Genogram interview questions

Questions to ask while a genogram is drawn, grouped as the chart is built. Ask what fits the conversation and leave the rest.

Each person on the chart

1. What is this person's full name, and what are they called in the family?
2. When were they born, and where?
3. If they have died, when did they die, how old were they, and what was the cause?
4. What work did they do for most of their life, and how far did they go in school?
5. Where do they live now, and who lives with them?

Couples and parents

1. When did this couple meet, and when did they marry or begin living together?
2. Did the relationship end, and if so when, and was it a separation or a divorce?
3. Were there earlier marriages or partnerships, and were there children from them?
4. Which children were born to this couple, in what order, and were any adopted, fostered or lost before birth?
5. Are there children who grew up in this house who are not the couple's own?

The relationships between people

1. Who in the family is this person closest to, and who are they most distant from?
2. Is there anyone in the family this person no longer speaks to, and since when?
3. Who takes care of whom, and who worries most about whom?
4. When there is a disagreement in the family, who takes whose side?
5. Which relationships in the family would you describe as tense or hostile?

Health, habits and events

1. Has anyone in the family had a long illness, a mental health condition or a disability, and at what age did it begin?
2. Has anyone had a problem with alcohol, drugs or gambling, and are they in recovery?
3. What were the big events in the family, such as a move, a loss, a job lost or a house bought, and in what year?
4. Did anyone in the family emigrate, and from where, and in what year?
5. Which anniversaries or dates are still hard for the family?

The family in its community

1. Which schools, clinics, churches, agencies or groups does the family rely on, and for how long?
2. Who outside the family would you call first in a crisis?
3. Is there anyone outside the family who is a source of pressure rather than support?
4. Which supports did the family have in the past that it no longer has?
5. What would you want someone reading this chart to understand about your family that the lines do not show?