CONTENTS

Acknowledgements ix

1 What is Family Therapy? Patterns of Living, Patterns of Mind and Patterns of Therapy 1
The systemic approach 2
Families in transition 4
Stressful life events and family life: patterns of stress and patterns of affirmation 5
Patterns and problems over time: changing constraints and developing new solutions 7
Historical and current dimensions 8
Family systems, transitions and non-biologically connected families: implications for a family therapist 9
Rethinking family bonds: diversity, intimacy and identity 11
How do cultural values underpin family life? 12
Culture, gender and development 13
What is the job of the family therapist? 13
Listening to families and to the the family in individual stories: internal and external discourses 14
The family as the template for intimate relations: three ways of looking at what goes on 16
Summary 19

2 Changes in Families: Theories in Change 21
Systems thinking, family pattern, family coherence, and dominant discourses 21
The Xavier family 24
The therapist's thinking 30
Influences from structural family therapy in the Xavier family session 31
The Riordan family 33
The Milan approach 37
Moving forward with theory 40

3 Culture, Diversity and Developments (1): Rethinking Contexts for Growth and Change **47**
The family and life cycle ideas: a pluralistic approach 47
Multiculturalism and diversity 49
Gay and lesbian families: diversity and homophobia 50
Culture and changing micropractices: keeping up with change 51
Ethnicity, culture, migration and family change 54
Refugees and family work 56
Creating conditions of safety 57
Changing gender roles for men and women 60
Racism in daily life, and in the therapeutic context 62
Gay and lesbian families: similarities and differences in life cycle issues 64
Life cycle rituals: new constructions 66
Poverty and stresses 68
Factors that buffer individuals against stress 70
Intimacy and resilience 72
Summary 73

4 Culture, Diversity and Development (2): Loss and Transitions in Childhood **74**
Communication and loss 76
Variations in childcare patterns and the loss of intimacy 80
Loss and adaptation 81
The importance of a safe place: former loss and current parenting 84
Transitions and second families 87
Adoption 87
Young adults who have grown up in second families 91
Theories of child development 92

5 Families, Divorce and Post-Divorce Family Work: Mothers', Fathers' and Children's Perspectives **94**
Keeping life predictable and maintaining self-esteem 96
Ambiguities in post-divorce relationships: 98
Residence and contact: parents and children in the post-divorce family 99
Acrimony and hostility 99
Parenting alone 103
Fathers; parenting in the context of 'contact' 105
Secrets and silence in post-divorce narratives 110

'Holding on to the bubble' – uncertainty about arrangements 114
Bearing the family in mind 116
Separation when children are very young 117
The Juniper/Rowan family: early separation, attachment issues, and the restoration of contact 119
Summary 127

6 Step-Families 128
What is a step-family? 128
Boys' and girls' ways of dealing with family distress: similarities and differences 131
Lesbian and gay partnerships 133
The extended family 135
Economic tensions 138
Stepmothers and mothers: trying to get it right 139
Stepfathers and fathers 142

7 The Family and Mental Illness 147
Cultural and family factors affecting descriptions of illness 147
Professional approaches to family work with major mental illness 150
Work focusing on patterns of communication 151
Family descriptions and self-description 153
Family relationships and different illness processes 155
Mental illness and external realities: social factors 163
Children of chronically ill parents: protective factors and 'being alright' 165
Dementia in the elderly 167

8 Violence in Family Life 169
The 'carry forward' of patterns 171
The Wade family *172*
The O'Rourke family 180
The use of language 180
Post-divorce issues 183
Family violence and traumatic effects on children 184

9 Sexual Abuse in Childhood and Some Effects in Adult Life 190
Boundaries of trust in therapeutic work 190
Therapy with a man: some considerations 192
The therapist as another woman 194

Traumatic, formless and perverse events 195
Early work in therapy: the written word 195
Confronting the voices of others in therapy: parents and children 197
Maeve: using workmates and children to create alternative voices 199
Talking with children about sexual abuse 202

10 Doing the work and making a difference 205
Study your own coherence 205
A theory you can live and work by 205
Attention to text 206
The wider world and family life 207
Attention to the fragility of relationships 209
Keeping an eye on oneself 210
The family as template for intimate emotions 210
What do we mean by resilience? 211

References 212

Index 226