

My Family As My Springboard: Dr. John C. Pulver

The purpose of the following questions is to have you begin to explore deeply your experiences. Specifically you will focus on your experiences in your family when you were growing up. This is called your “Family of Origin”; but for this questionnaire the family has been characterized as your ‘springboard’.

What follows are 20 questions on various aspects of your family experience.

1. What traditions did you have in your family, that you can remember, that was something you did consistently? These can be things that you might think most families do, or unique things to your particular family.
2. In the communication in the family: who talked with whom? Where did most of the communication come from? Were there subjects that appeared to be taboo for the family to discuss? Were there patterns of openness in your communication or was it more like communication veiled by silence, or sarcasm, or a certain kind of verbal treatment of different members of the household?
3. Who did you see as the powerful people in your family? This could be a parent, or parents; or this could be one or more of the children. How was this power manifest? Was it manifest through something physical, through verbal power; through manipulation, through threats, or was it manifest in some other manner?
4. What were the family rules that you experienced? These would be the expected behaviors for the members of the family, both for children and the adults. If there were rules that came from your cultural background that you felt were overlaid into your family, please discuss these are they related to the way your family acted.
5. Would you say your family was more **organized** (meaning rigid, controlled, rule-bound, predictable, goal-driven, strict) , or more **chaotic and loosely structured** in terms of the way things operated from day to day? (Chaotic meaning never knowing what might happen from moment to moment, highly spontaneous and unpredictable, and/or sometimes in crisis and loosely structured meaning a kind of ‘what will be, will be’, let people do what they want, and minimum accountability) Conversely, would you say your family operated as a very **close knit, connected unit**; or were the family members **more distant** or disconnected from one another? Can you also address how this may have operated with one parent or the other.
6. What would you consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of your mother? What would you consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of your father?
7. Where were you in the family constellation (birth order of the children in your growing up years), and how did that affect you?
8. What are the things that you experienced in your family that you would definitely want to carry on to the next generation; to your parent’s grandkids, and into your relationship with your partner or future partner?
9. Did you have pets in the home, and what do you feel the place of the pet(s) were in your family?
10. Are you aware of any ‘family secrets’ or things that family may be ashamed about- either with themselves directly, or where they came from, relatives they have had, or things that they experienced before in their lives that would give them some sense of being ‘less than’ or undeserving?

11. What is your sense of what makes your family proud? How do you accomplish it, and how is it reinforced in your family? Along with pride, do you get a sense of what your family's definition of 'success' is? Once you have left your family, how would you know you had achieved success?
12. What was the social class that you were growing up in when you were in your family?
13. Did members of your family experience unemployment, addiction or compulsive behaviors, or illnesses of any major type and how did any of these things affect what you were experiencing?
14. How were you disciplined?
15. What is the year of your birth? How would you characterize the generation you grew up with and how do you feel this influenced what you experienced in your family?
16. Did you have religious influences in your home and how did that affect what you were experiencing?
17. What was the place of education in your home and what were the values about education that were expressed or not expressed there?
18. Did you move around to different places quite a bit when you were growing up? How do you feel this affected your relationships while growing up and those you have now?
19. If you were a part of a single-parent home, experienced living in a step-family, or were a child of divorce, or experienced the re-marriage of one or more of your parents or them being in cohabitation relationships, how did this affect the way you experienced the family?
20. Are there any other advantages or disadvantages that you feel your family experience has given you in successfully creating a good family in the present or the future that you have not discussed?

For a more in-depth look at all of your varied early family experiences and what has flowed to you from them, see my book, "Growing Beyond Your Family of Origin Experience" available on Amazon and also through the link Family of Origin Book on the climbingupward.com website