

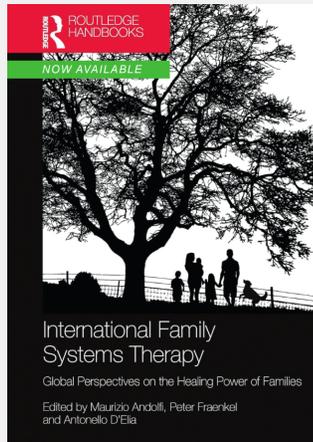


FTA Newsletter



International Family Systems Therapy

Global Perspectives on the Healing Power of Families



A new book by Routledge

edited by Maurizio Andolfi, Peter Fraenkel and Antonello D'Elia

This book advocates for a *Second Systemic "Revolution"* – or to put it more gently, a "Renaissance" of systemic therapy in the field of mental health. Its origins may be traced back to a powerful gathering in Assisi, Italy in July 2023, where leading family systems theorists and therapists from around the world convened. The conference culminated in the *Assisi Manifesto*, a declaration emphasizing the interconnection between individuals, families, communities, and societies.

The authors of this book form a world network of scholars and family experts, all of whom presented their work in Assisi. They explore alternative research and practices that emphasize the healing power of human relationships. They share and strongly reaffirm *multigenerational and multicultural principles*, and embrace *humanistic sciences* as the foundation for understanding family and community life.

Moving beyond the rigid categorizations of the medical-psychiatric model, they illustrate how psychology, cultural anthropology, sociology, traditional values, spiritual and artistic expressions offer deeper dimensions to respond to people and life's adversities. By shifting the focus from pathology to resilience, they highlight the importance of community support in fostering healing.

Readers of this large, truly international book — divided in 5 Parts — are accompanied into a professional journey which starts from the description of children, adolescents and family development and move progressively to marital and social crises, and ends with massive migrations, wars' traumatic effects, political oppression and climate change, that are endangering the world today.



Part 1: Get rid of labels and pills

The authors outline how much *children have been neglected in family therapy* often excluded from family sessions altogether and present very innovative and transformative approaches, demonstrating how problem-children can be actively included in therapy as *experts* in their own family dynamics, instead of being just diagnosed and medicated. Children with ADHD, autism spectrum, learning difficulties, behavioral problems, diabetes and other psychosomatic issues can be seen in therapy using a relational lens and activating family resources. By shifting from the attitude to *protect children's fragilities*, to one of *respecting children's knowledge and integrity*, therapists are able to unlock their valuable perspectives.

HIGH RISK



Part 2: Adolescents at high risk

Some adolescents withdraw, some become violent or self-destructive, and others use their bodies as a mean of expressing deep distress — even to the point of risking their own lives. Too often, as experts, we rush to diagnose and label them. The great danger is that these labels can harden into identities, becoming a shadow they carry throughout their lives. In today's fragmented and often toxic society — marked by family disintegration, single parenthood, and absent fathers — adolescents face increasing risks.

Through clinical examples and innovative practices, the authors highlight the critical importance of truly *listening to adolescents at risk* in both family therapy and peer group settings. Whether through defiance, cryptic messages, risky behavior or even silence, adolescents communicate an *urgent need for care, understanding, and recognition*.



CRISES & DIVORCE

Part 3: Family and social dimension of couple crises and divorce

Couple crises, hostile separations, issues around racism, ethnocentrism, gender inequity and identity conflicts, and domestic violence are not just private battles and struggles within a relationship. These challenges must be understood and addressed within the broader context of family and society, using appropriate and specific interventions that set limits on them, according the authors of this book. Research and clinical experience strongly suggest that individual therapy alone is often unproductive

for couples in crisis. On the contrary, *inviting the families of origin, children and even friends for some special consultations* can be very healing in working with couples.

LOSS AND RESILIENCE



Part 4: Trauma, loss and resilience

Death is a universal human experience, yet the grieving process is deeply shaped by cultural traditions, religious beliefs, and spiritual practices. It cannot be defined as *healthy or pathological* based on individual experiences or psychiatric criteria alone. Healing is a relational process, our ability to grieve, recover and build resilience depends on our closest bonds, our extended families, social support systems, and the broader community.

A central theme of this part is the impact of *traumatic losses caused by violence, war, and forced migration*, crises unfolding today on an unprecedented global scale. The authors emphasize that healing from trauma requires the inclusion of extended family and community as essential resources in order to transform trauma into an opportunity for growth, reconnection, and even forgiveness.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY



Part 5: Cultural diversity migration and social discrimination

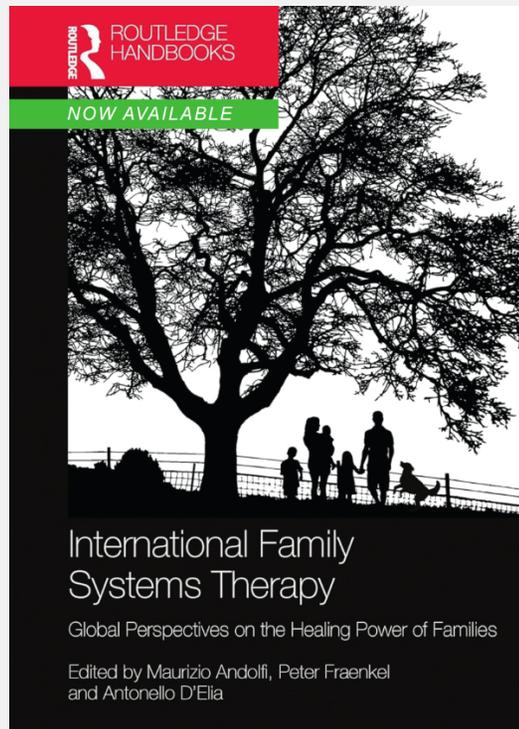
The authors highlight the immense value of *cultural diversity* as a powerful resource in family therapy, particularly in an increasingly multicultural world, facing *massive migration processes*. They explore how therapists can support those in need by respecting their values and recognizing their extraordinary resilience in the face of adversity. Therapists play a crucial role in helping families navigate these challenges

and establish a new family culture that integrate elements of both their heritage and their new environment.

Throughout this final section — and indeed the entire volume — a *call to action emerges*: mental health professionals are urged to adopt courageous, countercultural positions and build networks that promote *social justice, inclusion, and human rights*. This appeal also extends to humanity's relationship with the environment, a vital yet often neglected aspect of existence.

Such a shift demands a profound transformation in the *training of family therapists and mental health professionals*. Beyond learning techniques or fixing people's problems, they must broaden their understanding of the profession — one that, in many ways, can be considered a *mission* by embracing diversity, fostering resilience, and advocating for systemic change to create a more just and equitable world.

Prof. Maurizio Andolfi, Director of the Family Therapy Academy (Italy)



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