Healing Strained Intergenerational Relationships in Ageing Families: Insights & Implications for Practice

Presented by
Dr Helen Ko
Executive Director, Beyond Age

e: helenko@beyondage.com.sg, w: www.beyondage.com.sg

Senior Lecturer, Master of Gerontology Programme
Singapore University of Social Sciences
Presentation Outline

- Common Causes of Strained Intergenerational Relationships
- Evidence-based Indigenous Model for Counselling Older Adults and Their Families
- Application of Model
Common Causes of Strained Relationships

- Lack of support from siblings
- Lack skills to mobilise support e.g. communication skills, conflict resolution skills etc.
- Lack of understanding about disease progression and skills in managing e.g. dementia
- Unavailability/lack of awareness/not knowing how to tap support services
Common Causes of Strained Relationships (2)

- Poor self-care skills (e.g. unrealistic expectations of self, ‘perfect caregiver’, “my duty to care for my mother”, not seeking help until problems become very bad, no respite etc.)
- Poor prior relationship with older person
- Cultural values (expectations of older generation, particularly the less educated aged 75 plus)
Mdm Tan, in her late 50s, sought my assistance about her 82 year old mother, Mdm Soh, who was living with her. Her mother had been very difficult: naggy, fussy, demanding. She wanted a room to herself and food to be cooked in a certain way. Mdm Tan had no time to attend to her needs and the family cannot afford to let her have a room to herself, since they live in a four-room flat and Mdm Tan had three children aged 18 to 23 living with her. She had to take on two cleaning jobs to supplement the family income as her husband did not earn much.
Her children were also frustrated with their grandmother. As she was hard-of-hearing, whenever they conversed amongst themselves, she thought they were speaking ill of her, when in fact it was not the case. Thus, she had been complaining to neighbours that Mdm Tan’s children were unfilial. Mdm Tan felt very stressed caring for her. Her children were also unhappy. They felt that the other siblings of Mdm Tan should share the responsibilities of caring for Mdm Soh.
Mdm Soh was a very traditional woman. In fact, she had wanted to live with one of her five sons. However, none of her sons and daughters-in-law wanted her to live with them as, like Mdm Tan, they found her a very difficult person. She had caused much tension and conflicts within their families when she lived with them in the past, reprimanding them as though they were young children when they were already in their late 50s/early 60s. These made them feel very embarrassed before their adult children. She also complained to neighbours about them. Hence she landed up living with Mdm Tan for the past two years.
ECADIT Model


- Model based on research conducted in Singapore
- It is a procedural and integrative model which could accommodate various approaches and theoretical orientations
- Found to be effective for individual and family counselling
ECADIT Model (2)

- E – Engagement
- C – Concern Definition
- A – Attempted Solutions
- D – Desired Changes
- I – Intervention
- T – Termination

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Key Features

- brief, simple, could be relatively easily applied with adequate training
- structured, goal-oriented, amenable to efficacious and effectiveness studies
- an individualized approach that focuses on a wide range of late-life issues like interpersonal conflicts, depression, anxiety, grief, abuse, suicidal behaviour, and existential concerns
- flexible & its pace is appropriate for older adults
Key Features

- recognizes & acknowledges the strengths of older adults
- inculcates problem solving skills in older adults, enables them to successfully solve/cope with their concerns, also facilitate them to successfully prevent/cope with/solve future problems
- can be used in conjunction with pharmocotherapy and a wide range of other psychosocial interventions
Contra-indicated for

- Older adults who are diagnosed with dementia & other cognitive impairments
- Older adults who have major mental illness & are currently symptomatic
Engagement - Goals

• To build a trusting relationship and engage in a more serious conversation
• To get the client to articulate their concerns
• To get the client to express feelings

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Concern Definition - Goals

- To help client identify specific concerns
- To assess the client’s situation and concerns
- To encourage the client to express, verbalize and ventilate
Concern Definition

- What is/are your concern/s?
- How would you define the problem?
- When did it first start?
- How frequently does it occur? How are you affected?
- What did he/she do that is a problem for you? When is it a problem?
Attempted Solutions - Goals

• To get the client to talk about previous coping strategies
• To find out what worked or did not work for the client so as to craft interventions more appropriately
At tempted Solutions

- What have you tried to do about it?
- Why did you choose to do that?
- What have you found helpful?
- In what way has it been helpful?
- What have you tried and not found helpful?
- Why do you think it was not helpful?
Desired Changes – Goals

• To identify the goals of the client and the goals of involved parties
• To come to an agreement on the goals to work on
• To concretize these goals to become:
  • S
  • M
  • A
  • R
  • T
Desired Changes

• What do you like to see changed?
• What difference do you like to make to this situation?
• What are your goals/desired changes?
• How could you make your goals SMART?
• What difficulties might you face if you decide to have this changed?
Intervention - Goal

• To help clients and significant parties achieve some form of resolution pertaining to the desired change/s i.e. to develop their ability to resolve and/or cope with their concerns
Termination - Goals

- To sustain outcomes
- To disengage clients