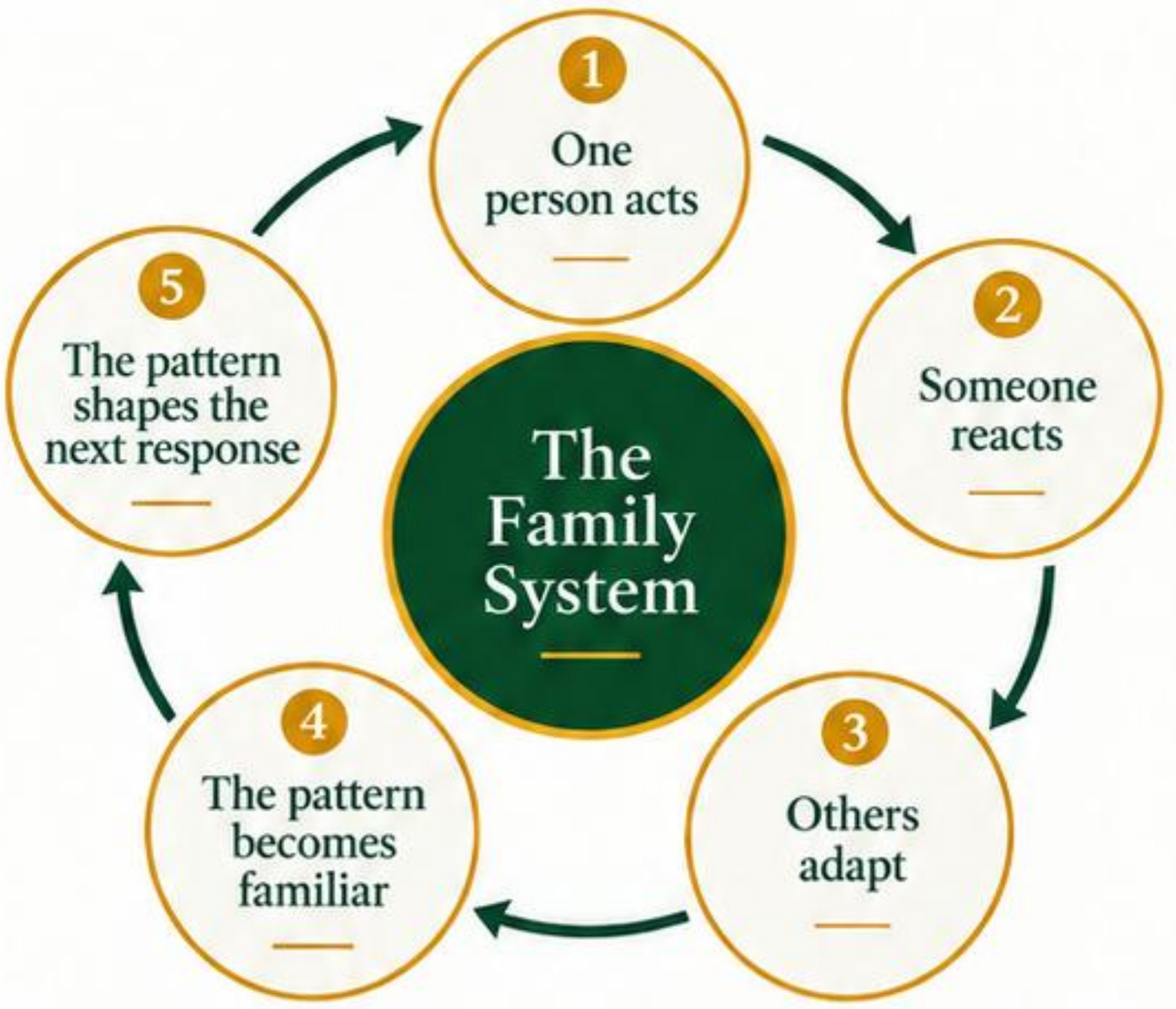
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When One Person Changes, Family Dynamics Shift

Understanding how one change affects the whole system

Families do not just respond to individual people. They respond to patterns. Over time, family members often fall into familiar roles, reactions, and expectations that help the system feel predictable, even when the pattern is unhealthy. When one person starts setting boundaries, getting sober, speaking up, or changing old habits, the whole family system feels it.

This worksheet is meant to help map those patterns more clearly. The goal is not to blame a family member or label people permanently. It is to notice the loops that keep repeating, understand what happens when one part of the system changes, and identify where a healthier response could begin.



Key idea: Families often organize around stress, roles, and predictability. When one person changes, the whole system feels it.

Where in my family do I notice familiar loops?

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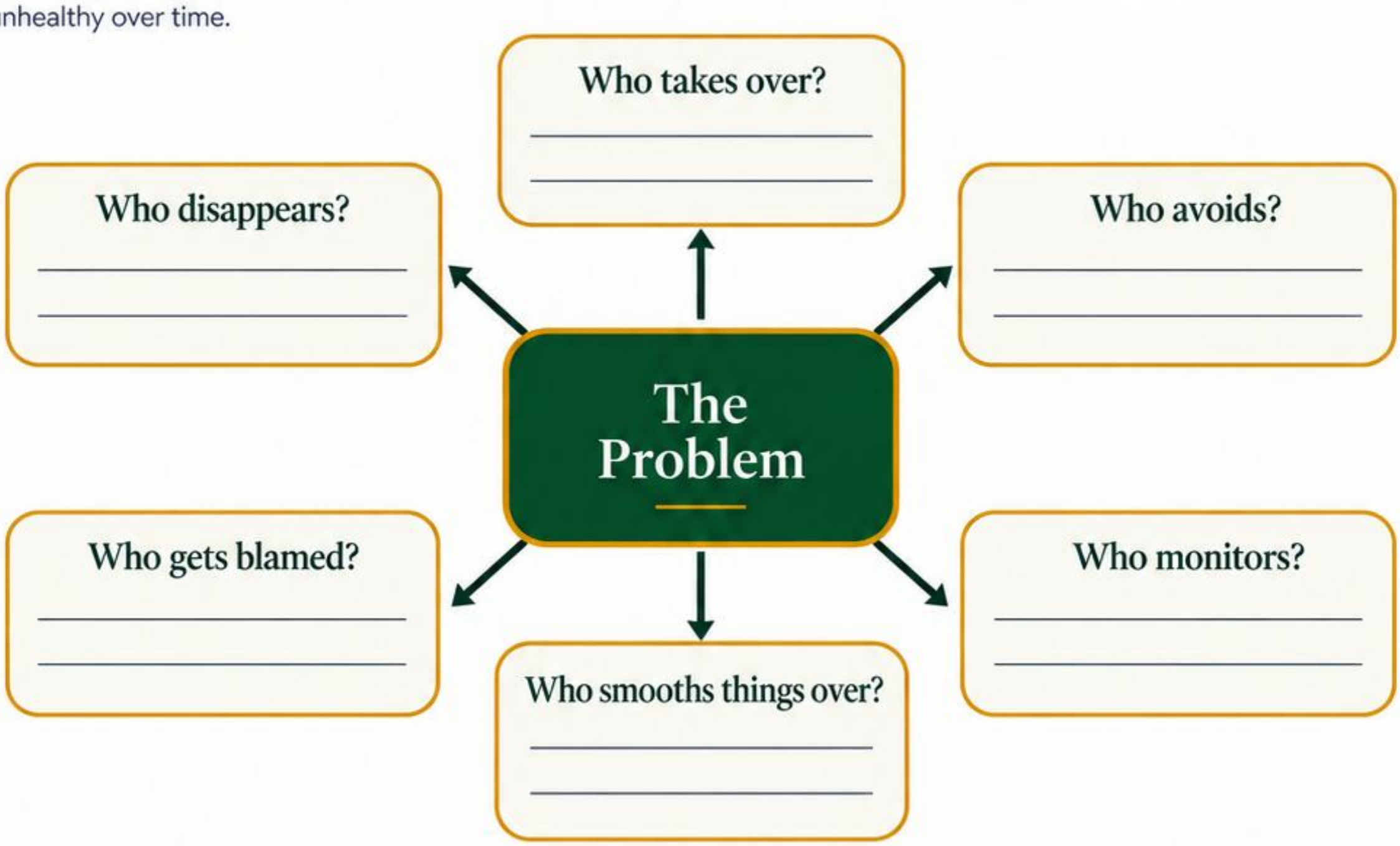
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What Happens Around the Problem?

Mapping the pattern instead of blaming a person

In many families, the problem is not just the issue itself. It is also the pattern that forms around it. As stress builds, people often begin taking on familiar positions that help the family function in the short term, even if the pattern becomes unhealthy over time.



These are not fixed identities. The same person may play different roles in different situations.

Which roles show up most often in my family, and which ones do I step into?

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When Balance Gets Lost

Overfunctioning and underfunctioning often feed each other

In strained families, one person often starts doing too much while another does too little. The more one person rescues, manages, reminds, or carries, the easier it can become for someone else to avoid, withdraw, or rely on being carried. This can create a pattern that feels normal but leaves everyone stuck.

Overfunctioning

- rescuing
- managing
- reminding
- fixing
- taking over

Healthy responsibility

- support without taking over
- clear expectations
- letting others own consequences

Underfunctioning

- avoiding
- waiting
- shutting down
- not following through
- letting others carry it

When I overfunction, what might I be preventing someone else from facing?

When someone underfunctions, how do I usually respond?

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Change Disrupts the Pattern

Before, reaction, and the possibility of a new pattern

Even a healthy change can create tension in a family system. When someone becomes more honest, more sober, more boundaried, or less reactive, the family may not immediately experience that change as relief. At first, it may feel like disruption.

1 Before

Everyone knows the old roles and the familiar way the system works.

2 Disruption

One person changes a behavior, boundary, or expectation.

3 Reaction

Anxiety, guilt, pressure, confusion, and pushback often increase.

4 New Pattern

The family adapts, or it tries to pull everyone back into the old system.

Key idea: Pushback does not always mean the change is wrong. Sometimes it means the system is adjusting.

What kind of pushback am I likely to expect when I change?

What change am I trying to hold onto?

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Map One Real Family Cycle

Follow the loop from trigger to result

A family pattern becomes easier to change when you can see the sequence clearly. Instead of jumping straight to blame or frustration, try mapping one actual cycle from beginning to end.

1 Trigger

2 My response

3 Their response

4 My next response

5 Result

6 What the cycle teaches everyone

Where could I interrupt this loop?

Small change I could make next time:

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Change One Part of the System

A steadier response can begin shifting the whole pattern

You do not need to change the whole family at once. Often the most realistic starting point is to change one repeated response and practice it with consistency.

1 **Old pattern**

What is the repeated response or behavior I want to change?

2 **New response**

What will I do differently instead?

3 **Likely reaction from others**

How might family members respond at first?

4 **What I will need to tolerate**

What feelings, discomforts, or challenges might come up for me?

5 **What I will keep doing**

How will I stay consistent, even when it is hard?

Consistency matters more than intensity. A small change repeated calmly is often more powerful than a dramatic reaction.

The one pattern I most want to interrupt is: _____

The response I want to practice is: _____