



The 20 Questions You Should Know About Family History

Decades of research have shown that most happy families communicate effectively. But talking doesn't mean simply "talking through problems," although that is important. Talking also means telling positive stories about you.

When faced with a challenge, happy families, like happy people, just add a new chapter to their life story that shows them overcoming the hardship.

The bottom line: if you want a happier family, create, refine and retell the story of your family's positive moments and your ability to bounce back from the difficult ones. That act alone may increase the odds that your family will thrive for many generations to come. Source: "The Stories That Bind Us." The New York Times – <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/17/fashion/the-family-stories-that-bind-us-this-life.html?pagewanted=1& r=2>

The following 20 questions were referred to in the article. The key isn't just "knowing the answers," but "how" children learn the answers. Spend time creating rituals, telling stories on car trips or while sitting around the dinner table. Stories are part of how we process life. So sharing your stories and preserving them for future generations can help your family be stronger and more resilient.

The Do You Know Scale

1. Do you know how your parents met? Y N
2. Do you know where your mother grew up? Y N
3. Do you know where your father grew up? Y N
4. Do you know where some of your grandparents grew up? Y N
5. Do you know where some of your grandparents met? Y N
6. Do you know where your parents were married? Y N
7. Do you know what went on when you were being born? Y N
8. Do you know the source of your name? Y N
9. Do you know some things about what happened when your brothers or sisters were being born? Y N
10. Do you know which person in your family you look most like? Y N
11. Do you know which person in the family you act most like? Y N
12. Do you know some of the illnesses and injuries that your parents experienced when they were

younger? Y N

13. Do you know some of the lessons that your parents learned from good or bad experiences? Y N

14. Do you know some things that happened to your mom or dad when they were in school? Y N

15. Do you know the national background of your family (such as English, German, Russian, etc)? Y N

16. Do you know some of the jobs that your parents had when they were young? Y N

17. Do you know some awards that your parents received when they were young? Y N

18. Do you know the names of the schools that your mom went to? Y N

19. Do you know the names of the schools that your dad went to? Y N

20. Do you know about a relative whose face "froze" in a grumpy position because he or she did not smile enough? Y N

Important Note: About that last question! Fifteen percent of our sample actually answered "Yes!" This is because the stories that families tell are not always "true." More often than not they are told in order to teach a lesson or help with a physical or emotional hurt. As such, they may be modified as needed. The accuracy of the stories is not really critical. In fact, there are often disagreements among family members about what really happened! These disagreements then become part of the family narrative. Not to worry!

Source: [Duke, M.P., Lazarus, A., & Fivush, R. (2008). *Knowledge of family history as a clinically useful index of psychological well-being and prognosis: A brief report. Psychotherapy Theory, Research, Practice, Training, 45, 268-272.*]