

# TMFRS

LET'S MAKE SENSE OF YER STUPID FUCKING BRAIN

## EXERCISE | Family Lessons from the Cage

Continual stimulus control will kill the real you.

Summer 2022

### Where did these rules come from?

Alright, so how has society impacted YOU - maybe a lot more directly than you realized before? Maybe... by working through your family. Passing along these trends of believing in some "higher powers" whether those are spiritual or based on human accomplishment standards. Some social hierarchy that they subscribe to. Some authority they believe in or fall servant to. Or an easy, breezy "they" who are supposedly taking care of it all.

Plus, how THEY - WE ALL - fall into place UNDER those beloved structures. Are we grubs, digging around down here in the dirt who deserve nothing besides whatever we've got so far? Or, if we play the right cards, do a select few of us get to rise up the food chain towards the masters at the top?

Those cards being, things like having the right sort of career, lifestyle, appearance, personality traits, RESPECT towards those authority figures.

I want to talk about this because, fact is, in the past two years of family shenanigans mixed with national shitfuckery, one of the biggest eye openers was how non-progressive these folks are. How tethered to the system they are, cognitively and physically. And how that's made my brain that of a little worker robot, terrified that I'm not allowed to be out in the world unless I look and be a certain way, which ultimately always comes back to ruin me.

Such as? My mom telling me with venom that I should quit what I'm doing (this) and get a fulltime job - then I could pay overpriced rent. So... give up this thing I've seen you working on since 2019, which is finally getting traction AND people all over the world say it's very helpful... and sell yourself back to a job which she had ALSO seen ruining me for years. All our conversations about what my brain could and couldn't handle - and the ways it was now appearing to aid others?

Nah. Not important, there are high-ranking hands to put money into. Why do I think I'm so special that I shouldn't have to pay like everyone else (she said, after offering for me to live with her rent free during my education.) Well, redacted. Get back in the cage, "Diva" jess.

OR, my oldest brother who has a lot of rightist radical beliefs, such as "women have never done anything useful in the history of mankind" and, oh, any racist statement in the book... telling me I was an entitled generation-z faggot for getting COVID when he wanted us to landscape without warning. I'm just too weak. Lazy. Insubordinate. To his higher power. WHY CAN'T I WORK 16 HOUR DAYS INDEFINITELY WITHOUT FAIL?!

OR my middle brother - the one who used to be a punk person - preaching the merits of capitalism and investing in the stockmarket. PS - "no one wants to work anymore! Lazy fucking assholes!" He said, while not working. And having his family take care of him. Uh, lot to unpack with this one.

But, overall... it was just an enlightening time that has shown me where my workaholism and need to achieve while being 100% unsupported by anyone else and having a hot bod while I do it.... in order to be allowed to exist came from.

And, also a lot more... the over-emphasis on being intelligent, neverendingly busy, tough, and good looking in a way that others appreciate are just the most heavy handed ones. Big parts of my personality that I don't necessarily want.

They all came from my family upbringing. Based on how my family subscribed to the social systems around them.

So... How did your people learn to "get by" in the rat cage and how has that influenced you?

Let's ask some questions.

### **Let's figure out... What does your family value?**

So, these will probably be topics they talk about recurringly - whether blatant or sneakily. Do you have memory of your family or immediate social group repeatedly bringing up some words or conversational points more than others... or are there "positive and negative energetic trends"?

These might be really obvious.

For instance, making disparaging remarks about this group or that one. Putting some other sect on a pedestal. Pressuring you with critical statements or rejections in certain ways. Priding themselves on traits that make you go, "but... really?" Even just making dirty looks at others.

This might be clear cut - they're openly stating things like "this is the way it is," or "that's not going to get you anywhere in this world." "I got news for these gen xyz-ers, they've got a rude wakeup call coming." Shit like that, on repeat. They're DISTURBED by what they see and they bring it up a lot.

Or it might be more subtle, and directed at themselves in backwards ways. Like, the way my family members all complain about various physical ailments that they won't take care of. "Why are they like that?" I've only had the wherewithal to ask for about 2 years - since the time my mom wouldn't go to the emergency room as her arm turned black and I couldn't call this a "normal" thing anymore.

Answer: because they need to be uncared for, to show they're tough, and they don't give a fuck about themselves... only fiscal responsibility. So obsessed with saving every dime that they'd rather die or suffer indefinitely - and tell everyone about it, continually - than to be a "weak" person who spends money on their health.

Tell me that's not from some social learning, handed down from the depression-era generation. THIS is what's pious. THIS is what gives me value. So they all live in pain they could easily treat or have teeth falling out of their mouths. Better that than to appear soft.

Why is it important? The consistency of it signals how they really feel about themselves AND what they dream of being. Partially because they all reinforce the same behaviors in each other - make it a suffering competition around our household.

So, look for looping narratives that might be obvious or subtle - but either one will probably strike you with this "wait, huh?" energy. Something about this seems reductive or counterintuitive or overcompensatory.

And it is. So take note, start exploring it.

**Next point: look where they place their shame.**

Another thing you'll pick up on is their tendency to shame other people for these societal lessons. I mean, that's how society passes along these lessons... so someone has to provide the shame if another steps out of line. That's the purpose of shame, right?

So, what do they tell you or others about the "correct" ways to be, through their shitty responses?

Again, back to those "good luck out there, being like THAT" sortof statements.

It might be hard to detect in YOUR interactions - might actually be USED to this talk, and not really notice it anymore - so it helps to watch them with other people, I find. For instance, do they talk shit to or about their friend for taking time off? For having a husband or partner they make decisions with? For NOT having a husband or partner they make decisions with? For having kids? Or not? For gaining weight? For losing weight? For beliefs or non beliefs? For an employment decision?

Check it out, it'll tell you what they believe is the "right" and "wrong" ways to be. Which tells you how they were formed. And how they tried to form you.

You CAN read into these things and get a pretty good map of their brain. HOW is it programmed that THIS is the response right now? What are they revealing with their social shame attack about how THEY think THEY need to operate in the world?

Take a gander.

**Also, be sure to watch their nerves.**

You might want to watch for ANXIOUS behaviors on their part. If they're passing along shame, they've been shamed before themselves. And a common response we have to looming shame is? Anxiety that we're about to be shamed.

So what topics do they sortof "overexplain"? Try to tell you alllll about the motivations for their actions when you did not ask and do not care? Again, things they repeat way too often, or in too much depth, or with great defensiveness that no one is providing the offensiveness to elicit.

Also check out things like:

What behaviors do they HAVE to carry out, as though their life actually depends on it?

Where do they get super rigid and reactive in their lives?

What decisions are they ready to die defending, even if no one's passing the judgement they seem to be expecting?

And... do you have any similar tics?

Let me give some examples... My family will overexplain their busy lives and work schedules TO DEATH, when no one gives a fuuuuuck. "Here are all the reasons why I wasn't working myself into the ground, spit out in a 10 minute long flurry of panic that's presented with utter frustration and some use of a common enemy, usually." Cool, didn't ask, don't care where you were, you're allowed to stop working, I know that the rest of life exists.

But we have to go through this on loop, anyways. Obvious point: them earning pity from you, instead of anger, because they've learned that having a negative backstory will get them out of the trouble they expect for not being constantly productive.

Or... the inability to stop exercising/being physically active. Tell my mom to sit still for an hour. She cannot. Ever. If she broke her leg, she'd still find a way to scoot around her farm, even with an army doing the work for her. Admittedly, this is to keep up with physical perfectionism... non-admittedly, I believe, to avoid her own thoughts and feelings.

Interrupt her busy schedule, and all hell will break out. Because that's the "right" thing to do. AND she'll talk about her schedule nonstop, to anyone; virtue signaling her worth on this planet by way of being very occupied in her own self-designed life.

Hey, I think I was trained to do the same. Though, around here it's also to let you all know why I'm too flustered to be wholly social a good portion of the time. There's a purpose.

But still. Deprogramming my "productivity merit" has been the focus of 2022. It feels wrong. It makes me have family scoffing running on a backtrack in my skull. And that's how I know it's right. Rewiring.

So what do you see? Read your family's "off kilter" reactions to things, and you'll get a lot of insight into what panics them. Probably, on a generational and societal scale.

**And that brings us to the next question - Can you connect it back to their social systems?**

Can you hypothesize about where they learned this behavior or picked up this narrative driving their behavior?

The reason being... then you better understand it, rather than hating them completely for the way that their environment shaped them. Which, I don't know, isn't meant to make you have family reunions or compassion-fests if that's not in your wheelhouse. Just opens the door to understanding the whole picture and healing, instead of settling on resentment.

So... Do they have a prior career or work or community environment that would have necessitated these ideas and actions? For instance, being a member of a "tough guy" industry? Or a "pretty girl" one? Or, one where being intelligent was absolutely required and mistakes were punished? Or, a hometown where dancing was still illegal?

If your parents were scientists, for instance... are they way TOO logical and "flat" with their emotions? Very factual with the way they present things? Disparaging of anything not peer-reviewed?

I use this example because I KNOW some of you have this experience.

Or, if they're super rigid and proper... did they come from a hometown where stepping out of line was actually dangerous?

How about a place where there were stratified gender roles? Does a very "masculine" flavor come out of your family at times? Does this have anything to do with needing to play "authority figure" at some position, and assuming a more male "vibe" to get that done?

Or a very "female" vibe, as we commonly describe it? Maybe, in order to play up their charms to those higher authorities?

How did they learn to get by? What traits do they emphasize from their work and operating environments?

**Okey, this gets deeper. How about what they learned from a family or social environment?**

Did their mother teach them that “proper women acted this way”? Did dad push them to be “real men?”

Do they have bitchy ass, untrustworthy, judgey friends? Or overly macho ones? How afraid ARE they of non-heteronormative humans? I think this alone says a lot about where they come from.

Also consider a question we asked back in the “do you want to care what *these* people think about you” show at the beginning of the year. Do they have histories of rapid social changes - getting into conflict with people regularly and/or suddenly leaving relationships?

This tells you a lot about their relationship tactics and why they may pressure you so strongly to be a certain way - the alternative is a sudden departure.

Anyways, if they DO have social structure issues - fleeting relationships or essentially no friends, on purpose. Do they talk MASSIVE SHIT about these close associates, past or present? And to go back a section - what sort of judgements ARE they shaming those folks about?

All of these things will help you understand - just like we’re having to learn with ourselves - where these social lessons originated from and why these brains are overcompensating the ways that they are. Then, how they told you to do the same. Directly or indirectly.

For instance, my mom grew up with a very upright and uptight mom. Keeping that in mind, it’s obvious why she’s weird about issues like sex - we pretend it doesn’t exist unless it’s being spoken about shamefully every 5 years or so. It’s also why she’ll spit out the most vile things you’ve ever heard in your life... but only apologize after she accidentally swears. “Nah, you can call me a bitch all you want, it was when you threatened to ruin my life that you really left a mark.”

It’s also obvious why she has no friends - she doesn’t actually like women, she continually talks about them being “silly” and “weak,” AND she can’t control her seductive manipulation around men, so those friendships never last longer than both parties getting what they want from each other.

She can have exactly one friend who accepts her bullshit, and every other relationship in her life is bad-mouthing chaos. Up and down, it’s here and then it’s gone... or it’s here, but she despises them. Including, that uptight mother of hers we just talked about. Really shows me

how I'm supposed to conduct my relationship with her - behind the scenes, unwillingly. "Grin and bear it" as my family says.

So. Think about it. What do you know about the people that your family knows? And where did they maybe pick up some of these ideas and behaviors to fall in line with those folks? And... how are those things affecting you, to this day, in your own interactions?

**Which brings us to... considering their entire generational and geographical environment, actually.**

What were times like "back when and where they were coming up?"

Was it a hard time? A tumultuous environment? A religious time and place?

Was everything very buttoned up and "laid out" for them? Similar to the way my mom learned not to speak of intercourse or swear, because those were the "improper" things to do for her time and mother's desire to climb the social ladder... she was also taught that women became mothers, and that was their job.

An idea she now RESENTS.

A woman's job is a woman's work out of the house. That's what's important. And here we are, I can never stop working and the idea of a family is the idea of imprisonment to me.

So, check out what they ACCEPTED from those broader influences... and also what they now REJECT FURIOUSLY. Both will tell you a lot about how they were raised and what they learned was acceptable...

Again, not so you HAVE to pity them. But... I find that I do. It's a more gray-toned area to be in, and although that's harder... I'd rather be able to SEE why my people are the way they are, than to just assume they are that way because they're terrible.

They might tell you one thing about themselves... "that's just the way I am!" but underneath the surface, it's all related to social programming.



And the last way I would encourage you to uncover societal narratives, judgements, and instructional systems being handed down is....

### **Look at YOUR PARTS.**

Sorry Fucker.

Like I said in the beginning, the way I actually started piecing this together was by asking questions about myself. WHY THE FUCK AM I LIKE THIS? WHICH I could only START seeing by GETTING AWAY from my family, meeting other people, and realizing... there are a lot of other methods of operation out there. Why DO I think that mine are the best ones, when they actually make me very miserable?

Why can't I stop working? Stop fronting with my intelligence and shutting off my humanity? Stop competing over who's in more pain right now?

Uh, not everyone is like this... even though I thought they all were...

Some of my old, no longer so strongly with me parts also begged the questions, "Why can't I stop obsessing over my hair and makeup? Why do I judge others for their eating? Why do I resent people who don't have to struggle every day like I do?"

The answers are all... social learning. What has society allowed your family to be, which turns into what they'll allow YOU to be?

So, take a look at pieces of yourself you don't understand, based on who you really are and what you really believe in your broader perspectives... if you weren't judging YOU, would you be saying these things to another person? Probably not.

And take a look at those trends, in all the ways we've just described. Where did they possibly come from? When were you taught these lessons? How? And who taught the lessons? Where did THEY learn those things - in prior careers, social structures, or generational conditions?

Do you have corresponding pieces / behaviors with your family members?

Followup:

Do you feel "WHOLE" when you're enacting these behaviors?

Do they shut down other parts of you?

Do they make you feel like a cardboard cutout?

Do they feel required? Or out of your control to stop?

Eh, they might be learned from someone else.... And enforced by social pressure, punishment, or reward... maybe over generations.

So, they SEEM as correct and natural as breathing by this point - it's all your bloodline has ever known. But if you look around at other sources of comparison - using these people from different backgrounds as a "control variable," are ALL people like this? And do they HAVE to be? Or are there differences in upbringing that can explain a lot of the discrepancies?

**If you're having a hard time with that one, because "I don't know who I really am, to compare "parts" of myself to some control measure. I was never allowed to find out." Gotcha. We can still get in there.**

How about we ask:

What are your strongest behaviors? Ones you can't really shut off?  
Worries that feel immersive and omnipresent? Shame? Anxiety?  
Strongest judgements of self?  
Of others?

What are your automatic thoughts, behaviors, feelings, and judgements? And are they really YOURS, for any reason besides, "I was taught this way, everyone acted this way."

You might "catch" yourself in the middle of these actions and get mad at you. "WHY did I just think that? That wasn't nice. WHY am I doing this again? I promised I would quit after I reached this point."

Well, that's a good indicator, it's not really YOU making shitty remarks about another person's work ethic, appearance, or mannerisms... it's someone you've been carrying around in your head with you, who hurt you in the past.

These micro-expressions can reveal a lot. Just need to notice them first.

AND, on a larger scale... let's also ask, thinking BIG decisions - Are there any from your past that you don't really remember or understand making?

Why did you marry that person? Why did you take that job? Why were you in that program, or at that school, at all? Why did you have kids? Why didn't you? Why did you move? Why did you stay? Why did you give up that hobby? Why didn't you pursue that great idea you had, or go on that wild adventure?

Maybe you know... maybe you have a headfull of question marks, considering none of it ever made YOU happy or felt like it came from YOUR best interest.

And maybe... you can remember that it made someone else a lot happier.... And all their friends were pretty excited about it too.

AH... yess... just fulfilling the societal constraints that made my parents look like good parents. That's why my life has been my life. I think a lot of us have this realization with college and marriage, sports and recreational activities, family rearing. Choice of mate. Sexuality, period. Etc.

But, obviously, look for the more nuanced examples of this, too. They might be very hard to spot, and again, you might focus on automatic, repeated behaviors that you otherwise don't really think much about all. And it might take you years of exploring before you really find the answer to those questions knocking around in your head. Might be a verrrrrry early experience that left a mark.

So don't feel like you're doing something wrong if you're using a lot of "Why AM I like that questions" but not finding a lot of quick answers.

Well, the lessons you're learning earliest in life are going to be implicit, subconscious memories and instructional systems. So, you might NOT KNOW why you act certain ways or have explicit memories of getting to this unwanted set of brain cells.... But you can learn an awful lot just by noticing and naming them.

AND THEN, go back to the beginning and observe your family again.

Start at the beginning of this episode, with your own "tics" in mind... and take an open-minded view of your social unit. NOW do you see any trends leaping from their words and actions, that make more sense when puzzle-pieced to gether with your own?

I bet you'll find out eventually - there's a reason for everything you do. Even if the family narratives that were actually societal narratives seemed subtle before.

So get to it, Fuckers. Get curious and get observing.

**And remember, question everything you think you think.**

There's a reason why you think it, that probably has very little to do with you. EVERYTHING to do with being born cursed as a social animal, sucking up instruction from everyone around you. Who was born in the same condition, and only a slightly different cage.

Cheers.

**How did your people learn to “get by” and how has that influenced you?**

**What does your family value?**

**Talk about it recurringly, blatant or sneakily**

**Shame you / others about it**

**Anxious behaviors on their part**

**Can you connect it back to their social systems?**

**Job environment**

**Family environment**

**Generational environment**

**Your parts**

**Do you have corresponding pieces / behaviors?**

**Do you feel “WHOLE” when you’re enacting these behaviors?**

**Do they shut down other parts of you?**

**What are your strongest behaviors?**

**Do they make you feel like a cardboard cutout?**

**Are they “automatic”?**

**Do they feel required? Or out of your control to stop?**

**What are your strongest judgements of self?**

**Of others?**

**Do you have past decisions you don’t understand/remember making?**