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PAST PRESENT

HOW TO STOP MAKING THE SAME
RELATIONSHIP MISTAKES—
AND START BUILDING A BETTER LIFE

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK



Story: Why Bother?



For Reflection

Spend some time reflecting on the questions below by journaling your responses. Then, if you are comfortable, share your observations with someone who is safe and trustworthy (a close friend, a therapist, or a significant other).

- How open and motivated are you to explore your past?
- If you have some resistance to examining your family of origin and story, what do you think you are afraid of? For example, are you afraid of being perceived as a whiner? Wasting time? Reliving the abuse? Challenging a “perfect” childhood?



TWO

What Is Story?



For Reflection

Spend some time reflecting on the questions below by journaling your responses. Then, if you are comfortable, share your observations with someone who is safe and trustworthy (a close friend, a therapist, or a significant other).

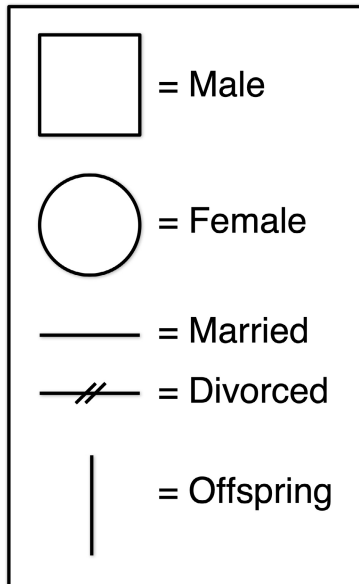
- What story lines from your past might be affecting your relationships today?
- What broken part of your story would you most like to rewrite or make well?
- How well do you think you are doing in sharing your story with others? Assess yourself on a scale of 1 (I never share) to 10 (I share at appropriate levels freely and openly). If your score is a seven or below, what could you do this week to start sharing your story more freely?

THREE

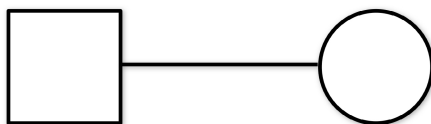
Characters: Understanding the *Who* of Your Story

DRAWING YOUR GENOGRAM

THE BASIC STRUCTURE



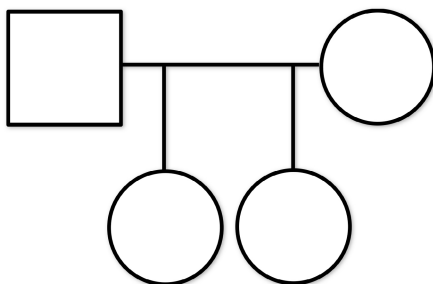
LINE FOR MARRIED COUPLES



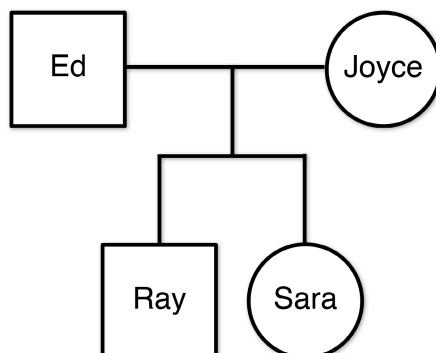
LINE FOR COUPLES WHO COHABITATE
AND HAVE CHILDREN TOGETHER



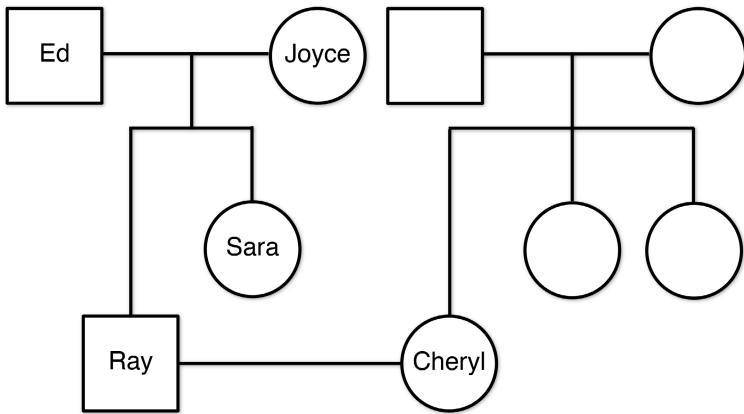
LINES FOR OFFSPRING



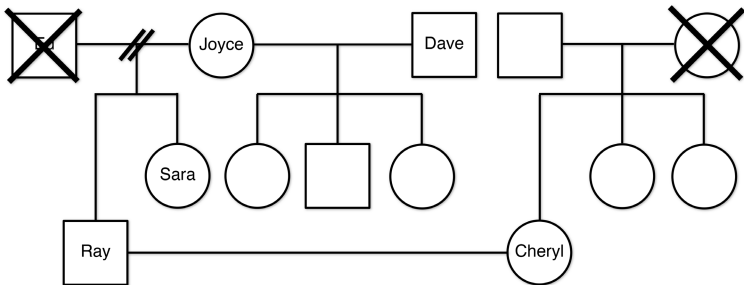
ALTERNATE LINE STYLE FOR OFFSPRING



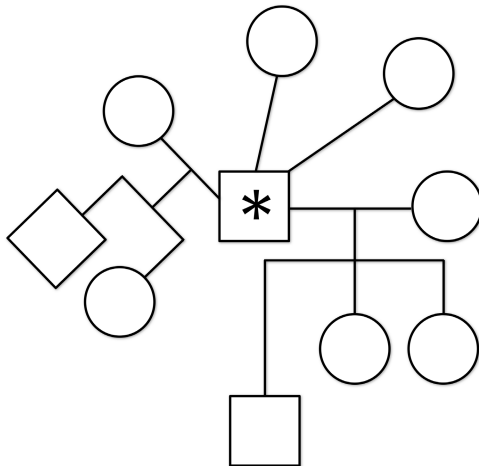
GENOGRAM OF RAY'S FAMILY



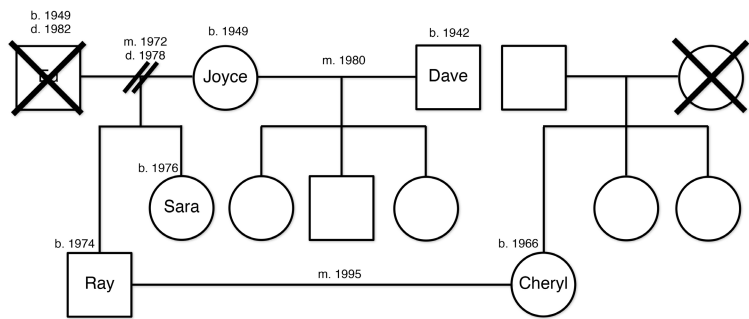
EXAMPLE OF MARKS FOR DECEASED AND DIVORCED



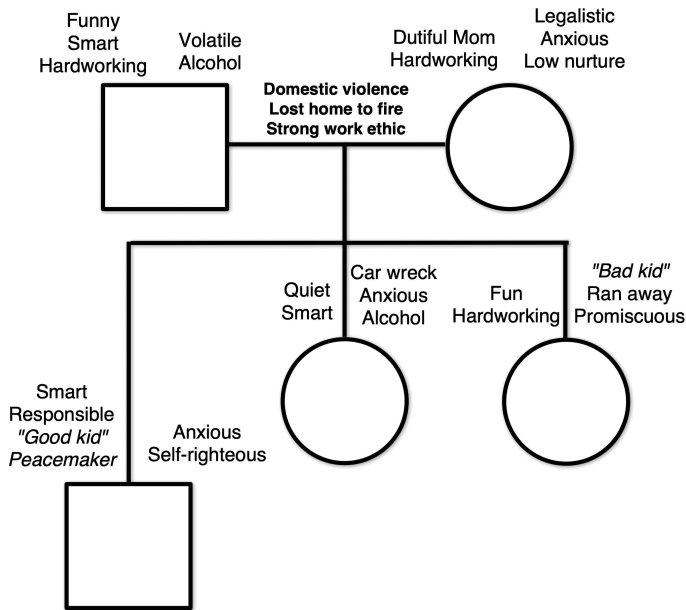
EXAMPLE OF GENOGRAM FOR SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN MARRIED SEVERAL TIMES



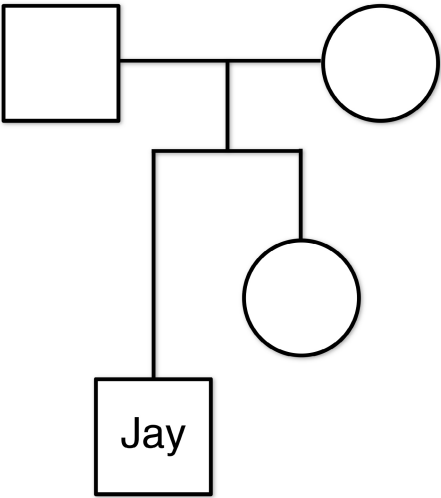
RAY'S GENOGRAM WITH ADDED DATES



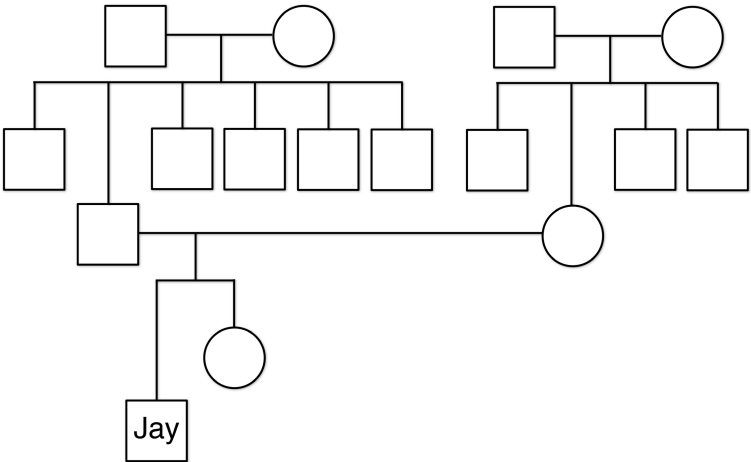
EXAMPLE OF A GENOGRAM WITH DESCRIPTORS
FOR TWO GENERATIONS IN A FAMILY OF FIVE



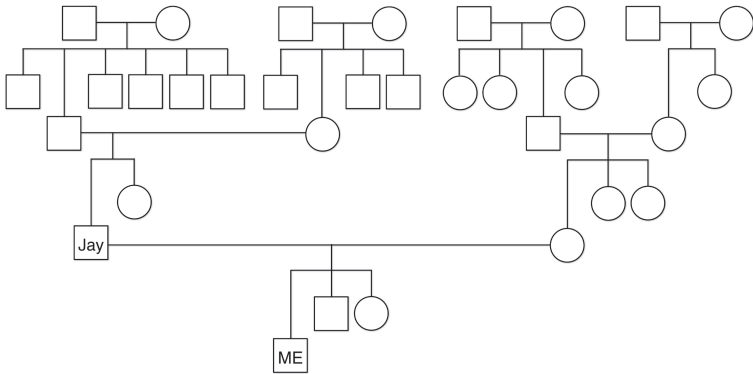
BASIC GENOGRAM FOR JAY



JAY'S GENOGRAM EXPANDED TO INCLUDE GRANDPARENTS, AUNTS, AND UNCLES



JAY'S GENOGRAM WITH HIS MOTHER'S SIDE



For Reflection

Spend some time reflecting on the questions on the next page by journaling your responses. Then, if you are comfortable, share your observations with someone who is safe and trustworthy (a close friend, a therapist, or a significant other).



- What are the highs and lows of your family story?
- What characteristics, events, roles, issues, and values have had the most influence on you?
- What parts of your genogram leave you feeling the most grateful?
- What insights did you gain into your own story? Into how you relate to others?
- How did the influence of previous generations make you a better person?
- What are some of the regrettable characteristics you carry from your family story?



Positive Plot Points: Maximizing the Best Parts of Your Story

CHART FOR POSITIVE INPUTS, BELIEFS, AND CONSEQUENCES

YOU		
Positive Inputs	Positive Beliefs	Positive Consequences
(from your childhood environment, individuals, and events)	(about yourself, the world, and your place in it)	(how you function in life and in your relationships)



For Reflection

Spend some time reflecting on the questions below by journaling your responses. Then, if you are comfortable, share your observations with someone who is safe and trustworthy (a close friend, a therapist, or a significant other).

- What connections did you identify between your positive inputs and the way you see the world?
- What positive consequences impact how you relate to others?
- To whom might you express gratitude for their influence in shaping who you are today? Do something tangible to thank them. Write a note or an email, make a call, perform an act of service, or send a small gift.



Negative Plot Points: Healing the Hard Parts of Your Story

CHART FOR NEGATIVE INPUTS,
BELIEFS, AND CONSEQUENCES

YOU		
Negative Inputs	Negative Beliefs	Negative Consequences
(from your childhood environment, individuals, and events)	(about yourself, the world, and your place in it)	(how you function in life and in your relationships)



For Reflection

Spend some time reflecting on the questions below by journaling your responses. Then, if you are comfortable, share your observations with someone who is safe and trustworthy (a close friend, a therapist, or a significant other).

- Are there any negative inputs in your story that are secrets or particularly difficult for you to think about or discuss?
- What are the distorted beliefs (messages of the wound) in how you see yourself, the world, and your place in it?
- How do your messages of the wound connect to the negative consequences and relational patterns that currently affect your life?
- What negative inputs in your story have left you feeling shame or a sense of guilt?
- In what relationships might you need to rehab your own injury by taking responsibility for the negative consequences that have adversely impacted others?



Automatic Responses: Taming the Reactions from Your Past



For Reflection

Spend some time reflecting on the questions below by journaling your responses. Then, if you are comfortable, share your observations with someone who is safe and trustworthy (a close friend, a therapist, or a significant other).

- In what types of situations are you most at risk for feeling triggered? For example, when do you feel abandoned, imperfect, stupid, passed over, alone, smothered, in need, excluded, and so on? For ideas refer back to your negative inputs, beliefs, and consequences table.
- Recall a time you overreacted and turned a wrench into a gun. What was the underlying emotionally charged memory that led to your overreaction? What emotions and physical sensations did you experience?
- Recall a recent argument you had. Generate two or three fact-based statements that all parties could have agreed on.



Write a New Plot



For Reflection

Spend some time reflecting on the questions on the next page by journaling your responses. Then, if you are comfortable, share your observations with someone who is safe and trustworthy (a close friend, a therapist, or a significant other).



- Briefly review the inputs, beliefs (messages of the wound), and consequences you've identified previously. What progress have you experienced in refuting untruths and revising beliefs? In what ways, if any, do you feel stalled or stuck?
- What messages of the wound do you suspect might need to be reconsidered and revised? How might you refute and revise these beliefs into something truer and more useful?
- In what ways might you enlist the help of your trusted person? For example, ask them to check in when you seem to be returning to thoughts and behaviors consistent with your messages of the wound rather than your revised beliefs.



Tell Your Story

TABLE TO CAPTURE AND SHARE
THE BREADTH OF YOUR STORY

Life Stage	Physical	Emotional	Spiritual	Relational
Childhood				
Adolescence				
Young adulthood				
Adulthood				



For Reflection

Spend some time reflecting on the questions below by journaling your responses. Then, if you are comfortable, share your observations with someone who is safe and trustworthy (a close friend, a therapist, or a significant other).

- As you look over the table you filled out, what areas surprised you? Why?
- Describe how an event in one quadrant or dimension of your life substantially impacted you in one or more of the other quadrants.
- When you find yourself nervous about sharing parts of your story with a safe person, why do you think that is the case? What are the thoughts or concerns that go through your mind?

Expressive Writing



For Reflection

Practice expressive writing by identifying a troubling or painful part of your story and writing about it using the five steps presented in this chapter. Then use the questions below to process your experience with a trusted person, a friend, or a therapist. As you practice expressive writing, remember that you're not going to share what you wrote with others. Feel free, however, to share any observations, insights, or impacts of your writing.

- What is the difference between rumination and productive sharing?
- What sort of gentle redirection language do you suggest you and your trusted person use when the other is slipping into rumination?
- After completing a session of expressive writing, what new insights have you gained related to the episodes you wrote about?



Further Steps on the Journey



For Reflection

Process where you are with grief, forgiveness, and gratitude by journaling your responses to the questions below, and then share your observations with a trusted person.

- Which one of the three practices comes easiest for you? Which is hardest? Why do you think this is so?
- *Grieve the losses*: You cannot redo yesterday and, sadly, you cannot undo the harmful experiences that pepper your early years. But you can name them and allow yourself to grieve them. Which negative inputs or beliefs (identified in chapter 5) most need to be grieved? What specifically have you lost as a result of those experiences?
- *Forgive the wrongs*: How would you describe your experiences with forgiveness overall? Is there someone you feel you need to forgive in connection with the negative inputs or beliefs you identified? What specifically do you need to forgive? (You may benefit from processing this with a therapist and/or a trusted friend and by using expressive writing.)
- *Express gratitude for the rest*: Briefly review the positive inputs, beliefs, and consequences you identified in chapter 4. For what and for whom are you especially grateful? Be specific. Identify concrete ways you can express gratitude for the positive parts of your story, which have formed and nurtured some of the most beautiful parts of who you are.