



**pocket family psychologist**  
online psychological support for families

## 7 THINGS THAT MAKE FAMILY CONSULTATIONS SO POWERFUL

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Over the years, we have had some really positive feedback from clients on the Family Consultation model.

*“We think that the foundation for the success we feel following our time with you was the unequivocal belief you had in our reality without even a hint judgement or criticism. This created such a nurturing and supportive environment for us to be open and honest which meant we could fully benefit from your expertise. We felt such validation of our feelings and experiences, and you made our life feel ordinary in such extraordinary circumstances. We were able to then accept our own limitations and forgive our mistakes and instead focus on how we could gain the skills and confidence we wanted and needed to strengthen our family. Of course, your practical advice and ability to decipher the children’s behaviours and providing us with strategies for managing all our trigger points meant that every session was valuable and practical too. Now, our children are thriving at this stage of their little lives because we have taken the time we needed to understand, accept and develop to be the best parents we can to two children impacted by loss and trauma”.*

And from our own experience, we are also aware of the power of these sessions. There are those goose bump moments when, as a clinician, you feel things suddenly shift for the family. Someone understands the other person’s perspective. Someone feels properly heard and fully accepted. Someone realises their assumptions about another family member were misguided or mistaken. The family appreciate that they have been following a set of rules that perhaps are no longer helpful for their family unit and finally, everyone’s voices are heard, and the progress begins.

These realisations can change everything. Anger and confusion all but disappear. Apprehension and agitation dissolve as there is no longer a need to tiptoe around one another and avoid particular issues. Family members feel connected and united once more because differences can be tolerated when they are not accompanied by rejection or pain.

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Moreover, it continues to astound us that families can make these transformations in just two or three sessions. This has prompted us to investigate the explanations behind these remarkable shifts in family dynamics and have concluded that the following features may be of importance.

- 1 Clear goal orientated sessions:** The act of simply coming together and being clear on the issues at play can unite a family, bringing clarity and beginning the process for change.
- 2 Non-blaming approach:** In the sessions, we use a lot of Systemic (considering the system, the family, as a whole) and evolutionary approaches. These attempt to understand that even the most unhelpful patterns and behaviour often emerged as a tool for survival or protection, that can span several generations. These patterns can become outdated and inappropriate and yet persist. We therefore seek to understand the circular patterns of behaviour, considering the history and context as a whole, rather than simply acknowledging the linear cause and effect of certain behavioural issues and in doing so, we are able to dissolve blame.
- 3 Displaying detailed family trees can be very powerful:** Seeing a map of your family, drawn on paper or represented by various objects in front of you can be a very effective tool in understanding how certain values, rules and assumptions are passed between family members as well as generations. Physically seeing how your family has transformed as a result of lifecycle changes such as new baby, retirement, or illness can be compelling. Moreover, an issue that led to certain alliances or exclusions in the family can be unearthed to allow the family to consider the family unit in its entirety.
- 4 Curious and open approach to questioning:** When we let go of blame, we often let go of shame and the need to defend ourselves. This leads to more curiosity which tends to foster broader conversations, enabling a deeper understanding of one another.
- 5 Playfulness and humour:** We are the antitheses of the common misconception of psychotherapy being stuffy and formal. We are friendly and playful. We invite humour as much as possible into our sessions because we understand that if families feel sufficiently safe to laugh, they will be much better placed to think, hear and be open to others and new ideas.
- 6 Honest and direct attitude:** We find that, if the family is ready, asking very direct questions can really move things along quickly to make effective progress whereby every family member feels valued and considered.
- 7 A lot of therapies, theories and expertise are brought into the mix:** As clinical psychologists, we are trained to use a range of therapeutic approaches, drawing on diverse research and evidence to tailor therapy to the clients and their needs. We are trained to work with people that span age ranges, psychological issues, learning disabilities, sensory processing issues, developmental disorders, as well as more everyday developmental stages and life cycle changes that bring challenges to the families facing them. But I am particularly proud of the team of psychologists that makes Pocket Family Psychologist. We are always on training courses, have a wealth of specialist knowledge and meet regularly to share expertise. We have worked hard to embed a consistent and highly effective approach to consultations. We really want to ensure that families get as much as possible - that keeps us sharp!

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