

TYPES OF		FAMILY SYSTEMS
CLOSED		OPEN
Boundaries change with little or no notice		Boundaries are consistent
Roles are unclear and there is conflict between roles		Each role is defined and compliments the other roles
There is no flexibility		There is flexibility in role-taking
A person will only function within their role		A person can take on numerous roles
Individuals do not take responsibility for their feelings and behavior		Individuals take personal responsibility for their feelings and behavior
One person is seen as leader and others follow apathetically or with resistance		Different persons take leadership while others willingly follow
There is one decision-maker who seeks no input from others		All persons have input into family decisions
No agreement on care issues or even discussion of them		General agreement in family on care issues
High level of tension		Low level of tension
Confusion between messages and communication		Clarity between messages and communications
More silence than talking		More talking than silence
Avoid information		Seek information
Generally negative mood		Generally positive mood
Interaction is explosive and long-standing conflicts are preserved		Minimal explosive, acting-out behavior of unresolved, long-standing conflicts
No or little sensitivity to others' needs		High degree of sensitivity to others' needs
Persons are discouraged from developing coping skills		Persons are given opportunity to expand their coping skills
Do not seek interpersonal relationships outside of family system		Seek interpersonal relationships outside of family system
Self-expression is punished		Self-expression is encouraged
Parents (usually one) control all power		Parents equally share and are the center of power
Family rules are enforced with threats of intimidation		Family rules are enforced with discipline and firmness

Adapted from materials of Dr. Charles L. Cox, Family Therapist, Paducah, KY 1993.