

## AZ Health: Treating Families, the Sustainable Approach

Written by Mitzi Mackenzie

---



Through evidenced-based practice, we know that the families that experience the healthiest changes are those committed to doing the work that is required for a family to heal. The goal is to create a treatment plan that holds the entire family system accountable, creating a recovery process with minimal chaos, long-term focus, monitoring to ensure compliance and inclusion at the appropriate level for every family member. The question becomes this: how do we as professionals encourage, support and, most importantly, inspire family systems to stay the course of a long-term treatment model that can provide and sustain healthy changes in family systems?

The structure in the program recommended needs to do the following things: relieve anxiety, stress and, most notably, the fear of the unknown. The level of tension in a family that is experiencing chaos, regardless of the reason, can be the navigation point used to design the work a specific family needs to accomplish, much like a team approach. Often families tend to focus on one person, creating more anxiety and tension with the blame effect. Once a family is willing to participate in the team-based solution approach, the playing field becomes somewhat neutral, even as typically said. The fear of the unknown tends to weaken which allows the work to ensue by all participants.

Effective treatment teams work in this fashion as well. Each professional operates within his/her discipline, contributing feedback to the entire team re-progress and/or setbacks. The goal is that the family being treated has the guidance of a team that demonstrates the ability to look at many solutions. Families in high stress tend to operate from a black and white state of mind which is not a healthy environment for anyone to heal, much less flourish. Treatment teams are not much different, if they do not have the skill to look at a families' uniqueness with breadth, they too lack the atmosphere to guide.

The message here is to choose a professional that you trust. Furthermore, seek out clinicians, especially within the mental health field that work with esteemed peers who believe in the team approach to treating family systems with a solution based model. Families can adapt to a healthy and peaceful way of life, if everyone is willing to do the work.

*Mitzi Mackenzie, MSW, LCSW is a highly skilled adolescent, young adult and family clinician, a specialist in successful interventions, family education and clinically sound placements for treatment of young adults and their family systems. She can be reached at 602.363.1141 or email [mitzi.mackenzie@asu.edu](mailto:mitzi.mackenzie@asu.edu). All contact to Mackenzie Family Advocacy is confidential.*