



# The Embedded Self: A Psychoanalytic Guide to Family Therapy

*Mary Joan Gerson*

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*The Embedded Self* is a thoughtful and illuminating introduction to family treatment tailored to the sensibilities of psychoanalytically oriented clinicians. Skilled in both modalities, Mary-Joan Gerson provides the psychoanalytic reader with a genial overview of the family therapy movement, its history, its organizing concepts, and its interventions. Basic family therapy approaches to development, diagnosis, and clinical engagement, as well as practical questions (such as when to refer and how to share information with colleagues) all fall within her purview.

But more importantly, *The Embedded Self* takes up the intellectual challenge of an alternative therapeutic modality to engage crucial questions about the therapeutic process. Pivoting her juxtaposition of the two forms of treatment on basic psychodynamic principles, Gerson invites the reader to appreciate how concepts developed for understanding the individual psyche are necessarily transformed when applied to the redundant communication patterns characteristic of family systems. The result is a striking reappraisal of the nature and possibilities of psychodynamic intervention in which psychoanalysis and family therapy stand as figure and ground to one another, each shedding new light on the fundamental principles of the other.

*The Embedded Self* is a timely work that succeeds at different levels - as introduction, as guidebook, and as invitation to renewed reflection on the nature of the self and the dynamics of therapeutic change. Engagingly written and liberally illustrated with sensitive clinical vignettes, it is destined to inform all future discussions of the complementary nature of individual and family interventions.

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