Systemic Thinking Foundations: Facilitator Pack

THE TALKING THERAPIES UK FACILITATOR PACKS



Systemic Thinking Foundations: Facilitator Pack

Teaching the course to a group

A facilitator pack · 2 sessions · for trainers

TALKING THERAPIES UK

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First edition, 2026.

This pack accompanies the course “Systemic Thinking Foundations” on Talking Therapies UK Training & CPD and its course book. It is drawn from the course and is kept current with it: whenever the course changes, the pack is set again.

This printing was set on 27 October 2026 from the course as it stood that day.

A note on teaching from this pack. It supports qualified trainers and supervisors teaching within their competence. Running the course from it does not award the course’s CPD certificate, which participants gain by completing the course online.

Set in Poppins and Roboto, the Talking Therapies UK typefaces.

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How to use this pack

This pack is for trainers and supervisors who teach the Talking Therapies UK course “Systemic Thinking Foundations” to a group: a session for each of its 2 modules, with timed plans, the points to draw out, group activities and discussion questions, the course’s assessment with answers, an attendance register and an evaluation form.

Part 1 sets out the course and how to plan it. Part 2 has a timed plan for each session, built from the course’s own modules, lessons and practice tasks; read it with the module it teaches. Part 3 holds the course’s assessment with its answers, an attendance register and an evaluation form.

What this pack covers

- Plan the course as 2 sessions
- Follow a timed plan for each session
- Draw out each lesson’s key points
- Run each lesson’s practice task as a group activity
- Check understanding with the course’s own questions
- Keep a register and gather evaluations

PART 1

Planning the course

What the course covers, who it is for, and how to run it.

CHAPTER 1

About Systemic Thinking Foundations

Ask why one person struggles and you get one kind of answer; ask what pattern the struggle keeps alive, and between whom, and you get another kind entirely. Systemic thinking is that second question pursued rigorously, and it changes what you see in every consulting room, whether you work with families or individuals. This course teaches it from the beginning.

The first module makes the paradigm shift: from linear to circular causality, where behaviour is both response and stimulus in loops without a first cause; homeostasis and feedback, why systems resist the very change they request; and the family life cycle, with problems read as transitions the system has not yet made. The second module tours the founding schools with their working ideas intact: structural boundaries and hierarchies, strategic reframes, the Milan team's hypothesising and circularity, and the social constructionist and narrative turn that re-centred meaning and language.

Full written lessons with key points and practice tasks that train pattern-vision on ordinary material, with a built-in study tutor throughout. Six hours of CPD, around six months of access, a final assessment, and a personalised certificate on passing.

By the end of the course, participants will be able to

- Think in systems: describe circular causality and how it differs from linear blame
- Map a family system, including alliances, boundaries and hierarchies, with a genogram
- Describe homeostasis and why systems resist change even when members suffer
- Recognise repeating interaction patterns, such as pursue–withdraw, in couples and families
- Ask simple circular questions that reveal pattern rather than fault
- Describe the major schools of family therapy and their shared foundations

Who it is for

The course is pitched at practitioners and trainees meeting the subject for the first time, and colleagues in allied roles who want a grounding in it.

At a glance

- 2 sessions of about 180 minutes, one for each of the course's modules.
- The online course is accredited for 6 hours of CPD.
- Each participant needs the course book, or access to the online course, for reading between sessions.

CHAPTER 2

Planning the sessions

Run one session for each module, a week or a fortnight apart, so that participants can read the module and try its practice task between sessions. The sessions can also be run as a block over two or three days.

OVERVIEW

The course at a glance

Session	Module	Lessons	Time
1	The paradigm shift	4	180 minutes
2	The founding schools	5	180 minutes

The group

- Six to sixteen participants: enough for small-group work, few enough for everyone to contribute.
- Agree ground rules at the first session: confidentiality, respect for different experience, and how participants will speak about their own clients (with nothing that could identify them).
- Ask before the course about access needs, and send any reading a week ahead.

What you need

- A copy of this pack, and the course book or the online course for each participant.
- A flipchart or whiteboard, and space for groups of three or four to work.
- Printed copies of the attendance register and the evaluation form in Part 3, which you may copy for the groups you run.

Keeping it safe

Training about psychological difficulties can bring up participants' own experience. Say at the start that anyone may step out, have someone available to talk to afterwards, and know where to point a participant who is struggling: their GP, their own supervisor or employee assistance programme, or Samaritans on 116 123.