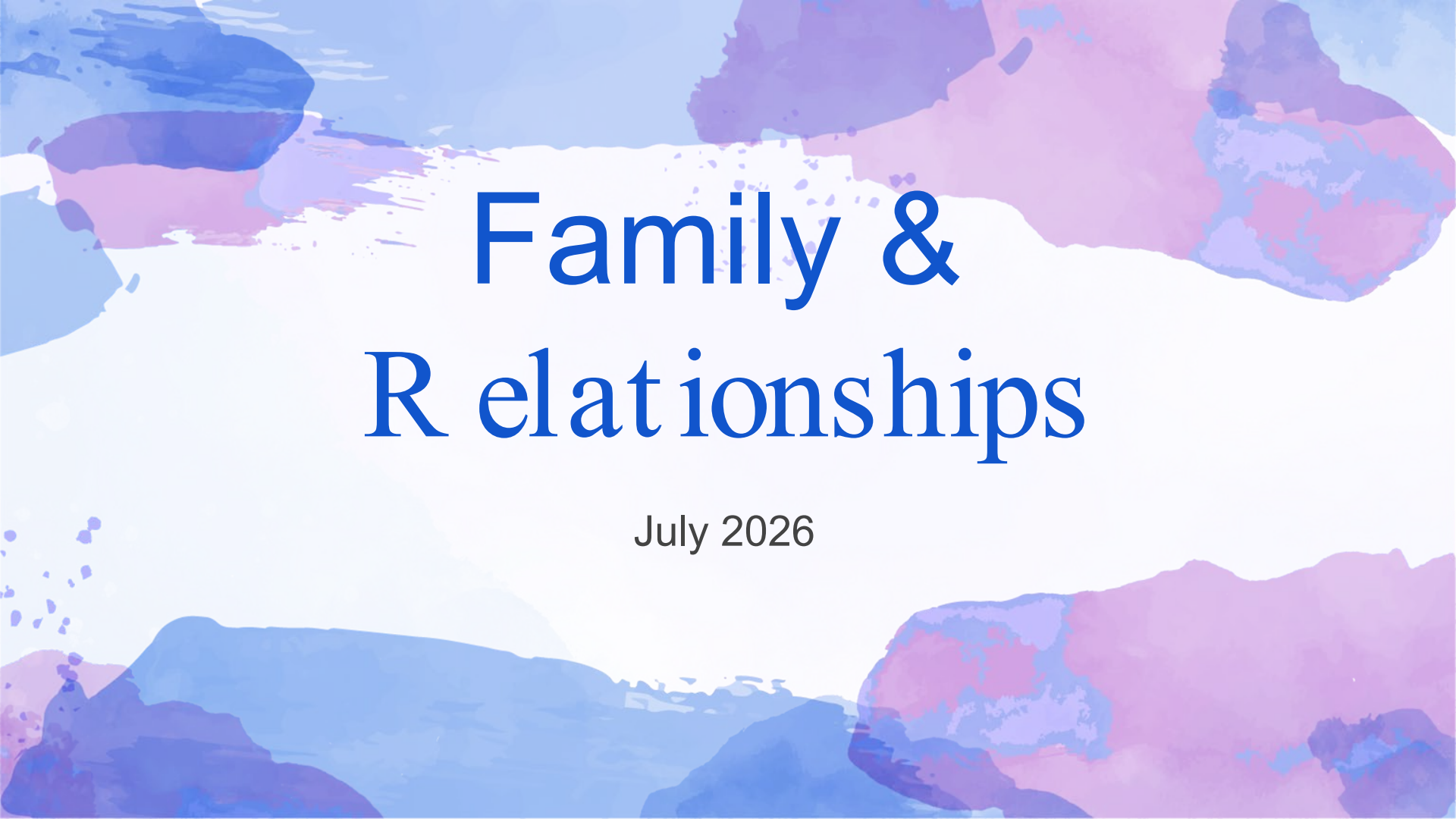




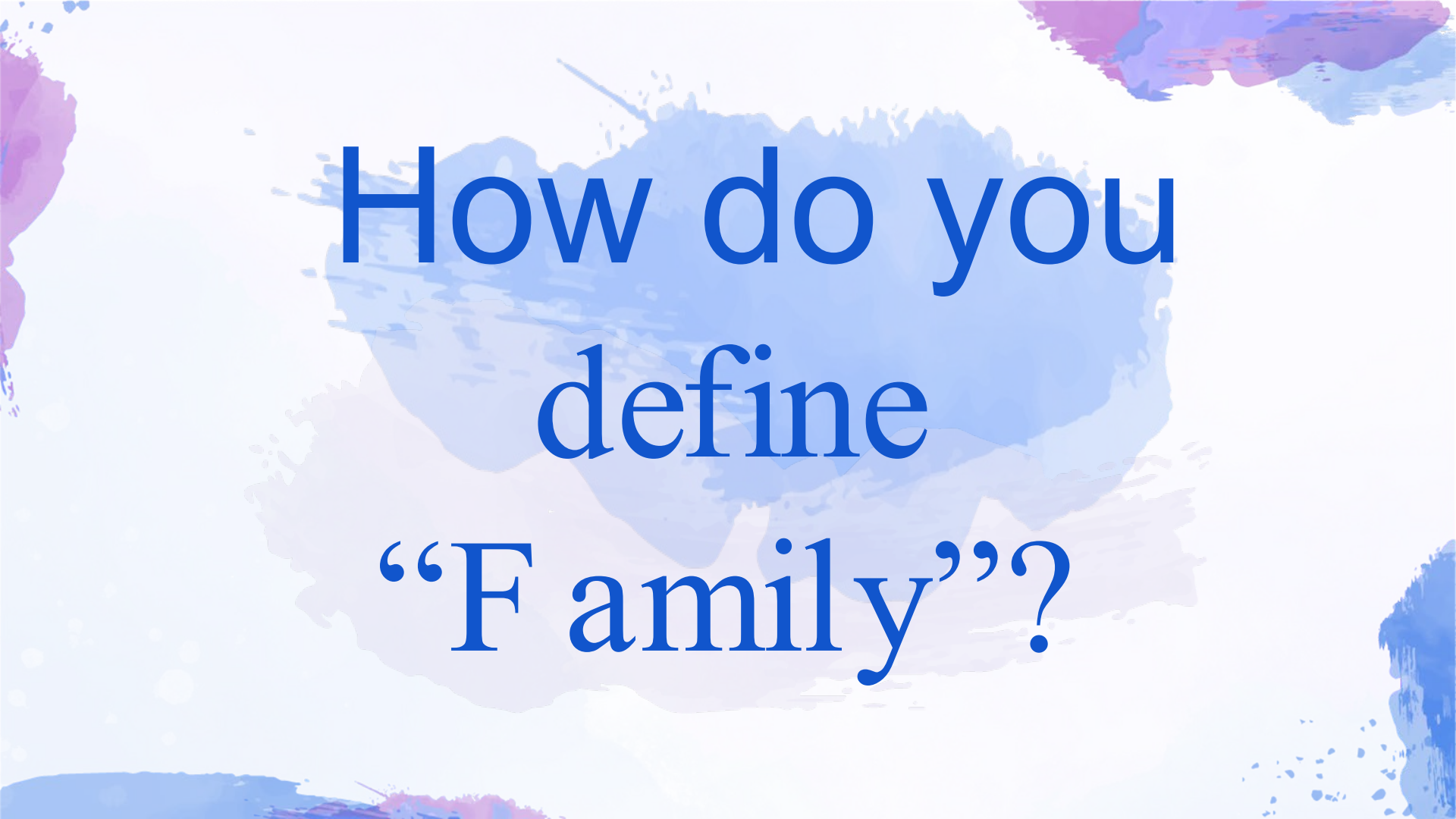
Family & Relationships

July 2026



Objectives

- Define “family”
- Understand the role of family in personal development
- Identify common challenges with families and relationships
- Discuss strategies to overcome challenges



How do you
define
“Family”?

Would your definition of “Family” include...



- A person who is not a blood or legal relative (e.g., a best friend) ?
- Romantic partners who are cohabitating and unmarried?
- Children who were once step -siblings after the remarried couple divorces?
- A married couple without children?
- A family pet?

“Family”



- “A group of one or two parents and their child or children living together as a unit” (Dictionary)
- “A group of two or more persons related by birth, marriage, or adoption who live together” (Health Resources and Services Administration)
- “Networks of people who share their lives over long periods of time, bound by ties of marriage, blood, law, or commitment, legal or otherwise, who consider themselves as family, and who share a significant history and anticipated future of functions as a family” (Braithwaite et al., 2025)

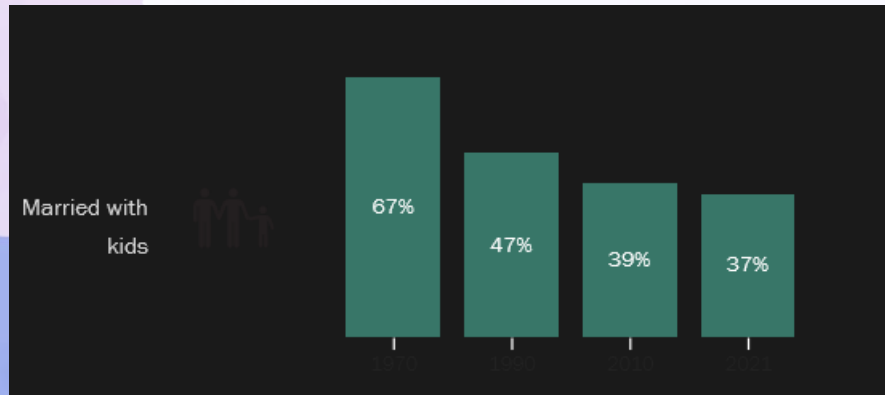


Examples of Family Structures

- **Nuclear family** – 2 parents with children
- **Extended family** - including grandparents, Aunts, Uncles, Cousins
- **Single-parent family** - 1 parent with child(ren)
- **Blended family** - Step-parents and children
- **Adoptive and foster family**
- **“Chosen” family** - not blood related

Changes in Family Structures Over Time

- In 1970 67% of Americans ages 25-49 were living with their spouse and one or more children younger than 18
- Over the past 5 decades, that has dropped to **37%**



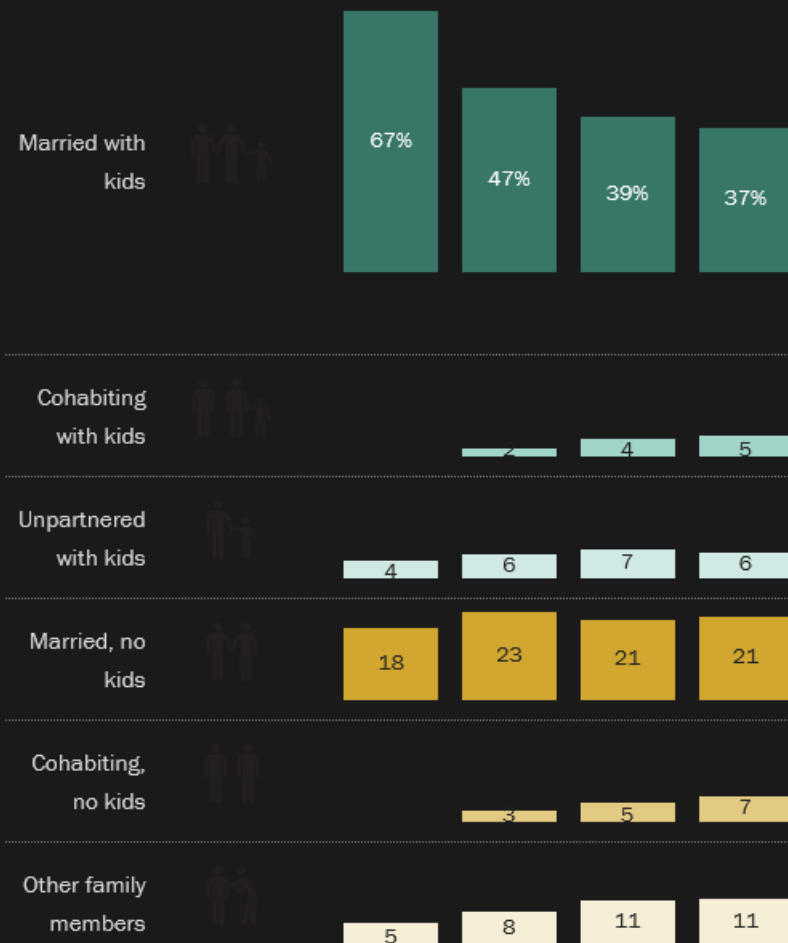
(Pew Research Center)



Changes in Family Structures Over Time

- There has been an increase in other types of family arrangements

% of 25- to 49-year-olds who are ...

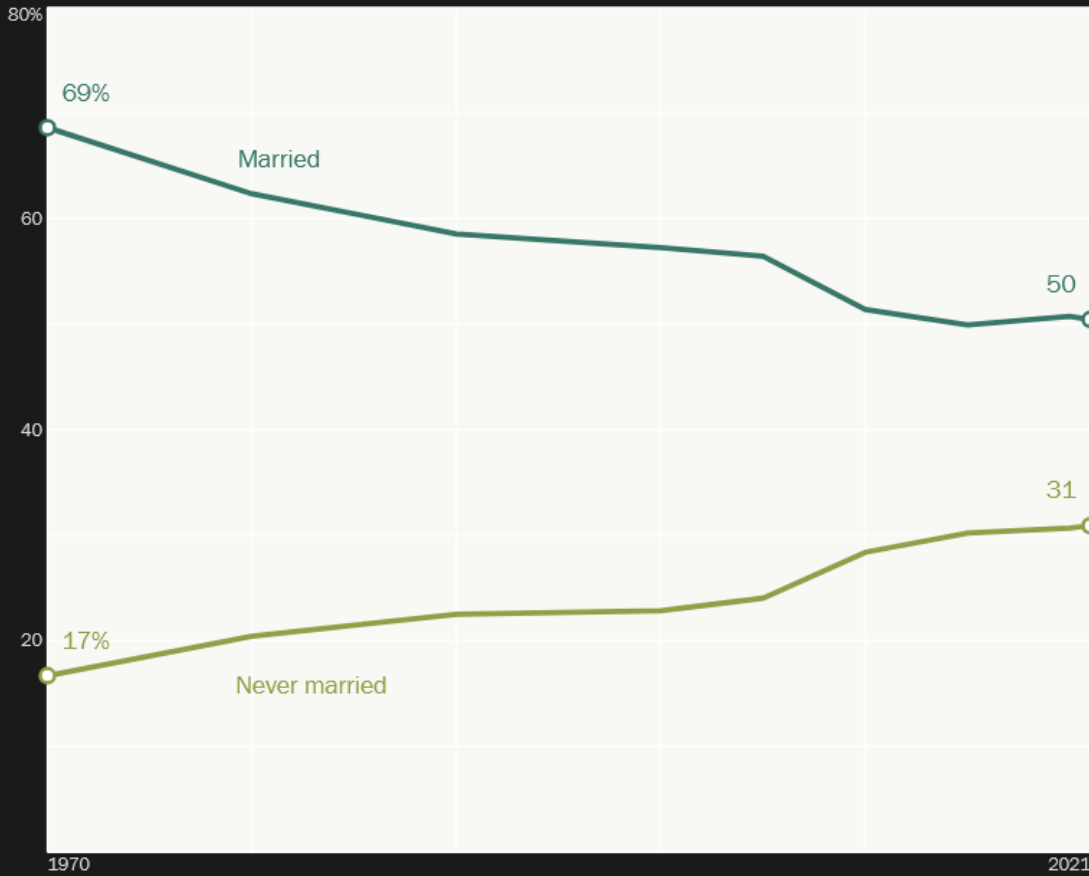




Changes in Family Structures Over Time

- Many Americans are marrying later in life or not marrying at all

% of U.S. adults ages 18 and older who are married or have never been married





Changes in Family Structures Over Time



22%

of Americans live in
multigenerational households,
up from 13% in 1970.

Pew Research Center 



Changes in Family Structures Over Time



22%

of Americans live in
multigenerational households,
up from 13% in 1970.

Pew Research Center 



On average, women have

1.9

children in their lives,
down from 3.1 in 1976.

Pew Research Center 



Importance of Family and Relationships

Personal Development

- Family of Origin - The family that we grew up with
- Has a significant impact on personal, social, emotional development
- Influences identity, our value system and character
- Can shape what we seek out or avoid when creating our own families

Modeling of Romantic Relationships

- Families can serve as a model for romantic relationships
- Can shape what we believe a romantic relationship should/should not look like and influence our future relationships

Support & Challenge

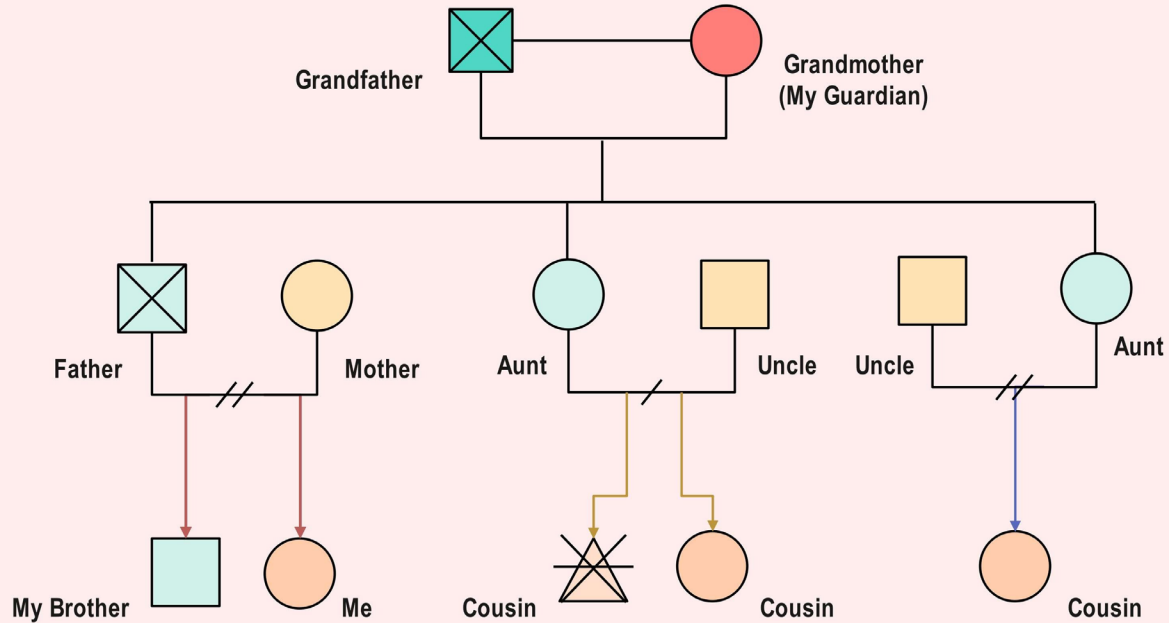
- Family/ Romantic partners can serve as a significant source of support **AND/OR**
- Family/ Romantic partners can also serve as a significant source of stress

2 things can be true!

Suggested Activity: Family Mapping/Genogram

- **Family Systems Theory** – an approach to understand interactions between individuals in a family and the context(s) in which the family is embedded
- **Genogram** - pictorial display of a person's position and ongoing relationships within their family system
 - Can give insight into family dynamics - identifying sources of support/struggle

My Family's Genogram





Common Root Causes of Family & Relationship Conflict

Communication issues: Miscommunication/poor communication

Unresolved conflict

Unhealthy boundaries

External stressors (work, finances, health problems, politics)

Addressing Root Causes of Family Conflict : Communication

- Engage in communication self -reflection (Intrapersonal)

- When/ with who is communication easy? Difficult?
- How would I rate my communication skills?
- Are there methods of communication that are easier or more difficult to engage in (in-person, written, texting, calling)?
- What topics are easy to discuss? Difficult?
- What emotions are easy to open up about? Difficult?
- What helps me feel comfortable to open up about difficult topics?
- What communication pet peeves/ triggers do I have?
- What would I want to improve with my communication skills?

Addressing Root Causes of Family Conflict : Communication

- Talk openly about communication (Interpersonal)
 - Once you understand your own communication needs, come together to discuss interpersonal dynamics
 - Discuss communication challenges AND successes!
 - Identify goals/changes that need to be made to work towards more effective communication and don't forget to follow -up!

Addressing Root Causes of Family Conflict :

Unresolved Conflict

- Conflict is expected
- If conflict not dealt with / unresolved - can lead to tension and create emotional distance and dysfunction
- Suggestions for addressing unresolved conflict:
 1. Conduct regular check -in's- reflect on your relationships - what's working/what's not?
 2. Have respectful conversations about how you are feeling/ what you need/ your expectations of one another
 3. Consider going to individual or family therapy

Addressing Root Causes of Family Conflict : Boundaries

Boundary Types

Types	✗ Porous	✓ Healthy	✗ Rigid
Physical boundaries refer to personal space and physical touch.	Allowing or initiating unwanted touch or physical closeness	Allowing or initiating appropriate touch or physical closeness	Never allowing or initiating appropriate touch or physical closeness
Emotional boundaries refer to feelings.	Oversharing or taking on too much of someone else's emotions	Sharing and connecting with others in a way that feels right to you	Never sharing your emotions or never attending to those of others
Intellectual boundaries refer to thoughts and ideas.	Caving in to others' views or never having views of your own	Respecting others' views while also standing up for your own	Insisting you're always right and never considering other views
Sexual boundaries refer to how and with whom you express your sexuality.	Going along with sexual activity despite not wanting to	Honoring your sexual desires, preferences, and limits	Always denying sexual desires even when compatible with your morals
Material boundaries refer to how you use your money and possessions.	Overspending or overgiving in a way that doesn't serve your well-being	Being generous without overgiving or creating codependency	Being excessively stingy and guarded with money or possessions
Time boundaries refer to how you spend your time.	Wasting time on things that don't matter or allowing others to dictate your schedule	Devoting enough time to the things that are important to you	Never being flexible or spontaneous with your time

Addressing Root Causes of Family Conflict :

Boundaries

- Unhealthy boundaries or boundaries not being communicated or respected can cause issues
- Suggestions:
 - Reflect on your boundaries/expectations of others/ how this has been communicated and enforced in the past
 - Communicate clearly what your boundaries are
 - Follow through when boundaries are not respected

Addressing Root Causes of Family Conflict : Boundaries

- How to communicate a boundary:
 - Use “I” statements - conveys what you are feeling in a specific situation and what you would need to change
 - I Feel ____ when _____. I need _____.
- Prepare for what you would do if the boundary is violated

Addressing Root Causes of Family Conflict :

External Stressors



- Finances, work, health
- Build strong coping skills to manage anxiety and know what works for you in which situations
- Openly communicate with one another about the external pressures
- Consider therapy

Coping Skills

COPING SKILLS



MEDITATE



EXERCISE



WRITE
JOURNAL



DRAW



LISTEN TO
MUSIC



TAKE
A BATH



PLAY
WITH PET



ENJOY
NATURE



CLEAN
THE HOUSE



READ
A BOOK



USE
AROMATHERAPY



PLAY
GAME



COOK
A MEAL



KNITTING



PRAY



FINDING
HUMOR



MAKE A
GRATITUDE LIST



COLORING



GARDENING



DO
YOGA



GET
ENOUGH SLEEP



ACCEPT A
CHALLENGE



DRINK
TEA



SQUEEZE A
STRESS BALL



PLAY MUSICAL
INSTRUMENT



ASK FOR
HELP



PRACTICE
DEEP/SLOW BREATHING



EAT HEALTHY
FOOD



LIMIT
CAFFEINE



SCHEDULE TIME
FOR YOURSELF



CRY



SMILE



TAKE
A WALK



DOODLE
ON PAPER



GO SEE
MOVIE



EAT A LITTLE
CHOCOLATE