

# Family Tree Initial Data Form

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**YOUR NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

One of the best and quickest ways to locate emotional "hotspots" in ones personal developmental history is look at ones genealogy. Unlike the usual "family tree", however, what is needed for use in psychotherapy is only that information that tells us useful things about your history. This means that much of the information that might be found in a genealogy developed to document kinship will be skipped. It wouldn't be useful to us, so we don't need it.

Put simply, your family tree is a way of finding out *what* and *who* made you who you are. It doesn't tell us everything, certainly, but certain very important things will almost surely show up in the family tree we develop.

I ask below for some fairly straightforward information about family members. I will take this information, lay out the tree, and then ask you a small set of well-chosen questions about the people in the tree. When we are finished we likely will have located most, if not all, of the sources of disturbance in your mind as you experience it now. This may seem like a bold claim, but it has almost always proven to be an accurate prediction.

YOU are the central focus of this family tree. We will look down in time to your children. We will look within your own time to locate your siblings, as well as the key individuals with whom you have had intimate relationships. We will also look back in time to locate your parents, and their parents. We do not need to go further than this.

## **General Instructions:**

If you do not understand what I'm asking for below, or if you do not know the information asked for, simply skip the problem item and go on to the next one. I will review with you all information you give me, and we can then work to fill in missing or vague information.

If you need more room to respond to an item than is available on this form, feel free to continue your response on the back of the form or on a separate piece of paper.

## **Special instructions:**

First names are quite sufficient, as a rule. They are used only to identify people, as we talk about them.

Ages do not need to be exact. Approximations are usually quite good enough. If you have to

guess, do so, but note that it's a guess in such a case. In all cases, give people's ages as they are, or would be, **today**. An easy way to do this is to count down or up from your own age.

Deceased individuals are indicated by placing a box with an X inside it beside their name. Give their age at death, plus the year of their death.

What you don't know - a name or age - can be replaced by a question mark. People about whom you know little or nothing are almost certainly of little or no importance in your developmental history, so we will not be interested in them.

Don't worry about any of this. Remember – you can't really make a mistake here. Just do you best, and we'll talk about what you produce here in our next time together.

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**1. Your children, if any:** List all children you have produced, and their present age.

If you have produced children with more than one intimate, please keep the children in separate sub-lists, and begin each sub-list with the first name of the intimate involved.

**2. Intimates:** List all individuals with whom you have been involved who meet ANY of the following qualifications – they were of unusual emotional importance to you; you were engaged to marry them, or did; you had children with them; or you lived with them.

I need to know (a) their present age, (b) YOUR age at the time you were first significantly involved with them, and (c) how long (months or years) you were involved with them.

**3. Your siblings:** List oldest to youngest. Be sure to include yourself, when you get to your place in the birth order. If you have siblings from step-parents, whether you are biologically related to them or not (they may be adopted, fostered, etc.), include them as well, but in a separate sub-list. Begin the list sub-list with the names of both parents (or write "adopted", "fostered", etc., if not known).

**4. Your parents:** Generally, this will be your birth parents. What is most important, however, is simply the people who had the greatest influence on you. Adoptive parents, or grandparents, may well be those people, in which case they should be listed as your parents in your family tree. If you do that, please also list your birth parents, in a separate space.

**5. Mother's siblings:** As with yourself, list any adopted siblings as well. List the sibling set going from oldest to youngest, and place your mother where she belongs in the list.

**6. Mother's parents:** Usually this will just be a pair of names, but it is possible for it to be quite appropriate to list more. Just identify all of them well (example: "John – married mother's mother when she was 12.")

**7. Father's siblings:** List these just as you did with your Mother's siblings (see instructions above for her).

**8. Father's parents:** List these just as you did with your Mother (see instructions above).

Thank you for your careful attention to these questions.

**Tom Cloyd, MS, MA**

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