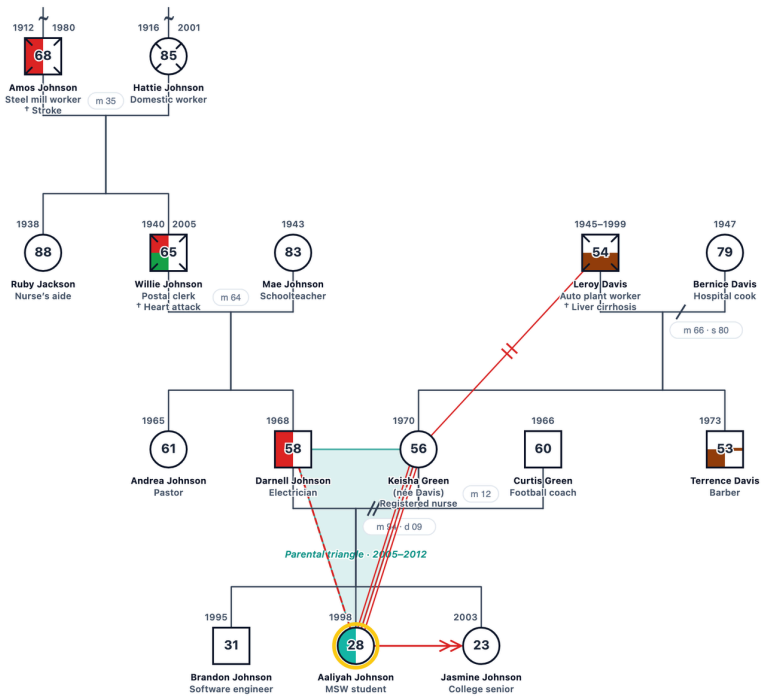
10 Genogram Examples for Students

Ten worked family genograms, from first-week notation to a full family-of-origin assignment, each with what to look for and a question to discuss.



For social work, MFT, counseling, nursing and psychology courses

genogramai.com/genogram-examples

HOW TO USE THIS HANDOUT

Read the chart before the caption

Each page shows one genogram. Cover the text, read the chart on your own, then check your reading against “What to look for”. The question at the bottom works for a seminar, a quiz or a reflective journal.

1. **Nuclear Family Symbols Guide** — Notation basics
2. **Basic 3-Generation Template** — Layout
3. **Blended Step-Family Genogram** — Blended families
4. **Adoptive Family Genogram** — Adoption
5. **Grandparents Raising Grandchildren** — Kinship care
6. **Emotional Triangulation** — Triangles
7. **Disengaged/Cutoff Family** — Emotional cutoff
8. **Substance Abuse Family Dynamics** — Substance use across generations
9. **Medical Genogram Tutorial** — Medical genogram
10. **Family of Origin Genogram: Graduate Student Assignment Example** — Family-of-origin assignment

> All ten families are fictional and were drawn with GenogramAI. Each one has its own page with a full symbol key and a written analysis at **genogramai.com/genogram-examples**, and opens in the free editor as a template.

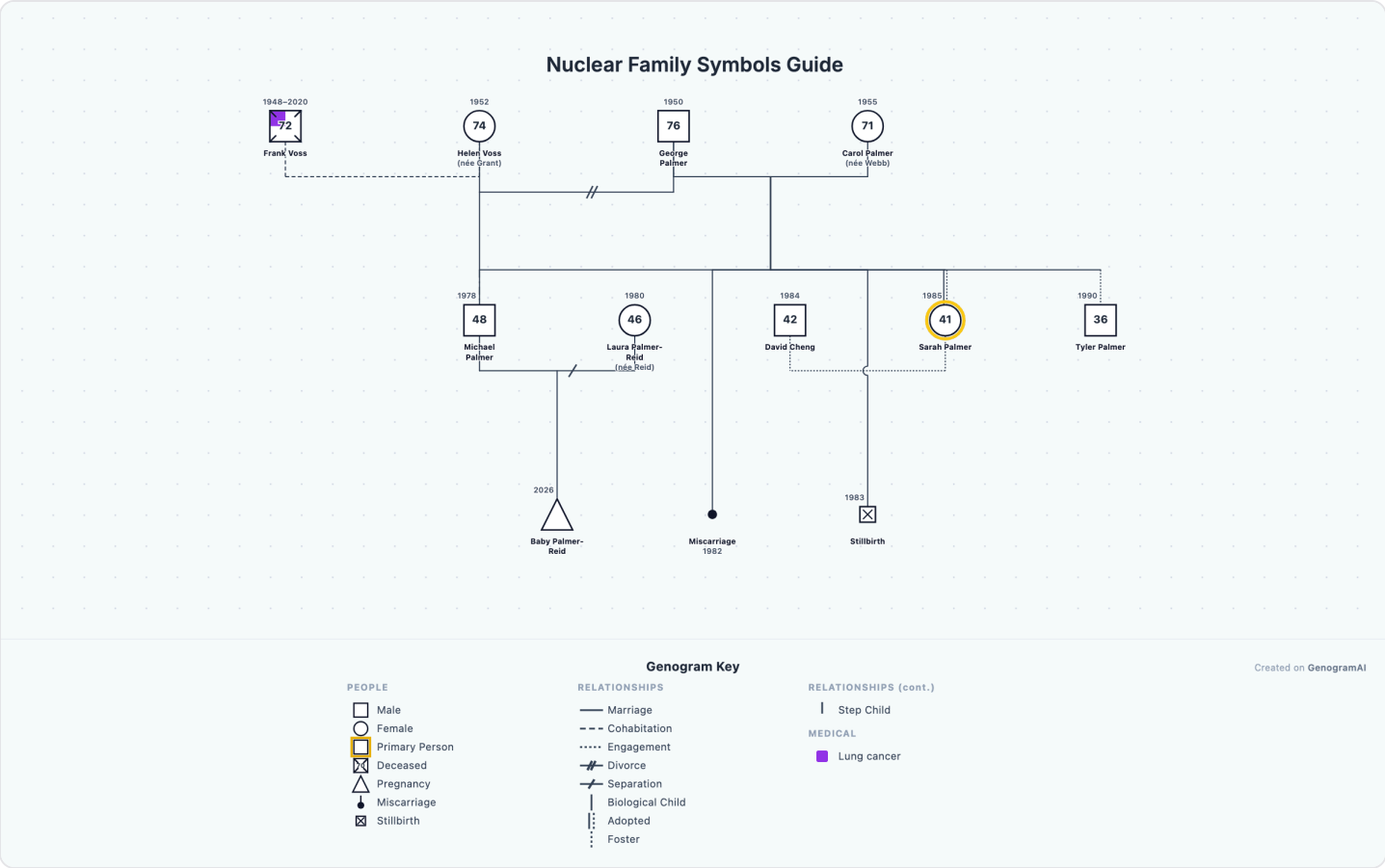
The symbols are explained in the free genogram symbols chart (genogramai.com/guide/genogram-symbols).

Notation follows standard genogram notation as described by McGoldrick and colleagues, with GenogramAI extensions. GenogramAI is not affiliated with or endorsed by the authors or publisher.

Further reading: McGoldrick, M., Gerson, R., & Petry, S. (2020). *Genograms: Assessment and Treatment* (4th ed.). W. W. Norton.

Cite this handout: GenogramAI. (2026). *10 Genogram Examples for Students*. https://genogramai.com/genogram-examples-for-students.pdf. Free to print and share for teaching with this credit.

Nuclear Family Symbols Guide



A comprehensive teaching genogram demonstrating all standard genogram person symbols and connection types. Includes living male (square), living female (circle), deceased (X), pregnancy (triangle), miscarriage (small filled symbol), stillbirth (X through small symbol), marriage, divorce, separation, cohabitation, engagement, and all child connection types: biological, adopted, foster, and step. Designed as a visual reference guide for students learning genogram notation.

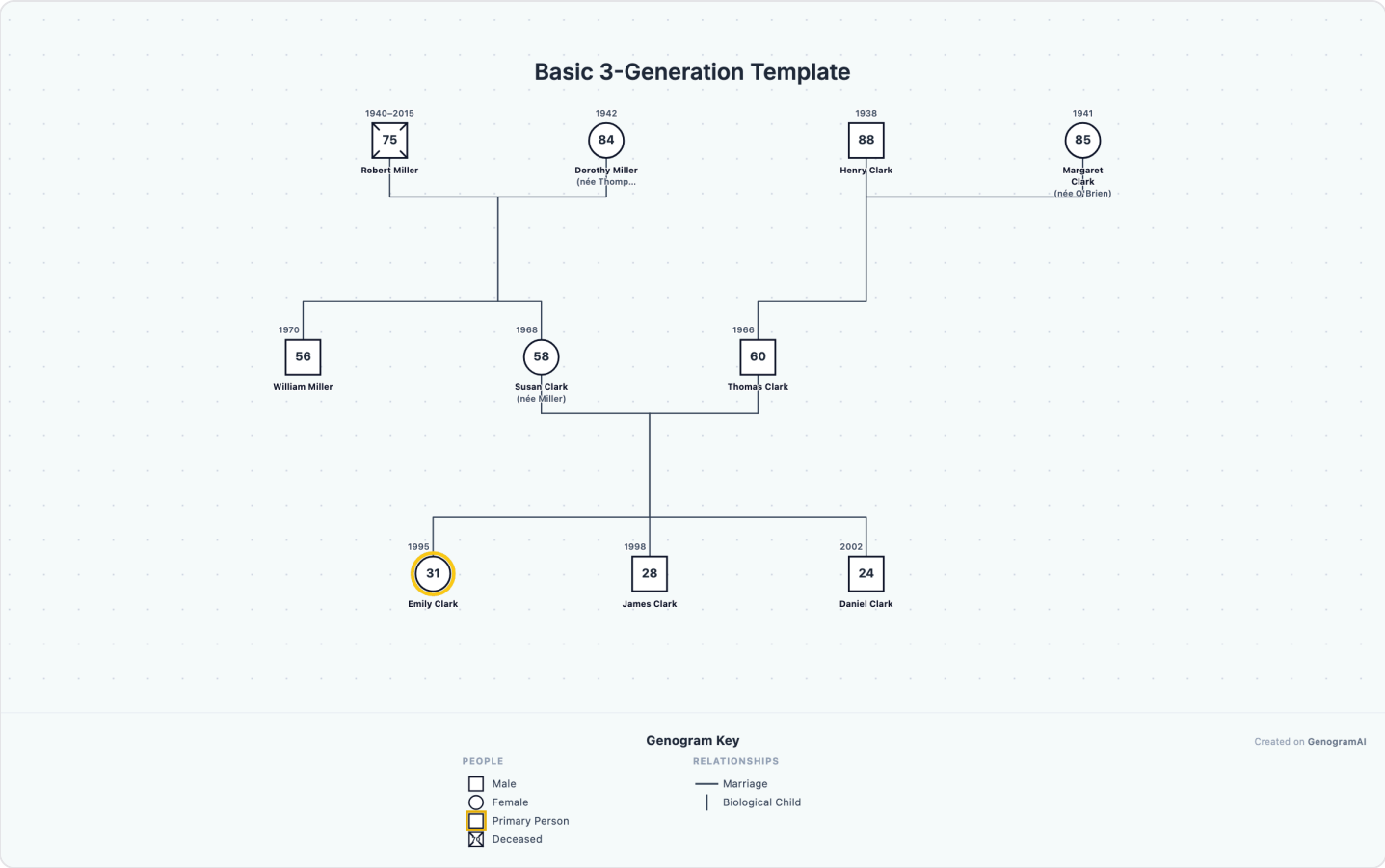
WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Square, circle and triangle shapes
- Solid, dashed and slashed couple lines
- Biological, adopted, foster and step child lines

DISCUSS

Name every person symbol and every line type on the page without looking at a key.

Basic 3-Generation Template



A clean, simple three-generation genogram template designed for teaching basic genogram construction. Features grandparents, parents, and three children with standard symbols, straightforward relationship lines, and minimal clinical content. Ideal as a student or beginner reference for learning genogram notation conventions, layout principles, and fundamental family mapping skills.

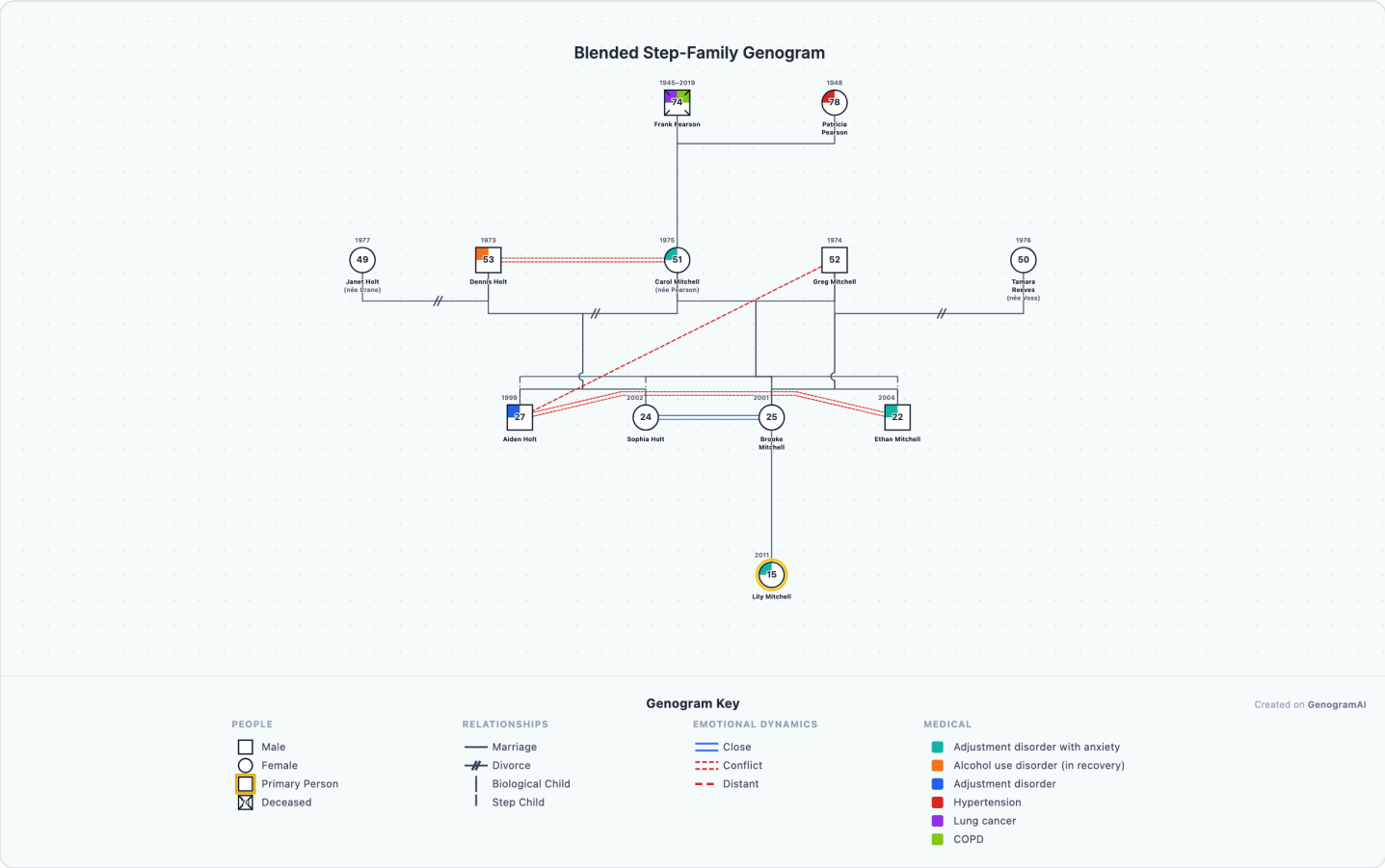
WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- One row per generation, oldest at the top
- Children left to right in birth order
- The index person marked with a highlighted outline

DISCUSS

Redraw this family from memory. Which layout rules did you follow without thinking?

Blended Step-Family Genogram



A complex blended step-family genogram showing two divorced parents who remarried each other, each bringing children from prior marriages. Includes one child born together, illustrating step-sibling and half-sibling dynamics, mixed emotional relationships, and the challenges of forming a cohesive blended family unit.

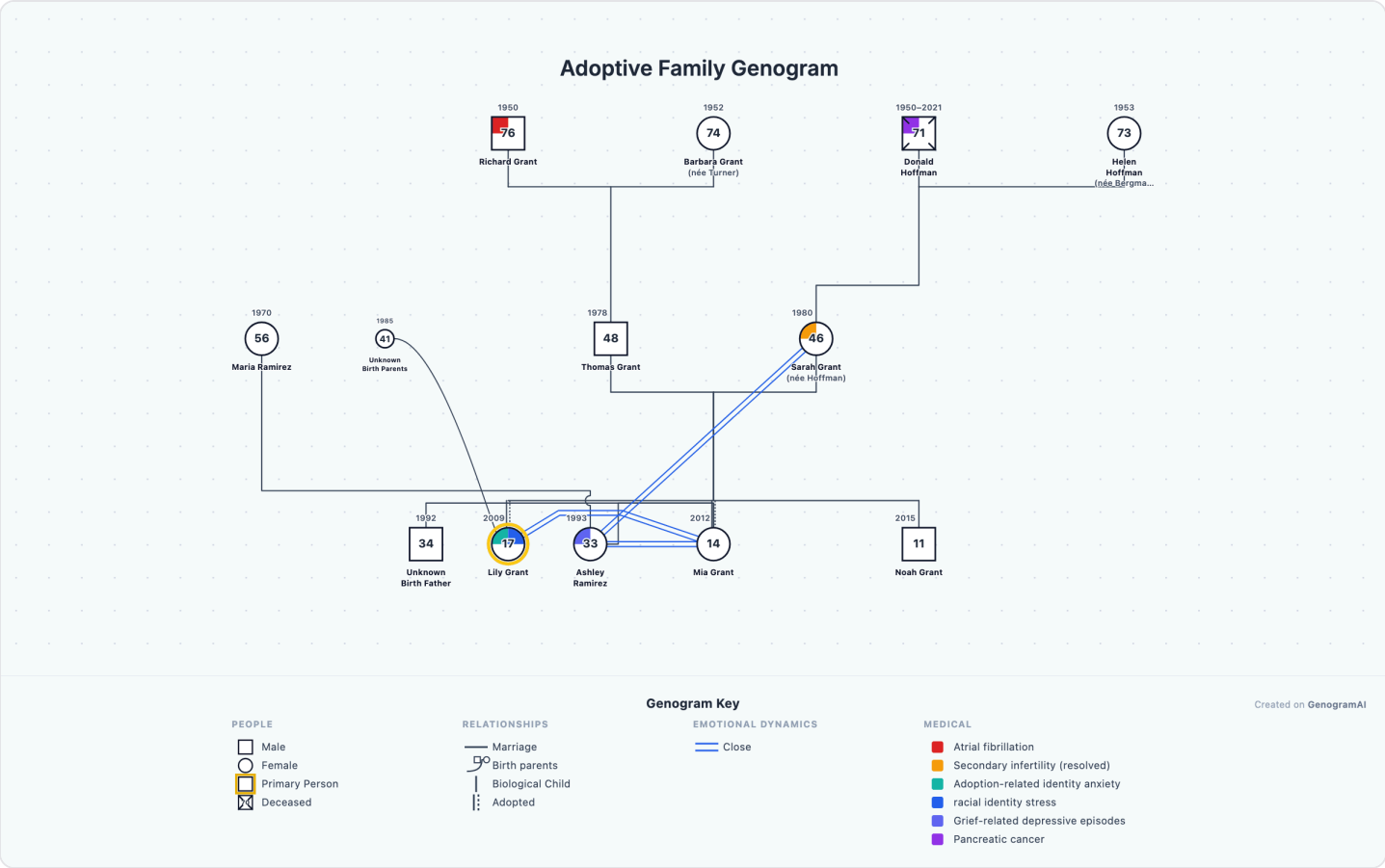
WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Prior marriages ending in divorce (two slashes)
- Children from earlier partnerships hanging from their own couple line
- Step-siblings and a half-sibling in the same household

DISCUSS

Which children share both parents, one parent, or none? Trace each from its couple line.

Adoptive Family Genogram



An adoptive family genogram featuring both biological and adopted children. Includes one child adopted internationally from China, one adopted domestically through an open adoption with birth mother contact, and one biological child. Illustrates birth parent connections, adoption adjustment, and the dynamics of mixed-origin families.

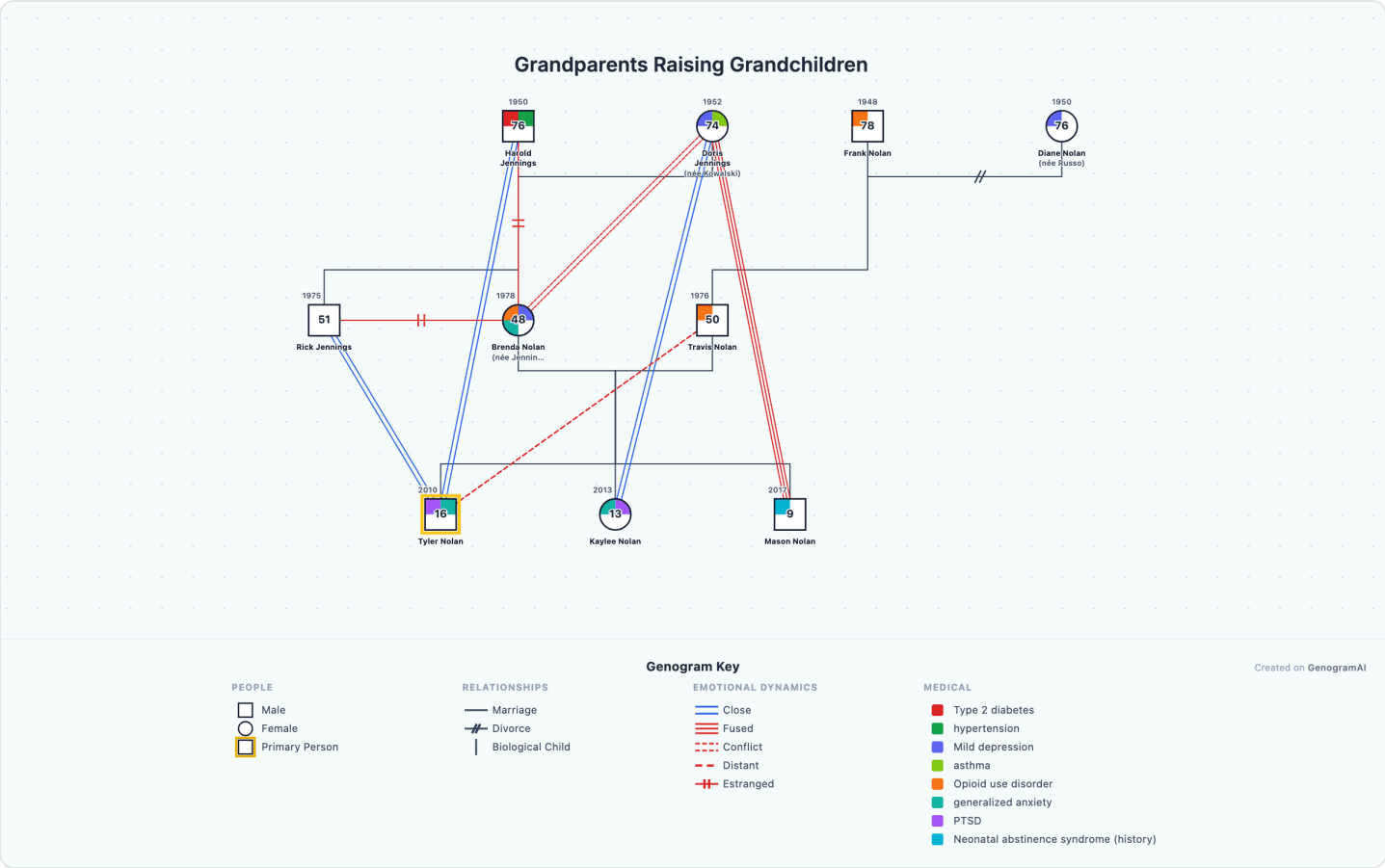
WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Adopted and biological children side by side
- Birth-parent connections kept on the chart
- Different child-line styles for different routes into the family

DISCUSS

How would the genogram change if the open adoption ended contact with the birth mother?

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren



A kinship care genogram showing grandparents who have legal custody of three grandchildren due to their daughter's substance abuse and son-in-law's incarceration. Illustrates the challenges of grandparent-headed households, estranged parent-child relationships, the impact of addiction on family systems, and the resilience of kinship caregivers.

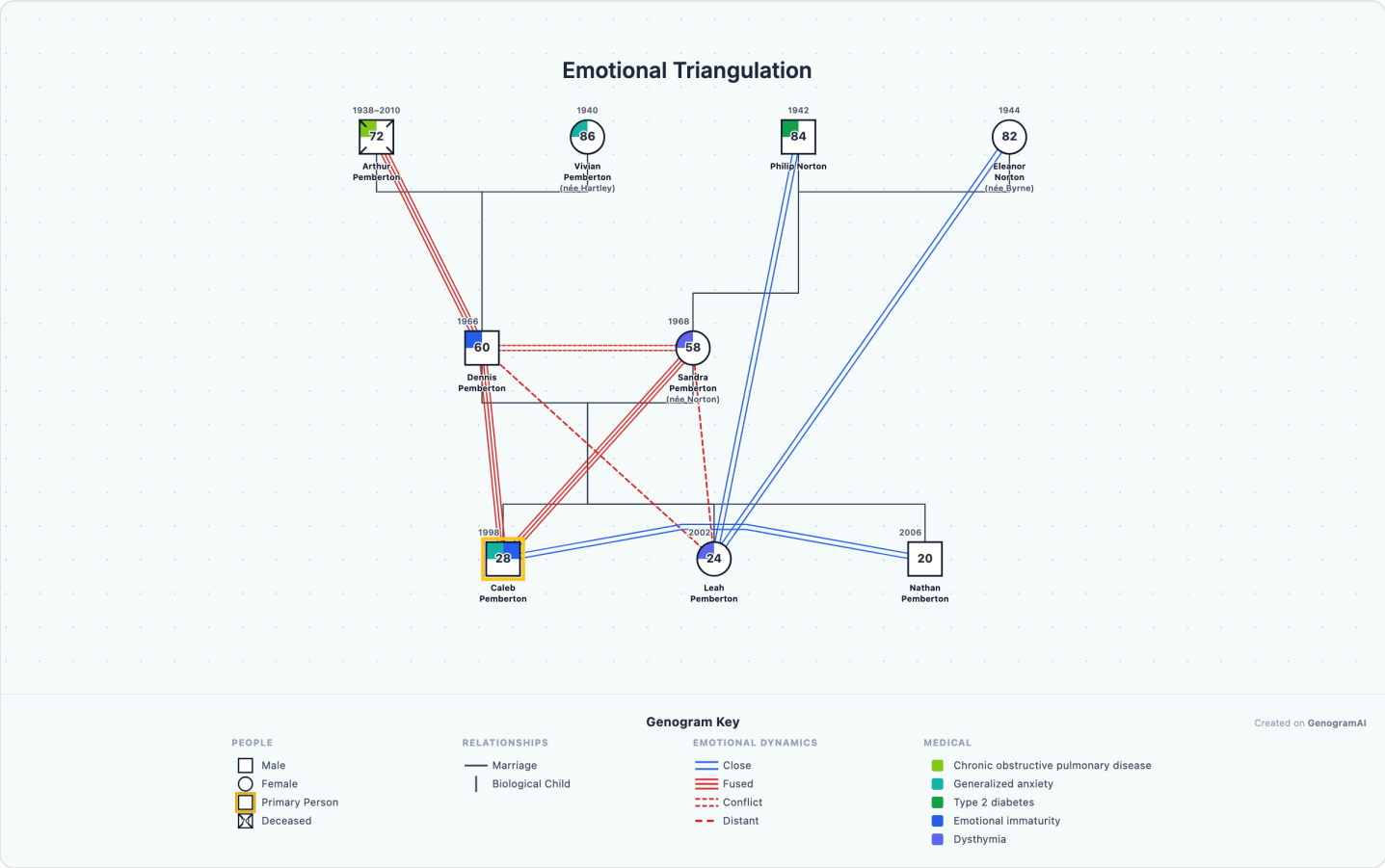
WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Grandparents as the household heads
- Estranged and conflictual lines around the children's parents
- Opioid use shaded on the mother's symbol

DISCUSS

Draw a household boundary around the people who live together. Who is outside it?

Emotional Triangulation



A three-generation genogram illustrating the classic Bowen family systems concept of emotional triangulation. Parents in chronic marital conflict triangle in their eldest son as mediator, confidant, and emotional regulator. Father confides in the son about the mother, mother complains to the son about the father, and the son develops severe anxiety from the impossible position. The younger daughter is overlooked and becomes "the forgotten child." Demonstrates the dynamics of triangulation, detriangling, and the impact on the triangulated individual.

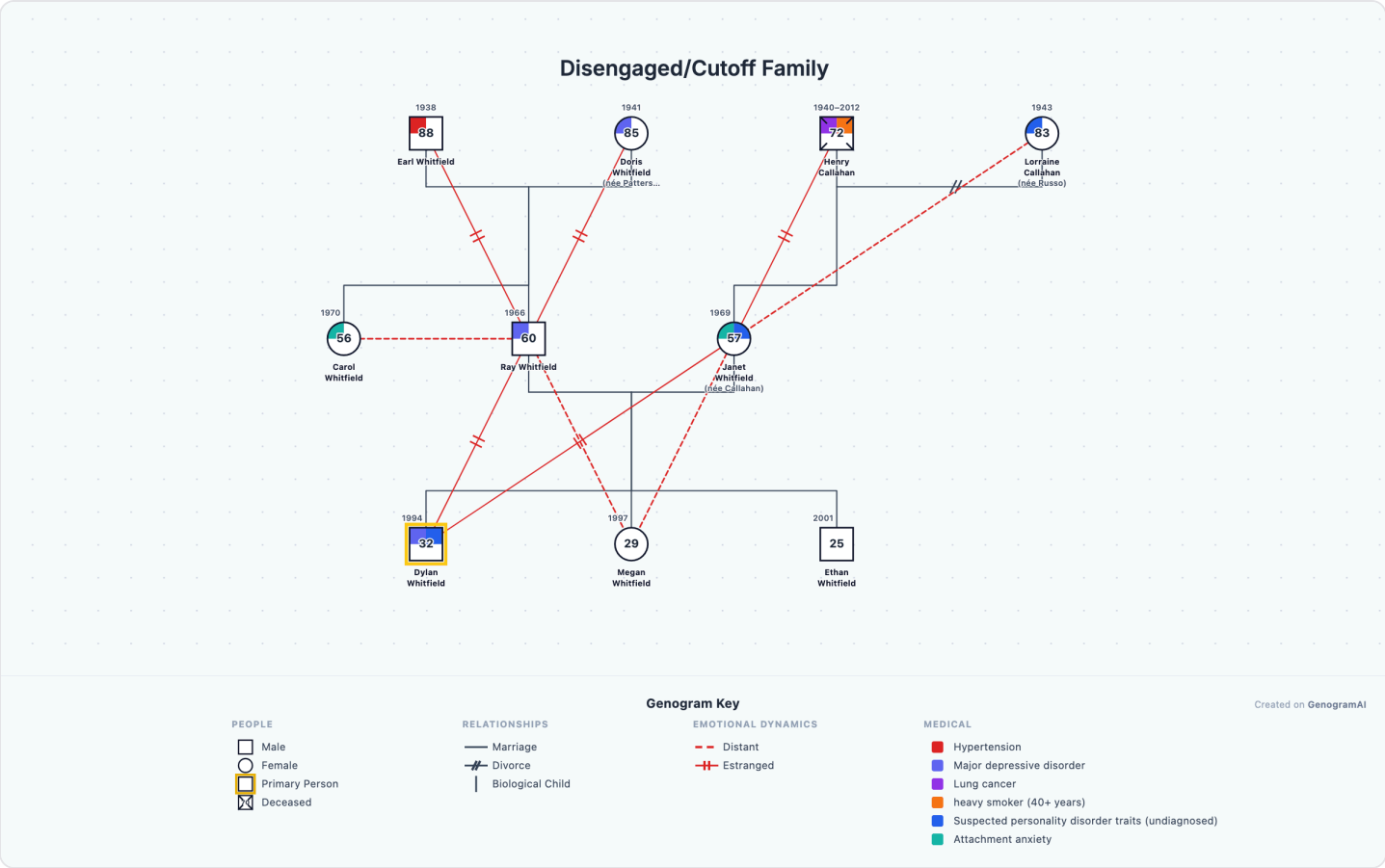
WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Chronic conflict between the parents
- A child pulled into the couple's conflict
- A sibling with very different relationship lines

DISCUSS

Find the triangle. Which relationship would need to change for the child to step out of it?

Disengaged/Cutoff Family



A three-generation genogram depicting a family system characterized by emotional cutoffs, estrangements, and patterns of disengagement. Demonstrates how unresolved conflict leads to severed relationships across generations, with the father cut off from his family of origin, one adult child estranged from parents, and pervasive emotional avoidance throughout the system.

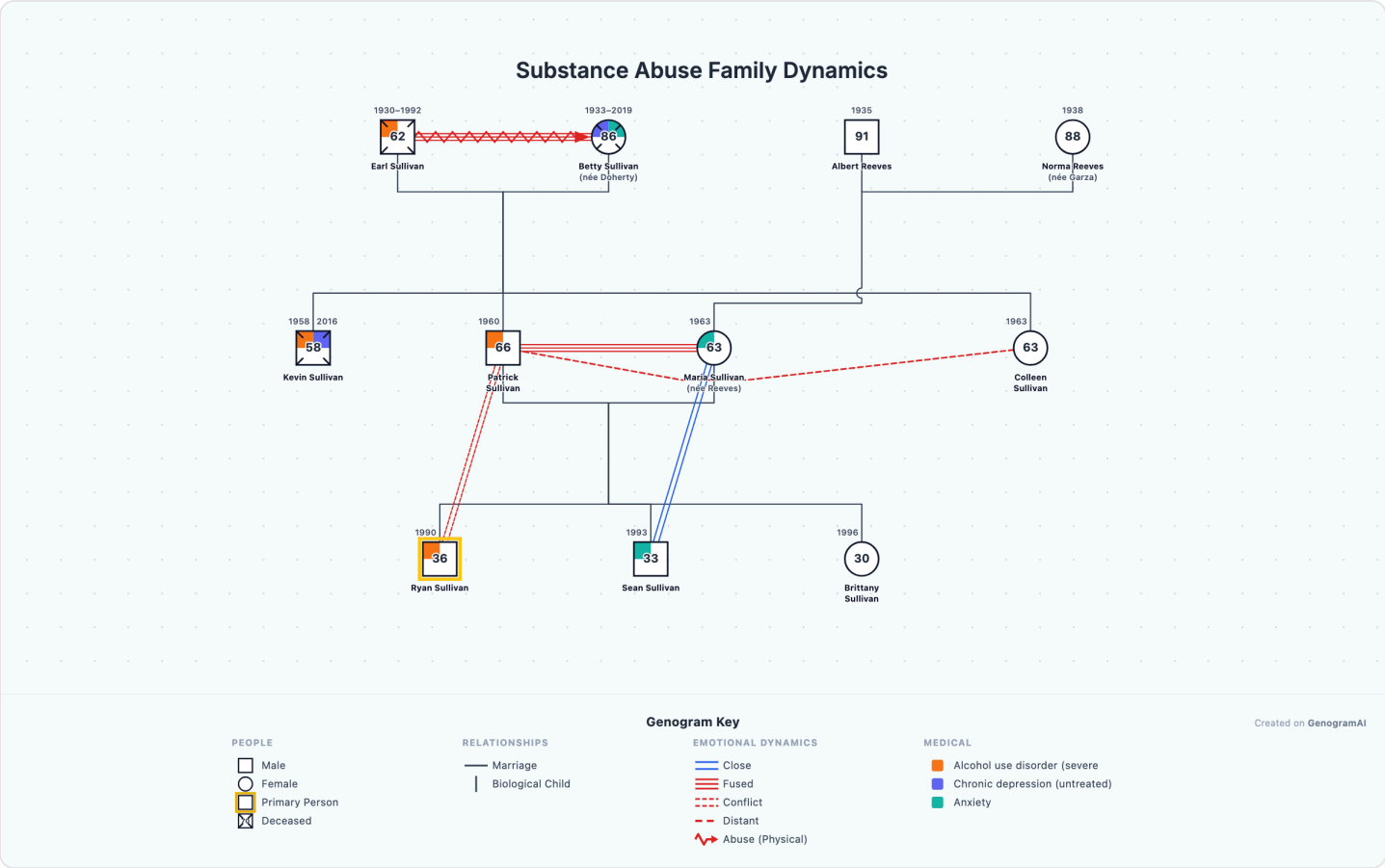
WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Cutoff lines (a line broken by bars) in more than one generation
- Distance and conflict lines around each cutoff
- Who is still in contact with whom

DISCUSS

Is the cutoff in the youngest generation a repeat of an earlier one? Give your evidence from the chart.

Substance Abuse Family Dynamics



A three-generation genogram depicting multigenerational alcoholism and substance abuse patterns, including codependency dynamics, recovery trajectories, and overdose death. Illustrates how substance use disorders transmit through families alongside enabling and codependent relationship patterns.

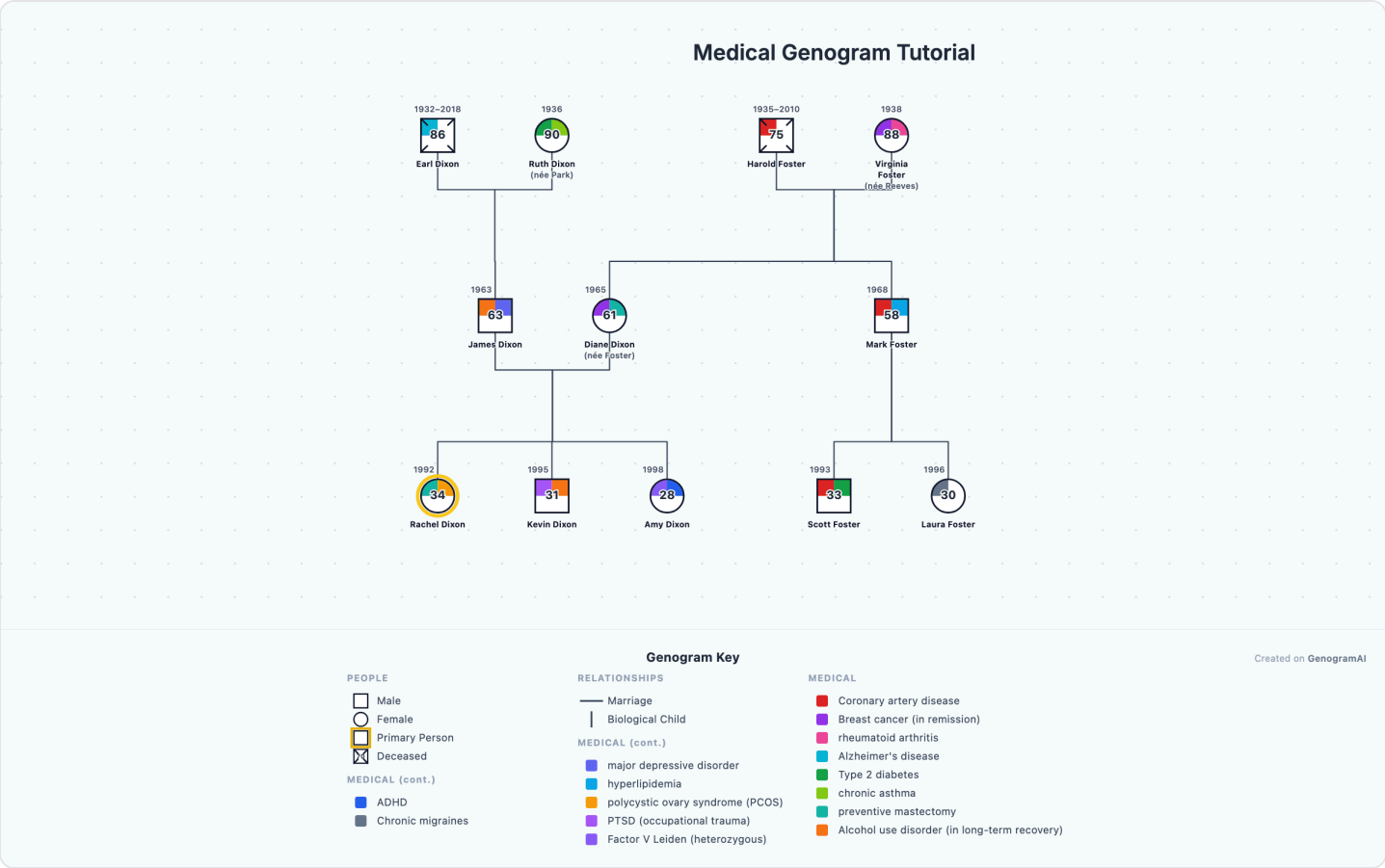
WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Substance use shaded across three generations
- Close, fused or conflictual lines around the person who drinks
- Physical abuse between the grandparents, and relatives who have died

DISCUSS

List the people who play a caretaking or enabling role. What do their lines to the drinker have in common?

Medical Genogram Tutorial



A teaching genogram demonstrating how to document and visualize medical conditions across a family using modern medical categories with color-coding. Covers all major medical categories: heart disease, cancer, diabetes, mental health, substance use, neurological conditions, respiratory illness, autoimmune disorders, genetic conditions, reproductive issues, anxiety, bipolar disorder, depression, and PTSD. Shows how hereditary conditions cluster in families across generations for genetic risk assessment.

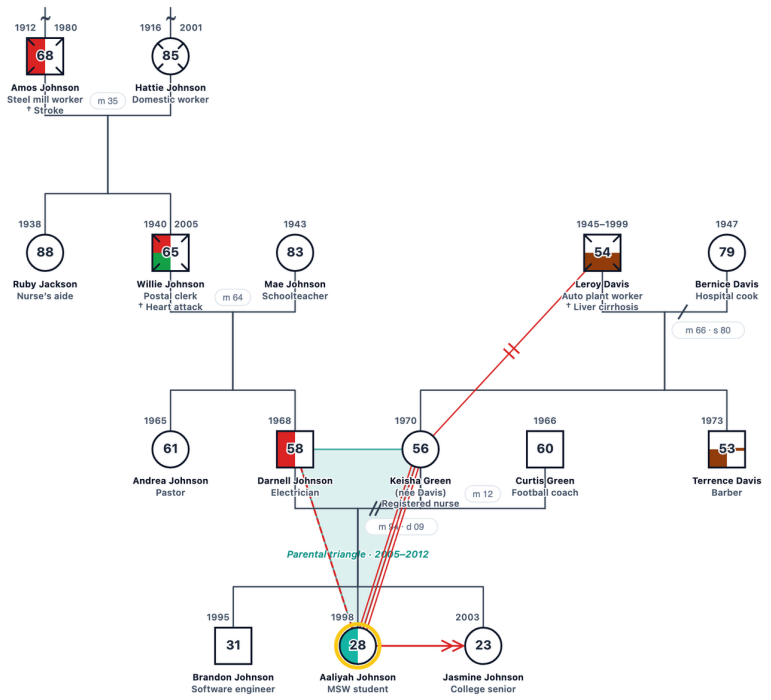
WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- One colour per condition, each named in the key
- Coronary artery disease down the Foster line: Harold, Mark and Scott
- Deceased grandfathers with birth and death years

DISCUSS

Which conditions appear in more than one generation? Which relatives would a clinician screen first, and why?

Family of Origin Genogram: Graduate Student Assignment Example



A four-generation family-of-origin genogram of the kind graduate students draw for MSW, MFT and counseling courses, for a fictional African-American family whose great-grandparents moved from Mississippi to Chicago in the Great Migration. It shows sibling position, a parental triangle, divorce and remarriage, a separation, alcohol and heart disease patterns, education levels and a dated chronology.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Four generations with dates of birth, death, marriage and divorce
- A parental triangle and a cutoff
- Health, alcohol use and education patterns running in parallel

DISCUSS

Write the three-sentence summary of this family you would put at the top of your own assignment.