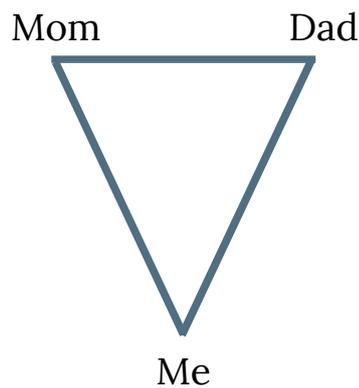


TRIANGULATION AND FAMILY ROLE

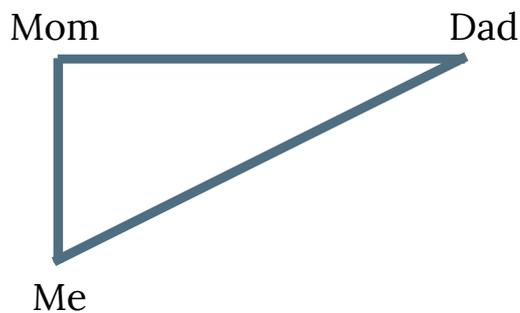
If your parents did not have a passionate, healthy marriage—and a deep emotional connection with each other—then it is likely that either you or one of your siblings were more connected to a parent than the parent's spouse was, a set up for subtle sexual abuse.

The emotional closeness of the relationship in your family can be drawn as actual triangles with the points of the triangle representing the closeness of the relationship.

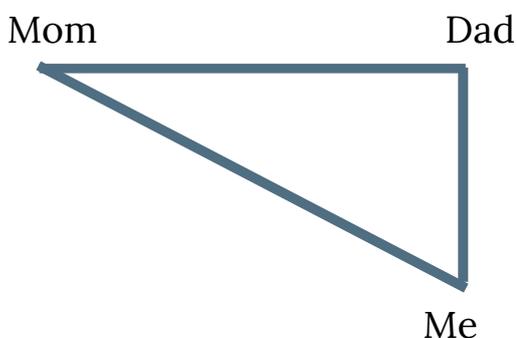


Mom and Dad are emotionally closer to one another than either of them are to you.

Triangulation occurs when a child becomes emotionally closer to Mom or Dad than Mom and Dad are to each other. In time, the parent may look to the child as a surrogate spouse.



You are emotionally closer to Mom than Mom is to Dad.



You are emotionally closer to Dad than Dad is to Mom.

In the space below, draw your triangle. Note: you may have to draw multiple triangles to account for situations of divorce and remarriage, or parental death and remarriage. Alternatively, you may have been raised by a single parent (in this case, try to depict the emotional closeness of the relationship with your single parent).

The questions that follow are designed to help you think about the relational triangles in your family of origin.

Mom and Dad's Marital Relationship

Rate the items below on a scale of 1 to 5.

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always

- _____ Mom and Dad were close friends.
- _____ Mom and Dad enjoyed each other and spent time doing things just the two of them.
- _____ Mom and Dad were attuned to each other.
- _____ Mom and Dad were honest with each other about their feelings.
- _____ Mom and Dad showed physical affection for one another (hugging, hand holding, etc)
- _____ When Mom was mad/sad/afraid, Dad responded to her with comfort and care.
- _____ When Dad was mad/sad/afraid, Mom responded to him with comfort and care.
- _____ When Mom and Dad disagreed or experienced conflict, they talked things through and reconnected with each other.

Based on your responses above, how close would you say your parents were to each other?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always

Your Relationship with Mom and Dad

- _____ Mom talked to me about her marriage problems.
- _____ Dad talked to me about his marriage problems.
- _____ Mom was contemptuous of my dad.
- _____ Dad was contemptuous of my mom.
- _____ Mom and I were emotionally closer than she was with my Dad.
- _____ Dad and I were emotionally closer than he was with my Mom.
- _____ I was Mom's favorite.
- _____ I was Dad's favorite.
- _____ My opposite sex parent was critical of me. It felt like there was something between us.
- _____ Mom made sexually suggestive comments (sexual jokes, comments about my or others' appearance, weight, body parts, etc.).
- _____ Dad made sexually suggestive comments (sexual jokes, comments about my or others' appearance, weight, body parts, etc.).
- _____ Mom confided in me about her emotional problems and difficulties, and turned to me for help. I felt like her confidante. We had a special relationship.
- _____ Dad confided in me about his emotional problems and difficulties, and turned to me for help. I felt like her confidante. We had a special relationship.
- _____ One of my parents attended most of my special events (games, concerts, recitals, etc) while the other parent stayed home.

Based on your responses, would you say that you were emotionally closer to your mother or your father?

You may not have been chosen as a surrogate spouse to one of your parents. Following is an exploration of additional roles that you may have been required to play.

You may have had elements of the **Hero Child** in you.

As you consider the children in your family, were you “the good and responsible” one?
Did you know what Mom/Dad valued, and did you work hard to become the kind of son/daughter that would make your parents feel good about themselves?

You may have had elements of the **Fool** in you.

Were you often the brunt of family jokes?
Did you feel like most of Mom or Dad’s contempt was directed at you?

You may have had elements of the **Problem Child** in you.

Did you feel like your family thought of you as “the one who needs the most help”?
Did you get into more trouble than your siblings?

You may have had elements of the **Truth Teller** in you.

Were you the child who was most likely to say things that no one else would say?
Did you have a sense of “I’m the only one who ever says it like it is”?
Did other family members get mad at you for saying things that you “shouldn’t” say?

You may have had elements of the **Complicated or Dramatic Child** in you.

Were you the most sensitive person in the family, the deepest feeler?
Were you told things like, “you’re too sensitive” or “you’re overly dramatic”?

You may have had elements of the **Clown** in you.

Did you use humor to deflect family conflict or ease family pain?
Were you gifted at lightening intense family moments by saying something funny?

You may have had elements of the **Lost Child** in you.

Were you obedient and passive, the one who stayed out of the way to avoid causing problems or being a burden?

Did you feel like your heart and your desires got lost in the midst of the family drama?

As you consider your role in your family, which of the categories do you relate to most?

Can you identify the role your siblings held?

If you weren't the chosen child, what did it feel like to be unchosen?

As you consider your role, are there particular scenes or vignettes that come to mind? How did your dinner table look? What was bedtime like for you? Can you start to piece together pictures that indicate your role? Write a paragraph describing any scenes that come to mind.

As you wrote, what thoughts and feelings did you notice? Did you feel anger, fear, grief, emptiness, confusion?