



Crossroads Counseling of Chicago

Personal Leadership Development &
Partner Abuse Intervention

Family Analysis

In performing formal family analysis, we will start by constructing a [genogram](#). This is a structured family tree with basic genealogy that can include more complex information such as legal, emotional, medical, genetic, social (influential people such as friends, enemies, etc., not just family), educational, and so forth.

[Bowen family systems theory](#) is a theory of human behavior that views the family as an emotional unit and uses systems thinking to describe the complex interactions in the unit. It is the nature of a family that its members are intensely connected emotionally. Family members profoundly affect each other's thoughts, feelings, and actions. People solicit each other's attention, approval, and support and react to each other's needs, expectations, and distress. The connectedness and reactivity make the functioning of family members interdependent. A change in one person's functioning is predictably followed by reciprocal changes in the functioning of others. When family members get anxious, the anxiety can escalate by spreading infectiously among them. As anxiety goes up, the emotional connectedness of family members becomes more stressful than comforting. Eventually, one or more members feel overwhelmed, isolated, or out of control.

Additionally through the lens of [object relations](#) or [inner child](#) work, a conscious about troublesome behaviors can be traced back to past events. This can lead to behavior changes that are geared to meet the "inner child's" needs with behavior that are appropriate as an adult and in integrity with the world we live in.

In diagramming the system, we start with basic family information. Then through a series of interviews and discussion, we slowly fill out the diagram with more and more pertinent information. Quite often people have insights and remember details about their past that they did not appreciate the significance of.

