

## 1.3a Engagement and Team Preparation Using the EMQ Connectedness Model

Many mental health professionals were trained to use a genogram, which is a derivative of a medical tool that was used to trace genetically transmitted disorders. The genogram, although widely used by physicians, social workers, and other therapists, has really not evolved to meet the more sophisticated understanding of the connectedness that matters just as much as biological or genetic lineage.

The EMQ Connectedness Model is designed to be used collaboratively with a child and family to explore areas of relation that might not otherwise be discovered. Humans and families are extraordinarily complex and multidimensional beings. As such, the Connectedness Model and its

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diagramming process are designed to capture some part of this in a manner that fosters engagement, empowerment, genuine inquiry, and the desire to truly understand the internal life of our children and families. The diagram becomes a living representation, which is owned by the child and family who co-participate in its creation. The very act of creating the Connectedness Diagram can yield results that are surprising—not only to the facilitator, but to the youth and family, as well. A successful connectedness diagramming process can go far in showing how genuinely the facilitator wants to understand who and

what matters most to the youth and family. It is also a way to communicate cultural sensitivity to families who may define "family" beyond a nuclear family unit.

Invariable questions that the connectedness diagram raises include:

- Who loves whom?
- Who teaches whom?
- What do they teach?
- What do they learn?
- Who matters most to a child or family?
- Who is missing?
- Who is being missed?
- To whom is the youth or family spiritually connected?
- From whom do they receive psychological support or nourishment?

What matters most to humans are our human connections. Bereft of these connections, we wither and fail to grow. With a rich network of interpersonal connectedness, a human is encouraged, supported, motivated, made capable of living life more fully, and of sharing both joy and pain. In many ways, human interconnectedness is at the core of the EMQ Matrix model. As the saying goes, "To the world you may be one person, but to one person you may be the world." This is potentially true of any person who shows up on the connectedness diagram.

## The Connectedness Diagram

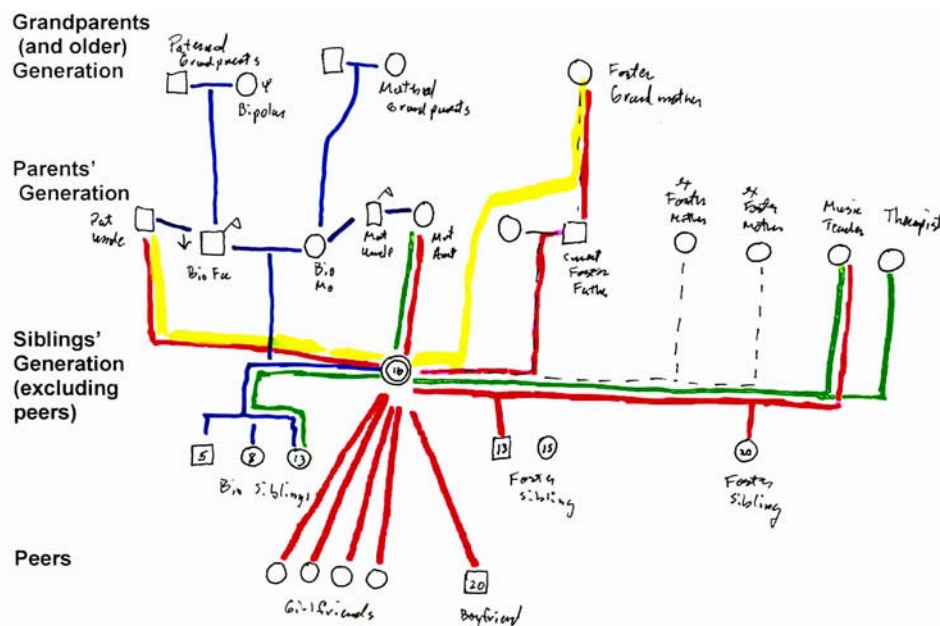
The Connectedness Diagram is quite simple but can be quite nuanced and subtle (see sample diagram below). It begins with a genogram in which a child's biological relationship is diagrammed in the traditional way using horizontal tiers for the child's generation (excluding peers), parents' generation, and grandparents' (and older) generation. This is done in the color

**Blue is the  
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blue, a mnemonic for the blue of the blood that runs in the veins. The blue portion of the Connectedness Diagram is very similar to the traditional genogram in that it represents the biological connections and the genetic endowment the child has inherited. Unlike the genogram, the Connectedness Diagram pays very close attention to whom the person loves

and by whom the person feels loved. These connections are represented in red, a mnemonic for the heart that bleeds. There may be some concordance between the biological relatives and those to whom the child is connected by love, but there may be others outside of the family (e.g., friends, teachers, coaches, foster parents) to whom the child feels a deep heart connection. There may be unrelated surrogate grandparents who provide much of the love that a child must have in order to flourish. Oftentimes, the child has a considerable amount of love for siblings, which can be both a source of support and strength and a place to discharge natural filial altruism. Facilitators may need to be reminded that many children are as much in need of someone to care for as they are in need of being cared for themselves.

**Red is the  
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In addition, children have an inherent need to learn and even perhaps to teach. This is symbolized in the mnemonic green, representing the fertile and creative mind. For example, the child may have a relationship with a schoolteacher, maybe a music teacher or a coach, to whom she also feels a heart connection. In this case, there is no biological or legal relationship with this adult in the child's life but, nonetheless, it is a relationship that could potentially be mobilized to support the child and family during a time of crisis. These connections, involving both those from whom the child learns and those the child teaches, are equally important. Often an older sibling who appears quite incapable of taking care of herself will take very good care of a younger sibling and teach her things that she herself needs to put into practice. For example, you may find a sibling who teaches her younger siblings not to abuse drugs; this impulse could be mobilized to understand why the older sibling herself does not practice what she preaches. Furthermore, it is important to understand the content of what is learned and what is being taught. If a child draws a green line to a history teacher, what it is about history that has engaged the child to this degree, and is there something that might be mobilized as a strength, a support, or an activity that could be used as part of the individualized child and family plan?

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Finally, there is the spiritual dimension that is diagrammed in the mnemonic yellow, representing the light of the soul. By nature, humans have a spiritual dimension, even if they do not care to acknowledge it. Many children and families, however, are very open in discussing their spiritual relationships with others. In many cultures, spirituality is a central aspect of an individual's every day. This dimension is particularly important in that it can often provide a healing power that is greater than what any psychological or psychiatric intervention could ever provide. This is particularly true when working with addictions and other unhealthy compulsions, but it can also be true in healing and building constructive relationships. The spiritual dimensions of a person's life should be explored gently and thoroughly. The Connectedness Diagram gives a way to do this neutrally, while never imposing a spiritual perspective on anyone.

**Yellow is  
the light of  
the soul.**

At the end of the connectedness process what the family, facilitator, and transition team end up with is a multicolored diagram called the Connectedness Diagram. It shows those connections of the heart, mind, body, and soul that are unique and important to the individual child and family. In our experience at EMQ, this methodology yields a robust discovery process while at the same time building engagement and true understanding. EMQ Matrix practitioners use it routinely.