We describe a social cybernetic view of health behavior problems associated with chronic illness and a family consultation (FAMCON) intervention format based on that view. Resurrecting foundational ideas from cybernetic family systems theory, this approach takes relationships rather than individuals as a primary unit of analysis, attaches more importance to problem maintenance than to etiology, and downplays linear causality. Intervention in this framework aims to interrupt two types of interpersonal problem maintenance – ironic processes and symptom-system fit (conceptualized, respectively, as positive and negative feedback cycles) – and to mobilize communal coping as a relational resource for change. Data supporting these three constructs come from our studies of couples coping with heart failure and couples in which one partner continues to smoke cigarettes despite having heart or lung disease.