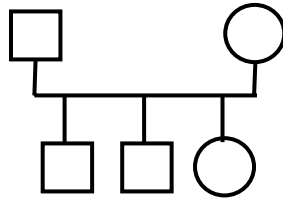


A Family **Genogram** **Workbook**

GROUP
STUDY GUIDE



Israel Galindo

A Family Genogram Workbook: Group Study Guide
by Israel Galindo

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THIS GROUP STUDY GUIDE IS TO BE USED WITH
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Introduction

This group study guide is designed to be used with the book *A Family Genogram Workbook*, by Israel Galindo, Elaine Boomer, and Don Reagan (available through Educational Consultants, www.galindoconsultants.com). For the most part this study assumes that the groups will be mostly self-directed with a minimum of guidance from the class facilitator. You can schedule the five-session study in any way that suits your group. Use the group discussion questions depending on the location (a Sunday morning class, a weekday evening class, a retreat, a weekly study course, a one-day extended workshop experience) and on the schedule you have chosen.

Here are suggestions for an effective group learning experience:

- Provide workbooks for all participants. Each participant will need a copy of *A Family Genogram Workbook* in order to complete the activities in the study. The group sessions will be enhanced to the extent that participants read the workbook chapters and complete assignments.
- The class or group leader should act as facilitator, allowing the group discussion to carry the learning. Group members will learn through conversation, through sharing of their experience, struggling with answers to questions, and by being a resource to one another. Monitor the groups to help them in case they get stuck, have a question, or need a resource. Strive to start and end your sessions on time.
- If you have a large class, form discussion groups of no less than 3 persons, but no more than 5 persons. The ideal group size for discussion is 4 or 5 individuals.
- Allow sufficient time for group discussion (at *least* 45 minutes for a group of 4 to 5 persons) and additional time for the learning activities if you choose to use them. For optimum learning, build in at least 10 minutes of “debriefing” time at the end of each session. The ideal time allowance for these sessions is 90 minutes. If you need to adjust this schedule allow for as much discussion time as possible.
- Because the topics of discussion can be personal and sensitive you may want to begin the learning experience with a group covenant. This can help establish trust and set ground rules for confidentiality. A sample group covenant is included in this study. Revise the covenant as needed.
- At the beginning of your study, review the “How To Be A Good Group Member” handout and the “Guidelines for Genogram Small Group Work.” Encourage your class members to commit to them so as to provide a great learning experience for all.

How To Be A Good Group Member

Good group learning experiences do not happen naturally, they are a result of intentional and responsible behaviors by group members. For an optimal learning experience, practice these good learner behaviors:

- Participate and share—others need to learn from you
- Determine to be honest and transparent with your group
- Take time to think
- Listen to one another
- Give reasons for your answers
- Stay on task or on the topic under discussion
- Negotiate the level of confidentiality you are comfortable with
- Ask thought-provoking questions
- Allow yourself to be challenged—you'll learn more
- Ask for others' opinions
- Ask yourself, "How does this apply to me?"
- Ask yourself, "What am I learning?"



A commitment to a group covenant can go a long way to help your group establish corporate values, articulate expectations, and help the members hold each other accountable in helping to make the group experience as meaningful as possible. You can use the following sample group covenant as a model for your group. Adapt the sample covenant to your needs, or create one with your group. Make copies of the covenant for the group members and suggest that each member sign the covenant when entering the group.

OUR COVENANT

As members of the Body of Christ seeking to learn and to grow together, we covenant with each other to:

- Affirm one another
- Be available and present
- Pray for each other steadfastly
- Be open and transparent
- Be honest
- Be sensitive
- Maintain confidentiality when asked.

To affirm one another means that we recognize that each of us is on the journey to growth and maturity. We will accept each member where he or she is and will not expect perfection, but rather, extend grace to each, believing that each is beloved of God.

To be available and present means that we will be good stewards of our time, beginning and ending on time, and participating fully in the process of learning together through listening, sharing, and responsible learning.

To pray for each other steadfastly means that we will intentionally pray for each member of our group when we are together and when we are apart, asking for God's redemptive presence and guidance in each other's lives.

To be open and transparent means that we will trust the group by being willing to be vulnerable in order to be challenged to grow, that we will work at being persons of integrity in our dealings and in our representations of ourselves.

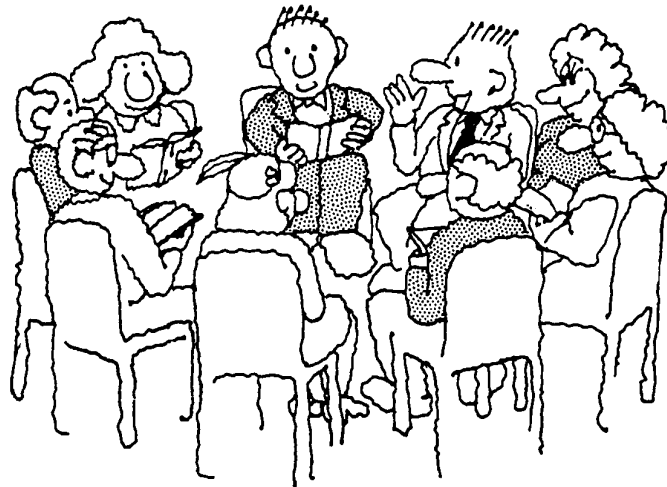
To be honest means that we will speak the truth in love, share accurate information when required, and take responsibility only for our own growth, and not that of another.

To be sensitive means that we will be redemptive and compassionate in our dealings with each other, even in times when challenge and admonition are appropriate postures. At all times we will strive to maintain the other persons' dignity.

To maintain confidentiality when asked means that we will honor requests to be responsible with personal and sensitive information that a group member shares as appropriate. But we covenant that we will not be bound by information that can be harmful to others if keeping a confidence means we are helpless to help or to prevent a harm.

GUIDELINES FOR GENOGRAM SMALL GROUP WORK

1. **Select a Timekeeper-Prompter.** Before you begin select a timekeeper-prompter to help keep things moving and to help your group stay on track.
2. **Diagram.** Provide a genogram handout for the group members or reproduce relevant portions of the genogram on a marker board or a flip chart when presenting your genogram case study.
3. **Do not diagnose.** Diagnosis is not helpful. It is better to ask good “systems questions” (see “Genogram Questions” handout for samples).
4. **Do not give advice.** Advice-giving is willful and leads to trying to “fix” another’s problems or situation. Challenge and ask systems questions instead.
5. **Respect confidentiality if requested.** Contract or covenant with your group members on your “ground rules” for confidentiality.
6. **Be honest.** Be honest when presenting your case study and be honest when helping your group members as they work through their presentation.



Genogram Questions

Asking good questions leads to good insight. Use the following list of questions to prompt exploration about what is going on in the family system as you explore your, or others', genograms:

- Why did that happen now? At that time?
- What has changed?
- Who talks to whom?
- Is there evidence of reactivity?
- What are the systemic (emotional) patterns at play?
- Do persons in the situation talk about content or feeling?
- Who is most motivated to change?
- Who are the most self-differentiated in the system?
- Who is the designated *Identified Patient* and whose anxiety is he or she carrying?
- Where are the primary triangles? The interlocking triangles?
- Are people acting out of their birth order roles?
- Is the anxiety manifested acute or chronic?
- Is there evidence of creativity?
- Are there any togetherness-separateness forces at play?
- Where is the system stuck?
- Can the system distinguish between content and process?
- What challenged the homeostasis of the system?
- Who is overfunctioning and who is underfunctioning?
- What are the systemic patterns in the corresponding families of origin?
- How is the "key" leader in the system functioning?

Session One

Introduction

You are about to lead your study group into a journey of self-discovery. The insights, memories, emotions, and experiences that this study will yield can be life-changing. Therefore, it is important to set the tone of your time together in this study. Take the time to allow members to introduce themselves during this first formal study session. Use the icebreaker activity as a way to help members relax, open up, and to begin sharing personal information in a non-threatening way.

Objectives for this session

The three objectives for this session are:

- Group members will be welcomed and introduced to the study
- The group members will clarify norms and expectations for the group
- The group members will create, and share, their first genogram.

Preparation for this session

- Read and complete the activities in *A Family Genogram Workbook* before leading this session. This will familiarize you with the content and will enable you to answer questions raised by group members throughout the study.
- Purchase a copy of the book for each participant.
- Provide materials needed: pencils, flip chart and markers, or blackboard, nametags.
- Numbered 3x5” cards (one sequential number for each participant).
- Copies of the handouts in this study guide, if you choose to use them.
- Secure and prepare the meeting room.

Session Teaching Outline

1. Welcome the group members to the study. If the members of the group are new to each other, or if there are visitors to a group where several know each other, distribute nametags to help the members get to know each other easier.
2. To help people get familiar and to set a fun and open tone to the start of this study lead the participants in the following icebreaker. Give everyone a 3x5” card with a number (one sequential number per participant). Instruct the participants to arrange themselves in numerical order communicating with each other without speaking or holding up fingers. They can make up their own body language,

- mime, or sign language to communicate. Once the group members have lined up check to see how well they did, then go to Round Two. In Round Two of this icebreaker have people arrange themselves in order of birth, again, without speaking or holding up fingers.
3. Take some minutes to orient the group members to the study. Talk about the importance of participation. At this time you can distribute and review the handouts for “How To Be A Good Group Member,” and “Our Covenant.” Lead the group members to talk about their desires and expectations for their time together. Review the covenant sample and lead the group members to craft their own covenant or to revise the sample. Inform them that at the end of today’s session you will ask each member to sign and commit to the group covenant.
 4. Distribute copies of *A Family Genogram Workbook* to each participant. These will be their personal copies in which they will write and will keep after the study. Review Chapter 1 with the group members. This is a basic tutorial on how to create a family genogram. Review the process step-by-step (pages 5-12). You may draw a model genogram on the board or on a flip chart as a way to model the process and the symbols conventions for the group (you can use a genogram of your own family as an illustration). Respond to questions about the nuts-and-bolts of creating a family genogram. The rule of thumb is to keep the genogram as simple as possible at this stage.
 5. Direct the participants to create their first genogram consisting of their immediate family of origin (their parents and their siblings). Instruct them to use pages 14-15 to diagram their genogram. Allow the group between 15 to 20 minutes for this activity. Make yourself available to answer any questions the group members may have about drawing their genogram.
 6. After about 20 minutes call time and get the group’s attention for the next step in this session. Ask the group members to open their workbooks to Chapter 2, pages 26 –27. Read the section on birth order and gender. Direct the group members to form groups of three or four and to share their genograms. Instruct them to share with others in their group their understanding of how the issues of birth order and gender influence the roles that people played in their families. Allow plenty of time for group sharing for this step.
 7. Call time and ask the group members to regroup. Invite the group members to return for their next sessions. Ask them to sign the group covenant as a way of affirming their commitment to the group process.
 8. Assignment: before dismissing the group tell them that their assignment for the next session is to complete a genogram depicting at least three generations.



Session Two

Introduction

For this second session the group members will focus on the emotional process of their families through identifying and describing how emotional triangles are at work in their relationships. Understanding how triangles work is one of the most intuitive ways to getting a grasp on emotional process. Most of the time for this session will consist of the participants working in small groups (3 to 4 persons). The ideal time for this session is 90 minutes. Adjust accordingly if your schedule requires a shorter amount of time.

Objectives for this session

The two objectives for this session are:

- Participants will fine-tune their family genograms.
- Participants will understand how emotional triangles are at work in their family systems.

Preparation for this session

- Read page 23 in *A Family Genogram Workbook* before leading this session. Study Appendix A, “Seven Laws of Emotional Triangles” and identify emotional triangles at work in you family system. This will enable you to provide illustrations and explain better how triangles work.
- Provide materials needed: pencils, flip chart and markers, or blackboard, nametags.
- Be sure participants have their copies of *A Family Genogram Workbook*.
- Secure and prepare the meeting room.

Session teaching outline

1. Welcome the group members as they arrive and get settled. Review the “Guidelines for Genogram Group Work” handout.
2. Direct the group members to page 23 in *A Family Genogram Workbook*. Read together the information on emotional triangles. Then, direct members to Appendix A in the book and read through the “Seven Laws of Emotional Triangles.” Using your own genogram as an example, identify an emotional

- triangle in your family. Explain the triangle as you understand it. Allow the group members to ask questions and make observations.
3. Direct the group members to form small groups of three or four persons (monitor this strictly. A larger number of persons in the group will mean that one person will not likely get to share his or her genogram). Instruct the group members to share two things: (1) their extended genogram (remember that their homework was to depict at least three generations), and (2) identify the major triangles in their families.
 4. Call time about ten minutes before the close of this session and regather the participants. Debrief the session by asking the group members to share general insights about triangles that they have acquired. Ask the participants to respond to the following debriefing questions as time allows:

Are the triangles in your family “permanent” or do they shift? When do they shift?

It is said that “you can’t get out of triangles; you can only re-position yourself in the triangles you are in.” Have you ever “repositioned” yourself in a triangle? How did you do that?

5. Conclude the session by telling the participants that for the next session they will examine family emotional patterns. Ask them to read Chapter 4 in *A Family Genogram Workbook* and to complete the timeline exercise in Appendix B.



Session Three

Introduction

This session of the study is primarily interactive. In this session of the study group members will participate in a family sculpture exercise. This interactive activity will take up most of the time in this session, therefore, take your time with the exercise. You may solicit the help of a volunteer for this activity ahead of time. If you do, share with that person the instructions for the family sculpture activity so that he or she will be familiar with the concepts and procedure. The ideal time for this session is 90 minutes. Adjust your teaching outline as necessary for your timeframe.

Objectives for this session

The two objectives for this session are:

- Participants will gain an understanding of the concept of family patterns
- Participants will share insights into how family patterns work through participation in an interactive family sculpture exercise.

Preparation for this session

- Read, and be familiar with, the instructions for the family sculpture exercise so that you can provide clear directions during the session
- One or two volunteers for the family sculpture exercise, as time permits.
- Balls of yarn in three colors: red, yellow, green
- Marker and 8 ½" x 11" sheets of paper to serve as identification signs (or use stick-on nametags)
- A large open space for the family sculpture exercise
- Participants will need their workbooks.

Session teaching outline

1. Welcome participants as they arrive. Allow the members to get settled before you begin the session.
2. Review with the group the concept of family patterns in Chapter 2, pages 21-22, in *A Family Genogram Workbook*. Review briefly the concept of emotional triangles (page 23 and Appendix A).
3. Explain to the participants that the primary learning experience for this session will be a "A Living Family Sculpture Exercise." Follow the procedure on the next page to guide the experience. If you have solicited the help of a volunteer ahead of time you may share the following page so that they will be familiar with the exercise.

A Living Family Sculpture Exercise

SET UP: This activity requires a large group setting, persons knowledgeable with the material in *A Family Genogram Workbook*, and the following materials: a few chairs, ribbon or colored yarn (green, red, and yellow), signs for names (name tags or a plain sheet of copier paper will do).

1. Call for a volunteer from the group to be the "sculptor." This person will "sculpt" his or her family system. Ask the sculptor to determine the family lifecycle, occasion, or time that he or she will depict, for example, current, 10 years ago, or during a time of crisis.
2. Direct the sculptor to choose persons from the audience to represent the individual members of the family system. They should approximate or resemble how those persons are to be perceived in the system. As each member of the system is chosen, he or she is introduced to the audience and given a name sign corresponding with their family title or position ("father," "boss," "step-mother," "older sister," "Identified Patient," etc.).
3. The sculptor is to arrange the persons in the system according to the following guidelines to illustrate the homeostasis of the system:
 - Persons of power or influence stand toward the front
 - Persons of little power or influence are placed toward the back
 - Persons who are emotionally "close" to each other are placed close together
 - Persons who are emotionally "distant" from the system, yet a part of it, are placed farther away
 - Very passive or "helpless" persons sit
 - Very powerful, domineering, or influential persons stand on chairs
 - Persons who communicate with each other face toward each other
 - Estranged or non-communicative persons face away from each other
 - A deceased but still influential member of the system must be represented.
4. After the sculptor has finished placing all the members of the family, hand her or him the colored ribbons or yarn. Instruct the sculptor to illustrate the emotional and communication relationships of the family members by connecting them with the colored yarn using the following color guide: green=healthy and/or open, red=antagonistic or unhealthy, yellow=fused. Identify the triangled relationships.
5. Ask the sculptor to interpret the family's homeostasis (the usual state of being). Then, inject into the family sculpture a real or contrived crisis and ask the sculptor to re-arrange the sculpture to reflect how such a crisis would: (1) affect the homeostasis; (2) change relationship patterns; (3) change member positions or roles in the family. Explore the dynamics of the family by asking the participants to (1) ask good systems questions, and (2) interpret the dynamics of the family in crisis.



4. If you have planned sufficient time to do the family sculpture exercise with two volunteers continue with the next person. Otherwise, draw the experience to a close.
5. **Option:** If you have sufficient time you can ask the participants to form small groups (3 or 4 members to a group) and ask them to share their timeline homework (Appendix B).
6. Close the session by assigning the class members to work on Chapter 3 of *A Family Genogram Workbook*. They are to begin to respond to the “20 questions” and come prepared to share their responses to the questions.



Session Four

Introduction

In this session participants will begin to interpret their genograms by sharing their responses to the “20 questions” in Chapter 3. By now your group members have probably developed enough trust amongst themselves so as to allow for open and honest discussion. As the group leader you can help facilitate that spirit of trust by participating in the small group time. Model openness, vulnerability, and honesty in your responses to the questions put to you. Model interest, sensitivity, acceptance, grace, and challenge when asking questions of others.

Objectives for this session:

The three objectives for this session are;

- Participants will develop a level of trust with each other through openness and honesty in sharing about their families
- Participants will interpret their genograms by responding to selected questions
- Participants will gain insight into family emotional process by listening to genogram stories from other group members.

Preparation for this session

- Complete as many of the “20 questions” as you are able before this session. Be willing and prepared to participate in a small group for this session.
- Paper and pencils or markers (and/or crayons and modeling clay).
- Make copies of the group handout, “Blessings and Legacies” for the participants.
- Participants will need their workbooks. They may refer to Appendix C, “The 20 Questions to Ask About Your Family,” during the small group activity.

Session teaching outline

1. Welcome the participants as they arrive. Distribute pencils (or markers or crayons) and paper in preparation for the first activity. [If you want to be extra creative distribute modeling clay or PlayDoh™ instead of, or as an option to, paper and pencil.]
2. Tell the participants that for this first activity they will do an “art project.” Instruct the group members to think of a “family heirloom” and to draw that object on their paper.

Allow sufficient time for participants to sketch then call time for the next step of this activity. Tell the participants that they are going to play “show and tell.” They are to stand and show their drawing to the group and explain what the family heirloom is that they have depicted. If you need to, prompt the speaker with questions like, “When did the object come into your family?” “Who kept it the longest?” “What does the heirloom represent to your family?” “Who has it now?” “Why did that person get it?” “Who will have it next?” Be sure to share your own drawing and story of your family heirloom. When each participant has had time to share move on to the next step.

3. Instruct the class that they will form small discussion groups of three or four persons to a group. Direct them to the instructions on the handout “Blessings and Legacies” (see next page) then distribute copies for the groups. Review the small group discussion instructions first before letting the groups form. This will help everyone start in the same place and will help the group members get into the discussion sooner.
4. When it is time to close call the groups back together for a few minutes of debriefing. Ask, “What insights did you gain about yourself and your family during your discussion?” “What statement about families in general can you now make that you were not able to make before beginning this study?” Allow additional comments and questions from the group. Thank the group members for their good work. Remind the group that the next session will be the final session in this study.
5. Before dismissing the group, give the homework for the next session: Pick two (2) of the 20 questions found in Chapter 3 and come prepared to share your responses. Extra credit: interview a family member using the 20 questions and come prepared to share about the interview.



Blessings and Legacies

DIRECTIONS: Before you begin choose a timekeeper-prompter for your group. This person will monitor the time, help keep things moving, and help keep the group on-task. Follow the directions given below. Note that there are two parts to this activity. Be sure that you allow sufficient time for both.



STEP 1: "Blessings and Legacies"

In this first step each of your group members is to share their response to question no. 3 in Chapter 3, along with the related questions on the page.

STEP 2: "I'd like to hear you share about..."

In this second step each group member is to choose one of the questions from Chapter 3 (or refer to Appendix C). Once they choose a question they are to turn to another person in the group and say, "[*Person's name*], I'd like to hear you share about question [*choose the question from your selection*]."

[NOTE: If a group member is reluctant to answer a question you may allow one "pass" for each member. If a group member chooses to "pass" on a question then the person making the request will choose a second question from the "20 questions." The second question *must* be answered.]



Session Five

Introduction

In this final session of the study participants will continue to explore their genograms by sharing their responses to more “20 Questions To Ask About Your Family” from Chapter 3 and referring to their genograms. The goal of this session is to provide ample time for participants to share about their responses to the genogram questions. Be sure to provide enough time for the closure activity for the session.

Objectives for this session

The two objectives for this session are:

- Participants will continue to explore and understand family emotional process through questions and dialogue.
- Participants will help bring the study to a close by sharing insights and deciding on how they will continue to work on their genograms.

Preparation for this session

- Secure and prepare the meeting room
- Participants will need their copies of *A Family Genogram Workbook*.

Session teaching outline

1. Welcome the participants as they arrive. Thank them for sharing their stories about their families and for being willing to be open and helpful to others. Tell them that for this session they will be given opportunity to continue to explore their genograms in small groups. Before breaking up the group into their small discussion groups review with them the “Guidelines For Genogram Group Work” handout.
2. Direct participants to form small discussion groups of three or four. Instruct them that they are to share responses to two (2) of the 20 questions in Chapter 3. Which questions they address is their choice. Those who conducted an interview as part of their homework may share about that. Remind the groups to select a timekeeper-prompter to monitor the time.
3. To bring closure to this study call time about 10 minutes before ending and ask participants to respond to the following: What do you understand about yourself now that you were not aware of at the start of this study? What areas in your genogram do you want to pursue? Who in your family will you talk to about your genogram? Each participant should answer the first question. The other questions can be from volunteers.

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