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Family-Farm Therapy: An Urban Therapy Clinic to Address The Multifaceted Needs of Multi-Stressed Families and their Surrounding Communities

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### Multi-Stressed Families

Multi-stressed is a term that is given to refer to families that are experiencing difficult realities in their lives, yet have the capabilities to address those stresses (Madsen, 2007) even if they are unaware of themselves. It is a purposeful attempt to understand and to maximize the positive effects of language. Multi-stressed families have been labeled many ways based on judgments and interactions others have with such families:

- **Dysfunctional**
- **High risk**
- **Highly resistant**
- **Non-compliant**
- **Problem**

Multi-stressed families are often marginalized due to circumstances which force families to focus on survival and impede their ability not just to seek therapeutic assistance, but to even think about its availability.

### Signs of Need

- **Physical health difficulties or disabilities**
- **Justice system and social system involvement**
- **Families will learn how their environment affects their lives (i.e. positive and negative experiences with justice and social systems)**
- **Fear of judgment**
- **Nutritionists will work with the family to increase knowledge on nutrition and physical health**
- **Identifies the circularity of the family, community, and environment, and how each might help family, community, and environment**
- **Volunteerism and community for the farm.**

### Significance

The Family-Farming Therapy approach is innovative and unique in its holistic delivery and systemic application of Marriage and Family Therapy because it addresses the multifaceted needs of the family, and simultaneously establishes a relationship of not just the individual or family members, but the relationships between, them, the community, and the environment.

- **Mental and Relationa and Health:** Individual, family, and group therapy provided within a non-institutional environment (i.e. green house rooms and walking gardens), in addition to psychiatric and substance use care.
- **Environmental Relationship:** Families will learn how their environment affects their lives (i.e. positive and negative experiences with justice and social systems) and foster positive living behaviors that can adapt and by recognizing that a relationship exists between them and their environment, and then identifying the benefits of having a relationship with nature, the family may become invested in caring for nature and their community.

### Experiential Therapy Applications

Experiential therapeutic approaches have proven to be quite effective within the populations they are structured to serve. This literature review will explore such experiential therapeutic approaches that have demonstrated effectiveness and efficiency in addressing the needs of multi-stressed families.

- **Nature Therapy**
- **Animal-Assisted Therapy**
- **Art Therapy**
- **Garden Therapy**
- **Nutritional Therapy**

### Environment, Family Systems and Therapy

Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) focuses on the relationships of individuals within a family system. Experiential Therapy (ET) focuses on the connection to the individuals and their relationship with the ecological environment. Ecology and MFT theory share common principles and concepts such as sustainability, circularity, reciprocity, and recursion (Blumer, Hertlein & Fife 2012). Both MFT and ET operate from a systemic lens, recognizing that interactions at all levels can impact a family's ability to grow, produce, and fulfill its purpose because its encasing dissolves and adapts.

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