TRAUMA-INFORMED CLINICAL FORMULATION, FAMILY SYSTEMS, & HEALING PROTOCOL

Intergenerational & Historical Trauma Clinical Screener

Structured Assessment of Inherited Family Patterns, Collective Trauma, & Ancestral Resilience

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Clinical Rationale & Scope: Intergenerational and historical trauma occur when unresolved collective, systemic, or familial adversities (such as forced displacement, racism, colonization, war, poverty, addiction, or abuse) are transmitted across generations through relational attachment, unspoken family rules, survival beliefs, and chronic stress physiology **(Brave Heart, 1998; SAMHSA, 2014)**. Screening for both inherited pain and ancestral resilience helps clinicians contextualize current distress without pathologizing families **(Danieli, 1998)**.

Client Name / Chosen Name & Pronouns: _____	**Assessment Date / Age:** _____
Clinician / Provider Name & Role: _____	**Emotional Safety & Pacing Reviewed:** _____

Part 1: Trauma-Informed Administration & Pacing Standards

1. **Honor Family Loyalty & Avoid Caregiver Blame:** Frame intergenerational patterns as survival adaptations developed under hardship rather than moral failings of parents, elders, or communities.
2. **Respect Family Privacy Norms & Voluntary Pacing:** Many families hold protective rules against airing pain outside the home. Allow clients to skip items or answer broadly without pressing for detailed family narratives during screening.
3. **Balance Vulnerability Assessment with Ancestral Strengths:** Explicitly assess cultural endurance, faith, caregiving solidarity, and cycle-breaking strengths alongside inherited distress **(SAMHSA, 2014)**.

Part 2: Intergenerational & Historical Trauma Screening Items

Administer collaboratively or as a confidential self-reflection screener. Mark **Yes**, **No**, or **Unsure / Skip**.

Screening Prompt & Clinical Focus	Yes	No	Skip
Domain 1: Familial Adversity, Unspoken History, & Emotional Rules			
1.1 "Have parents, grandparents, or earlier generations in your family experienced major unresolved trauma, loss, war, displacement, severe poverty, violence, or addiction?" Identifies multi-generational exposure to severe adversity or abrupt family disruption.	☐	☐	☐
1.2 "Are there painful events, family secrets, or topics in your family history that nobody is allowed to talk about, or where grief and vulnerability had to be hidden to survive?" Detects the "conspiracy of silence" and emotional suppression norms that transmit unspoken distress across generations.	☐	☐	☐
Domain 2: Inherited Survival Beliefs, Parentification, & Relational Patterns			

Screening Prompt & Clinical Focus	Yes	No	Skip
2.1 "Do you notice yourself carrying chronic hypervigilance, guilt, mistrust, or unspoken survival rules from your upbringing (such as 'never rely on anyone,' 'never show weakness,' or 'always stay on guard')?" Captures internalized cognitive schemas and nervous-system threat responses rooted in ancestral survival.	☐	☐	☐
2.2 "Growing up or today, have you felt responsible for carrying your parents' or family's emotional pain, mediating family conflict, or 'fixing' the struggles of earlier generations?" Assesses emotional parentification, enmeshment, and burden-bearing roles across generations.	☐	☐	☐
2.3 "Do you feel caught between honoring your family's expectations and breaking painful relational, parenting, or coping patterns that have repeated across generations?" Identifies cycle-breaking tension, differentiation guilt, and relational loyalty conflicts.	☐	☐	☐
Domain 3: Historical, Systemic, & Cultural Disconnection			
3.1 "Has your family or community been impacted by historical or systemic trauma—such as racism, colonization, forced migration, boarding schools, incarceration, or discrimination—that still affects daily safety or opportunity?" Situates personal symptoms within structural, racial, and historical contexts rather than individual pathology.	☐	☐	☐
3.2 "Do you experience grief or disconnection related to lost heritage language, ancestral land, cultural traditions, or separated extended family members?" Evaluates ambiguous cultural loss and identity fragmentation resulting from migration or assimilation pressure.	☐	☐	☐
Domain 4: Inherited Strengths, Wisdom, & Cycle-Breaking Resilience			
4.1 "Are there stories of endurance, mutual aid, humor, faith, artistry, or wisdom from your family or ancestors that give you strength when facing hardship today?" Activates intergenerational resilience and culturally grounded sources of hope and identity.	☐	☐	☐

Part 3: Clinical Interpretation & Cycle-Breaking Care Guidance

Screening Pattern	Recommended Clinical Formulation & Action
Elevated Intergenerational / Historical Impact (≥ 2 Yes responses in Domains 1–3)	Integrate a trauma-informed genogram or cultural timeline once safety and stabilization are established. Validate survival adaptations, address differentiation guilt, and incorporate somatic regulation and culturally congruent healing practices **(SAMHSA, 2014)**.
Protective Ancestral & Cycle-Breaking Assets (Endorsement in Item 2.3 or Domain 4)	Highlight the client's role as an intentional cycle-breaker and anchor treatment goals in the cultural, spiritual, and community strengths identified in Domain 4 **(Brave Heart, 1998)**.

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Client Reflections, Inherited Strengths, & Clinical Formulation Notes

Practice Standards & References

1. Brave Heart, M. Y. H. (1998). The return to the sacred path: Healing the historical trauma and historical unresolved grief response among the Lakota through a psychoeducational group intervention. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 68(3), 287–305.
2. Danieli, Y. (Ed.). (1998). *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma*. Plenum Press.
3. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (2014). *Trauma-Informed Care in Behavioral Health Services* (Treatment Improvement Protocol [TIP] Series, No. 57). HHS Publication No. (SMA) 13-4801.

Clinical & Originality Notice: *All screening items and formulation tables in this document are original clinical prompts developed for educational and intake use, informed by published historical/intergenerational trauma scholarship (Brave Heart, 1998; Danieli, 1998) and public federal guidance (SAMHSA TIP 57). No copyrighted third-party instruments are reproduced herein. © 2026 Klasey Consulting. All rights reserved.*

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