

# Family therapy concepts and methods

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To simplify his reasons for Systems Theory, Bowen introduced the use of genogram in analyzing and understanding family processes and issues. Genogram is a schematic diagram or structure for mapping family relationships, patterns, and processes across at least three consecutive generations. Nichols (2013) elaborates that the structure details marriage relationships, dates of births, dates of death, geographical locations and general relationships of family members in different times within the covered generations. Just like other techniques of treating psychological and family disorders, genograms have their advantages and disadvantages.

The main advantage of a genogram is that its structure provides family therapist with detailed information about a family in treatment. A genogram uses clear symbols, shapes and lines to show various relationships, identify individuals, and disclose events. As demonstrated by Nichols (2013), the diagram also shows dates when certain events happened across the covered generations of a given family. With such information, a family therapist is able to trace and glean elaborate understanding of dynamics that lead a family to its contemporary condition. To this extent, therapists can device reliable if not very accurate treatment techniques and processes.

Another advantage of genogram is that it enables members of embattled family trace and understands the source(s) of their problem(s). The fact that genograms cover events that transpired across at least three generations of a family enables family members to gain proper self-knowledge, understand consequences of their actions and hypothesize ways to restructure their lives and behaviors (Nichols, 2013).

The greatest disadvantage of genogram over talking with family members about their immediate concerns relates to likelihood to consume a lot of

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time. The act of tracing historical events of a family down across at least three generations is time consuming (Nichols, 2013). Recording relationships, events and dates must obviously consume much time than would be if a therapist concentrated on immediate concerns and events. Tracing a family's problems across three generations or more is also likely to cause diversion from or confusion as to the exact topic of focus and goals of a treatment process. Genogram may also be ineffective and unreliable in situations where the troubled family has scarce knowledge about history of the preceding generations.