

Leadbetter family Genogram  
SA 201 Andrea Gerry-Leadbetter

Leadbetter Family Genogram

Andrea Gerry

Beal College

Addiction In The Family

The following paper is an in-depth look into my family's history.

When taking an in-depth look into one's own life can be a daunting task. This is especially a more time-consuming assignment when trying to lay it all out into a genogram. I have chosen to use my maiden name to achieve this goal and provide a detailed reflection of my own family's history.

When looking to do a genogram it is a look back at your family's diseases, death, mental health, drug and alcohol addiction. It just seems to look at negative things. I guess that's the point right? It doesn't have any way to show good things someone has accomplished throughout their lives. It doesn't have their career, or show how they may have touched someone's life. This information gathering feels a little like labeling to me. It makes me think of when my own children may be put into a position to create one of these in their lifetime. What will my circle look like? Or better yet, what their circle and square will look like. I have always heard and believed that when you make something visual it becomes real. And with this, it brings awareness.

So I will start with my grandparents. My mother's father Nathan died of old age at 88 years young. Nathan had arthritis. My mother's mother, Pauline, died at 81 with severe COPD, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. I was extremely close with my grandparents, especially my grandmother. Neither one of them had issues with drug or alcohol abuse from my mother's perspective. From what I can remember as a child my grandfather did smoke tobacco from his pipe and my grandmother smoked cigarettes like a chimney. In 1997 Pauline, my grandmother suffered a stroke from her excessive smoking and was diagnosed with COPD at that time. So in 1997 my grandparents both quit smoking to help with my grandmother's recovery and she was able to return home without any outward visible effects from that stroke. My father's father George was a strict prideful man. He smoked for a brief period of his life but by the time I was born he

Leadbetter family Genogram  
SA 201 Andrea Gerry-Leadbetter

had quit. My father's mother, Elaine, was also a strict prideful person who never touched a drug, smoked cigarettes, or drank an alcoholic beverage. My grandfather George died at 77 a month after being diagnosed with Colon Cancer. And My grandmother Eliane is still alive today and is a Florida resident during the winter and comes home to Maine for the summers.

My mother Joan is 63 years old and has only experimented with marijuana a handful of times in her life, mostly in college she reports. She currently doesn't use any drugs and almost never drinks an alcoholic beverage. She did, however, smoke for over half of her life and has also been diagnosed with COPD. I am proud to say she did quit smoking 5 years ago. My mother suffers from Fibromyalgia and at times is on oxygen due to her failing lungs. My father Peter is 65 and is a true stoner through and through and he will admit this. My father drank a lot as I was growing up and he would smoke marijuana outside. Although my father drank I very seldom saw him intoxicated. He quit drinking before I was a teenager but I am not sure exactly when.

My parents have been married for 42 years. I was 14 when I started to dabble with using drugs. I moved out of my parents home at the age of 17 got my GED and went to work. I had my first child, a daughter Rebekah at the age of 19. I was married the same year.

Next, I'll talk about my brother Danny. My brother is 39yrs old and is a recovering addict. He has been clean off his medication-assisted treatments of Suboxone for almost 6 years now. I wouldn't consider him an alcoholic, however, he is a daily drinker. He is a tobacco user.

I am 37 years old and I currently receive medication-assisted treatment for my opioid addiction. I also currently smoke cigarettes but slowly I have been cutting down how many a day. I have struggled with drug use since the age of 14 and addicted by 20. I was a very bad alcoholic at age 27 and suffered a bout with pancreatitis so severely I was hospitalized for a total of 44 days and needed surgery to remove the piece of my pancreas I damaged so badly from my chronic drinking. Before leaving the hospital on that 45th day I was told by three doctors that one drink of alcohol from this day forward can and will probably kill me. With these words I gave up drinking and never looked back. I have struggled with mental illness all my life and in my teens became a cutter which landed me in Acadia hospital for two weeks. During that stay I was diagnosed with Bipolar 1 with manic episodes. With medication, I am able to function in more healthy ways.

I have two aunts. One is my aunt Jean who is my mother's twin sister, yet they couldn't be more different. Jean who is currently in her 4th marriage, has been a drug addict for as many years I've been alive off and on, she has been diagnosed with several different mental illnesses and abuses her medications. My mother's older sister Sandy is morbidly obese and recently underwent Gastric Bypass. She does not suffer from any mental illness and does not smoke, she drinks on occasion.

My dad's brother Mark is a very successful pharmaceutical rep who doesn't drink, smoke, or use drugs. Mark has two children, a girl my cousin Emma and a son my cousin John. Both of my cousins do not smoke, have any known mental diagnosis, and

Leadbetter family Genogram  
SA 201 Andrea Gerry-Leadbetter

do not consume alcohol. These are the only first cousins I have on my father's side of the family.

What I have found interesting while researching for this genogram was the fact that none of my father's side of the family ever had any known drug or alcohol addiction, except for my own dad and the partying side of his growing up. Quite honestly I feel this is in part because of the very strict and sometimes extreme discipline from my dad's parents George and Elaine. These are all stories told to me through my father and his reflection of the way he was raised.

My mother's side had a little more colorful family history and being she was raised in a very Irish family and background, drinking alcohol was a lot more socially accepted and thus making it much easier to invite addiction. My mother is the only one in her immediate family still married to her 1st husband, my dad.

This brings me to my children. My oldest daughter Bekah is 19 and in my opinion and pretty average college student. She gets good grades, has a part-time job working weekends and does not drink or use drugs, thankfully. She has been dating her boyfriend Dylan for just under two years. My second daughter Hannah is 15 and a sophomore in high school. Hannah has recently admitted to my husband and I that she has tried marijuana and even states it helps her. This was a hard pill for both my husband and me to take considering we both struggle with addiction. We were very proud that Hannah felt comfortable enough to come and express her feelings and we are remaining to keep an open line of communication. We did ask Hannah to refrain

Leadbetter family Genogram  
SA 201 Andrea Gerry-Leadbetter

from smoking marijuana for now as we explained the repercussions on a person's brain when they introduce chemicals at such an early age.

My son Ethan is a 13-year-old boy who is not really sure about himself right now. Ethan has also been the child who shows his emotions the most. He has been known to have "rages" when he is feeling vulnerable in situations and hasn't quite mastered handling his emotions in the best way, I worry he may get my genes and possibly the Bipolar disease.

My family has shaped my career path in such a major way as well as the life experiences we have handled together as a family. When I first really understood my mental illness, I watched my aunt Jean a lot more at family functions and parties. When I started to understand addiction. I again compared myself to her.

Thankfully my family has remained forgiving and full of love through my last 20 years of trials and tribulations attributed to my drug use and roller coaster ride in my mental state. My life is now about leading the life I want to show to my children. I think the experiences I have encountered within my own life and within my family have played a vital part in my story. I do a much better job being aware and even helping them to be aware of their behaviors. I have been able to gain amazing insight into helping other families become aware of generational progression, and how to implement changes, bring awareness to help stop the cycle from continuing.