

Family Map Test

by Bill Gaultiere

Healthy family systems are balanced in relational connecting and structure. Understanding your family dynamics in these areas is the first step to developing more loving and effective family relationships.

You can use the Family Map Survey to help you understand your family of origin. If you have children you can also use the Family Map Survey to describe your own family system. If you're married it's helpful for spouses to compare their approaches to relationship and structure. The Family Map is also a great pre-marital counseling tool. We tend to bring into our marriage and parenting the characteristics of the family system we grew up in and this can be a source of conflict between spouses/parents.

Family Map Questions

Use this scale to answer the questions below. First go through the survey to describe your family of origin *during your childhood*. Then re-take the survey, using the scale to describe your family with your own children:

	1	2	3	4	5
	Almost Never	Once in a While	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost Always
1. We asked for and gave help to one another in our family.					_____
2. When solving problems, the parents took charge without input from the children.					_____
3. We approved of each other's friends.					_____
4. The children had no say in their discipline.					_____
5. We liked for just our immediate family to do things together.					_____
6. The same person(s) acted as leaders in our family in all situations.					_____
7. I felt closer to my family members than to people outside my family.					_____
8. Our family's way of handling tasks was unchanging.					_____

9. I like to spend free time with my family members. _____
10. The parents punished misbehaving children without discussing things. _____
11. I felt very close to my family members. _____
12. The parents made all the decisions in our family. _____
13. When our family got together for activities, I liked for everybody to be present. _____
14. It was important for rules to stay the same in our family _____
15. We could easily think of things for our family to do together. _____
16. It was hard for us to shift household responsibilities from person to person. _____
17. We consulted with family members on family related decisions. _____
18. In any situation it was easy to identify the leader(s) in our family. _____
19. Family togetherness was very important to us. _____
20. Each family member had particular household chores and they didn't change/ _____

How to Interpret Your Family Map Test

The Relationship Scale looks at levels of closeness, emotional involvement, and togetherness – are people in the family connected or more separate? The Structure Scale looks at how the family is organized in terms of rules and discipline – is it parent-controlled or more democratic? Roughly speaking, the Relationship Scale is assessing your experience of God's grace and the Structure Scale is assessing your experience of God's truth.

High scores on the Relationship Scale tend toward the "Enmeshed" category. Low scales tend toward "Neglectful." Near the middle is optimum as "Independent" and "Intimate" are both healthy values to hold together in your relationships.

High scores on the Structure Scale tend toward being "Authoritarian" and low scored tend toward "Permissive." Near the middle is optimum as "Flexible" and "Firm" are both healthy values to seek in the structure of a family.

You can plot your scores on a Family Map to easily compare your score(s) with your partner's. Your map needs four quadrants that form an plus sign in the middle. The horizontal axis is your relationship scale score (0 to 10, left to right). The vertical axis is the structure scale score (0 to 10, bottom to top). So going around the circle clockwise: Top right is neglectful and

authoritarian. Bottom right is neglectful and permissive. Bottom left is enmeshed and permissive. Top left is enmeshed and authoritarian.

As with the individual scales, the optimum point for the two scores plotted on the map/graph is near the middle, but few people are right on the center. It's hard to find the middle on both scales. That's because bonding and boundaries are two core developmental needs but they are in tension with each other. You may feel that you have to sacrifice one to meet the other, but you need both! Jesus Christ as he's revealed in the Gospels of the Bible is the perfect picture of grace and truth integrated (John 1:14, 17).

In marriage you'll tend to pull your partner toward your own family of origin experience or your own personality pattern that you've developed.

The tables below explain different levels of the relationship/bonding and the structure/boundaries scale:

Family Map: Relationship (Bonding) Scale				
Parenting Style	Neglectful (0-2)	Independent (3-5)	Intimate (5-7)	Enmeshed (8-10)
Bonding	Very separate; Little closeness	Separate; Limited closeness	Close; Some separateness	Extreme closeness; Little separateness
Family loyalty	Lacks loyalty	Some loyalty	Loyalty expected	Loyalty demanded
Emotional expression	Infrequent	Some response	Preferred	Continual and intense
Decision-making	Individual	Joint possible	Joint preferred	Subject to group
Friends & Activities	Separate	Some shared	Most shared	Must be shared

Family Map: Structure (Boundaries) Scale				
Parenting Style	Permissive (0-2)	Flexible (3-5)	Firm (5-7)	Authoritarian (8-10)
Leadership	Children in control	Democratic	Some democracy	Parental control
Rules	Inconsistent; Frequent changes	Flexibly enforced; Some changes	Firmly enforced; Few changes	Unchanging
Discipline/Consequences	Very lenient	Negotiated	Predictable	Rigid
Roles	Unclear; shifting reversals	Fluid changes; Shared	Stable; May be shared	Strictly defined; Separate
Negotiation/Decisions	Impulsive; Endless negotiating	Discussed and agreed upon	Made by parents	Imposed by parents

The basic concepts in the Family Map are modified from FACES III developed by David H. Olson, Joyce Portner, and Yoav Lavee, Family Social Science, Univ. of Minnesota, 1985 .