

The Spiritual Genogram

A **genogram** is an important tool for self-awareness, personal development, and relationship development. It can reveal how a person's experiences today make sense in the larger context of their family-of-origin and past experiences. A genogram is the Family Tree 3.0: not only does it reveal **who's who** in the family, but it also is rich in information about:

- **major events**
(e.g., war, immigration, 9/11) that may have left a deep impact on the individuals and/or the family,
- **cultural factors**
race experiences, immigration, religion, sexism, homophobia
- **mental health issues**
(e.g., anxiety, bipolar disorder)
- **medical conditions**
(e.g., diabetes, cancer)
- **traumas**
(e.g., sexual abuse, sudden deaths, miscarriage)
- **addictions**
(e.g., alcohol, work, pornography, substance, sex, ministry, shopping)
- **relationship dynamics:**
closeness, distance, conflict, enmeshment, cut-off,
- **the role** played in the family
(e.g., the Hero, the Victim, the Clown, the Lost Child)
- **spiritual information** (e.g., denominational affiliation, religious preference, spiritual orientation, beliefs, virtues, practices)

Put the Pieces Together Here is how you can make your own genogram.

1. **Draw the Family Tree** - draw out all the members in your family for 3-4 generations.
 2. **Name the Players** - add any relevant info about family members (age, role, marital status, personality, trauma).
 3. **Determine the Relationship** - add info about significant relationship dynamics between family members.
 4. **Update as Needed** - periodically check for shuffled family roles or shifted relationship dynamics.
- **What stands out to you?**
Notice what you notice. There's probably a good reason why this is catching your attention now!
 - **What emotions are you feeling right now?**
What reactions are you having? (It's **OKAY** for you to feel whatever you're feeling. Your body is trying to digest this new information.)
 - **How has your family dealt with emotions or pain?** (overdid it, underdid it, was comfortable with it.)
 - **How do you deal with your/others' emotions or pain?**
 - **How is your past showing up in your present?**
Are there any familiar patterns that resemble what you grew up with?
 - **What are some generational blessings and burdens that have been passed down?**
What burdens would you like to end with your generation? (What would you like to **CHANGE?**)

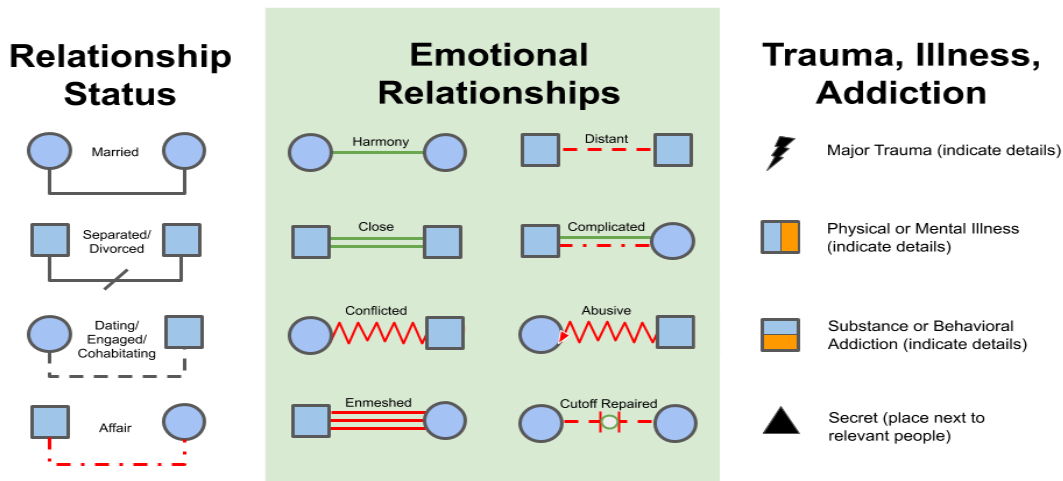
What blessings would you like to pass down to your children? (What would you like to **CONTINUE?**)

- **What feels important for you to focus on for the next half year?**
(e.g., exploring an unfamiliar part of your family, processing hurts from family, repairing strained relationships)
- **What type of religious affiliation characterized each member of your family, going back to your grandparents?** How meaningful was their relationship with their denomination/faith? Their church (house of worship)? To what extent were their personal beliefs and those of their church/denomination congruent? What was their level of participation? To what extent did they enjoy religious fellowship? Their spiritual lives?
- **How did they express their spiritual and religious beliefs?** What were the particular rituals or sayings that were commonly evidenced? How were spirituality and religion assets in their lives? How did their spirituality intersect with the difficulties they encountered in life? How did their faith help them cope with trials?
- **Who/what else influenced your spiritual path?** (e.g., clergy, historical figures, theologians, mystics, Sunday School teachers, Saints, social justice champions, indigenous faith, your denomination)
- **What spiritually significant events (transitions/conversions/changes in affiliations/encounters with transpersonal beings) have occurred in the family?** How did these events affect the individuals involved? How did other members react to these changes?
- **What are the differences (and similarities) among various family members in their beliefs (practices)?** How were differences and conflicts managed? Who was the spiritual leader in your family? What role did your grandparents play in your spiritual walk?
- **What spiritual relationships stand out to you in your childhood years?** What are your earliest religious memories? Did your family hold regular devotional times? What types of spiritually based practices occurred at home? Which members of your family have had most influence on your spiritual walk? Who do you feel closest to in a spiritual sense?

Adapted from:

Kim, Joanne B.- <https://www.olivemecounseling.com/blog/genogram>

Hodge, David R., - Spiritual genograms: A generational approach to assessing spirituality in “Families in society: the journal of contemporary human services”



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