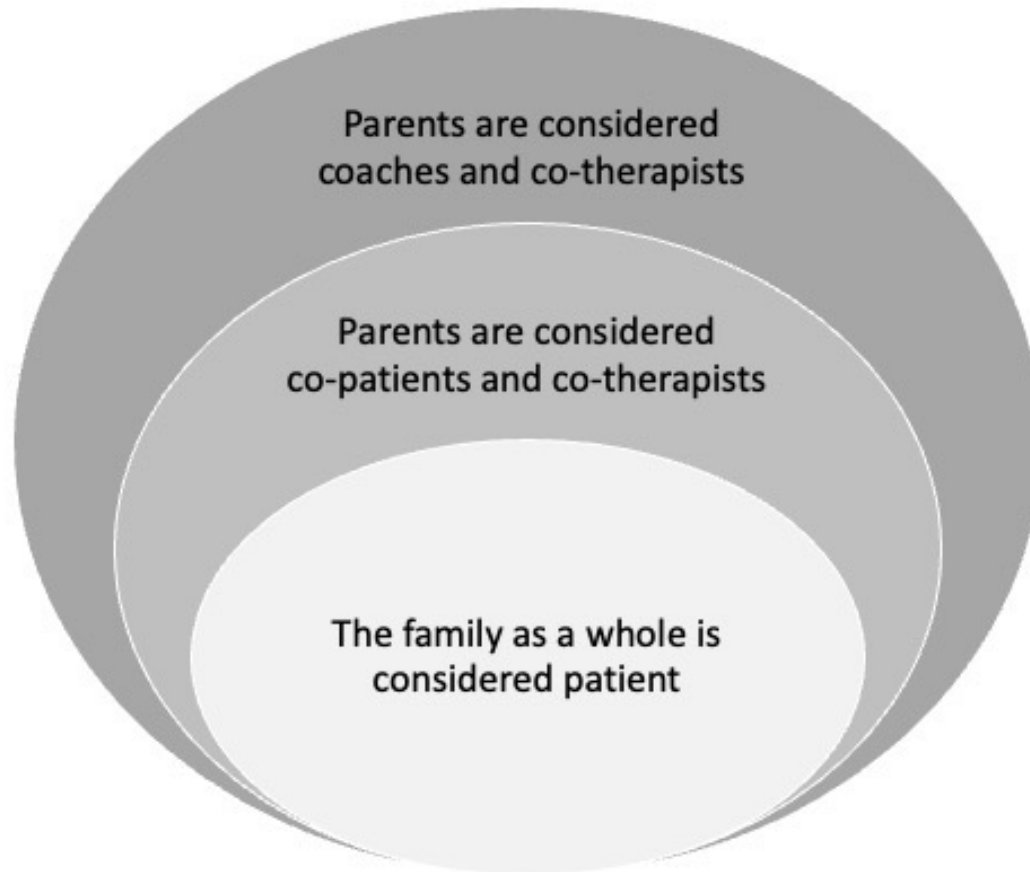


Common grounds for communication





Roles and expectations





That day, when we started family therapy, that day everything changed. The heavy load on my back got lighter. And the day, when I had told everything that was bothering me was the day that my back pain was gone.



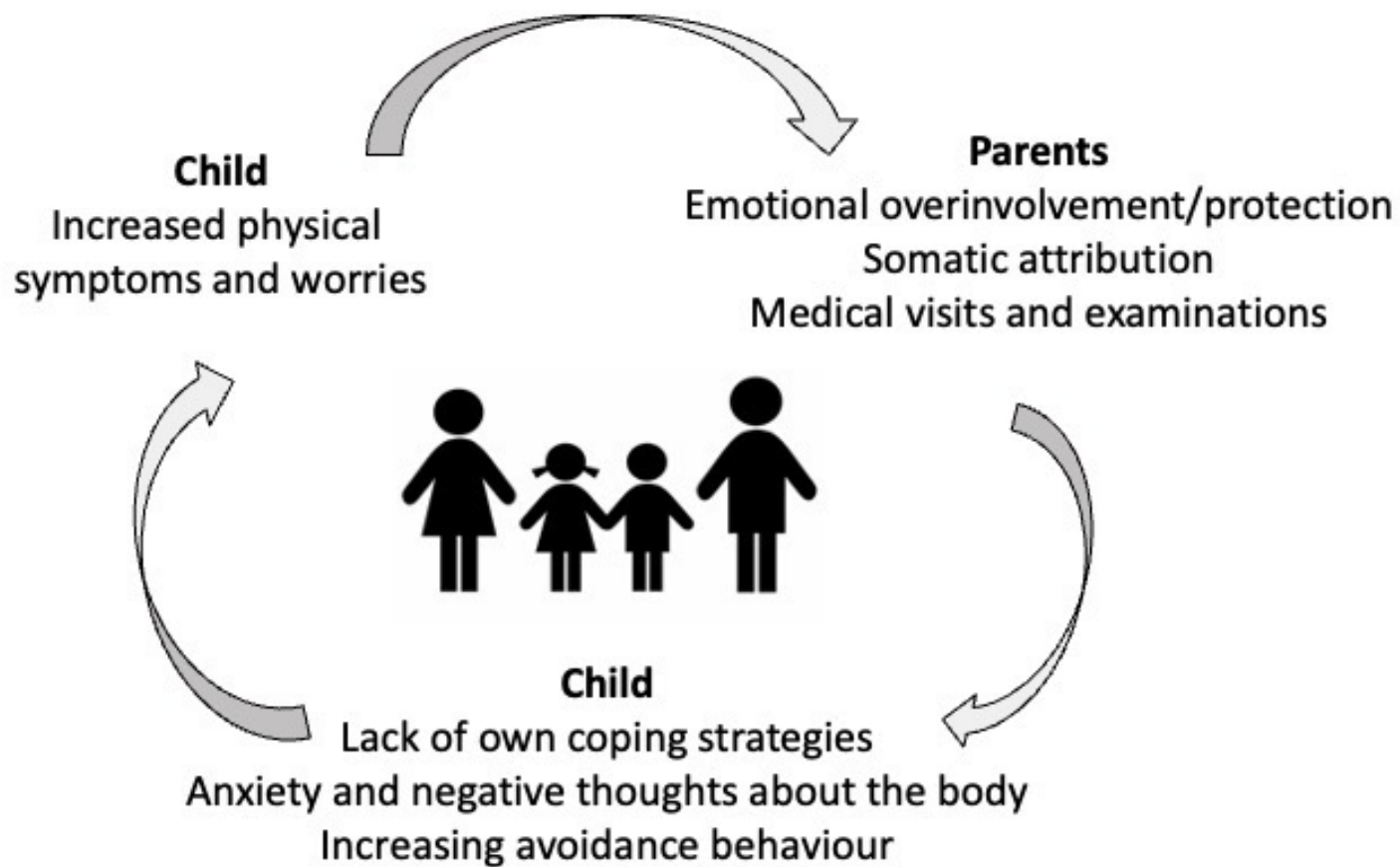


Addressing guilt and avoiding blame

Mary's mother:

I also think that illustrations and material that can illustrate explanations, like the biopsychosocial model, they can provide hope, and further, they can take some of the guilt away. And I have felt a lot of guilt, and some of that could be taken away, which was a good thing.

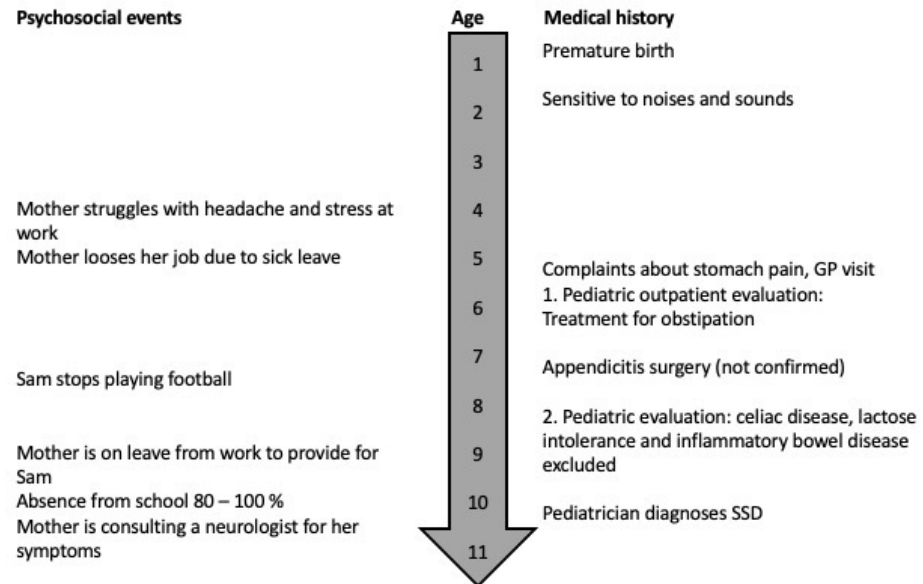






Helpful psychoeducational models

Timeline



Biopsychosocial model

