

# Family Life Cycle and family Dynamics

# What is a family?



Nuclear family

# Extended family





A collective body of people who live in one house, and under one head or manager; a household, including parents, children, and servants, and, as the case may be, lodgers or boarders



Two or more people who share goals and values, have long-term commitments to one another, and reside usually in the same dwelling place.

- All the members of a household under one roof.

# What are the functions of a family?

- Socialisation
- Support and nurturing
- Affection
- Legitimisation of sexual relationships
- Security



# Family Dynamics

## Includes

- Awareness of family structure and function
- Family roles
- Stages of the family life cycle
- Impact of unexpected life events
- Impact of chronic disease on the family

- Mrs Jansz was a 50 year old lady.
- She complained of feeling tired all the time.
- She had worked hard for the last 25 years and was now a secretary to the CEO at the company where she worked.
- Her husband works in a bank. She has two children aged 20 and 16 years old.

- History, basic investigations, examination  
– unremarkable
- The doctor advised her to rest for 2 weeks.  
She had hardly ever taken much leave  
before that.

- Mrs Jansz doctor reassured her that her symptoms were probably due to over work and stress and that she would be better after a complete rest of two weeks.

- Mrs. Jansz felt better after 2 weeks and went back to work.
- She started off with her usual energy but before long felt more disabled than before. She couldn't carry on her usual work.
- This time her doctor asked her to take a month off work and prescribed fluoxetine having diagnosed her with depression.

- You see Mrs Jansz in another 3-4 months.
- By this time Mrs Jansz had resigned from the job that she had loved as she could not cope with the work.
- She said that initially she had felt better with the medicine, but she now felt numb and she was not her old self.

# What is missing?

- What have we missed?



# Family Life Cycle

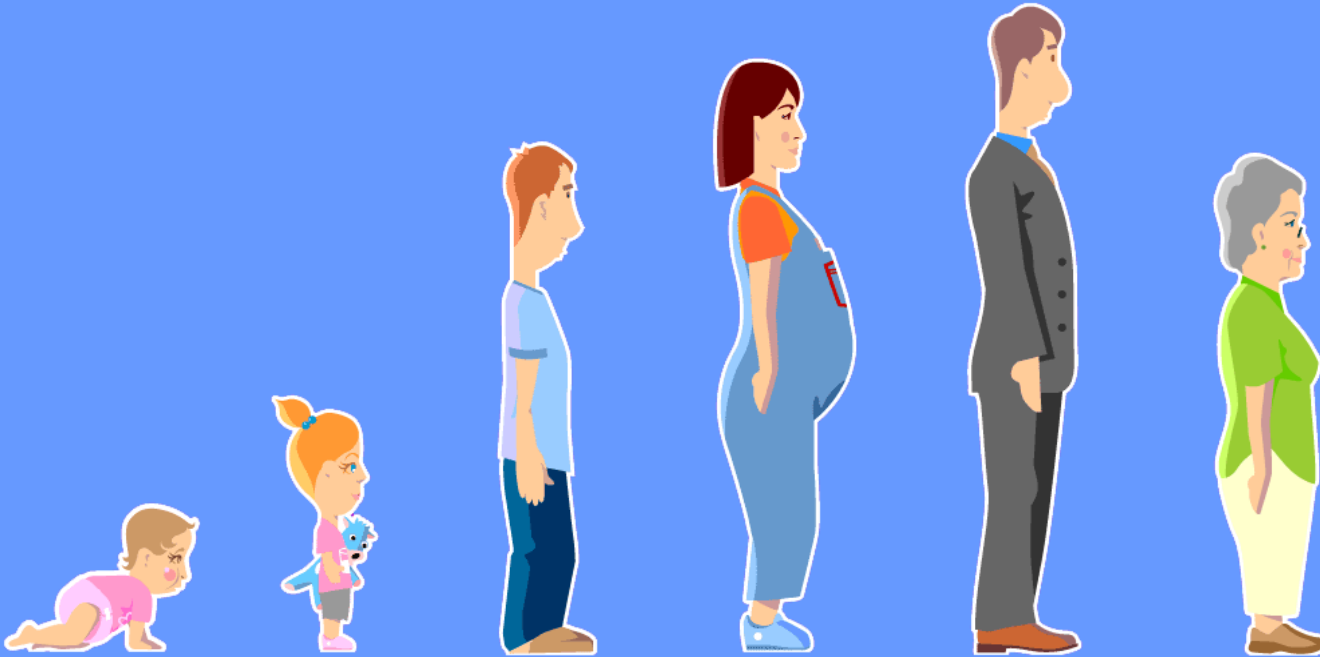
- Helpful in understanding family dynamics
- a series of stages families go through as the structure of the family changes.
- each family is unique
- Every family does not follow the life cycle in order of description cause.
- Problems experienced by a majority of families during the different stages are known as **normal stressors**

- Some families are unable to adapt to these normal stressors.
- They may become dysfunctional

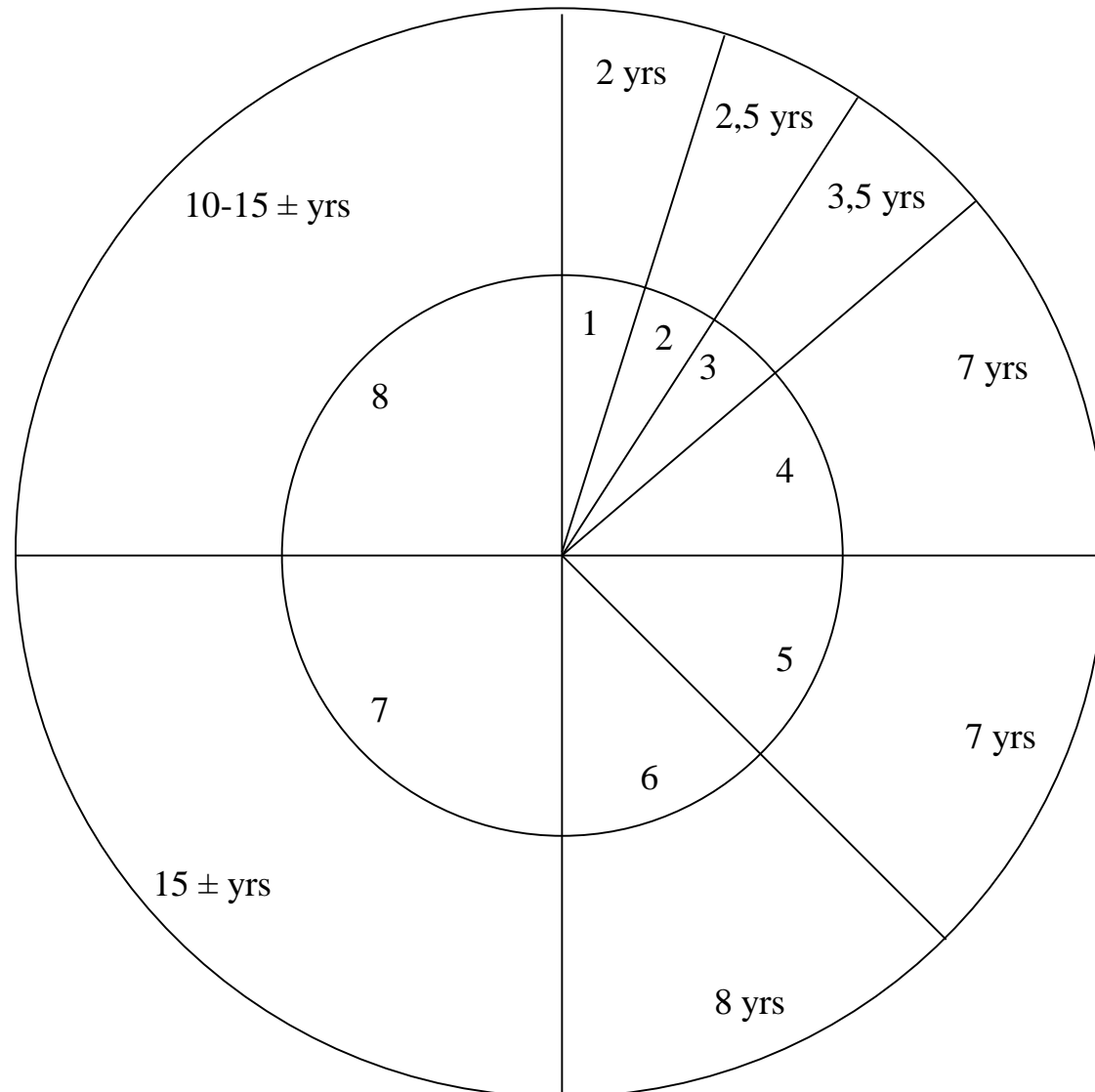
- Understanding the stage in the family lifecycle that your patient is in can help you as the family doctor to understand the challenges and demands he is facing in his life and provide holistic care.

- By having a knowledge of the stressors which occur at the different stages of the family life cycle, the family physician could anticipate problems before they arise and give preventive counselling.

# Stages of the Individual Life Cycle



# Family Life Cycle



1. Married couples  
(without children)
2. Childbearing families  
(oldest child, birth to 30 months)
3. Families with preschool children  
(oldest child 30 months to 6 years)
4. Families with school children  
(oldest child 6 to 13 years)
5. Families with teenagers  
(oldest child 13 to 20 years)
6. Families launching young adults  
(first child gone to last child leaving home)
7. Middle-aged parents  
(empty nest to retirement)
8. Aging family members  
(retirement to death of both spouses  
retirement to death of both spouses)

Duval 1977

# STAGE 1: Married couples without children

- In this stage, two people form a family unit separate from each one's original family unit
- There are no children in this stage of the life cycle





# *Challenges*

- Honeymoon effect : Overlooking problems
- Initial adjustment to marriage
- role adjustments
- Shift from family of origin to new commitment – emotional separation

# STAGE 2: Childbearing families

- From the birth of the first child until that child is 2 ½ years old
- During this stage, children are added to the family.



# *Challenges*

- Demands of caring for an infant

# STAGE 3 - FAMILIES WITH PRESCHOOL children

- When the oldest child is between the ages of 2 ½ and 6 years old

## *Challenges*

Dealing with behavioural  
problems, infectious diseases

# STAGE 4 - FAMILIES WITH SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

(When the oldest child is between the ages of 6 to 13)



## *Challenges*

- More prone to accidents, trauma
- FP should be proactive re immunisation, growth monitoring

# STAGE 5 - FAMILIES WITH TEENAGERS

(When the oldest child is  
between the ages of 13 and  
20)



# *Challenges*

- children become more independent :  
coping with their independence
- Help children physiological and emotional changes.
- Problems with drugs, alcohol, sex
- Conflict with parents
- Parents themselves dealing with midlife crises
- Developing new interests beyond child care



# STAGE 6 – Families launching young adults

- first child gone to last child leaving home
- empty nest



# *Challenges*

- Re-stabilizing and reordering priorities
- Adjusting to the ending of parenting roles
- Young adult choosing career, marriage partner
- Menopausal problems of mother of family

# STAGE 7 –Middle aged parents

- Empty nest to retirement

# *Challenges*

- Loneliness
- Financial hardships? Higher income?
- Sandwich generation?  
Help raise grandchildren & dependent parents.

# Stage 8 – Aging family members



# *Challenges*

- Dealing with aging, illness and death

# Unexpected life events

- Illness of a member
- Accidents
- Divorce
- Unemployment
- Death
- Family member migrating to another country
- Change of residence

....Crisis involving one member affects other members





# Presentations that may point to trouble in the family

- Problem behaviour in a child
- Alcohol/drug abuse of a member
- Evidence of partner /child abuse
- Multiple presentations of a family member/multiple presentations by multiple family members
- Complaints such as chronic fatigue,insomnia
- Presenting with anxiety,depression etc.

# How to intervene

- Opportunistic observation of the family at a consultation
- Family counselling session – family conference
- Home visit
- Assess family resources that could be used to alleviate situation
- Utilise community resources

# Skills necessary to deal with family issues effectively

- Prior knowledge of the family
- Good communication skills
- Strong Dr Patient relationship
- Confidentiality with individual members while maintaining neutral stance and good relationship with all members.

# The family in disease

- The disease can have an impact on the family
- The family has an impact on the disease

# ....The family in disease

*The family could be the source of a health problem*

- Infectious diseases
- Genetic predisposition
- Common factors – malnutrition, obesity
- Family problems – psychosomatic conditions eg. IBS, anxiety, problem behaviour in children

# Family resources

- Doctor should recognise potential resources available to the family and help family use its own strengths to adapt and cope .

# .....Resources needed

- Psychological strengths
- Financial resources
- Social support from extended family and friends

This is Dilan. He is Mrs Jansz' 20 year old son. He is struggling with alcohol and drug addiction.



Could we have helped Mrs. Jansz better if we knew?

What other problems could Mrs Jansz be facing ?