



— 2ND ANNUAL —
BRIDGING THE GAP CONFERENCE

Building Strong Families from the Roots Up!



JUNE 11-12, 2026



TRUSSVILLE CIVIC CENTER



THANK YOU
FOR JOINING US!



PLEASE SILENCE
MOBILE DEVICES



VISIT OUR
EXHIBITORS
DURING BREAKS



CE CERTIFICATES
WILL BE EMAILED
FOLLOWING THE
CONFERENCE



THANK YOU TO OUR
SPONSORS AND
EXHIBITORS

COUNSELORS • SOCIAL WORKERS • RECOVERY PROFESSIONALS • COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Welcome!

Who we are at New Direction Counseling?

What is Bridging the Gap?

Why offer low-cost continuing education?

Why have continuous growth?

Housekeeping

- Sessions are 3 hours with a 10-minute break in the middle—feel free to get up/move around as needed
- Sign-in for each session and complete a survey for each session
- Complete the survey that will be sent out after the conference to give an overall rating for the conference

What Is A Family?



Understanding the Evolution of
Families and their impact on Mental
Health, Recovery, and Relationships



Opening Reflection

“Some people hear the word family and think of comfort. Others think of conflict. Some think of support. Others think of survival.”

Dr. David Whittinghill, PhD

What Comes to Mind When Family is thought of?



- Belonging



- Identity



- Chaos



- Pain



- Safety



- Support



- Conflict



- Understanding



- Love

Families Have Changed

Historical family systems compared to modern family realities.

Are we applying historical ideas to modern situations?

Historical Family Systems

- Multigenerational homes
- Defined family roles
- Stronger community ties
- Shared identity

Was This



Now This



Major Shifts in Modern Families

- Technology
- Economic pressure
- Increased mobility
- Divorce/remarriage
- Isolation

The Digital Family

Connected Everywhere. Present Nowhere.

Pressure on Modern Parents

- Burnout
- Constant availability
- Parenting comparison culture
- Emotional exhaustion

Changes in Community Connection

Many families today have fewer built-in support systems

Modern Family Strengths

- Increased emotional awareness
- More awareness of family history
- Greater acceptance and availability of counseling
- Adaptability and resilience

Families and Trauma

- Generational trauma
- Addiction cycles
- Attachment disruptions
- Emotional cutoff

Families and Addiction

Addiction reorganizes the entire family system

Sets up:

- Twisted family roles
- The Iceberg
- Generational cycles

Mental Health in Family Systems

- Anxiety transmission
- Conflict cycles
- Trauma impact
- Enmeshment
- Emotional regulation

The Impact of Social Media

- Comparison culture
- Identity pressure
- Online validation
- Communication shifts

The Rise of Loneliness

People are more connected digitally than ever before—
and often more disconnected emotionally

What Defines a Family?

- Attachment
- Belonging
- Presence
- Emotional safety
- Shared identity

Family Is More Than Biology

Some families are biological. Some are blended. Some are chosen. Some are rebuilt.

Healthy Family Functions

- Communication
- Boundaries
- Stability
- Repair after conflict

What Children Need Most

- Safety
- Stability
- Presence
- Belonging

Family as a System

- Individual struggles effect everyone
- Healing impacts the whole system

Resilience in Families

Healing and reconnection are possible

The Role of Helping Professionals

We often become bridge-builders in fractured systems

Small Moments Matter

Healthy families are built through ordinary moments repeated consistently

Interactive Reflection

- What has changed most?
- What strengths have emerged?
- What do families need today?

Closing Challenge

Families may not look like they once did. But the need for connection has never changed.

Thank You

We hope the next 2 days is amazing experience

Please visit our exhibitors and see the resources they offer!