Genogram: Alcoholism And Shakiel Gibbons Family History

The word 'family' can be interpreted in many ways and is nearly impossible to define. Some people limit the family to include only blood relatives, while others may have a broader definition that includes not only relatives but close friends as well. However, according to Sarkisian (n.d.), “a family is a group of two or more people who define themselves as related by blood, marriage, or some other bond”. Sarkisian (n.d.).

No matter how we choose to define the word somethings remain true, each family is unique and includes its own set of rules, patterns, and traditions. Families also provide several functions; one of which is to 'socialize members to their underlying values and beliefs about significant life issues, such as gender, health, and religion' (Galvin, Bylund, &Brommel, 2004, p. 3).

Creating a genogram was a really interesting way to discover things I had never known about my family. I was made aware not only of conflicts but also of traits that my family members share, which helped me discover more about myself and explain why I behave the way I do.

To complete this project, the author focused on the family backgrounds of his maternal and grandparents and his father’s lineage. To gather the information, the author informally interviewed his grandparents and uncle Aaron. Everyone I talked to seemed to want to tell me more about my family and accomplishments ancestors of mine have made.

While collecting information for my genogram, I noticed one reoccurring pathology within my lineage and that was alcoholism. According to……..“Alcoholism is a disease that produces both physical and psychological addiction.”

Alcoholism was present on both my mother's and father’s side of the family. When analyzing my mother’s side of the family evidence of alcoholism can be observed through her father, uncles, and aunts. Upon speaking to my grandfather it was revealed that four of his five siblings struggled with alcohol and drug abuse issues. My great uncle Ray and Carl is currently recovering from alcohol and nicotine addiction. As for great uncle Neal Halley he developed dementia in his old age and has since passed away. According to Alcohol and dementia. (n.d.) Excessive alcohol consumption over a lengthy time period can lead to brain damage and may increase your risk of developing dementia.

When I questioned my grandfather about my great aunt he told me that aunty Avril was an alcoholic and to this day still drinks alcohol profusely. While my great aunt Joan Halley was always known to be a seasonal drinker. As it pertains to my grandfather, he confessed that he was also a heavy drinker in his early days but that changed when he met my grandmother.

Furthermore, when I examine my maternal grandmother’s lineage it was revealed that all three of her siblings were known to be heavy drinkers. As I look back I recall every time I met my great uncle Erwin he was always drunk, and to this day I have never seen him sober.

In addition, to gather information on my father's side of the family I called my uncle Aaron. My

conversation with him revealed that his father was a serious alcohol drinker and that he developed dementia in his old age. My uncle also acknowledged that in his earlier day he struggled with alcohol abuse but upon meeting his with his wife she was able to help him with managing and overcome his addiction. My father, on the other hand, wasn't so fortunate with overcoming his alcohol addiction. My father's taste for liquor led him into running with the law, it also affected his commitment to our family and rendered him incapable of offering financial assistance to his children. According to Cooper & Russell, (1988) "people who exhibit patterns of abusive drinking behavior often have difficulty coping with the stress of daily living."

After speaking to my family, and analyzing the information given to me by my grandparents and uncle. It was plain for me to see that 'addictions within Families repeat themselves across generations. This is supported by the fact that three of my grandparent's children including my mother are suspected alcoholic.

In addition, three of my brothers on my father's side of the family are suspected alcoholic, while the fourth is currently serving a jail sentence for driving under the influence and for being found with the possession of narcotics. The genogram left me considering the adverse effect of the outcome of alcoholism on my family. Probing the question how is it that the social practice of alcohol drinking survived through three generations.

Alcoholism

To answer this question, we must realize that alcohol is one of society's favorite pass time drinks that is consumed throughout all social classes. Quote If we do, then we would quickly realize that its survival could in part be attributed to traditionalism.

According to dictionary.apa.org, traditionalism is "a set of social practices and conditions considered typical of societies that are economically and technologically undeveloped, relatively static in their structures and customs, rural rather than urban, and religious rather than secular and that tend to emphasize family or collective responsibilities rather than individual rights and aspirations."

People tend to think that traditionalism only has a social impact on society. However, Provide a reference Studies show that traditionalism can have a pathological effect on the members of a family.

To further understand how alcoholism has made it through the ages we have to explore the question of how we learn in families. One theory to consider is the social learning theory. The social learning theory focuses on learning through social modeling (Bandura, 1977). In other words, environmental influences help determine how our behavior are learned.

The act of drinking can be learned from interacting and observing people in a social environment. In our culture we witness this through our family gatherings and reunions. These joyous occasions, are synonymous with alcohol consumption which is usually present to liven the festivities. It is here that most children observe the action of their parents and guardians who in most instances encouraged the little one to their first sip of alcohol. Obedience in this case is rewarded with a smiles and cheer from close friends and families.

According to…Quote 1... “The acquisition of alcohol cognitions and dispositions are observational learning via families, media, and peers as well as personal drinking experience”.

Furthermore, Peele, 1984, “supports the idea that alcoholism is a result of both cognitive thinking and the influence environmental factors”.

To understand how the practice of drinking have survived so long, we must also consider how a person belief about alcohol can influence their decision of whether they may drink alcohol. For example, if a person has learned and now believes that drinking can help overcome a crisis, increase the social attitude, or increase their sexual stamina, they are at risk of becoming an alcoholic. For me as a young lad the perception of alcohol drinking was always tied to one of the belief mentioned above. I recall when going to party with my friend we would always take a few shots of liquor to increase our social attitude.

In addition, if this isn’t the case, then most children adopt the habit through social influence, which according to changingminds.org,

“is the change in behavior that one person causes in another, intentionally or unintentionally, as a result of the way the changed person perceives themselves in relationship to the influencer, other people and society in general.”

Under this theory, we can observe the effects of how the constant exposure to alcohol consumption through main stream television could greatly influence children who idolize celebrities. As I reflect, I recall watching movies with Scott Leo commonly known as ‘Taye Diggs’ when I was younger. I liked watching his on screen depiction of manhood, which was often portrayed to be robust, charming and liquor drinkers. Also, the fact that alcoholic practices were constantly being reinforced on a frequent basis in different movies didn’t help me avoid the alcoholic pit.

Moreover, some young people are obsessed with the idea of gaining the approval of their peer. This desire, often leads them to experiment with the substance, not because they truly desired this but because they wanted to earn the respect of their friends.

Symptoms of Alcoholism

The fact that alcohol consumption is such a normal practice throughout most parts of the world, it may be important to explore the warning signs and symptoms of alcoholism. Although a person who is in the early stages of alcohol abuse may still be able to function in a relatively normal way, it is important to note how the severity can impact them. According to Galbicsek (2019):

“There are various warning signs to help detect potential alcohol abuse. While many signs are recognizable, others may be more difficult to identify. Also, the severity of alcohol abuse may play a role in the warning signs a person exhibits. For example, some people try to cover their alcohol abuse by drinking in private and isolating themselves from others. This makes it challenging for family members or friends to intervene and help their loved one”, (Galbicsek, 2019).

Common signs of alcohol abuse include: drinking in secrecy, prioritising drinking over responsibilities such as work and exhibiting signs of irritability such as unpredictable mood swing. Other symptoms include experiencing short term memory loss and feeling hung-over when you are not drinking.

With this information in mind, it is possible for us to more easily identify a possible alcohol abuser. Unfortunately, most alcoholics are not very open to receiving the rehabilitative help that they are in need of. Galbicsek (2019) said that:

“Denial is one of the main reasons why millions of people do not receive treatment for alcoholism. Some individuals will try to rationalize their drinking behaviors. For instance, you may blame other people or certain circumstances for your drinking. Rather than acknowledge the problems you’ve experienced from alcohol, you become defensive when someone mentions your excessive drinking pattern. By refusing to recognize the negative consequences of alcohol, you’re preventing yourself from living a healthy, sober life” (Galbicsek, 2019).

Recommendation

Some members of the Halley and Gibbons family exhibited signs of alcoholism. It is important to note that in order to prevent this persistence into future generations, major changes would need to be implemented. Galbicsek (2019), advised that in order to break this cycle certain risk factors would need to be eliminated. Encouraging adolescents to drink at a young age, even if it’s just a sip, would need to cease. This is in an effort to prevent desensitizing them with regards to alcohol consumptions. Pressure from relatives at family gatherings, both young and old, could incline or force an individual to drink alcohol. This could be solidified if every gathering has copious amounts of alcohol and the pressure to drink is consistent and persistent. High levels of stress could worsen alcohol dependence especially if it is easily accessible and a part of the familial culture (Galbicsek, 2019),

Help to Manage Alcohol Use Disorder

The complex relationship of genetics, heredity, and other factors in a person’s life may lead them to struggle with alcohol use disorder, but it is always possible to end the addiction. Detoxing with the help of medical supervision, then participation in a complete rehabilitation program, is the best process for a person who struggles with this addiction. Therapy and social support are important components offered in a rehabilitation program, and these help the individual understand their addiction, avoid triggers for relapse, and maintain a sober, healthy lifestyle.

Conclusion

Through families’ value systems are passed down in the form of tradition. With this taken into consideration it is evident that the families act as the vessel which is responsible for transporting various pathologies across generations. The evidence can be seen when we follow the progression of alcoholism throughout the lineage of the Halley’s, Benjamin’s and the Gibbons’.

The spread of alcoholic practices in my family without a doubt can be explained through the

theory of social learning and social influence. The social learning and social influence theory dictates that, drinking is a cognitive behavior that imitates what we have learned through family, friends, the media, and direct experiences. The result of the aforementioned theories is the creation of a cycle transported alcoholism throughout the ages.

Alcohol dependence symptoms were associated with a stronger family history of alcoholism and later generational status. There was a significant interaction effect between familial alcoholism and generational status; the relationship of familial alcoholism with alcohol dependence symptoms increased significantly with successive generations in the

Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant that reduces anxiety, inhibition, and feelings of guilt. It lowers alertness and impairs perception, judgment, and motor coordination. In high doses, it can cause loss of consciousness and even death. Alcoholism is a disease that damages the brain, liver, heart, and other organs (short-term, long-term effects of alcohol)

Reference

1. Galbicsek , C. (2019). Signs of Alcoholism - Know the Warning Signs of Alcohol Abuse.
2. Retrieved from https://www.alcoholrehabguide.org/alcohol/warning-signs/.
3. Sarkisian, N. (2015, August 7). Family. Retrieved from https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/psychpedia/what-is-family.