

Your Family Genogram



A genogram is a visual tool to document the history and dynamics of our family relationships, and their impact on us, over three to four generations. Constructing a genogram helps us examine unhealthy patterns from the past that we bring into our present leadership as well as our relationship to Jesus and others. It will take you beyond a conceptual or motivational level to a place of practical application.

Directions: If you're ready to take a life-changing step, you can watch an online video and access the "Genogram Your Family" tool at: www.emotionallyhealthy.org/genogram. We've also provided you with this worksheet (on back) to help you get started. This will help you discover previously unexplored areas of your life and shadow.

When you explore your past with a genogram, you expose your shadow to the light of Jesus. Then by God's grace, you can break its power over you and integrate its hidden treasures into your life.

Sample Questions to Ask in Constructing Your Genogram

The following questions are ones we ask to help people get beneath the surface and identify how the past might be impacting the present. As you read through the questions, try to consider them especially from the perspective you had as a child between the ages of eight to twelve.

1. Describe each family member in your household with three adjectives and identify their relationship to you (parent, caregiver, grandparent, sibling, etc.).
2. Describe your parents' (or caretakers') marriage(s) as well as your grandparents' marriage(s).
3. How were conflict, anger, and tensions handled in your extended family over two or three generations?
4. Were there any family "secrets" (such as an unwed pregnancy, incest, mental illness, or financial scandal, etc.)?
5. What was considered "success" in your family?
6. How did ethnicity or race shape you and your family?
7. How would you describe the relationships between family members (conflicted, detached, enmeshed, abusive)?
8. Were there any heroes/heroines in the family? Any villains or favorites? Why were these individuals singled out in this way?
9. What generational patterns or themes do you recognize (addictions, affairs, abuse, divorce, mental- illness, abortions, children born out of wedlock, etc.)?
10. What traumatic losses has your family experienced? (For example, sudden death, prolonged illness, stillbirth/miscarriage, bankruptcy, divorce?)
11. What insights (one or two) are you becoming aware of that help you to make sense of how your family of origin, or others, impacted who you are today?
12. What are one or two specific ways this may be impacting your life?

Excerpt From: Peter Scazzero. "The Emotionally Healthy Leader." iBooks. <https://itun.es/us/YNNa4.l>

(Worksheet on back)

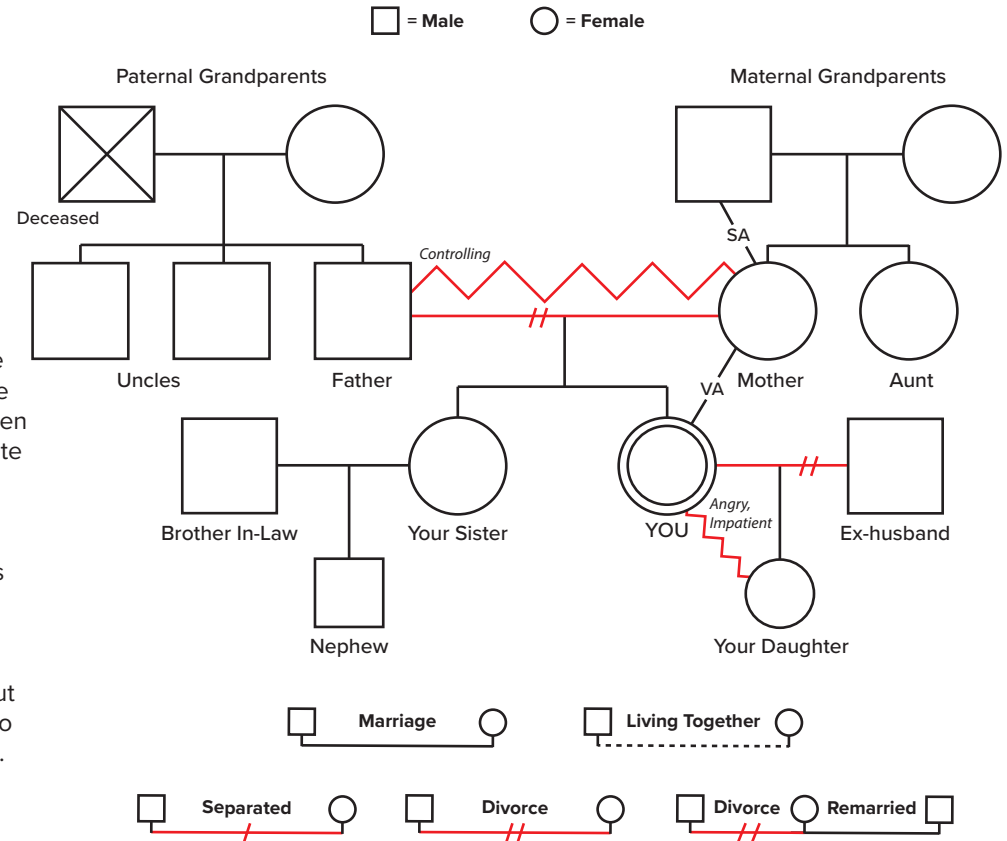
Build Your Family Genogram



Genogram Instructions:

- Start by outlining your family, using the template as an example. Draw several generations, going back to your grandparents and any children.
- Take note of who is married, who is divorced, and who may be living together outside of marriage. Is anyone widowed? What about separation, or forced separation?
- Learn the emotional relationships. Are members of a union loving? Do members get along? Is there conflict or enmeshment? Use the representative symbols, so you can see generational patterns.
- Dig deeper and mark the messages or good “blessings” that passed down. Thank God for them, as your family passed on what God intended, and you want to do the same.
- Use the key of “Notable problems” to mark patterns in each generation. This is just a start; there may be other issues not in the key—write those in. Write negative messages, lies, or sin-patterns that were “curses” commonly heard, such as “you’re worthless,” “don’t trust anyone,” or “financial success is everything.” You can go even further and differentiate between physical and emotional components. The template has some examples of other patterns to think through.
- Once you’ve completed the genogram, look carefully to see what patterns can be identified. There may be hereditary patterns or particular psychological tendencies that are very noticeable when grouped together in this way.
- Once finished, look for patterns. Thank God for the blessings, and remember that God does not force us to live in the sin patterns of our parents (Psalm 79:8), but you can only turn from what you recognize. Also remember Jesus’ words: “Come to me all who are weary and heavy burdened and I will give you rest...learn from me... my burden is light.” So God is not “burdening you” with this but wants to unburden you. Meditate on that, and daily ask Him to teach you to live in His reality (truth).

GENOGRAM EXAMPLE



Relationship	Relational Dynamics	Symbol
Conflicted	A consistent pattern where issues do not get resolved between people.	□ ~~~~~ ○
Cut Offs	People in the family stop talking to one another or avoid contact.	□ — — ○
Distant/Poor	Low or minimal emotional connection between family members.	□ ○
Enmeshment	Pressure is created for family members to think, feel and act alike. There is low tolerance for people to be separate, to disagree, or be different.	□ === ○

Notable Problems Code		
SU = Suicide	ED = Eating Disorder	PI = Physical Illness (chronic)
SA = Sexual Abuse	SD = Sexual Dysfunction	MI = Mental Illness
PA = Physical Abuse	ID = Infant / Child Death	DP = Depression
VA = Verbal Abuse	IM = Miscarriage	FA = Fear / Anxiety
AB = Addictive Behavior (sex, work, gambling, etc)	IX = Abortion	UF = Unforgiveness (bitter root, judgement)
AA = Addictive Substances (alcohol, drugs, food, etc.)	UG = Unresolved Grief	AD = Adultery
	CR = Criminal Activity	OC = Occult / Satanic Activity