

Workbook Chapter Eight Connect the Dots

Self-Assessment Tools:

Self-Quiz: Family Patterns Inventory

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Directions: In the blank before each item, place a number from 1 through 4 that indicates how true it is for you. Key: 1 = Almost Never 2 = Occasionally 3 = Usually 4 = Almost Always

- ___1. My current relationship conflicts remind me of conflicts I had as a child.
- ___2. My partner says or does some things that irritate me and remind me of the way my parents treated me.
- ___3. My partner disapproves of some things I say or do just the way my parents did.
- ___4. I criticize myself and others the way I was criticized as a child.
- ___5. Even though I don't want to, I find myself saying and doing things that hurt my children or partner the same way people hurt me while I was growing up.
- ___6. When I get upset at myself, I say some of the same critical things to myself that my parents or others said to me when I was a child.
- ___7. The way my partner relates to me reminds me of the way my parents related to me when I was a child.
- ___8. I find myself acting weak and helpless so others will feel sorry for me or help me out.
- ___9. I can see similarities between the kinds of intimate relationships I now have and the relationship my parents had or still have with each other.
- ___10. I tend to feel uneasy when everything seems to be going well in my relationships.
- ___11. When I have conflicts with others, I tend to focus on what they did to cause the conflict.
- ___12. I tend to give more than I receive in my relationships.
- ___13. I have trouble enjoying sex the way I would like.
- ___14. I am afraid to be "too successful."
- ___15. I don't like to take risks and prefer to stay with what is familiar.
- ___16. I feel my intimate partners treats me unfairly.
- ___17. When asked, I have trouble thinking about or listing positive traits about myself.
- ___18. I cannot express my feelings the way I would like.
- ___19. I encounter people who tend to treat me like my parents treated me.
- ___20. I feel controlled by the expectations of others.

_____ **Total Score**

Scoring and Interpretation:

Add the numbers in the column to the left of the statements to get your total score. Use the following guidelines to help you interpret the possible meaning of your score.

If your score was between:

20–40 A few family patterns are likely sources of your present reactions.
41–60 Many family patterns are the likely sources of your present reactions.
61–80 Almost all of your reactions have their source in unprocessed family patterns.

COMPLETION PROCESS WITH YOUR PARENTS©

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This exercise is designed to do with a trusted partner or therapist who will guide you through the process and also support and witness your experience. This exercise can take up to two hours with each parent, depending on how much previous work you have done with these issues. In it you play both your part and your parents' part in a Gestalt-like process. Sometimes it is possible to do this with your real parents, if they are willing. In that case, we recommend doing the exercise with them in a therapy setting where you will have skilled support if the process becomes difficult or breaks down because of the intense feelings that often emerge. Prior to doing this exercise, it is useful to have clients do the exercises on the characteristics of the parents.

1. Decide which parent you will first complete with. Invite your image of this parent (or parent figures) to sit down in front of you to go through a process in which he or she will speak his or her truth and will listen to and validate your truth.

2. Tell this parent about any unresolved feelings (pain, grief, shame, resentment) that you have toward him or her.

a) Tell this parent what he or she did or didn't do that hurt you. (Use your two lists to do this.)

b) Tell this parent how you felt when he or she did or didn't do these things (physically discharge any feelings if necessary).

c) Tell this parent how each of these things affected your life.

d) Tell this parent what unhealthy telepathic agreements you are aware that you made with him or her. ("I'll do this for you if you do this for me. ") Tell him or her why this was unhealthy for you.

3. Tell this parent the new healthy agreement you want from that parent and ask him/her to agree.

("What I want from you now is... Are you willing to agree to that?")

4. Change seats, assume the role of your parent and answer this question.

5. Therapist or partner checks for completion of this part of the process.

Did the unhealthy agreement get stated clearly?

Were the feelings expressed?

Was the new healthy agreement stated clearly?

6. Respond as your parent to the other things your son or daughter has said to you.

a) As the parent, receive what the child has said. Tell your child your real feelings.

b) Reflect back the facts and feelings. Let your child know the truth about what s/he has said to you.

7. Switch seats again and reflect back to your parent what he or she has said. Add any thoughts and feelings this brings to your awareness. Is this the truth? If not, ask him/her again to tell you the truth.

8. Switch seats and become your mother or father again, and by using intuition, sense what it was like to be that parent. Begin with your parent as a child, moving

through the years to his or her adulthood, sharing what life was like for him or her. As the parent, look at the influences that caused you to be the way you were as a child growing up. Communicate anything further you wish to communicate to your child about your life.

9. Change seats and become yourself again. Take in what your parent communicated. See if there is anything further you wish to communicate to your parent.

10. Release your parent from your expectations and blame releasing your parent to find his or her highest good in his or her own way. Accept your parent as he or she really is (if you can now). Say, "I release you from my expectations and blame. You are free to find your highest good in your own way, if you choose. I accept you as you really are." (Note! If you are not ready to release your parent, tell them that instead and tell them why and are not ready.)

11. Forgive your parent (give back anything you took on that you don't want). Say, "I now give back to you your shame, your fears..."

12. Forgive yourself.

Give back to your True Self (reclaim) all the things that you have denied yourself and that you now realize you truly deserve.

Say, "I now give back to myself my self-respect..., etc."

13. Affirm your choice to take charge of your own life and to use your free will to create the life he or she wants.

Say, "I now agree to live my life differently from now on. In order to do that I will (will not) . . . "

14. Therapist or friend gives feedback to you regarding the completion of the whole process.

15. Repeat Steps 1-14 of this process with your other parent.

(Note! Give yourself time to integrate what you have learned from this process before repeating it with your other parent.)

Case Example:

Sara, age 57, is the mother of teenaged twins. In my work with her, she reported having trouble relating to her husband. In one session, she said, "he acts just like my father did." I looked at this as an opportunity to connect some dots so I asked her if she remembers any incidents where this was true.

She recalled an incident when she was a teenager and her father called her one day from the tennis court and ordered her to clean the house while he and her brother were going to play tennis. Angry at being order around by her father, she called her mother and complained about her father's behavior. She asked her mother to do something to change the way her father treated her.

In another session after she shared this incident, she was telling me how her daughter comes to her and complains about her father and asks Sara to do something to stop the way her father is treating her. I immediately swathe parallel and pointed it out to Sara. She had no awareness that she was repeating a pattern of behavior exactly how it was for her growing up now with her children.

This got her attention and made a believer out of her that whatever is left unfinished, will reappear later in a familiar form. This breakthrough has led to more similar experiences of "connecting the dots" for Sara.

