

# Family members essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Illumination Through learning, the systemic approach resonated with me as I realized that I did not exist in isolation but rather as part of a context, a system. Growing up in my family seemed relatively 'normal's me, but then again, every family is different so I suppose there isn't a definition of normal in that sense. For the purposes of this essay, I will focus on my immediate family. Although I am one of 2 biological children, my mother had the misfortune of having stillborn twins in between us. This essay aims to discuss my family and the dynamics within.

It will provide a brief introduction of the members, their respective ages and roles. It will then identify the type of family I am a part of, discuss the functions, roles and responsibilities of each member, identify 3 healthy elements as well as three unhealthy elements, identifying one negative characteristic which is directly influenced by one of these three unhealthy elements and lastly it will provide my opinion on my families functionally considering health and dynamics. It will debate whether we need therapy and provide insight into why I believe there is hope. 2. My family Members

I was born on the 1st of December 1988 at the Parkland Clinic. I am 24 years old and currently work at Imply-Child Protection and Adoption Civvies and I am in my 3rd year of Social work at the University of Johannesburg. I was not like Adam, created from dust but from 2 people already living, my mother and father. My mother , Laura was born on 13 April 1955 at the Oxford Maternity home in Minaret's in Johannesburg. My mother is now 58 years old but has the same energy and mind set of someone half her age. She's a book keeper by profession and has been at the same company for over 20 years.

She is my pillar and has been instrumental in my upbringing. A more loyal and dedicated mother would be hard to find. She has a wonderful circle of friends who have been an incredible support system. She enjoys playing bowls as a hobby. She has done the most amazing job of raising us with the right morals and has taught us appreciation for everything in life. My Father, Allen was born on the 26th of January 1952 at the Queen Victoria hospital in Johannesburg. He is now is 61 years old and a manufacturer of burglar bars.

He enjoys the outdoors and has qualified as a master scuba diver. He does not play as much of a key role in my life, if any in my life at times. He never wanted children and seemed to want to lead the life of a bachelor. My older brother, Michael was born on my mother's 30th Birthday, 13 April 1985 at the Parkland clinic. He is 28 years old and has an honors degree in Financial Planning. Mike and I had been living with my mom since my parents separated in 1991 but 2 years ago he was transferred to Switzerland by the company he works for Strata.

My brother is the most incredible person I know and I struggle not having him at home. There are two other members of my family even though they might not be considered as actual members by most, but they certainly are to us. Our beloved 10 year old ginger haired cat, Diesel has been a valued member of the family since we got him as the little bundle of fluff of a kitten. Our nanny, Elizabeth is 45 years old and has been a part of our family since I was two years old. She has been like a second mother to me. 5 years ago, she got married and I was honored to be her maid of honor. 3.

Type of Family My family would be considered a reconstituted family,' consisting of second marriages or blended families My father left on my third birthday n 1991 and my parent's got divorced later that year. My father then married a woman, Lorraine after dating her for 13 years. She had two sons former previous marriage, one of which was brutally murdered while they were collecting rent form a building she owns. Her younger son lives in Melbourne with his wife and two children. Switching to stepparent's new rules and expectations can be stressful and how they adapt depends on the quality of family functioning (Beer, 2009; IPPP).

Lorraine tried to instill her views and ways of doing things on Michael and I when we used to stay at my father every second weekend. However her efforts were not well received. Although by definition, Lorraine would be considered my step mother, she is by no meaner a mother figure in my life

4. The Functions, Roles and Responsibilities of Each Member Roles are prescribed and repetitive behaviors involving a set of reciprocal activities with other family members (Cladding, 2007, pop). ' The roles and responsibilities of the members in my family differ quite greatly.

There has been a sense of adaptability and flexibility which is conducive to the change that have occurred as change has been the only constant in some areas. Taking a Journey back in time,' looked at my nursery school drawing of my family. Let was fascinating to realize that at such young age I had an understanding of the dynamics that still exist today and was able to formulate an idea of myself in relation to my family as well as an overview of my family members influence. In my drawing, my mother is bigger in relation to others which is reflection of her dominance in our family.

She is holding my hand showing a sense of unity and belonging. My mother's function, role and responsibility through the past 28 years has been predominately the upbringing of her children in every specs. She provided my brother and I with a private education; gave us the tools that we needed to get through various challenges that we faced and is now giving me a tertiary education as well. My brother and I were given our basic essentials of food, water, clothes, a roof and an education, and we were also given the luxuries when it was appropriate.

Thinking about it, the word "role" in terms of this essay is very appropriate as she is and always has been my role model. I hope and pray that I can give my children the incredible blessing of life she has given me. She has, and still is lifting her functions, roles and responsibilities as a parent; she's actually exceeded the 'normal' expectations as she has filled in as a mother as well as a father figure, having obtained what Cladding(2007) would refer to as 'single parenthood as a result of divorce' (IPPP).

Even with the additional economic pressures, provision of resources, time management and having to give so much more of herself, she never complained and has done it with excellence. She still provides me with a roof over my head, clothes on my back and a fridge full of food while I study and work. It is cause of her inexplicable resilience that the rest of us were able to function as a "normal" family. Michael was just as fortunate as I was and also got everything I did His roles and responsibilities apart from studying and getting through school only really started when he was 18.

He thought it was going to be great having his driver's license, until that first Saturday night when I wanted to go out with my friends. It was almost like I had a personal chauffeur and seeing as he is my brother, it was my duty to take advantage of that. He never argued or said no though; he was playing his role of being the bigger brother. He was always happy to help my mom with taking me places, occasionally doing the shopping and running the normal day to day errands.

I guess in a way, he felt like he needed to play a father figure to me as well while being my big brother - he was the man of the house and he fitted into those metaphoric shoes perfectly. He has always been protective over my mother and I and has always looked out for us in times of need. It was amazing how once he had finished school and started varsity how he still managed to help my mom with everything and he continued doing it with the most incredible efficiency. He obtained his Bachelor's of

Commerce in finance and went on to get his honors in financial planning, which was him completing his responsibility to my mother for giving him the opportunity of an education. His success and bravery was inspirational in the following years as he went on to achieve his goal of getting into the coal industry and was rewarded for his dedication by being offered the opportunity to move overseas and work in Switzerland. He has done what everyone sets out to do, and some fail - he has become completely independent and self sufficient which to me is the ultimate role of a big brother which is setting an example for his younger sibling.

He's missed greatly, but we're all happy for him that he has done what he wanted to do and become what he set out to become. We even had to get devices that we plug into the wall which release some type of relaxant to calm Diesel down because he had separation anxiety from Michael leaving and would actually cry at night from missing him. I never drew my father in my nursery school picture. My father's function, role and responsibility has changed over the years as well. As children, he used to pay maintenance to my mother on a monthly basis but soon stopped and left the role of provider to my mother.

We would stay at him every second weekend and visits to the zoo and gold reef city soon became weekends of customers and cleaning his house which even then disintegrated into seeing us every second Friday night. My father chose to not have the function, role and responsibility of a father and share responsibility in my upbringing. However, my father's absence did not cause the system to fall apart but resulted in the redistribution of his tasks. My mother suggested that the only role and responsibility I have now is finishing my degree.

That's all she expects of me but I still do so much more. As it's just the two of us now, I try and help out with the errands that Mike used to do to maintain an equal level of function and alleviate the stress on my mom. I have always tried to be a good daughter in a sense that my mother has raised Michael and I on her own and I have always felt that it is my responsibility to make it easy for her and I like to think that I've succeeded in that. I asked her if she felt that I had made it easier for her; she looked at me, burst out laughing and carried on drinking the coffee that I had made her.

Her reaction indicated that I had. Anyone who knows my mom well enough, knows that she has a very good sense of humor and that if I was not succeeding in my responsibility to her in making her job of raising me easier, she would have said so and might have even sent me to Switzerland with Michael.

When my mother did decide to be serious, she said that she has been able to relax a lot more since and I have been a great help in doing the shopping for the house and the errands she used to have to do.

She suggested that I needed to focus on fulfilling what she felt my responsibility to her was and that obtaining a Bachelor of Arts in psychology was one of the happiest moments of her life. She said that the only responsibility I had left was to complete my honors in Social Work. I saw her eyes becoming a little teary when we spoke about it because she knows that once I have completed my studies; I would follow in my big brothers footsteps and start my path towards independence.

She's told me many a time before that if she had things her way, both her children would always be here with her but she would never stop us from exploring and becoming the people we aspire to. 5. Healthy and Unhealthy Elements ' Communication is concerned with the delivery and reception of verbal and nonverbal information between family members (Cladding, 2007, p. 10). ' According to Cladding (2007), members within healthy families are able to address each others messages, whether they are spoken or unspoken. We are able to communicate effectively as a family.

My brother is my confidant, my mom is my best friend and they feel the same about me and each other so when it comes to discuss the important



things that really matter. My mom did very well in that sense; she's always made effort to be understanding and encouraged us to share anything about everything to the point where we actually feel comfortable sharing our deepest and arrest secrets with each other. A rule in our house has always been eating dinner together so that we could discuss our day and be a part of each others lives.

Even though my brother lives so far away, we message every day and speak on keep at lead once a week. Despite my father and my strained relationship, we also message each other and keep each other in the loop of what may be happening in our lives. Having said this, through this assignment, I realized my families most negative element - the fact that we sometimes fail to communicate the small things which sometimes actually matter the most. Whenever I speak to my mom over the phone, every night before I go to sleep and pretty much every opportunity I get, I always tell her that I love her.

What I don't always tell her, if I do ever tell her at all are the two words that gets drilled into our mannerisms from when we start talking - " thank you". It seems that we get so accustomed to having and taking that we never really stop to " appreciate" for lack of better words. The commitment that family members have toward one another is strengthened when they verbally express their appreciation (Cladding, 2007, pop). We obviously do appreciate everything we get and everything our other has ever done for us but I get the feeling that she sometimes thinks that we don't.

Through picking up on this negative element, Vive found a positive element as well and unfortunately, this element is one that every family needs but unfortunately don't always have Another element that I have found in my family which has positive and negative sides is encouragement of individuals at the appropriate times. ' It behooves families to encourage the development of talents and abilities within their individual members (Cladding, 2007, p 35). ' My family has a history of accountants and financial minds that have always been successful in their careers.

My decision to go into psychology was frowned upon somewhat and at first; it felt like I did not get the support that I needed to help with my career path. My family tried to persuade me to follow Michael into obtaining a finance degree, but when they realized that I had made up my mind, they gave me the best encouragement I could have. One of the scariest things for me was the transition from high school into university and I feel that it would have been easier if I had their support and encouragement through the change instead of only half way through first year.

Michael had considered pursuing other careers as well, specifically one of scuba diving and becoming an instructor for it. This was also shunned and it was made clear that he should consider it a hobby and continue the family tradition of finance. He decided to listen and diving is probably now his best hobby, but I think he often thinks about the " what if" scenario. I don't mean to say that my family doesn't give encouragement, I just think that at times they're more concerned with what they think is right over what passions Michael and I have or had.

Once we had made up our minds and we set off on our rarer paths, even though it may have been slightly delayed, the encouragement and motivation was certainly there and I shudder to think how Michael and I could have failed without it. The third element that Vive found to have both positive and negative sides is the commitment of members to our family. ' in strong families, members are devoted not only to the welfare of the family but also to the growth of each of the members (Cladding, 2007, pop).

This is a very broad aspect but for purposes of this assignment, I'm going to narrow it down and relate it to my father who has not always been there for Michael and I. He left my mom when I was three years old and since then has not played as big a role in my life as I would have liked him to. He missed some of the more important milestones in our lives like birthdays, starting school and graduations. Part of the separation agreement between him and my mom was that we would spend every second weekend with him.

This was good and bad - good because we still had some form of a father in a sense, and bad because he would sometimes leave Michael and I alone while he went out. It gets complicated as to whether the bad was really bad and whether the good was really good though. The bad that came with him being there in a sense filled us with some false hope that he would be there for us, and as disheartening as it felt - he wasn't. The good that came with him often leaving us alone while he went out was that it taught us how to take care of ourselves from a young age. If we were hungry, we made our own food.

If I was scared, Michael was there to protect me and because he was the older of us and he was a boy, he would pretend to be brave for me which actually brought us closer together. The positives and negatives continue in a way that we eventually stopped depending on our dad to be a father which lessened the feeling of being disappointed when he let us down or didn't do something he said he would. Our relationship with our mom grew even stronger as she bravely and in true form of an amazing woman, took over responsibility of acting as a father as well as a mother.

An example of us not expecting much from our dad that comes to mind is the one night when Michael was at a night club. Michael was attacked and beaten up quite badly; someone hit him over the head with a bottle which resulted in his hospitalizing for severe concussion and getting several stitches in the back of his head. Our father was nowhere to be found through the ordeal. On the same note of being attacked, I realized that we have a positive side as well, not to mean that anyone being attacked could possibly be positive - but we as a family, even though we weren't close to our father were still there for each other.

My father was attacked one night as he was coming home, and Michael was so brave - my knight in shining armor actually. We were so scared that night but he raced through to my father's house and was over the wall to look for him before the police were. I looked after him during his recovery, taking him to all the necessary doctor's appointments and fed him as his thumb was cut off. This proved our commitment to our family, regardless of the dynamics within it. Fortunately, in both scenarios everyone made it out ok and each of

them have their battle scars which can make for some pretty interesting war stories.

It took a lot of self reflection as well as discussion within my family to come to the decision to use the above three examples of negative and positive elements. I chose those three to show that every negative does have a positive to it as well. Without some of the negatives, the positives wouldn't exist and some of the positives that came from the negatives are elements that have forged an impenetrable family bond. I try and take something out of everything and believe that life lessons are to be learned from every single experience, good and bad.

This leads me into considering the actual functionality and dynamics of my family. Everyone is different and handles events differently - to me, my family has been through a considerable amount of hardship which we've all made it out of, as well as great times with unforgettable memories. 6. My opinion of my Family Functionality A families functionality can be assessed through the following criteria set out by Barker (1998), Identity process, change, information processing and role structuring.

If I really think about it, my family functions relatively well considering the above elements as discussed in this essay and granted, even though sometimes its not a healthy relationship - it still a relationship. My dad is still my dad, my mom is still my best friend and Michael is still my knight in shining armor. In my opinion, even though some components could be amended, it wouldn't change who we are, how we feel about each other or

what we expect from each other. If one was to go on a quest to find the perfect family, they would be setting out to achieve the impossible.

No one is perfect in their setting even though it may seem that they are in times. It's the silent elements that are and always will be there - stress for example is possibly the biggest and most dangerous one in my opinion and that's what I'm going to play on in respects to validating my theory of my family needing therapy. I often find that after a stressful day, I'd come home rather irritable and sometimes say something I don't mean or wouldn't have said under different circumstances. My mother has those days, Michael has them, everybody does.

As much as I dislike the word "normal", having stress is something that falls under normality. We work, we study, we have deadlines, we have targets, we have places to go and people to meet - I think it's fair to say that everyone needs a certain amount of stress in their lives to function at optimal levels. I could argue with my own logic now considering my stating that stress is possibly the biggest and most dangerous element in a family and day to day vying, but that argument is easily avoidable.

Yes, stress can be a major downfall but it all depends on how one deals with their stress. In saying that, I believe that my family, every family for that matter, needs some type of therapy to assist with the management of stress. I think my family could certainly benefit from some form of therapy in which we could learn how to manage our stress in much better ways - my stress is getting through my degree, my mother told me that her stress is making

sure all the bills are paid at the end of the month... It's an unavoidable constant.

Now, e take the my stress and my mother's stress, mix it together and with the right form of guidance and therapy, we could actually help each other deal with our different stresses which could very possibly bring us even closer together as we would be able to learn to deal with it together which would inevitably decrease the levels of stress in the family greatly and would give my family an even tighter knit relationship. There is always hope for anything and everything, even if the hope sometimes disappoints us.

The act of having hope itself is something that us as humans need, a family insists of humans which indicated to me that a family as a whole, would need more hope than an individual. Having hope keeps us motivated in our day to day living, it keeps that flame going and if nothing else, it keeps us living out of hope for another day. If someone were to actually ask me if I thought there was hope for my family, my answer would be " I hope there is hope. "

7.

Conclusion This essay has tried to provide a brief introduction of the members, their respective ages and roles. It identified the type of family I am a part of, discussed the functions, roles and responsibilities of each member, identified 3 healthy elements as well as three unhealthy elements, identifying one negative characteristic which is directly influenced by one of these three unhealthy elements and lastly it provided my opinion on my families functionally considering health and dynamics.