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Genogram

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My Family Genogram

Family is an inherent part of society. A family can be described as a set or group of individuals originating from the same lineal descendants or are joined by conjugal relationships. However, in some cultures, individuals who are non-blood-related are also viewed as a family. The words immediate and extended family are frequently used to illustrate the proximity level of consanguineal family members. Nonetheless, what differentiates blood-related relatives from those who are not are the repetitive patterns that persist in the family line of blood-related relatives for generations; this includes disease, education, divorce, immigration, and social-economic status. A visual representation or genogram can demonstrate common patterns, themes, interactions, and relationships of family members from several generations. Hence, in this mindset, in this paper, I will discuss and explain the interactions, relationships, themes, or patterns that are present in generations of my family pedigree. Plus, I will examine a portion of my family line and present a family counseling approach and intervention aiming at helping them combat intergenerational, repetitive patterns.

To begin, I was born in Leogane, Haiti. Currently, I am married and have a 6-month-old son. I grew up in a blended family composed of myself, my three sisters (Natacha, Nancy, and Louisiana), and my two brothers, Akim and Pedro. Akim's father was in love with my mother; however, his parents forced him to enter an arranged marriage, which caused his relationship with my mother to erupt. My mother later met Natacha's father, Cedotte. A year after they met, she gave birth to Natacha, who is currently 43 years old. They, however, parted ways shortly after my sister, Natacha, was born.

My father met my mother while stationed as a police officer in my mother's hometown, Leogane. After Nancy and I were born, in 1981 and 1987, respectively, my parents moved to the

capital city, Port-au-Prince. We moved to a house that they purchased in a middle-class neighborhood. A paternal relative primarily raised Akim. He moved to my parents' residence at the age of 10. Presently, my mother is a widow.

My grandparents, from my maternal and paternal sides, are deceased. I have limited memories of my grandparents, except my paternal grandfather, who I have never known. He died in 1966, years before I was born. My maternal and paternal grandmothers lived in different towns than my family. As a child, they came to visit us in the capital, Port-Au-Prince, a few times. Thus, my memories of them are limited. My paternal grandfather, while married to my grandmother, was the breadwinner. He was a businessman. When he died, he bequeathed his wealth and properties to his children.

There are repetitive patterns in my lineage. These patterns, bareness, separation, alcoholism, out-of-wedlock childbirth, and disease (high blood pressure), are pinpointed in the genogram sketched. To begin, in total, my maternal grandmother, Manan, had seven children. With my grandfather, Louis, her first husband, she had two children. My father and his younger brother, Ernest. A few years after her husband's death, my maternal grandmother remarried. She had five children with her second husband, Marie, Molene, Jean Philippe, Micheline, and Naomi. However, only two have children from all her children—my father and my uncle Jean Philippe. Jean Philippe has four children (3 daughters and one son). Marie, my aunt, is a nurse. She is currently married to Beto but does not have children. Micheline and Naomi are married but not mothers yet. Ernest, the only single sibling, died without an inheritor or child. Molene childlessness, nonetheless, is understandable. She is celibate and is not interested in forming a family. Her preference for not having children and a spouse is accepted and respected by her

siblings. In retrospect, the generations that preceded my grandmother's were not numerous. They were married, indeed, but with few children.

Besides bareness, another pattern that is recurrent in my father's bloodline is alcoholism. My father, although he was a police officer and entrepreneur, was an alcoholic. His primary care doctor warned him to refrain from alcohol consumption due to health-related issues, diabetes. He did not heed to his physician's warnings, nonetheless. On September 20, 2012, he died prematurely at the age of 52, following the amputation of his lower limbs. Similarly, his brother, Ernest, was an alcoholic. He died two years after my father's death due to complications related to alcoholism. Now, my brother Pedro, though he refuses to admit it, is a heavy alcohol drinker.

Unlike my paternal family lineage, the patterns frequently encountered in my maternal family line are high blood pressure, separation, and having children out-of-wedlock. My grandmother died following heart failure. High blood pressure was the main culprit. Now, both my mother and older sister, Natacha, have been diagnosed with high blood pressure. They are currently taking medication to regulate their blood pressure. Moreover, our primary care doctors have informed my sister Louisiana and me that we are on the border of developing high blood pressure. At present, we are taking preventive measures that include a lifestyle change through diet and exercise to avoid becoming hypertensive.

In my maternal family pedigree, separation and immigration can be delineated as themes, for they occur continually and in more than three generations. Only a few relatives of my maternal lineal descendent are married. Take, for example, my maternal grandmother. She had five children, out-of-wedlock, with different fathers. Her children have children out-of-wedlock, except for her daughter, Rosemine, who cannot have children due to infertility. My mother, on the other hand, before marrying my father, was in a short-term romantic relationship with my

siblings' fathers (Natacha and Akim). Natacha and Akim, like my mother and grandmother, have illegitimate children. In short, my aunts, uncles, and cousin are not exempted from this congenital pattern. Some of my relatives do not regard having children post-marriage as the norm. As for immigration, in my mother's lineage, it is highly sought after. To us, it is the best possible manner to escape from political turmoil, economic insecurity, and hardship.

My siblings and I have a harmonious relationship. We have a firm bond and are attentive to each other. My father's siblings (aunt and uncles) are inseparable. Even though most are married, they care and love each other immensely. However, this is not the norm for all my relatives. Some have or had encountered marital and relationship issues. My maternal aunt, Rosemine, for example, has a conflictual relationship with her half-sister, Ulane. Their relationship problem has not been revealed to everyone. It stemmed from a secret or scandal that involved their parents. Besides Natacha's relationship with her biological father, which is mistrust, and the estranged relationship of my cousin Joelson with my aunt, Rosemine, the relationship between my immediate families on my mother's lineage, is solid.

There are conflictive relations, nonetheless, between my relatives and their former partners. For instance, although my sister, Nancy, and Rosemine, my aunt, are divorced, they are constantly quarreling with their ex-husbands about issues that were left unresolved in their marriages.

My relationship with my husband is healthy. We have been successful with our communication approach. We do not hold any secret from each other. If there is a misunderstanding, we make it known to each other and discuss it. We put time aside to pray, cook, and watch television together. Plus, we have date nights on the 18th of each month (the

day we celebrated our wedding in July 2020). We choose to have monthly date nights to talk about our marriage and to keep our love ignited.

Further, while analyzing the visual depiction of my family, genogram, I understand, plus decode my family's presenting problems in a much deeper way. The relationship of my family members is not perfect. Some family members on my maternal side have suffered severe emotional scars resulting in strained or conflictive relationships with other family members and partners. Based on my maternal relatives' testimonies, the issue of engagement and relationship dissolutions has existed for years. Examining this issue on another scope, I surmise they did not valorize commitment, which resulted in the breakup of their relationships with their partners. Alternatively, in my opinion, it may originate from a lack of connection with God, for most of my maternal relatives are not Christians. Despite all, my maternal and paternal relatives have significant strengths. Their education, achievement, commitment, adaptability, and solid interfamilial relationship, are to vent a for.

Differentiation is an inborn capacity. For change to occur in one's family lineage, self-differentiation is pivotal. "To be self-differentiated, one needs to have the ability to remain one's person under the pressure of group influences, especially in the face of the intense influences of family life," stated Capuzzi and Stauffer (2021). Throughout the years, I have learned to follow my path. Thus, when I detect familial or environmental patterns that are destructive, I exclude myself from them. In the same vein, I believe some of my family members need to self-differentiate. As human beings who can communicate, act and think, while not abandoning their family, they can articulate what they want, set boundaries, and maintain their roles in the family.

In a nutshell, although my family never discussed their family concerns with a counselor due to cultural stigma, I believe they would benefit tremendously from marriage or couple

counseling. If some had considered counseling, their marriages, perhaps, could have been saved. They would have learned to enhance their communication and fight to eradicate the root of their marital problems, to name a few.

Examining my family genogram, if I were bestowed the opportunity to be the assigned counselor to work with a portion of my family members, my parents and my younger brother, Pedro, would be the family members chosen. My father was an alcoholic. His alcoholism had terrible effects on my family, mainly my mother. While under the influence of alcohol, my father's demeanor was damaging. One of the short-term effects of alcohol consumption on my father was the inability to control his impulses or judgment. He tended to be consumed with anger every time he consumed alcoholic beverages. And those waves of anger were displaced on my mother. The whole family was codependent on my father's alcohol addiction. Beattie (1992) affirmed, "A codependence person is one who has let another person's behavior affect him or her, and who is obsessed with controlling that person's behavior."

Psychoeducation and Bowen Murray's family system theory are the theoretical approaches chosen to help my family during the counseling sessions. Besides the theoretical approaches cited, assessment tools such as the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (Audit) and the Severity of Alcohol Dependence questionnaire will be considered. Moreover, the clinical assessment will focus on gathering information to arrive at the core of the family problem. In doing so, they will be asked to sketch a genogram to trace repetitive patterns in the family line, including alcoholism. Moreover, while assessing for alcohol use dependency, the following questions will be posed: Date of first use, frequency of alcohol usage, the amount used, triggers that elevate the need for alcohol consumption, and if they regard excessive alcohol usage as a problem.

To conclude, a family is a vital union composed of related or non-related relatives. One family member's view is different from other family's. Although non-consanguineal family members are viewed as family, in the loop of some cultures, what differentiates the two is that patterns and themes are inheritable. The repeated patterns can be positive and constructive. It is essential, nonetheless, to examine one's family tree and visualize how negative habits it can be fixed to therapy or counseling.

References

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