

## **The Work Family History Tree Exercise**

By Gail Jean Nicholson, MA, LPC © 1985

Doesn't it make sense to think about what your folks did for a living, while you ponder the question of what to do yourself, given how influential they are? Models are very important in life. Work life role models, especially so. Perhaps one of your parents didn't work outside the home. Maybe they volunteered or were involved in the community in a meaningful way, providing a model of giving for you to see.

Draw a picture of your extended family; a tree with branches labeled with names of your parents, grand parents, great grand parents and so on if you know of them. Add siblings, aunts, uncles and cousins. Include influential community, teachers and mentors from school, religious life, the neighborhood, wherever they appeared.

Jot down what they did for work on a separate page along with how they seemed to feel about the work they did. What was the message that you got about work life from them?

Allow yourself to reflect on your families' notions, ideas and experiences of working life, what they passed on to you and your sibs. How would you verbalize it? Describe what you learned work is supposed to be in your life? Highlight any challenges that you assume will come with a full time job, particularly those that represent a barrier to satisfying and viable employment. Detail the positive messages you received about the potential of work life.