

09-234 Emerging Adults Living at Home:
The New American Family Paradigm – 6 Hour Seminar

Martha Straus, Ph.D.

Saturday, June 20, 2009 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Course Description

Twenty five million young adults in the U.S. between 20 and 34 reside at home. These emerging adults and their parents, across bounds of race, class, and geography, are struggling to manage a changing world of expectations within and beyond the family, offering unique challenges and opportunities for therapeutic support. In this course, we will consider the perfect storm of psychological, social, systemic, economic, and cultural factors that have led to a paradigm shift, redefining family relationships, the developmental transition to adulthood—and even what it means to be an adult. We will critically examine the assumptions underlying traditional psychological thought that hold--to the detriment of these young adults and their families—that separation and individuation must be the gold standard of parenting. Through a developmental-attachment lens, we will explore the new paradigm of “*bungee families*:” emerging adults and their Boomer parents, mutually connected and living together--usually through some combination of choice and necessity. Within this compassionate (and evidence-based) model of lifespan interdependence, we will consider assessment and treatment strategies for the range of young adult “bungees”: impoverished but successful in other dimensions, immature, emotionally struggling, temporarily regrouping, transitioning for a year or two, parenting, caring for others—including, sometimes, their parents-- substance addicted, or chronically physically or psychologically unwell. We will also discuss strategies for assisting the comparably diverse and often bewildered population of new “bungee” parents--and grandparents.

Faculty: Martha Straus, Ph.D. – is a professor in the Department of Clinical Psychology at Antioch University New England Graduate School in Keene, New Hampshire, and adjunct instructor in psychiatry at Dartmouth Medical School. She maintains a small private practice in Brattleboro, VT and consults to schools, social service agencies and courts. Dr. Straus is the author of numerous articles and four books including *No-Talk Therapy for Children and Adolescents*, and more recently, *Adolescent Girls in Crisis: Intervention and Hope*. Dr. Straus trains and conducts workshops internationally.

Learning Objectives

1. To describe psychological, social, systemic, economic, and cultural factors that have converged in recent years, creating the developmental period of emerging adulthood.
2. To delineate the tasks, vulnerabilities, opportunities, and challenges faced by emerging adults, their parents, and the therapeutic community.
3. To replace detrimental and obsolete theoretical models of post-adolescent development with an evidence-based paradigm based on interdependence, attachment security, and pragmatism.
4. To consider strategies for assessment and intervention that meet the developmental needs of these emerging adults, their parents, and their families.
5. To understand how countertransference and our own personal and cultural narratives about adolescence and adulthood may create additional challenges within this work.

References

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