



FREE GUIDE

7 Questions About Your Family Story

A first encounter with psychogenealogy — a first step toward discovering how certain inheritances from your family's history can shape your life.



Institute of Transgenerational Studies and Practices

www.psychogenealogy.info



Maybe you know your story

You know where you were born, who your parents and grandparents are, where your family comes from.

Maybe you've heard the same stories many times — about people, events, departures, loves, losses, or achievements.

But how well do you really know your family's **story**?

This guide won't give you answers about who you are. Instead, it offers you 7 questions you can use to start looking at the history you come from a little differently.



BACKGROUND

What is psychogenealogy?

Psychogenealogy invites us to see a person not only through what is happening to them in the present, but also in the context of the history of the family they belong to.

Within a family, far more is passed from one generation to the next than names, physical traits, or possessions. Stories and values are passed on. Ways of loving and caring. Ways of coping with loss, change, or uncertainty. Aspirations, fears, family rules, silences, and things that are "not talked about." But also resources: the capacity to survive difficult times, models of solidarity, and a sense of belonging.

Psychogenealogy explores these links between family history and individual experience, without assuming that the past determines the present. Getting to know your history doesn't mean searching the past for an explanation for everything that happens to you — it means, above all, becoming curious: What did I receive? What did I learn? What has repeated? What has changed? What do I choose to carry forward?

Four key ideas

Invisible family loyalty — unwritten expectations and obligations, passed on without words, from one generation to the next.

The anniversary syndrome — emotional difficulties, illnesses, or accidents that occur at dates or ages coinciding with traumatic events from the family's past.

Transgenerational transmission — unresolved traumas and life themes that resurface, often in disguise, in later generations.

The genosociogram — a visual map of the family, used in therapy to see, at a glance, the recurring life situations within it.

BEYOND THEORY

These four ideas don't stay theoretical. They sit at the center of the work of Cristina Schmidt, one of the founding members of ITSP, who has spent years working with exactly these life themes: the transgenerational transmission of anger — situations of injustice and unfairness in a family's history —, class neurosis — the impact of moving from one social class to another — and the influence of the unspoken and of silence on family members. Cristina has presented these topics at national and international conferences and has led, over the years, a large number of workshops — online and in person — not only across Romania, but also in the USA, Japan, China, Indonesia, Italy, Egypt, Turkey, and many other countries.



SIGNS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

How do transgenerational life themes show up?

Transgenerational life themes rarely announce themselves. Most often, they simply feel like "just the way I am."

- Unintentionally repeating situations similar to those your parents or grandparents lived through — the same kinds of relationships, the same blocks in different life situations.
- Intense anxieties or fears that don't seem to have a clear cause in your own life.
- An inexplicable pull toward, or aversion to, certain places, professions, or ages.
- Family secrets or topics that are simply "not talked about."
- The feeling that you are living a life that isn't entirely your own — like an already-written script.

None of these signs is a verdict. They are invitations — signals that something unfinished in your family's past is asking to be seen.



GUIDED PRACTICE

Three exercises to get started

EXERCISE 1

Your family tree

Take a sheet of paper and simply sketch three generations of your family — grandparents, parents, you. Next to each person, note one important event (a birth, a loss, a move, an illness). Notice: are there dates, ages, or events that repeat?

EXERCISE 2

Situations that repeat in your life

Choose situations or things that keep repeating in your life — a relationship, a fear, a block. Ask yourself: "Who else in my family lived through something similar?" You don't need an immediate answer — just curiosity.

EXERCISE 3

The unspoken

Is there a subject your family tends to avoid? Simply write it down, without analyzing it. Naming it is already a first step toward taking away its power.



REFLECTION EXERCISE

7 questions about your family story

Don't try to answer quickly. Some answers you already know. For others, you may want to talk with your parents, grandparents, siblings, or other family members. And for some questions, you might simply discover: "I don't know." That, too, is an important answer.

1 What are the stories about my family that I've heard the most?

Who appears in them? Who is admired? Who is criticized? What events get told over and over?

Write down three family stories you've heard more than once.

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2 Who or what is talked about very little?

Are there people you know very little about? Periods you have almost no information on? Vague or contradictory answers you've received?

What do I still not know about my family's history?

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REFLECTION EXERCISE

3 What major events changed the course of my family?

Births and deaths. Marriages and separations. Migrations. Wars. Losing a home, or building one. Major career changes. Illness. Achievements. Bankruptcies. Encounters that changed destinies.

What were the great turning points of your family?

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4 What seems to repeat across generations?

Career choices, relationships, the ages at which certain events happened, moves from one place to another, roles people take on. A similarity doesn't automatically mean transgenerational transmission — above all, it's something worth noticing.

What repetitions catch your attention in your family?

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REFLECTION EXERCISE

5 What has changed from one generation to the next?

Maybe someone was the first to leave the family's town or village. The first to go to university. The first woman to have her own profession. The first to divorce. The first to choose a different kind of life.

What did your generation do differently from those before it?

6 What good things did I receive from my family?

Resources are passed down through generations too, not just difficulties: perseverance, humor, curiosity, faith, a capacity for hard work, care for others, independence, creativity, a particular way of staying together through hard times.

What are three things you're glad you received from your family?



REFLECTION EXERCISE

7 What do I want to carry forward?

This is perhaps the most important question.

We cannot change our family's history. But we can change the relationship we have with what we received. We can keep some things. We can transform others. We can start something that didn't exist before. Look for a moment in both directions: toward the generations that came before you, and toward those that come after you.

What do I want to carry forward?

And what would I like to begin with me?



CLOSING

This is where the exploration can begin

If you've answered the seven questions, you probably have new questions now too.

Maybe you discovered you know surprisingly much about your family.

Or maybe you realized how many things you've never asked.

Maybe you noticed a repetition.

A rupture.

A person you became curious about.

A story you'd like to hear again.

There's no need to find explanations right away. In psychogenealogy, a good question is sometimes a more valuable beginning than a hasty answer.

You can start simply: choose one of the seven questions and ask it to someone in your family. Listen to the story. Then ask one more question.



THE NEXT STEP

You've opened a door. You don't have to walk through it alone.

The seven questions above can surface life themes, stories, and new questions — and sometimes, emotions you weren't expecting. That's an important step. And at the same time, a family's deepest recurring life situations are hard to see and hard to change on your own, because they're woven into the very way you learned to see the world.

This is where the real work of psychogenealogy as a therapeutic process begins: not just noticing these life themes, but understanding them in depth, in a safe setting, guided by a specialist trained in transgenerational therapy. At ITSP, we've built programs for anyone who feels ready to continue this exploration — whether for themselves, or to help others do the same.

FOR YOU

Individual sessions, workshops & retreats

- Individual sessions — work one-on-one, with guidance, on your own genosociogram, to understand the origin of life themes, fears, or blocks that keep repeating in your life.
- Workshops, online and in person — discover the tools of psychogenealogy alongside other participants, at an accessible pace, wherever you are.
- Retreats — immerse yourself in a safe, guided experience for a deeper exploration of your family's story, away from daily routine.

→ [See all services for you](#)

FOR PROFESSIONALS

Training in psychogenealogy and transgenerational practices

- Learn the classical methodology of psychogenealogy, in a professional and ethical framework.
- Deepen tools such as the genosociogram, applicable in your own practice.
- Join a community of practitioners trained by ITSP.

→ [View training programs](#)

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This material is for educational and personal reflection purposes only. It does not represent and does not replace psychotherapy, psychological or psychiatric evaluation, diagnosis, consultation, or medical treatment. If exploring your family history brings up difficult experiences or significant distress, support from a qualified professional is recommended.