

Family Life Cycles

My parents single unattached:

Tammy (Mom): Grew up in a blended family with 2 full siblings, 2 half siblings from her mom and 1 half sibling from her dad. My mom had a very unstable childhood with an abusive alcoholic dad. As a young adult she took on the role of caretaker for both her father and sister in which both lived with her. My mom did what she had to do to survive and did not have much opportunity or options to continue with schooling after high school.

Doug (Dad): Grew up in a more stable household with 3 siblings from the same parents though they divorced when he was a teenager. At 18 his then girlfriend got pregnant which he chose to marry her because he felt it was the right thing to do. At 19 they had a son then later got divorced. The mom left the child with Doug. Doug's family was all very highly educated but he chose to become a plumber because it was the best and quickest opportunity he had to be able to provide for his child.

My parents as a new couple:

My parents met at 25 and got married at 28 years old. There were some difficulties due to my mom's traumatic upbringing. My brother also added some stress to the relationship, especially due to my dad's ex wife not taking any responsibility. But they worked through it. They built a house out in the country, which was their dream, and had me at age 29.

My parents with young children:

My mom worked as a bank teller while my dad opened up his own plumbing business. Then they decided that she would stay home with me while I was young and do the secretarial work for my dad. My mom struggled with alcoholism in the early stages but chose to stop drinking to be able to provide the best life for me. My parents did the best they could to provide a very comfortable life for our family.

My parents with school aged/adolescent children:

Once I was of school age my parents chose for my mom to homeschool me until I chose to go to public school in 8th grade. My parents didn't argue much and seemed to get along well to me as a child. Though my mom often had anger outbursts and didn't allow my dad to speak up. I now understand that my mom has a strong anxious attachment style and my dad a strong avoidant attachment style which prevented them from ever working through issues in their marriage.

My parents after I left for college:

After I left for college I believe was difficult for my parents. My mom more so. I was the center of her life and what their relationship revolved around for so long. They never believed it was important to work on their relationship outside of me and therefore didn't have much of one. My

mom started drinking again and my dad didn't know how to handle it. Though they did their best to work through it and find their own interests.

My parents during retirement:

After I got a little older and moved to NYC my parents sold their house and all their belongings and bought a mobile home. They started traveling the country and working at different campgrounds together. They also started seeing a couples therapist. Though their relationship isn't perfect, I believe they are doing the best they can to work together and maintain their love and respect for each other. Most importantly I believe they have a great friendship with each other.

Mine and my boyfriends family life cycle:

This brings me to my own family life cycle. I will use the relationship between my boyfriend and I. We have been dating for 2 years, are not (yet) married therefore do not live together or have kids but we do own a business and have a puppy (that mostly stays with me) together.

Single unattached adult:

Myself: I was an only child (other than my half brother whom never lived with me), so I was the center of attention for my parents. I was the light of my parents life and I lived up to that standard of success. I grew up in a small town in Indiana. I was very close to my parents but coming from a white culture, independence was very important. I left for college at 18, went to Los Angeles for my college internship and then moved back near home for a few years before leaving to live in NYC without knowing anyone.

My boyfriend (Jose): Jose grew up in a small apartment in Washington Heights to immigrant parents from the Dominican Republic. Jose was the 3rd child of 6 kids. Jose's mother had a miscarriage after him creating a gap between him and his younger sister, giving him the experience of being the baby before having the attention taken away by three more younger siblings. Jose took a few years before going to college which he went upstate for then came back to Washington Heights, living 10 blocks from his parents for the past 12 years.

New Couple:

Jose and I met at a gym that we both trained clients at. We started bonding over our love of thrills (after he notice my black eye from a moped wreck) and acrobatics, as he's a stuntman for film and TV and I was a gymnast. We would try to show each other up with our skills in the gym. We soon started spending every day after work hanging out and talking about all we had in common. Same morals, views on life, dreams of success, and goals of having a family. We were both highly driven, adventuresome people.

Only 8 months into our relationship, due to a difference in beliefs with the owner of our current gym we were forced to take our clients elsewhere and kind of fell into opening our own fitness studio. It has been the absolute most amazing experience to do this with him. Though after spending day in and day out working together, making big business decisions, and handling a lot of stressful situations, we were forced to face our relationship in ways that I assume most new parents would.

Some areas where we have struggled:

Jose is really great and fighting for attention due to being the middle child of many siblings and I am used to getting attention by being a "good girl" (which still works as an adult) and that seems to irritate us about each other.

When it comes to making decisions, Jose will fight until he gets his way and since I never had anyone to fight with growing up, I just give in.

When it comes to working with clients, Jose has little awareness or care whether he is upsetting or offending someone, whereas I am hyper aware of peoples reactions from constantly trying to make sure my mom was happy. I'm often on edge that Jose might say something offensive and have had to work on not trying to control that.

Finally when it comes to raising our puppy, we have different cultural expectations. My boyfriend comes from the idea that it's a community effort, if he's busy it's not a big deal to just leave her with his family for as long as he needs to. I come from the idea that "you chose the responsibility, you take care of it". I am working to adapt more of his way of thinking because I believe it makes more sense.