

YOUR FAMILY (Genogram)

Much has been written about healthy and unhealthy families. Many have described the dynamics of unhealthy families and, unfortunately, have placed a great deal of blame on families. Some people get defensive, not wanting their family to be considered unhealthy. We believe comparing families is unfair. No family is totally unhealthy nor is any family totally healthy. All families have different dynamics. Some of these patterns of relating are good and some of them aren't.

Don't get hung up on wondering or not if your family is healthy. Accept yours for what it is. Many difficult things may have happened to you, but also many wonderful things. As you grow you will be able to discern the difference.

Focusing on the dynamics—good or bad—of your family is not for the purpose of blaming your parents for whatever sins you have committed. The purpose is not to be angry with them or to not love them. You may be angry about some things that happened. You may wonder why things happened to you and how that has affected you over the years. Your family is the most powerful influence on you emotionally, physically, sexually, and spiritually.

>Pray that God will allow you to understand the things that you need to understand about your family.

We want you to draw a “map” of your family. Having something visual to better understand your heritage will be important later. Below are some symbols that have become rather universal among counselors and therapists.

 Males are symbolized by a box.

 Females are symbolized by a circle.

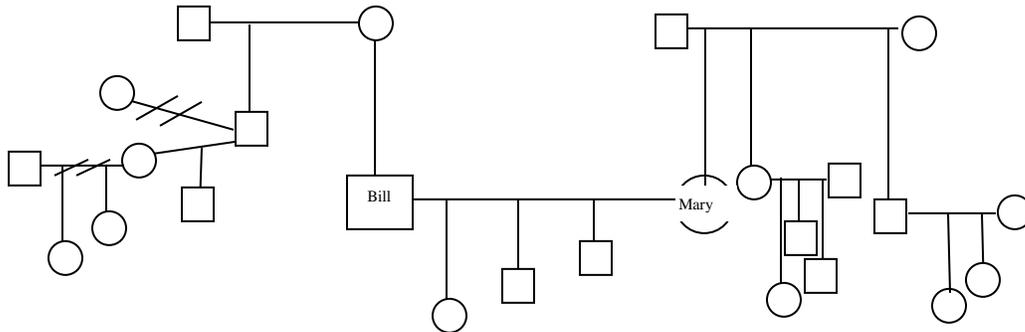
— Marriage is represented by a horizontal line.

 Divorce is a horizontal line with a double slash through it.

| Children are represented by a vertical line. You can represent age by length. The longer the line, the older the child.

 An X through a box or circle means the person has died.

Below is a map of a family just to give you an idea of what a family looks like visually using these symbols.



The symbols at the top left represent Bill's father and mother, who are still married and living. A younger brother is represented by the shorter vertical line extending down from the horizontal line that connects the parents. By the diagram you can see a brother has been divorced once. His current wife was also divorced and has two daughters from that marriage. A brother and his wife also have one son from their marriage.

Mary's parents are represented by the symbols at the top right. Mary has a twin sister and an older brother. You will notice that they each are married and have children.

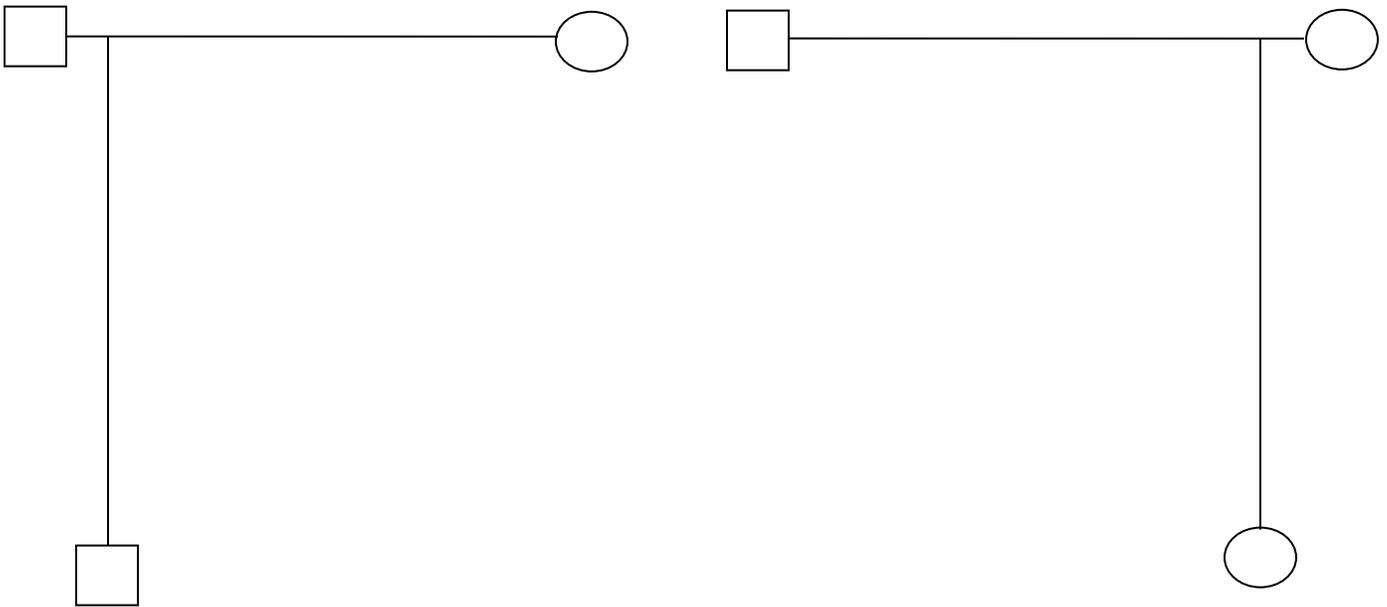
Finally, in the middle of the diagram you will see that Bill and Mary have three children. Two boys and one girl.

Now it is time for you to diagram your family. Don't worry if this is not perfect. Draw out a map of your family using the symbols given on the front of this page on the purple sheet that is titled your family (genogram). We would also like you to include the following on your map.

- Names and ages of immediate family (put name below symbol age inside symbol)
 - Biological: father, mother, siblings
 - Nonbiological: father, mother, siblings
- If married when and for how long: put these numbers on lines between you and your spouse
- Your children: include their ages. Remember, the longer the line the older the child.
- Divorced or separated and when: put these numbers on line between you and your spouse.
- Any significant extended family members include their name and ages (grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins)
- Deaths when and who: put an X over the symbol include date of death

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(Genogram)

Client Name _____ Date _____



Other potential information for Genogram

- Use adjectives to describe significant people in your family (i.e. hard working, loving, abusive, etc...)
- Any mental health and/or AODA issues in family of origin
- Significant Medical Hx
- Suicidal, homicidal history
- Religious affiliations
- Abuse, invasion or abandonment history
- Significant pets
- Grandchildren (include only if they have lived with or if client is the guardian, or if client's issue revolves around the grandchildren)
- Attachment concerns. Describe current relationship with significant others.
- Brief description of family life while growing up
- Briefly describe relationships outside the family while growing up (ie. friends, neighbors, family friends, community relationship).
- Briefly describe current relationships outside the family.
- Past vs. current relationship status vs. preferred/ideal (for key relationships)
- Relationships divorce/merging hx (custody/placement; personal experience)
- Relocations and life transitions
- Significant events timeline