

Pastoral Skills Training Family Life Course
 Lesson 7: Genograms
 Instructor Guide

Lesson Information	
Lesson Objectives	Identify how to conduct a genogram and use it in a pastoral counseling setting. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain why genograms are used in a pastoral counseling setting. • Explain how genograms provide insight that can help us guide people toward health.
Class Time: Presentation	Approximately 1 hour
Class Time: Discussion	Approximately 1 hour
Lesson Materials	
Webinar Presentation	Page 2
Webinar Discussion	Page 7
PowerPoint Slides for Webinar Presentation	07-slides.ppt
Supporting Lesson Materials	
Student Guide	Student advance sheet containing the objectives of the lesson and the materials required for participation
Student Readings	<i>Clinical Use of the Genogram</i> (McGoldrick and Gerson) 07-Clinical-Use-of-the-Genogram.pdf
	Miscellaneous Information on Genograms 07-Genogram-information.pdf
	Case Study 07-case-study.pdf

Webinar Presentation		
Title	Description	Slide Number
Objectives	<p>At the end of this presentation, you should be able to do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify how to conduct a genogram and use it in a pastoral counseling setting. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Explain why genograms are used in a pastoral counseling setting. ○ Explain how genograms provide insight that helps us guide people toward health. 	Slide 2
Part 1: The Purpose of Genograms		
What Is a Genogram?	<p>A genogram is a visual display of a family’s relationships. While on the surface it looks like a traditional family tree, it goes beyond that genealogical tool by providing details on relationships, individuals, and events.</p> <p>(Show image of genogram example.)</p>	Slide 4
Why Genograms?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For a clinical record, the genogram provides an efficient summary, allowing a counselor who is unfamiliar with a person to quickly grasp a large amount of information about a family and to have a view of potential problems. • Typically, the genogram is constructed in the first session and revised as new information becomes available. • Genograms make it easier for a counselor to keep in mind family members, patterns, and events that may have recurring significance in a family’s ongoing care. • Genograms can help family members see themselves in a new way, and are thus an important way of “joining” with families in counseling. 	Slide 5

Using Genograms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking at the current family context allows the counselor to assess how the immediate players in the family drama are connected to each other, as well as to the broader system, and to evaluate the family's strengths and vulnerabilities in relation to the overall situation. • The genogram usually includes at least three generations of family members, as well as critical events in the family's history. By scanning the family system historically and assessing previous life cycle transitions, one can place present issues in the context of the family's evolutionary patterns. 	Slide 6
A Family Systems Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information on a genogram is best understood from a systemic perspective. • The concept of system is used to refer to a group of people who interact as a functional whole. Neither people nor their problems exist in a vacuum. Both are inextricably interwoven with broader systems, the most fundamental of which is the family. • In this framework, "family" consists of the entire kinship network of at least three generations as it currently exists and as it has evolved through time (Carter & McGoldrick, 1980). 	Slide 7
Why Look At Families?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People are organized within family systems according to generation, age, and sex, to name a few of the most common factors. Where you fit in the family structure can influence your functioning, relational patterns, and the type of family you form for the next generation. • Families repeat themselves. What happens in one generation will often repeat itself in the next, i.e., the same issues tend to be played out from generation to generation, though the actual behavior may take a variety of forms. (Multigenerational Transmission) 	Slide 8
Genograms and Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the genogram, we look for patterns of functioning relationships and structure that continue or alternate from one generation to the next. • The "flow of anxiety" in a family system occurs along both vertical and horizontal dimensions. 	Slide 9

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concurrent events in different parts of the family are not viewed as simply random happenings; rather, they are seen as being interconnected in a systemic way. • Symptoms tend to occur around such transitions in the family life cycle, when family members face the task of reorganizing their relations with one another in order to go on to the next phase. 	
Degrees of Fusion	There are many types of relationship patterns in families. Of particular interest are patterns of relational distance. People may be very close or very distant or somewhere in between. At one extreme are family members who are very distant from or in conflict with each other. The family may actually be in danger of breaking up. At the other extreme is what is called emotional “fusion” or “stuck-togetherness” of individuals in the family system.	Slide 10
Triangles in a Family System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-person relationships tend to be unstable. Under stress, two people will draw in a third, stabilizing the system by forming a coalition. The basic unit of an emotional system thus tends to be the triangle. • As we shall see, genograms can help the counselor identify key triangles in a family system, see how triangular patterns repeat from one generation to the next, and design strategies for changing them. • The genogram helps the counselor pinpoint the contrasts and idiosyncrasies in families that indicate the type of complementarity or reciprocal balance. 	Slide 11
Discussion Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How have your family relationships affected your life?</i> • <i>How can a genogram help you understand the family relationships of a client?</i> 	Slide 12

Part 2: Using Genograms		
Constructing Genograms	<p>Creating a genogram involves three levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map the family structure: The backbone of a genogram is a graphic depiction of how different family members are biologically and legally related to one another from one generation to the next. Plotting this information is the first step. • Record family information: The next step requires gathering information on the family members, such as deaths or other events. • Delineate family relationships: Finally, family relationships are delineated. If a son has been disowned by his parents, for example, that is reflected in the genogram. 	Slide 14
Reading Genograms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This map is a construction of figures representing people and lines delineating their relationships. • Reading the genogram for patterns of contrast and balance in family structure, roles, functioning, and resources allows the counselor to derive hypotheses about how the family is adapting to imbalances that may be stressing the system. 	Slide 15
Clinical Uses of the Genogram	<p>Counselors can use a genogram in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage the whole family. • Unblock the system. • Clarify family patterns. • Reframe and detoxify family issues. 	Slide 16
Engaging the Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genogram interviewing shows interest in the whole family system. • The genogram interview often allows the counselor to build rapport with family members around issues of specific concern to the family. Genogram questioning goes to the heart of family experiences: birth, illness, death, and intense relationships. 	Slide 17

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genograms often provide almost instant access to complex, emotionally loaded family material. However, the structure of the genogram interview seems to elicit such information in a relatively non-threatening way. 	
Unblocking the System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When a family comes in with a problem, it has often adopted its own view of the problem and what needs to be changed. This is often a rigid, nonsystemic view based on the belief that only one person, the symptomatic one, needs to change. • The genogram interview organizes questioning around key family life experiences: birth, marriage, life transitions, illness, and death. Collecting information on these events can open up a rigid family system and help clients get in touch with paralyzing blocked emotional and interpersonal issues. • The genogram interview is especially useful for engaging obsessive, unresponsive, or uninvolved clients. • Calm, nonthreatening “research” questions can often open up these matters, so that family members can begin to relate to one another in a different way around such issues. 	Slide 18
Clarifying Family Patterns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarifying family patterns is at the heart of genogram usage. • Clarifying family patterns serves an educational function for the family, allowing family members to see their behavior as connected and within the family context. 	Slide 19
Reframing and Detoxifying Family Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In problematic families, the family’s perspective is often rigid or resistant to change or to alternative views of the situation. Genograms are an important tool for <u>reframing behavior</u>, relationship and time connections in the family, and for “<u>detoxifying</u>” and <u>normalizing</u> the family’s perception of itself. Suggesting alternative interpretations of the family’s experience points the way to new possibilities in the future. 	Slide 20

Discussion Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>How might a genogram help an unresponsive family open up or view itself in a different light?</i>	Slide 21
Ask for questions.		
Give reading and case study assignments to prepare for the discussion webinar.		
End webinar.		

Case Study

Setting: Chaplain is meeting with Steve and Emma, an engaged couple that want to make sure they get their marriage started off on the right foot.

Counselor: How are you today?

Steve: Fine

Emma: Excited, the wedding is getting close. Only a few months until it's here.

Counselor: Yes, it's an exciting time, both with changes and with things that you bring to marriage from the families in which you grew up. In fact, that's what our focus is going to be during this session of premarital counseling. As we discussed last time, today we're going to construct a genogram . You might think of it as a family tree that includes some stories and significant events. We want to look at these relationships and events because when people get married, we don't just start from scratch. We take all the things we have learned by seeing and listening in our family to our new marriage. This way you can have a greater self awareness of why some things are important to you. It will also let you plan those things you want to include in your family from your family of origin. The goal is to look back over three generations. So are you ready to start?

Steve: Sure, it sounds fun.

Emma: Well, I haven't done any research so I don't know if I'll know much.

Counselor: That's OK. There are some advantages to not preparing. Sometimes, what we don't remember can be as significant as what we do recall. OK, Steve we will start with you. What are your parents' names?

Steve: David and Mary.

Counselor: Do you have brothers and sisters?

Steve: Yes, two, I have a brother and sister.

Counselor: Are they younger or older?

Steve: Sister is older. The other one died.

Counselor: I'm sorry. What happened?

Steve: He died in a car accident when he was sixteen. He and a friend were coming back from the movies. They were hit by a drunk driver.

Counselor: That had to be really painful.

Steve: Yea, it is still painful. I don't like to talk or do anything on that day.

Emma: I didn't know that. But it explains that argument we had.

Steve: Yea, I guess I didn't realize it then. It just happens. No one in the family drinks anymore after that accident. It changed a lot of things.

Counselor: That is important. Thanks for sharing and we can talk some more about that later. Can you tell me about your sister?

Steve: Sure, she's great. She's three years older. She's married and has a baby boy. They named him Allen. It was our brother's name.

Counselor: So the accident impacted her, too.

Steve: Oh yeah. But no one really talks about it. We just deal with it in our own way.

Counselor: What is her husband's name?

Steve: Adam. He's a great guy. They have a really nice and peaceful family.

Counselor: It sounds like that's important to you as well. What about your parents?

Steve: My mom's name is Mary, and my dad is David.

Counselor: How old are they?

Steve: My dad is 52 and Mom is 51. They met in high school and have been married for 31 years.

Counselor: That's great.

Steve: Yea, they're good parents. They're very supportive...and they want grandkids.

Counselor: That is interesting. What role does religion play in the family you grew up in?

Steve: We're Catholic. Mom goes to Mass every day.

Counselor: So religion is important to you in your family.

Steve: Yes. But Emma I haven't really talked about it much. We had so much fun just being together.

Emma: That's true. I know he's Catholic but I don't know how religion fits in with us. I was raised Methodist but since college I haven't really been involved. I focused more on community service and justice issues. Religion just seemed outdated. You know, it was too restrictive...the rules and organization and everything.

Counselor: Sounds like something we may to explore further. Steve what about your grandparents?

Steve: They have been married for 53 years. Their names are Elmer and Janet. There's a funny story about them. Supposedly they got married because Oma was pregnant with my Dad. But no one says anything about it. It is like a big secret that everyone knows but pretends not to know.

Counselor: Sounds like it's a big family secret.

Steve: Yeah, but you wouldn't believe how closely they watched my sister.

Counselor: Interesting, there is a lot more to explore and we still have to learn about Emma's family. But let's stop here for a minute. I want to show you what we have so far. If look at the sheet you see squares and circles. The squares are the males. The circles are the females. You can see the wedding dates, the X to show deaths. You can see the ages. In the corner you noticed that I wrote down some of the key events and secrets. All this may have implications for the family you and Emma choose to form. Things like rules about alcohol, pregnancy, and religion we can already see will have an impact. But now you will have a greater awareness and be able to make an informed decision rather than just letting emotion drive you one way or another. Any questions?

Steve: No

Emma: This is really interesting

Counselor: Yes, it's amazing how much we know and don't know about our family and its effects on us. Well, this is a good start. Let's

take a break and we can come back and start on Emma's family. I will see you in about ten minutes.

Case Study Discussion Questions:

- 1) From this short beginning, what issues do you think will be worth exploring to help this couple get off to a good start on their marriage?
- 2) What role do you think family secrets have played in this couple's life?
- 3) For an assignment, do a genogram with someone and discuss what insights it gave the person into their life, struggles, and strengths.