

# FAMILY OF ORIGIN

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The term Family of Origin really addresses from whence we come. Our family of origin includes our nuclear family (Mom, Dad and siblings) plus all our other relatives such as Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles, Cousins, etc.

When one looks at family of origin, it is necessary to look at relationships within the family, one's place in the family, expectations of family members and culture to mention a few variables. Being able to understand how the emotional process and the years of "training" can affect our interaction with our spouse, and others that we come in contact with during our lifetime is important. Understanding the emotional process is still at work with regard to family of origin and modifying our response to them can aid significantly in the resolution of problems that we will encounter in our marriage.

Family theory sees the entire network of the extended family system as important in the gaining an understanding to significant patterns of interaction. Specific patterns of behavior, perceptions and thinking in addition to specific issues within the family, such as: religious observance, sex, money, abuse, drinking, health, divorce and separation (to name a few) seem to have an eerie way of reappearing in later generations. Does this mean that one generation after the other will be afflicted with the same problems? No.

In marriage, an awareness of the family of origin will enable the individual and/or the couple to take more responsibility for his/her (their) contributions to difficulties and problems that may be encountered along the way.

How does the family of origin play a major role in both the difficulties and the successes of marriage? As humans, we have all experienced many events during our lifetime. These events have an impact on how we respond to events and situation that may be encountered at a later date. Relationships with our parents, siblings and our interaction with them both positively and negatively have produced tapes. A tape is a situation or event in which is committed to our behavioral memory, either conscious or unconscious, in which we have a habitual response. We respond in a manner that is familiar when a similar situation is encountered. These tapes, although at times seem positive can actually be very destructive. Tapes can be either compatible or incompatible with our mate's.

We are all influenced by styles of interaction between family members. Roles that have been taken on by different members of the family, expectations of family members and style of communication within the family all have an impact on our relationship.

What are some of the more common effects of our family?

- ◆ Sibling birth order has been observed to have an effect on the individual through out their life. Certain expectations are placed on the first born child, the oldest male, the middle child, the youngest child or the "baby" of the family and the roles of females in the family. These expectations and roles may vary from family to family and culture to culture, but the roles have a tendency to be perpetuated in one form or the other.

- ◆ Conflict resolution and the roles taken on by the members of the family either directly involved in the conflict or in a support role. Who sides with who and what is the pattern of resolution?
- ◆ Expectations of the head of the household. Who is the head of the household?
- ◆ Health or illness, how is an individual treated within the family when they are ill.
- ◆ Financial responsibility and goals.
- ◆ Family rituals, holidays and celebrations.
- ◆ Parenting
- ◆ Commitment to church and church related activities.
- ◆ Separation and divorce, what is the commitment to marriage?
- ◆ Decision making
- ◆ Methods of communication or non-communication, verbal and non-verbal.

This list can go on and on, but these few were brought forward to begin to help you become aware of the impact that our families have on us. Even though we may feel that we have left the nest, and that there will be limited impact on the new union by our families, what we have observed and participated in as we matured has left its mark. With an understanding of from "whence we came" the potential destructive effects can be addressed, while the constructive effects can be enhanced.