

Family Of Origin – Background Information

Harry Motro, Psy.D., LMFT / 408-823-2822 / www.harrymotro.com / harrymotro@gmail.com

When doing these worksheets, think about your childhood, up to age 18. Do not answer based on your current life.

In the boxes below, write down the strengths and weakness of your primary caregivers. Afterwards, circle the strengths and weaknesses that had the most impact on you.

Strengths (examples - warm, loving, always there, nurturing, sense of humor, intelligent, hard-working, playful)		
Mom	Dad	Other

Weaknesses (examples - never there, critical, anxious, angry, controlling, cold, distant, preoccupied, depressed)		
Mom	Dad	Other

Who are you more like, Mom or Dad? In what ways?

Describe Mom and Dad’s relationship with each other in the following areas:	
Affection: how much/how expressed?	
Conflict: how much/how expressed?	
Final decision maker?	
Communication: Surface or deep?	

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CHILDHOOD WOUNDS: List your childhood “wounds” and their impact. Think about your chronic frustrations and consider what you needed most but did NOT get from your caretakers. Examples: more time or attention, acceptance of who I was, safety, encouragement, affection, to have an opinion, physical, sexual or emotional abuse, respect, etc. If you are having trouble identifying these unmet needs, review your parents’ weaknesses above and the list of painful memories below.

Childhood frustrations / Unmet needs	What you felt as a child. Name the feeling words.	How you coped with the frustration or unmet need
Example: My mom criticized me constantly / Needed affirmation.	Unworthy, insecure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tried to be perfect. • Became critical of myself and others. • Cried alone in my room.
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

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Expectations from the past that are different from your partner’s expectations can wreak havoc on your relationship. Complete the section below and then, after both FOO sessions, compare notes with your partner.

Pattern, rule, or behavior from childhood	How that is showing up today
1. Displays of Affection:	
2. Communication Patterns:	
3. Husband/Wife roles:	
4. Power/Control issues:	
5. Attitudes about sex:	
6. Manipulation/means of influence:	
7. Child raising:	
8. Conflict/anger:	
9. Money patterns:	
10. Nurturance/fun:	
11.	
12.	

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List the most significant memories (painful, traumatic or momentous) from your childhood. Think hard about your life from birth to 18 years old; however, you are welcome to add items that occurred after 18 as well. Try to think of at least 5 of them. If you have more than fit on this page, copy the page and continue. We will NOT delve into these items in detail in your first Family of Origin session; however, you are invited to bring any of these up in couples therapy and spend as much time as needed on any item.

Childhood Memories:	Approximate age when event occurred	Rate intensity (1-10)
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		

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CORE BELIEFS ABOUT YOURSELF: Most people have deeply held positive and negative core beliefs which impact how we live and relate to others. To identify your core beliefs, review your *Childhood Wounds* page and your *Childhood Memories* page. Ask yourself: “What painful childhood experiences would have brought about such feelings or experiences as a child?” And then, “What might I have concluded about myself, others or life as a result of these experiences?” That conclusion is most likely to be a core belief. To better figure out your core beliefs, go to Couples Tools tab on my website and read the “Core Beliefs” article under Family of Origin.

Place a “Y” for yes or a “N” for no by the common Negative Core Beliefs that apply to you and indicate its strength from 1 to 10 (strongest).

		Negative Core Belief		
Y/N	1-10	One-word	Statement	How it shows up today
		Defective	I am not good enough. I can't get anything right. I'm stupid. I'm worthless. I'm always wrong.	
		Unlovable	I am not lovable. I'm unacceptable. Nobody loves me or wants me. I'm unwelcome.	
		Abandonment	People I love will leave me. If I speak up, people will leave. I'm bound to be alone.	
		Helplessness	I am helpless. I'm out of control. I'm weak and needy. I can't handle life. There's no way out.	
		Caretaker	I must take care of everyone. I can't ask for help. If I don't do it, no one will. If I care, I should fix it.	
		Approval-seeking	I'm only worth something if people like me. I constantly need affirmation. I feel bad unless I hear that I'm good.	
		Glamour	I must be beautiful. I'm really ugly. You love me because of looks. If someone looks better, you'll leave.	
		Failure	If I don't succeed, I'm worthless. I will eventually fail. I'm an imposter, only acting like I have it together.	
		Unwanted	I don't belong anywhere. I never fit in. People don't want me around; they just tolerate me.	