



# The Complete Genogram Reference

Every symbol, relationship type, medical category, and interpretation technique — the definitive visual guide.

FOR CLINICIANS, STUDENTS, RESEARCHERS & FAMILIES

Extended Edition · 2026

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# What Is a Genogram?

A genogram is a graphic representation of a family system that goes far beyond a traditional family tree. Developed by Monica McGoldrick and Randy Gerson in the 1980s, genograms use standardized symbols to map not only *who* is in a family, but how family members relate emotionally, what health conditions run in the family, and what behavioral patterns repeat across generations.

*A family tree tells you **who**. A genogram tells you **who, how, and why**.*

Rooted in Murray Bowen's family systems theory, the genogram became a formal clinical tool when McGoldrick and Gerson published *Genograms in Family Assessment* (1985). Now in its 4th edition (2020), the McGoldrick-Gerson-Petry notation system is the global standard taught in over 300 graduate programs.

## What a Genogram Captures

**Family structure** — marriages, divorces, separations, adoptions, blended families, cohabitation, surrogacy

**Emotional relationships** — closeness, conflict, distance, enmeshment, cutoffs, abuse, control

**Medical history** — 15+ categories including heart disease, cancer, diabetes, neurological, autoimmune, genetic conditions

**Mental health** — depression, anxiety, bipolar, PTSD, substance use, and recovery

**Cultural context** — heritage patterns, religion, social class, immigration history

**Life events** — births, deaths, traumas, career history, education, major transitions

## A Brief History

YEAR	MILESTONE
1978	Murray Bowen publishes <i>Family Therapy in Clinical Practice</i> , laying the systems theory foundation
1985	McGoldrick & Gerson publish <i>Genograms in Family Assessment</i> — the first standardized notation
1999	Second edition adds cultural genograms and expanded relationship types
2008	Third edition integrates digital tools and medical genogram overlays
2020	Fourth edition (McGoldrick-Gerson-Petry) — current standard with 50+ symbol types
2024+	AI-powered genogram tools expand notation to 48+ relationship types and 15 medical categories

# Genogram vs. Family Tree vs. Ecomap

These three tools are often confused. Each serves a distinct purpose in understanding family dynamics.

ASPECT	FAMILY TREE	GENOGRAM	ECOMAP
<b>Focus</b>	Biological lineage	Relationships, health & behavior	External systems & resources
<b>Depth</b>	Names, dates, ancestry	Emotional bonds, medical history, cultural factors	Community connections, stressors, supports
<b>Symbols</b>	Basic boxes & lines	50+ standardized clinical types	Circles with directional arrows
<b>Purpose</b>	Genealogy & heritage	Clinical assessment & pattern recognition	Resource mapping & service planning
<b>Users</b>	Hobbyists, historians	Therapists, doctors, researchers	Social workers, case managers
<b>Generations</b>	Many (5+)	Typically 3–4	Current only

*A family tree answers: “Who are my ancestors?”*

*A genogram answers: “What patterns have shaped my family?”*

*An ecomap answers: “What systems surround and impact this family now?”*

## Other Related Diagrams

### PEDIGREE CHART

Used in genetics to track hereditary traits using Mendelian notation. Focuses on carrier status and expression of specific genes. Common in genetic counseling and medical genetics research.

### CULTURAGRAM

Maps cultural factors for immigrant families: legal status, language, health beliefs, crisis events, values, and community ties. Developed by Elaine Congress (1994) for multicultural social work.

### SOCIOGRAM

Maps social relationships within a group (classroom, team, organization). Shows who interacts with whom, social clusters, and isolated individuals. Used in education and organizational psychology.

### ATTACHMENT MAP

Visualizes attachment bonds between a child and caregivers. Shows secure, insecure-avoidant, insecure-ambivalent, and disorganized attachment styles. Used in child development and trauma work.

# Who Uses Genograms and Why

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## Marriage & Family Therapists

Reveal intergenerational patterns influencing couples — attachment styles, conflict patterns, and family-of-origin issues that neither partner may be aware of. Essential for Bowen, structural, and narrative therapy approaches.

## Social Workers

Map family systems for case management, child welfare, court reports, and service planning. Document complex household structures and identify support networks.

## Genetic Counselors

Track hereditary conditions across generations. Assess risk factors for conditions like breast cancer (BRCA), heart disease, sickle cell, Huntington's, and cystic fibrosis.

## Medical Professionals

Physicians and nurses use genograms during intake to visualize family medical history. The 15-category modern medical genogram replaces traditional written lists.

## Psychiatrists & Psychologists

Map mental health patterns: depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, PTSD, and substance use across generations. Identify predispositions and environmental factors.

## Students

Core assignment in 300+ graduate programs for family therapy, social work, psychology, counseling, and nursing. Helps develop systems thinking skills.

## Addiction Counselors

Track substance use patterns, recovery status, enabling behaviors, and codependency across generations. Essential for family-based addiction treatment.

## Researchers

Study intergenerational transmission of trauma, resilience, attachment styles, and behavioral patterns across populations using standardized notation.

## School Counselors

Understand student behavior in family context. Map divorce impacts, blended family dynamics, and support systems affecting academic performance.

## Individuals & Families

Personal genograms help understand family dynamics, explore inherited health risks, process family history, and prepare for therapy or counseling.

## Person Symbols & Gender Types

Modern genograms support 9 gender representations, expanding far beyond the traditional male/female binary.

 <b>Male</b> Square shape	 <b>Female</b> Circle shape	 <b>Transgender Male</b> Square + triangle
 <b>Transgender Female</b> Circle + triangle	 <b>Non-binary</b> Rounded square	 <b>Intersex</b> Circle + vertical line
 <b>Unknown</b> Diamond (gray)	 <b>Other</b> Diamond (custom)	 <b>Pet</b> Hexagon

### Identity & Name Fields

Modern genograms support rich identity data beyond the traditional name field:

**Full name** — First, middle, last, title (Dr., Rev.), suffix (Jr., III)

**Maiden name** — Birth surname for maternal line tracing

**Nickname** — Informal name used in the family

**Alternative name** — Alias, immigrant name change, chosen name

### Sexual Orientation (8 Options)

Can be recorded for any person. Some notation systems display orientation via symbol color or a small indicator:

<b>Heterosexual</b>	<b>Gay</b>	<b>Lesbian</b>
<b>Bisexual</b>	<b>Asexual</b>	<b>Pansexual</b>
<b>Queer</b>	<b>Unknown</b>	

#### INDEX PERSON

The central figure of the genogram (proband) is indicated with a yellow/gold outer ring around their symbol.

## Status Markers

Status markers modify the base person symbol to indicate vital status and pregnancy outcomes.



### Alive

Standard shape, no modification



### Deceased

X drawn through the shape



### Pregnancy

Upward-pointing triangle



### Miscarriage

Triangle with X



### Stillbirth

Small shape with X



### Abortion

Triangle with X and line

## Twins & Multiples



### Fraternal Twins

Lines converge to single point



### Identical Twins

Converge + horizontal bar

## Additional Person Data

Each person node can store extensive metadata beyond the visual symbol:

**Dates** — Birth (year/month/day/place), death (year/month/day/place/cause/age), burial

**Career** — Current occupation, employer, full occupation history with dates

**Education** — Highest degree, institution, full education history

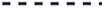
**Location** — City, state, country (with flag display)

**Immigration** — None, single (bicultural), double (immigrant)

**Custom attributes** — Tags, labels, and free-text notes

## Structural Relationships (15 Types)

Structural relationships show the formal or legal bonds between partners. These are drawn as horizontal lines connecting two person symbols.

 Marriage Solid line	 Life Partner Extra-thick line
 Cohabitation Dashed line	 Engagement Dotted line
 Dating Light dashed	 Affair Pink dashed
 One Night Stand Pink sparse dots	 Separation Single slash
 Legal Separation Vertical bar	 Physical Separation Dashed + slash
 Divorce Double slashes	 Annulment Slashes + X
 Widowed Line + orange X	 Rape Red line + X
 Unknown Dotted + question mark	

### CONVENTION

Males are placed on the **left** of partnership lines and females on the **right**. Multiple marriages are shown left to right in chronological order.

## Child Connection Types (7 Types)

Children hang below the couple line, ordered oldest (left) to youngest (right). The **line style** indicates the nature of the parent-child connection.

 <p><b>Biological</b> Solid vertical line (default)</p>	 <p><b>Adopted</b> Dashed vertical line</p>
 <p><b>Foster</b> Dotted vertical line</p>	 <p><b>Step</b> Dash-dot line</p>
 <p><b>Surrogate</b> Dashed + "S" label</p>	 <p><b>Sperm Donor</b> Dashed + "SD" label</p>
 <p><b>Egg Donor</b> Dashed + "ED" label</p>	

### MODERN FAMILIES

These 7 child connection types allow accurate representation of blended families, IVF, surrogacy arrangements, and non-traditional family structures increasingly common in clinical practice.

### Emotional Relationship Lines — Overview

Emotional relationship lines are drawn **between any two people** in the genogram, regardless of whether they share a structural (partnership/parent-child) connection. They represent the *quality* of the relationship.

GenogramAI supports **30+ emotional types** organized into five categories:

CATEGORY	COLOR	TYPES	COUNT
<b>Positive</b>	Green	Close, harmony, fused, love, in-love, limerence, friendship, attachment, jealous	9
<b>Conflict</b>	Red	Conflict, hostile, violence, hate	4
<b>Distance</b>	Gray	Indifferent, distant, estranged, never met, cutoff repaired	5
<b>Abuse/Control</b>	Blue/Purple	Abuse (physical, emotional, sexual), neglect (physical, emotional), control, manipulative	7
<b>Hybrid</b>	Mixed	Fused-conflict, close-hostile, distant-hostile, focused-on, focused-on negatively, distrust	6

The following three pages detail every emotional type with its visual rendering.

## Emotional Relationships — Positive

Positive emotional lines are drawn in **green** (or related warm colors). They indicate bonding, closeness, and attachment.

 Harmony Solid green line	 Close Double line + connectors
 Fused / Enmeshed Triple parallel lines	 Love Line + circle overlay
 In Love Line + double circles	 Friendship Double line + circles
 Limerence Pink line + arrow (obsessive)	 Attachment Line + multiple circles
 Jealous Green + diamond arrow	

### DIRECTIONALITY

Limerence, jealousy, and focused-on lines are **directional** — the arrow points toward the person being focused on or envied. All other positive types are bidirectional.

### Cutoff Repaired

 Cutoff Repaired Green dashed + circle (reconciliation)
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This unique symbol indicates a previously severed relationship that has been reconnected. It acknowledges both the history of cutoff and the work of repair.

# Emotional — Conflict & Distance

## Conflict Types

Conflict lines are drawn in **red** and indicate active tension, hostility, or aggression.

 Conflict Double red dashed	 Hostile Red zigzag
 Violence Tight red zigzag (aggressive)	 Hate Triple red dashed
 Distrust Black line + X marks	

## Distance Types

Distance lines are drawn in **gray** and indicate emotional separation, withdrawal, or absence.

 Indifferent Gray dotted	 Distant Gray dashed
 Estranged Red dashed + T-bars	 Never Met Gray dotted + X marks

## Hybrid Types

Some relationships contain both positive and negative elements simultaneously.

 Close & Hostile Green lines + red zigzag	 Fused & Conflict Triple green + red zigzag
 Distant & Hostile Gray dashed + red zigzag	

## Focused Attention

 Focused On Black line + filled arrow	 Focused On Negatively Gray zigzag + hollow arrow
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# Emotional — Abuse & Control

Abuse and control lines are **directional** — arrows point toward the person experiencing the abuse or being controlled. These are drawn in **blue** (abuse/neglect) or **purple** (control/manipulation).

## Abuse Types

 Abuse (General) Blue zigzag + arrow	 Physical Abuse Red zigzag + blue arrow
 Emotional Abuse All blue zigzag + arrow	 Sexual Abuse Blue double arrow polygons

## Neglect Types

 Physical Neglect Blue dashed + arrow	 Emotional Neglect Blue fine dashed + arrow
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## Control & Manipulation

 Control Solid purple + filled arrow	 Manipulative Purple dashed + hollow arrow
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### CLINICAL SENSITIVITY

Abuse and control lines require careful clinical judgment. Always use collaborative language with clients: *“I notice a pattern here — what’s your experience of this relationship?”* Never label relationships without the client’s input.

## Complete Emotional Type Count: 31

CATEGORY	TYPES	COLOR SYSTEM
Positive (9)	Harmony, Close, Fused, Love, In Love, Limerence, Friendship, Attachment, Jealous	Green / Pink
Conflict (5)	Conflict, Hostile, Violence, Hate, Distrust	Red / Black
Distance (5)	Indifferent, Distant, Estranged, Never Met, Cutoff Repaired	Gray / Red / Green
Abuse (6)	Abuse, Physical, Emotional, Sexual Abuse, Physical Neglect, Emotional Neglect	Blue / Red
Control (2)	Control, Manipulative	Purple
Hybrid (3)	Close-Hostile, Fused-Conflict, Distant-Hostile	Green + Red
Focus (2)	Focused On, Focused On Negatively	Black / Gray

## Medical Categories (15 Modern Types)

Modern medical genograms replace the traditional 4-slot system with **15 color-coded categories**. Each category fills a segment of the person symbol when active.

 <b>Heart</b> Cardiovascular	 <b>Cancer</b> All cancer types	 <b>Diabetes</b> Type 1, 2, gestational
 <b>Mental Health</b> General MH	 <b>Substance</b> Alcohol & drugs	 <b>Neurological</b> Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, MS
 <b>Respiratory</b> Asthma, COPD	 <b>Autoimmune</b> Lupus, RA, Crohn's	 <b>Genetic</b> Down syndrome, CF, sickle cell
 <b>Reproductive</b> Infertility, PCOS	 <b>Anxiety</b> GAD, panic, social	 <b>Bipolar</b> Bipolar I, II
 <b>Depression</b> MDD, seasonal, persistent	 <b>PTSD</b> PTSD, complex PTSD	 <b>Other</b> Any unlisted condition

### Display Modes

#### QUADRANT MODE (1–4 CONDITIONS)

Each condition fills one corner of the person symbol: top-left, top-right, bottom-left, bottom-right. The most intuitive display for typical clinical use.

#### PIE SLICE MODE (5+ CONDITIONS)

When a person has 5 or more conditions, the symbol switches to radial pie slices. Each condition gets an equal angular segment, like a multi-colored pie chart inside the shape.

### Legacy 4-Slot System

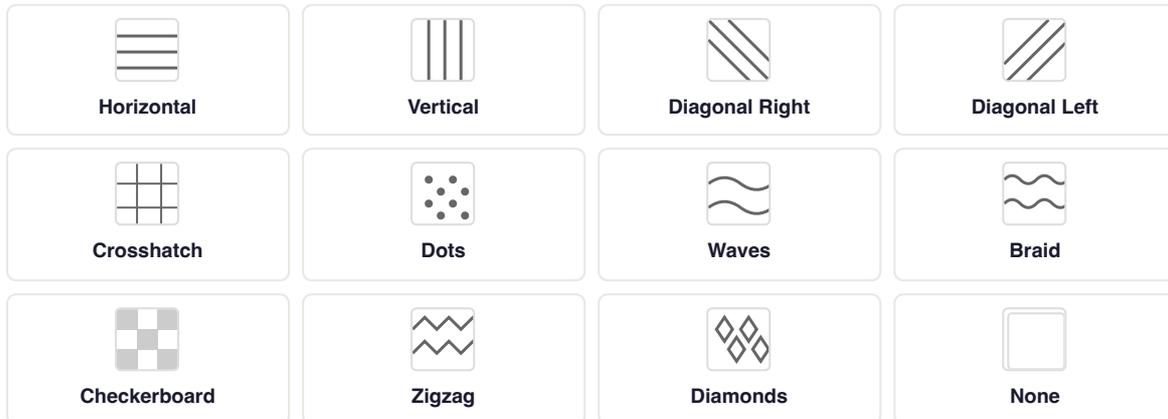
The traditional McGoldrick system used 4 color-coded slots (red, blue, green, purple), with each slot assigned to a specific condition defined in the genogram's legend. The modern 15-category system is backwards-compatible and can map to legacy slots when needed.

#### CLINICAL BEST PRACTICE

Always include a legend on your genogram that maps colors to conditions. While the 15-category system is standardized, readers may not know which colors correspond to which conditions without a key.

## Cultural Heritage Patterns (12 Types)

Cultural heritage is represented by **fill patterns** inside the person symbol. Each ethnicity, nationality, or cultural background is assigned a unique pattern. When a person has dual or multiple heritage, patterns are split into equal segments.



### Multi-Heritage Display

#### SINGLE HERITAGE

Full pattern fill covers the entire symbol

#### DUAL HERITAGE

Left/right split — each pattern fills half

#### TRIPLE+ HERITAGE

Radial pie sectors, each at 360°/count

#### USAGE

Heritage labels are user-defined (e.g., “Irish, Mexican”). Assign a distinct pattern to each cultural background at the start, then apply consistently across all family members sharing that heritage.

## Additional Markers

### Religion (12 Types)

Displayed as a small icon badge in the top-left corner of the person symbol.

<b>Christianity</b> Cross	<b>Catholic</b> Cross + circle	<b>Mormon</b> "M"
<b>Jehovah's Witness</b> "JW"	<b>Judaism</b> Star of David	<b>Islam</b> Crescent & star
<b>Buddhism</b> Lotus flower	<b>Hinduism</b> Om symbol	<b>Sikhism</b> Khanda
<b>Spiritual</b> Sparkle	<b>None</b> No marker	<b>Other</b> Question mark

### Social Class (5 Levels)

Displayed as a small "\$" badge in the bottom-left corner, color-coded by level.

 <b>Upper</b>	 <b>Upper Middle</b>	 <b>Middle</b>
 <b>Working</b>	 <b>Poverty</b>	

### Immigration Markers

<b>None</b> No immigration background	<b>Single Squiggle</b> Lived in 2+ cultures	<b>Double Squiggle</b> Immigrant (moved countries)
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### Location & Country

When the location view is active, each person's **country flag** appears as a small badge in the top-right corner. Country is stored as an ISO 2-letter code and rendered from a CDN flag service.

### Custom Node Colors (14 Options)

Users can assign a custom stroke color to any person for ad-hoc categorization:



Slate, Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Teal, Cyan, Blue, Indigo, Purple, Fuchsia, Pink, Rose, Default

# How to Build a Genogram in 5 Steps

## 1 Gather Family Information

Collect: names, birth/death dates, marriages, divorces, children (all types), medical conditions, mental health, substance use, life events, occupations, education, cultural background, religion.

### TIP

Gaps in knowledge are meaningful — they often indicate cutoffs, secrecy, or unresolved grief. Note what you *don't* know.

## 2 Start with the Index Person

The **index person** (proband) is the central figure — yourself, the client, or the person presenting. Place them center-canvas with a gold indicator ring. Build outward from here.

## 3 Add Structure & Family Members

Add spouse (same line), children below (oldest left), parents above, siblings same row, grandparents up. Use the correct structural relationship type for each partnership and child connection type for each child.

## 4 Add Emotional Relationships

Draw emotional lines between *any* two people. For each pair ask: How close? Any conflict? Cutoffs? Enmeshment? Abuse? Control? Use the 31 emotional types to capture nuance.

## 5 Layer Medical, Cultural & Contextual Data

Activate view modes to add: medical categories (15 types), cultural heritage patterns, religion, social class, immigration markers, occupation, education, and custom attributes.

### TIME ESTIMATES

By hand: **45–90 min** for 3 generations. Digital tool: **15–30 min**. AI-assisted: **2–5 min** (text or image input).

## Spouse Visualization Modes

When a person has multiple marriages, three display modes are available:

### LINEAR (DEFAULT)

Spouses arranged left to right in chronological order on the same row.

### STACKED

Spouses above/below the index person with numbered connections.

### TIMELINE

Chronological arrangement with relationship dates shown.

## 7 View Modes for Analysis

View modes let you toggle different analytical lenses on the *same* genogram data. Each mode reveals a different dimension of the family system without modifying the underlying structure.

### ■ Medical View

Displays medical conditions as color-coded quadrants or pie slices inside person symbols. 15 categories with distinct colors. Essential for genetic counselors and family physicians.

### ■ Cultural / Heritage View

Fills person symbols with pattern overlays representing cultural background. 12 patterns available. Multi-heritage displayed as split or radial fills.

### ■ Social Class View

Shows “\$” indicator badges color-coded by socioeconomic level (5 tiers). Reveals class patterns across generations and marriage patterns.

### ■ Religion View

Displays religion icon badges (12 types) in the top-left corner. Maps interfaith marriages, religious conversion patterns, and spiritual evolution across generations.

### ■ Location View

Shows country flags in the top-right corner. Visualizes migration patterns, geographic spread, and cross-cultural connections in the family.

### ■ Relational View

Reveals association-type edges that are hidden in the default view. Shows non-blood emotional connections — friendships, mentorships, community bonds.

### ■ Custom View

Displays custom node stroke colors and labels. Use for ad-hoc categorization: therapy status, genogram grouping, research coding, or any user-defined dimension.

### COMBINING VIEWS

Views can be **toggled independently** — activate medical + cultural + religion simultaneously to see a rich multi-dimensional picture. The canvas legend auto-updates to show only active categories.

## Canvas Legend

When view modes are active, a dynamic legend appears on the canvas showing:

- Active medical category colors and counts
- Heritage patterns and associated labels
- Relationship line type legend
- Any custom color labels in use

# Reading & Interpreting Your Genogram

Interpretation happens at four progressive levels, each building on the last:

## 01

### Structural

How many generations? Nuclear, blended, or single-parent? Multiple divorces? Early deaths? Large or small family size? Adoption or surrogacy?

## 02

### Relational

Where are close bonds? Conflicts? Cutoffs? Triangles (two bonding against a third)? Enmeshment? Who is the peacemaker? The scapegoat?

## 03

### Functional

Who overfunctions (holds everything together)? Who underfunctions (others worry about)? How does anxiety flow? How is stress managed?

## 04

### Multigenerational

What repeats across generations? Caretaker roles? Addiction? Cutoffs? Marriage age patterns? Career paths? Mental health clustering?

## Interpretation Checklist

**What stands out?** Look for the most visually prominent patterns — clusters of red lines, many deceased markers in one generation, a preponderance of cutoffs.

**What's missing?** Absent information is data. Unknown fathers, no contact with entire branches, missing medical history — all meaningful.

**What would the family say?** Consider how different family members would describe the same relationships. Whose perspective is represented?

**Where are the strengths?** Look for resilience: repaired cutoffs, recovery from substance use, close bonds despite adversity, cultural continuity.

**Pattern to presenting problem?** How might the multigenerational patterns connect to why this person/family is seeking help now?

**Timing & transitions** — When did symptoms emerge? Around what family events? Anniversary reactions? Developmental milestones?

*“The genogram is not a diagnostic tool — it is a hypothesis-generating tool. The patterns you see are invitations for exploration, not conclusions.”*

# Common Multigenerational Patterns

## Repetitive Relationship Structures

Same dynamic across generations: oldest children as caretakers, middle as peacemakers, youngest as the “problem child.” Birth order roles that persist even when family members are unaware.

## Anniversary Reactions

Events mirroring earlier generations: death at the same age a grandparent died, symptoms at the age a parent experienced trauma, marriage at the same age as parents.

## Symptom Concentration

One person per generation carries the family dysfunction — the “identified patient.” When this pattern appears, it signals a systemic issue, not an individual one.

## Complementary Couple Patterns

Partners who fit like puzzle pieces: pursuer + distancer, overfunctioner + underfunctioner, dominant + submissive. These typically mirror family-of-origin dynamics.

## Loss & Replacement

A child born shortly after a family death, often named after the deceased. Quick remarriage after a spouse's death. These carry unresolved grief into the next generation.

## Cutoff Chains

Estrangement repeating: father-son cutoff in one generation leads to another in the next. The pattern perpetuates because the underlying conflict is never processed.

## Medical Clustering

Hereditary conditions concentrating in specific branches: heart disease on the paternal side, depression on the maternal side. The medical view makes these visually obvious.

## Triangulation

Two people managing their anxiety by involving a third: a parent-child coalition against the other parent, siblings who bond by criticizing another sibling.

### CLINICAL NOTE

When presenting patterns, use collaborative language: “*What stands out to you?*” and “*Here's something I notice...*” Let clients discover patterns themselves rather than imposing interpretations.

# AI-Powered Genogram Generation

Modern AI tools have transformed genogram creation from a 60-minute manual process to a 2-minute conversation.

## Text-to-Genogram

Describe your family in plain language and the AI generates a complete genogram with proper symbols, structural relationships, and layout. Example: *“My parents divorced when I was 10. Mom remarried. I have one sister from my dad’s second marriage.”*

## Image-to-Genogram

Upload a photo of a hand-drawn genogram, whiteboard sketch, or textbook diagram. The AI extracts people, relationships, and structure, then renders a clean digital version with standardized notation.

## GEDCOM Import

Import standard genealogy files (GEDCOM format) from tools like Ancestry, FamilySearch, or MyHeritage. The AI enriches the data with generation assignment, layout optimization, and relationship inference.

## AI Editing

Modify existing genograms with natural language: *“Add a brother to Sarah,” “Mark John as deceased,” “Show that Mom and Aunt Lisa have a conflictual relationship.”*

## AI Insights

Request pattern analysis: the AI examines your genogram and surfaces multigenerational patterns, relationship dynamics, medical clustering, and areas worth exploring in therapy.

## Digital vs. Paper

ASPECT	PAPER	DIGITAL / AI
Time	45–90 minutes	2–15 minutes
Symbols	Limited by drawing skill	48+ structural, 31 emotional, all standardized
Medical	4-slot color system	15 categories, auto pie-chart
Views	One static view	7 toggleable analytical views
Editing	Erase and redraw	Drag, drop, AI natural language
Sharing	Photocopy	PNG, PDF, secure link, GEDCOM export
Storage	File cabinet	Encrypted cloud, auto-save

# Expanded Glossary

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## Index Person (Proband)

The central person around whom the genogram is constructed.

## Identified Patient (IP)

Family member labeled as “the problem” — symptoms often reflect a larger family dynamic.

## Nuclear Family

Parents and their children living as a unit.

## Family of Origin

The family in which a person grew up.

## Enmeshment (Fusion)

Blurred boundaries where individual identity is lost in the relationship.

## Cutoff

Complete severing of contact between family members.

## Triangulation

Three-person dynamic where two manage anxiety by involving a third.

## Multigenerational Transmission

Emotional patterns passing from one generation to the next.

## Transgenerational Trauma

Trauma affecting descendants through behavioral, emotional, and epigenetic mechanisms.

## Differentiation

Maintaining identity while staying connected to the family system (Bowen theory).

## Emotional Reactivity

Automatic emotional responses triggered by family dynamics rather than present circumstances.

## Overfunctioner

Person who takes on excessive responsibility for others' emotions and problems.

## Underfunctioner

Person who functions below their capability, often enabled by an overfunctioner.

## Parentification

Child taking on adult/parental roles in the family system.

## Anniversary Reaction

Symptoms or events emerging at the same age/time as a significant family event in a prior generation.

## Genogram Legend

Key explaining all symbols, colors, and patterns used in a specific genogram.

## GEDCOM

Standard file format for genealogy data exchange between software tools.

## McGoldrick-Gerson Notation

The standardized symbol system for genograms, now in its 4th edition (2020).

### REFERENCE

Based on McGoldrick, Gerson, & Petry, *Genograms: Assessment and Treatment* (4th Ed., W.W. Norton, 2020) and Bowen, M., *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice* (Jason Aronson, 1978).



Genogram *AI*

# Create Your Genogram in Seconds

Describe your family in plain language and watch your clinical-grade genogram come to life — with all 48+ relationship types, 15 medical categories, and 7 analytical views.

[Start Building Free →](#)

[genogramai.com](https://genogramai.com)



AI text &  
image input



48+ relationship  
types



7 analytical  
views



PNG, PDF  
& GEDCOM