



© Beltz Verlag, Weinheim, Basel, 2023
www.beltz.de

Illustration: Annika Botved

Editing: Antje Raden

Design and typesetting: Myriam Frericks

Printed by: ParioPrint, Krakow

Printed in Poland

GTIN 4019172101190

The Family Memo

With the family memo you can quickly get to grips with a broad and modern spectrum of all possible family constellations.

When you hear the word »family«, do you immediately think of the classic picture book family? Father, mother, child(ren)? Sure, everyone has a family, but very few people have a family that corresponds to a so-called picture book or »normal« family.

There are rainbow families, patchwork families, but also flat-sharing communities that live together and see themselves as a family; families where many generations live together under one roof and much more. Surely you also know children whose parents have died or who are growing up in a foster family, residential group or in a children's village or who have been adopted. With a divorce rate of about 33 %, there are a huge number of patchwork families

and single parents. And not only since the wave of refugees have there been many families with a migration background, with very different cultural and religious backgrounds.

You will encounter all these different family forms and constellations in your daily (psycho)therapeutic and counselling work - and it is much easier to get into this world of topics with your patients if it is done in a playful way.

The concept of family or: What is »family«?

The question arises whether the concept of family, which usually has a positive connotation, must necessarily be linked to a (blood) relationship. Does a family necessarily have to consist only of (blood) relatives or is not actually a loose mixture and choice (»Who is good for me, who do I want to have contact with ...?«) much more conducive? Why shouldn't a child call the older couple across the street, who have no children and consequently no grandchildren, but who take super care of the

child, grandma and grandpa? Why not rather look for beneficial, supportive contacts and develop them and thus create a family of choice? Because actually, life should be about surrounding oneself with people who take responsibility for each other, who care for each other and are there for each other when one is not well. If this is done by parents and relatives, the so-called family of origin, then that's great, but if not, then other constellations should also be possible and allowed. The memo is perhaps a first playful introduction to thinking again about one's own concept of family in breadth and depth.

Families are very different, that's for sure and that's a good thing!

Family history and identity. In its breadth of motifs, the family memo takes up the most common family constellations. Those who deal with the concept of family usually also begin to deal with their own family history. Where do I actually come from? Where are my roots and who and how were my ancestors?

The question »Where do I come from?« is also often connected with the question „Who am I? Dealing with one's own history often brings to light unexpected, beautiful, strange, but also exciting and interesting aspects that can change or also consolidate one's own previous image of the concept of family.

The (gender) roles in families. Who has which role in a family? How is the respective role or activity regarded? In many families, despite their diversity, the roles are still clearly divided and women tend to take care of activities such as raising children, household, caring for elderly or sick people, while men earn the money or most of the family income and thus often have little(less) time for the children and also the partnership. Often, in wealthier families, many of the caring activities are outsourced and cleaning staff, babysitters, au-pairs etc. are employed - again, these are usually also women, so that the children see and experience women in this position as well. These are also

questions that you can address with the help of the memo and the drawn families, depending on the time.

As you can see, with this memo you have the opportunity to take up the whole range of the topic of family, to address it and to deepen it in a playful way.

The motifs of the family memo in overview



1. person living alone



2. large family



3. small family



4. couple without children



5. patchwork family



6. family in which the child lives with the grandparents or other relatives



7. family in which the parents have separated



8. family in which one parent works or lives somewhere else



9. family with several generations in the house



10. family with migration background



11. family that has fled their home country



12. family that has adopted one or more children



13. family in which a parent or other family member has died



14. children's village



15. foster family (on call)



16. rainbow family with 2 mothers



17. rainbow family with 2 fathers



18. socio-educational living community



19. flat-sharing community/group



20. family with au-pair, nanny



21. family with twins or multiples (monozygotic / dizygotic)



22. family in which one or more people have a mental illness



23. family in which one or more persons have a physical illness



24. family in which one or more persons have a sensory disability



25. family in which one or more persons have an intellectual disability



26. family in which one or more persons have had one or more children through artificial insemination or sperm donation



27. family in which one or more persons have a physical disability



28. family in which the child was born through a surrogate mother



29. family with a single parent



30. family ... (Blank/Joker card that can represent any other type of family)

Working with the Family Memo Cards

You can use the Family Memo Cards in therapy and counselling as a quick and good introduction to each lesson. But also during the therapy session you can let your patients/clients work on the topic of family at any time with the help of the picture cards laid openly on the table. Or you can work together on different family constellations and their advantages and disadvantages, which your patient may not be able or willing to name (at the moment). At the end of a lesson, too, it can be a nice moment to generate a playful exit from the lesson with the help of the family memo cards.

Functions of the family memo cards

- ▶ Icebreaker
- ▶ quick entry into the family constellation of your patients/clients
- ▶ quick introduction to the topic of family in general
- ▶ Psychoeducation
- ▶ Follow-up of the time between therapy sessions
- ▶ Visualisation of one's own family (constellation) and the desired family
- ▶ Depicting one's own or other people's family constellations, life events or change(s) in family status (e.g. as a marker when working with lifelines) faster visualisation
- ▶ vivid report on own family and relatives
- ▶ allocation of family types and persons with the help of a drawn genogram
- ▶ as a non-verbal medium
- ▶ ... or just to have some fun and distraction

The therapeutic use of the Family Memo Cards

As a therapist, educator or counsellor you help your patients/clients to find an even better access to their family and to express it. Especially in the first therapy sessions, verbalising and accurately describing certain questions may not be so easy or may still be too difficult.

Questions like:

- ▶ »Where am I from?«
- ▶ »Is my family actually normal?«
- ▶ »Why is ...?«
- ▶ »Which family forms all apply to my family?«
- ▶ »What kind of family would I like to have?«
- ▶ »What should my desired family look like?«

To answer all these questions, it is helpful to discuss the diversity and range of families together using the Family Memo Cards.

The cards also work excellently in combination with circular questions.

- ▶ **Attention:** Adapt the number and motifs of the family memo cards to the cognitive abilities of your patients.
- ▶ **Pre-sorting:** Pick out the card motifs that you would like to discuss with your patient/client beforehand. You may also want to consciously not (yet) address certain types of families (e.g. the topic of surrogacy), in which case you can simply remove these cards in advance.

Multiple uses of the Family Memo Cards

The Family Memo Cards are not only suitable for playing games, but also for many other areas of work and use. In addition to their use in the (psycho)therapeutic field, the Family Memo Cards can also be used in many other areas:

In the day care centre. As an educator, e.g. in a day-care centre, you can easily work on the topic of family with children from the age of about three. Let the children describe their own family. Or use the cards to discuss certain situations or to retell an event (e.g. a quarrel between parents and grandparents).



Another possibility is to learn and get to know the most common family constellations in a more differentiated way. It is important to understand that there is no »one/right« family constellation, but a great variety.

At school. As an educator at school or in school counselling/social work, you will often experience a quicker and also deeper entry into conversations that you might have been denied in such a short time without these Family Memo Cards.

Group work is much easier with the cards, as the participants find individual family constellations much more quickly with the help of the cards.

Supervision, coaching, counselling. In supervision, coaching and counselling you can also use the family type motifs as a tool to represent your own feelings about your own family or other family members.

Other places of application. Other suitable places to use the family memo cards are:

- ▶ Self-awareness or self-help groups or groups on specific topics, e.g. separation, grief groups.
- ▶ In systemic counselling and family therapy, the cards can be used excellently.
- ▶ The cards are also a popular medium in couples counselling/therapy.

Client/patient spectrum

The Memo Cards can be used in work with a very wide range of clients and ages, such as those with mental or learning disabilities or people with autism spectrum disorders.

However, you can also use the Memo Cards very well when working with people who do not speak your language but another language.



Family diagnosis

The assessment of one's own family (constellation) often plays an important role in therapeutic work with children and adolescents. You can use the cards of the family memo very well for the diagnostic recording of the patient's/client's family. Just let your patient/client look at the cards and ask, for example:

- ▶ which family types he/she knows
- ▶ which family types are in his/her circle of friends
- ▶ which family type cards apply to his/her own family
- ▶ which family type cards he/she would wish for
- ▶ which family type cards would make up his/her ideal family



Game instructions

At the beginning, all the cards are shuffled and then placed face down on the playing area. Then the first player starts by turning over two cards and laying them out for all the other players to see. Then the cards are turned over again. The next player then also uncovers two cards and tries to find identical card motifs. It is important that the cards do not change their position while being turned over. If a player succeeds in uncovering two identical motifs, he or she may remove this pair of cards from the game and place them in front of him or her on his or her pile of cards. After revealing two identical motifs, the player may reveal and show two more cards. The game is played until all the same pairs of pictures are revealed. The player who has the most pairs of cards is the winner. Since there can be a tie in the game with 30 pairs of cards, there are then either two winners or another round!

If you are short of time, you can vary the game and speed it up by always leaving one of the revealed cards face up. This way, more duplicate cards are found more quickly.

Variations on the classic memo game

Clap memo. A variation that is particularly popular with younger children is the so-called »clap memo«. Just like in the regular version, the cards are turned over in turn and when a pair appears, it is given to the first person to point at the two identical cards or clap their hands. Of course, you can also include the condition that the person may only keep the pair if he or she briefly tells something about the family type that has been revealed.

The never-ending memo story. Depending on the time of the game, all the memo cards or just the simple memo card deck are laid out on the table face up or face down, depending on the type of game. First, a theme is set, e.g. the children of the kindergarten group or school class, the children from the neighbourhood or similar. The first player now selects a card of the appropriate family type for a particular child and describes it, e.g.: »This is Jochen's family, Jochen's parents have separated and the father has a new girlfriend who has a daughter with another man«, etc. Then the next player takes a card and describes the family for the next child and thinks of a story that could fit both cards, what connects the two families or what they could have experienced together, e.g. the families could go on holiday together, go on a trip or celebrate a party.

The next person in line extends the story until all the corresponding children (from the nursery group, the school class, the neighbourhood, the football club, etc.) have been included. If it is unclear what family one of the children has, the joker card can be used. It is also very suitable for working with groups.

The family palette. The family memo card set is spread out face down on the table. Then the first player takes one of the cards and shows it to the other players and says something about the family depicted. For example, when and if he knows such a family and what his impression of this family is or if he could imagine living in such a family.

Describing situations. There are two different possibilities here. Either you as the therapist choose certain cards and turn them over one after the other or your patient turns over the card himself. After the card has been turned over, the player tells a situation that he or she associates with such a family. Then it is the turn of the next person in the round.

Find someone ... (group exercise to get to know each other) The pairs of family memo cards are separated. Depending on the number of players, enough memo cards are distributed face down so that each group member has a memo card. Now the group members have to act out the family on their own card and at the same time find the group member who has received the same family motif as a card and also show it in pantomime while everyone goes around the room.

This is my family ... We don't always know about the families in a group. Ask your patients to pick the card that fits their family situation and tell something (positive or negative) about their family.

Picking a card that fits your own family situation can also serve as an opportunity to introduce yourself and your family in more detail or to start a conversation about it in a group. This can be done by selecting and presenting the drawn family type memo card in the dyad, small group or the whole group.

Surely you and your little and big patients and clients can think of many more beautiful variations. Be creative together and try out how you would like to use the family memo cards.

If you feel like it, please send us your new ideas for use or experiences:
m.graesser@therapie-lippstadt.de

Download

In the download area on beltz.de you will find a number of family type pictures to colour in.

The authors

Dipl.-Psych. Melanie Gräßer is a psychological psychotherapist (behaviour therapy) for children and adolescents and for adults in Lippstadt. She has many years of professional experience in child and adolescent psychotherapy and paediatrics. Ms Gräßer is a book author and developer of therapeutic games and materials. Her aim is to provide patients and therapists with suitable tools for an even better and easier therapeutic approach.



Eike Hovermann jun. is managing partner of the Academy for German Business and founder and managing director of the Academy for Kindergarten, Daycare and After-School Care. He is the author of numerous specialist books and guidebooks and the developer of therapeutic games.



Annika Botved grew up partly in Denmark and France. After school she lived in Switzerland for three years. »My exercise books and school books have always been full of little drawings. Painting has always been great fun for me«. After a few stints in academic professions, she started further training in new media and two years later ventured into self-employment by founding penimals. »I finally get to paint and draw all day and my children are good advisors and inspiration at the same time«.



You can find many more therapeutic games for your practice at: www.beltz.de/therapiespiele.

Emotions Memo

The combination of the popular memo game and working with feelings is ideal for use in creative child and adolescent psychotherapy.



As many patients often find it difficult to talk about or name their feelings, the memo game is very suitable for emotion work. The 30 feelings memo cards show the range of the most important positive and negative feelings.

Resource memo

Memo games are very popular. That is why they can be used very well for resource work in psychotherapy, because many children and young people hardly use and know their own resources.



With this memo game, a playful introduction to various resources/themes is possible:

- ▶ at the beginning of therapy as an introduction
- ▶ to stabilise existing resources
- ▶ to discuss and select possible resources
- ▶ as a nice exit from the therapy session

Here I am at home - The family rallye

Patchwork, rainbow or extended families, shared flats or children's villages - psychotherapists, educators and other professionals work with children and young people from many different family forms and constellations. This game can be used to discuss a wide variety of family topics in depth. Where do I actually come from? Are the family members there for each other? Do other families have the same rituals as we have at home? The players should be encouraged to reflect on and expand their own knowledge on the topic of family and also to recognise choices for their own actions.



This is the way I go - life path game

Working on one's own biography, life path and goals - all these are important tasks in the therapeutic process. What is my greatest life dream? What has gone really wrong? What am I totally proud of? What would I most like to do after school? What am I afraid of? With the life path game, players are encouraged to think about experiences, associations and emotions and to reflect on their own behaviour in relation to life's path. With game board consisting of 72 path cards.

