



FAMILY HISTORY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is the cultural heritage of your family of origin? Your parent's families of origin?
2. What are the religious beliefs of your family of origin? Your parent's families of origin?
3. What is the socioeconomic background of your family of origin? Your parent's families of origin? How did they feel about money or what was the family theme around money?
4. What were gender roles like in your family of origin? Your parent's families of origin? Were there any assumptions about gender? i.e. roles of breadwinner or disciplinarian, nurturer, etc., or household responsibilities, emotional expression, sexual rules, and expectations specific to gender
5. Any chemical dependency or addiction in your family of origin? Your parent's families of origin?
6. Any mental health issues (anxiety, depression, etc.) in your family of origin? Your parent's families of origin?
7. What were the values in your family, or what was important to them? i.e., community, work ethic, family, getting ahead, doing better, education, giving back, honesty, faith, sports, looking good, etc.
8. Were there any traumatic events in your family's history?
9. What are your sibling's names and what is the birth order in your family of origin? Were there ways that the birth order affected relationships or how people felt about themselves?
Variations to consider: only child, first born, youngest, middle, adopted, oldest/youngest male or female, blended families

10. What was your “role” in your family? If you had siblings, what were their roles in the family? What about your parent’s roles in their families?

A few common “roles:” The Golden child, The Scapegoat, The Black Sheep, The Clown, The Victim, The Hero, The Fixer, The Problem-Solver, The Caretaker, The “Glue”, The Baby, The Little Adult, The Screw Up, The Princess, The Peacemaker, The Sick One, The Strong One

11. Choose the “family theme” or motto that describes your family of origin? Your parent’s families of origin? Some examples: “Peace at any price,” “Walking on eggshells,” “We are the perfect family,” “All for one and one for all,” “Everything looks great on the outside and no one ever sees the inside,” “No talk No feel!”

12. What was communication like in your family of origin? Your parent’s families of origin? i.e., covert, overt, direct, respectful, open, loving, cold

13. How was anger expressed in your family of origin? Your parent’s families of origin? i.e., avoiding, denying, expressing, suppressing, exploding, passive aggressive behaviors

14. How was love expressed or communicated in your family of origin (X)? Your parent’s families of origin (P paternal/M maternal)?

Warm ←————→ Cold
Words ←————→ Actions

15. How would you describe the emotional closeness vs distance in your family of origin? Your parent’s families of origin?

Enmeshed ←————→ Distant

16. How would you describe the “feel” or structure in your family of origin? Your parent’s families of origin?

Chaotic ←————→ Rigid

17. What were you like in your family of origin when you were around 10 years old? What was it like to be in your family around then?

This is a common stage when children experience and become aware of dynamics in the family. Think back to this stage for clues about how your family managed emotional processing and how you formed your own functioning.

18. What was your perception of your parent's relationship when you were growing up? Has it changed since then? i.e., intimate, conflictual, distant, affectionate, loving, controlling

19. Are there any emotional cutoffs in your family of origin or extended family?

Cutoffs are when family members avoid communication, are emotionally absent, or actively avoid each other.

20. In what ways do you see learned patterns of behavior (the ways you behave) in your family of origin playing out in other areas of your life (work, romantic relationships, friendships)? i.e., birth order, family roles, over/under-functioning, expression of feelings, distance and closeness, structural chaos/rigidity, indirect communication, suppression of anger, striving, avoiding, not being vulnerable, etc.

21. Does your family have an "illness of choice"? Some families develop patterns of chronic illnesses due to genetics and/or others due to emotional process. Look for patterns that might be present in three or more generations. i.e., alcoholism, obesity, abuse, affairs, mental health issues, workaholic, avoidance, finance management habits

22. Who carried the "legacy" in your family? i.e., carrying on the family business, being as successful or more successful than previous generations, being "the best," going to college or not going

23. What do you appreciate most about your family? What is the most challenging part about your family?

24. Can you identify an over-function/under-function reciprocity dynamic in your family of origin?

i.e. over-functioning: doing things for others, rescuing, not saying no, caretaking

i.e. under-functioning: not picking up the slack, letting others decide, avoiding responsibility

25. How did your family handle crises?

26. What were the unspoken rules in your parent's families? Your family of origin? i.e., Don't talk about hard things, don't get angry, laugh it off, show up no matter how you feel, be loyal, don't share feelings unless they are positive, don't confront what's going on with your brother, ignore the abuse, make the family look good, avoid conflict, etc.

27. Does your family have any family secrets, or "skeletons in the closet?" i.e., suicide, incarcerations, financial failures, mental illness, illegitimacy, abortion, verbal, physical, or emotional abuse, elopement, previous marriage, adoption, alcoholism or drug abuse, miscarriages or stillborn children, gay family member, impending divorce or separation, incest.

28. Any additional information to share?