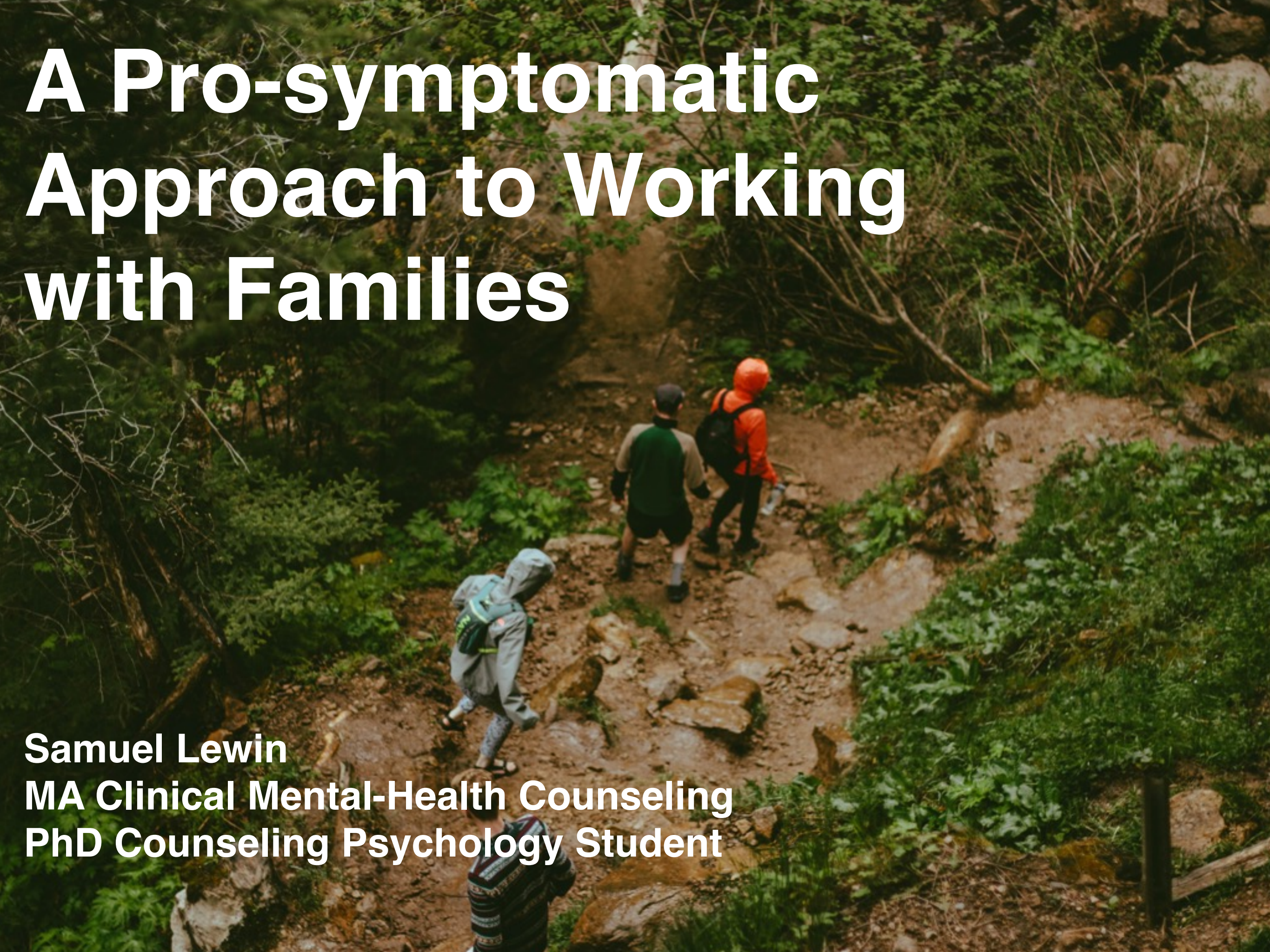


# **A Pro-symptomatic Approach to Working with Families**

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"Until you heal the wounds of your past, you will continue to bleed. You can bandage the bleeding with food, with alcohol, with drugs, with work, with cigarettes, with sex, but eventually, it will all ooze through and stain your life. You must find the strength to open the wounds, stick your hands inside, pull out the core of the pain that is holding you in your past, the memories, and make peace with them."

–Iyanla Vanzant

# Reasons for Referral

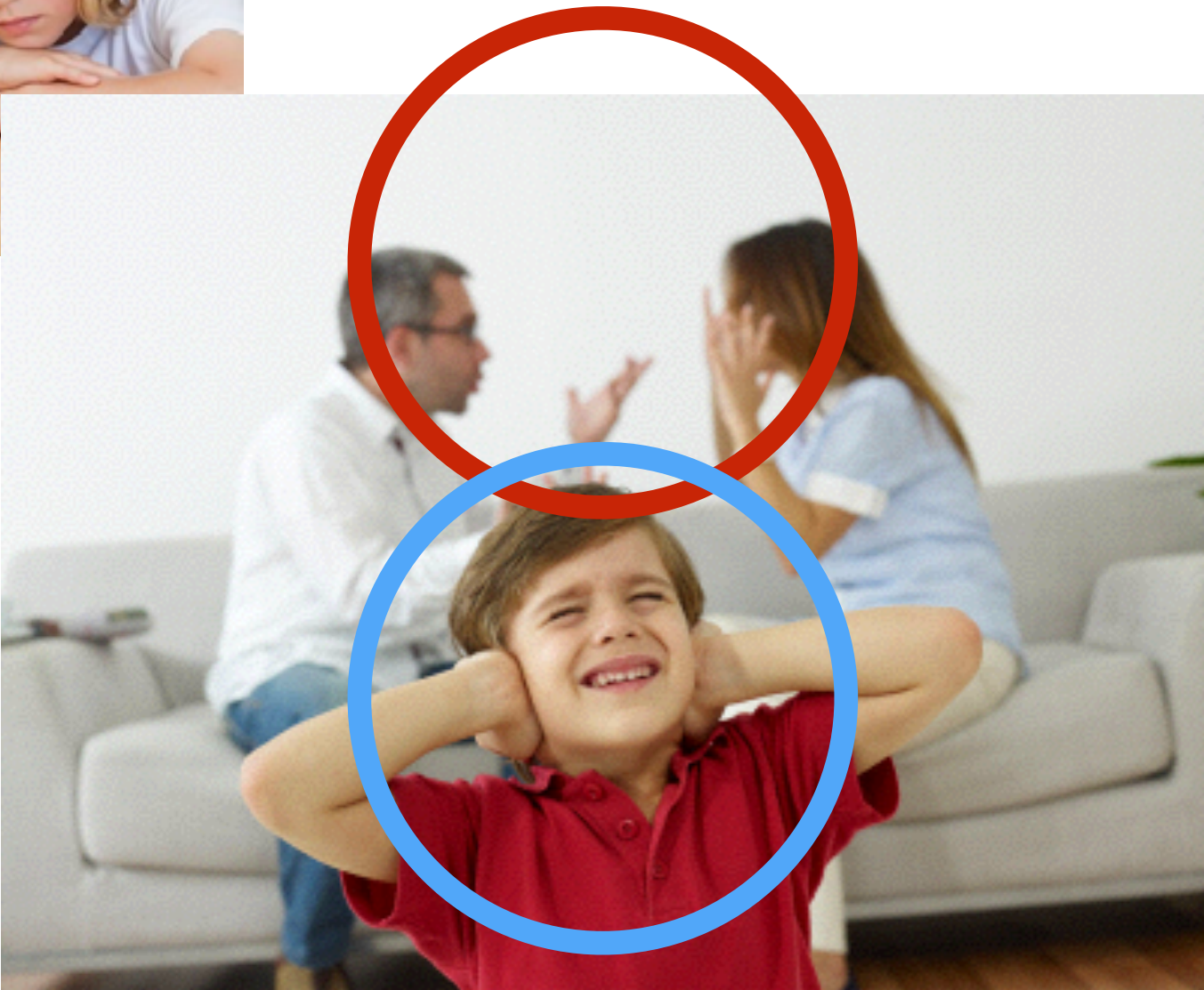
- To fix a family member (spouse, child, sibling, parents)
- To get rid of an undesirable emotion (anger, fear)
- To get rid of a dynamic (conflict, stonewalling, dismissal)





Perfect Family









# Symptom

Subjective evidence of disease or physical disturbance; broadly: something that indicates the presence of bodily disorder

Something that indicates the existence of something else; symptoms of an inner turmoil  
a slight indication

(Merriam-Webster)

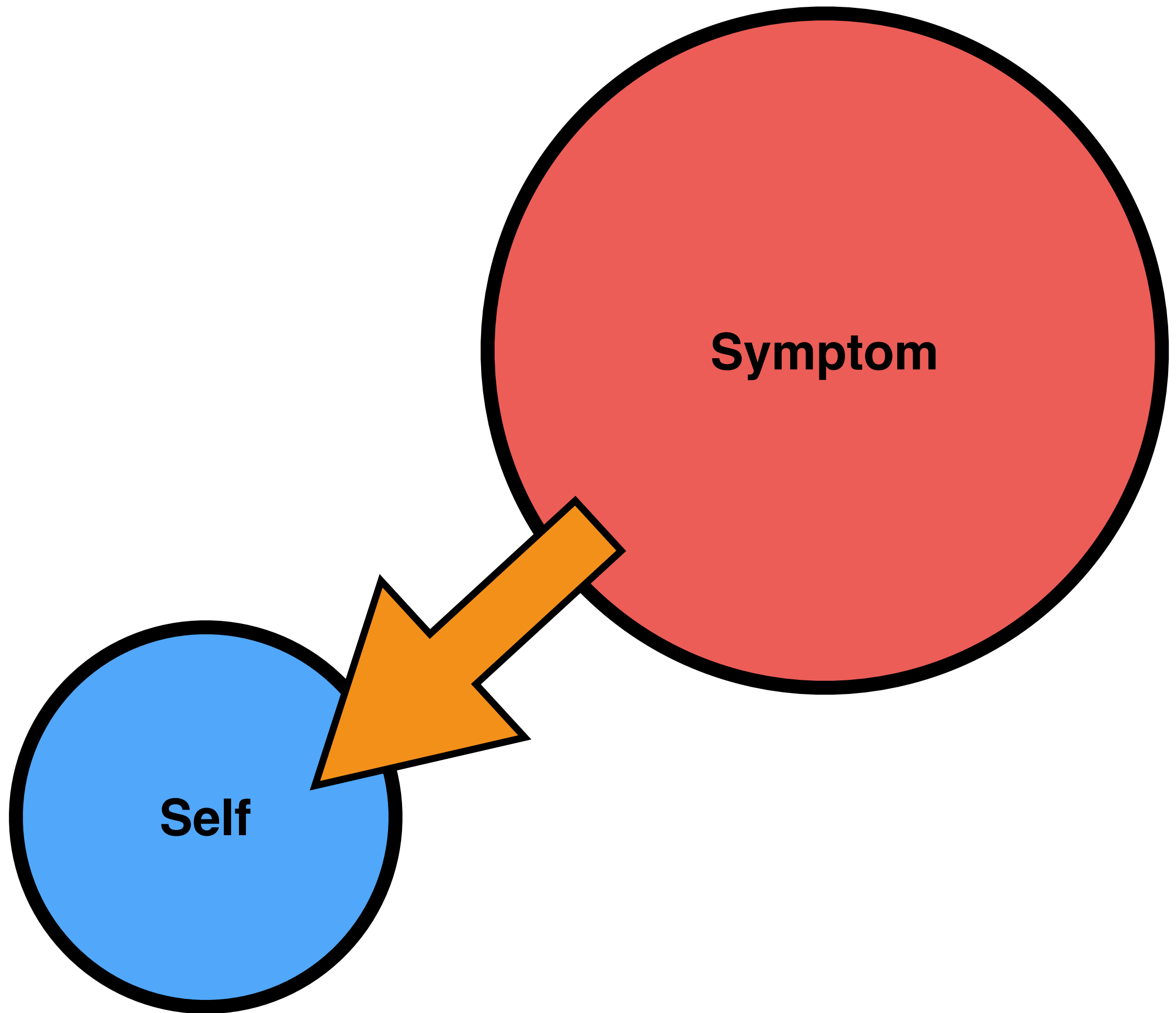
# Symptom

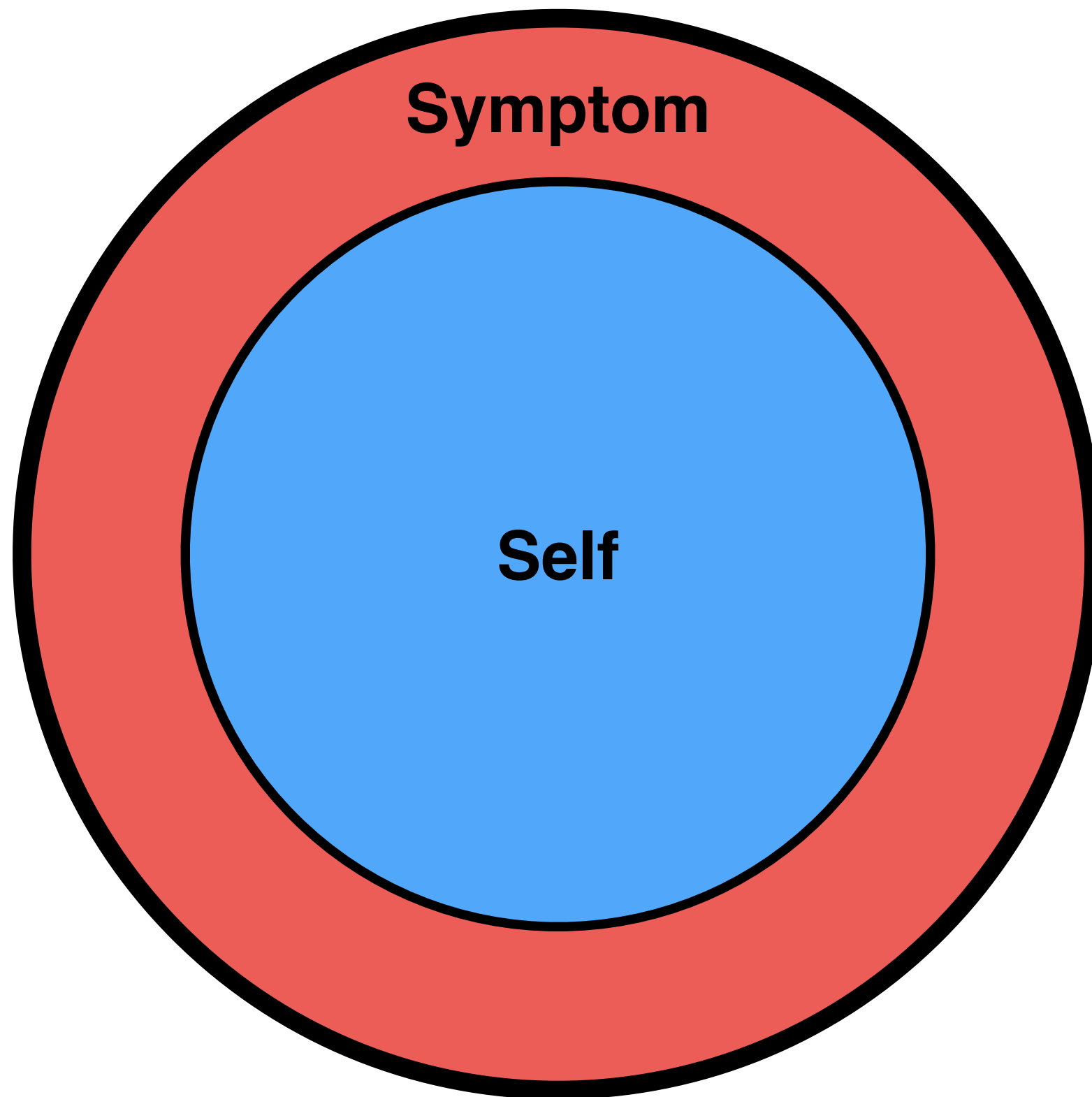
Subjective **evidence of** disease or physical disturbance; broadly: **something that indicates** the presence of bodily disorder

**Something that indicates** the existence of something else; symptoms of an inner turmoil  
a slight indication

(Merriam-Webster)









# Symptoms

Anxiety

Depression

Low self-esteem

Conflict

Internal Dialogue

Addiction

# Addictions

Avoidance of a deeper emotion

Maladaptive method of coping

Feeling “good”/feeling “bad”



# Emotions

Happiness

Sadness

Anger

Fear

Disgust

Surprise

# Emotions

Evolutionary psychologists have proposed that emotions are functionally designed to orchestrate physiological and cognitive systems for the purpose of predisposing those who feel or remember them to act more or less in a certain way

(Gómez-Miñambres & Schniter, 2017)



# Emotions

Emotions have co-evolved with conflicted behavioral systems to process information about decision outcomes and available options, essentially functioning as “guidance systems” regulating future behaviors

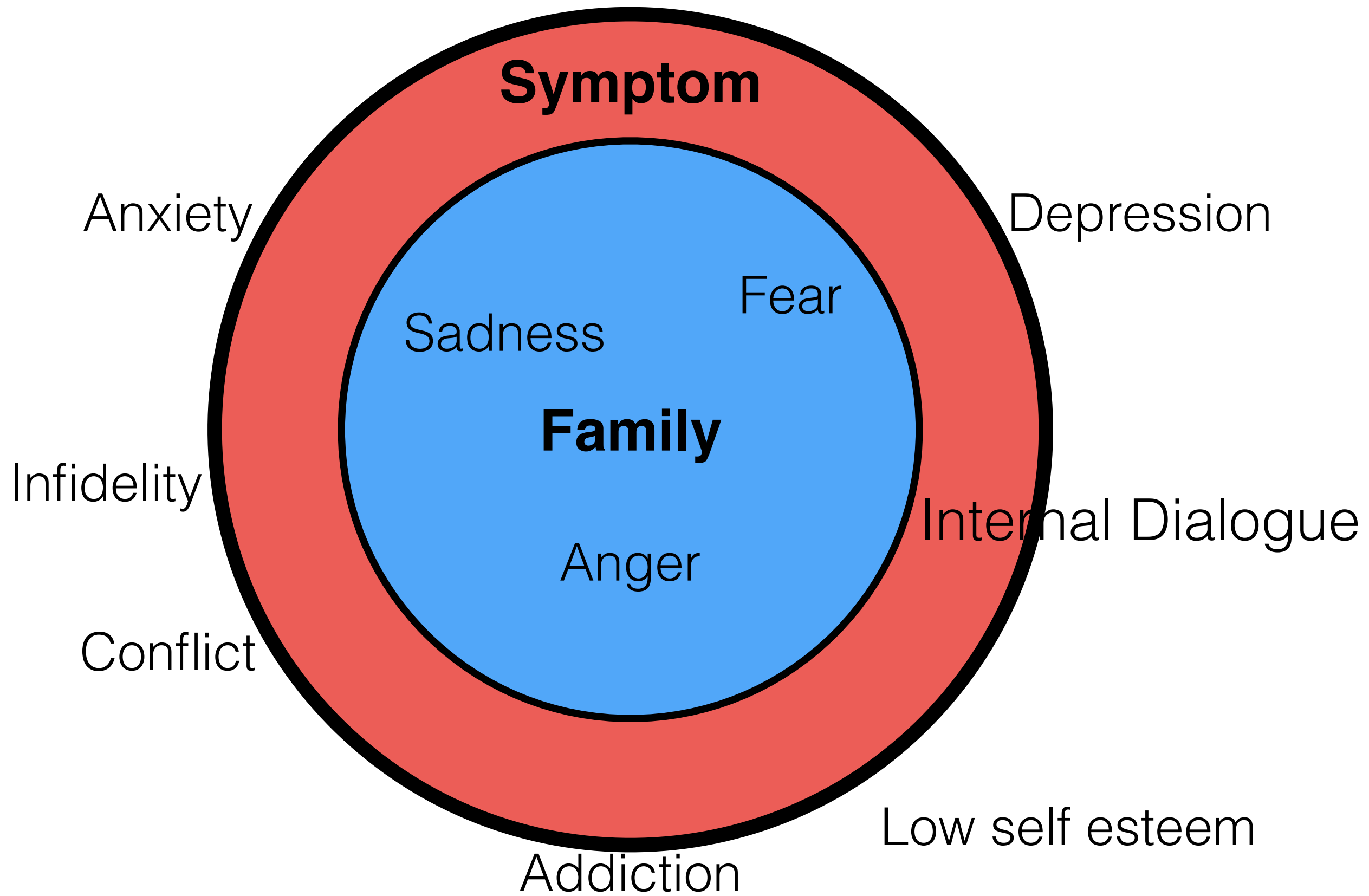
(Gómez-Miñambres & Schniter, 2017).



# Cognitive Shortcuts







# Healing

**to make free** from injury or disease: to make sound or whole heal a wound

to make well again: to restore to health heal the sick

to cause (an undesirable condition) to be

**overcome:** mend

(Merriam-Webster)



# Healing

Often does not begin without effort of the patient

Is a work in progress (weeks, months, years)

Might not be permanent

# Healing

Relationship

Readiness

Insight

(change what we are aware of)

Internal dialogue

Acceptance

# Healing

Mindfulness based interventions programs like acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) and dialectic behavioral therapy (DBT) chiefly focus on modifying some emotional traits such as emotional self-regulation, emotional acceptance, observing feelings without judgment and effective modulation of affect for cultivating mindfulness and inducing its related benefits

(Mandal, Arya, & Pandey, 2017)



# Pro-symptom Approach

A small family of four steps into the office. Jackson, is 15 years old, his half sister, Brooke is 12. They have a somewhat positive relationship with each other.

# Pro-symptom Approach

Their parents Rick and Julia have brought the family for counseling to work on Jackson's porn/drug use as well as his disrespect towards both parents, mainly Rick.

# Pro-symptom Approach

Rick and Julia don't argue often, but when they do, it's usually about Julia allowing Jackson to get away with his behavior. At the same time, Rick refuses to discipline Jackson, passing the responsibility to Julia.



What would be the awful thing you would have to face if you let go of your symptom?

If your symptom never went away, what would  
that mean about you?

**When is it not an issue?**

**When does it present itself the most?**

What purpose does your symptom serve?

**Why is it here?**

**When did it start?**



How do I get rid of this?

What do you think I should do?

Am I stuck like this?

Without our child's addiction, we'll have to pay attention  
to our dysfunction.

If I lose my anxiety, I lose my preparedness for the  
unexpected.

If I lose depression, my spouse won't pay attention to me.

# Closing

Adopt a pro-symptom approach

Help clients understand the concept via  
questions

Decide to empower rather than enable



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