

Think of trauma, the THC in cannabis, and/or high stress as potential "on-switches" to our genetic predisposition. According to Stanford Medicine heritability for depression is probably 40% and significantly higher for severe depression (2-3 times higher or 20-30% vs 10% chances of developing depression.)

Addiction is estimated to be up to 60% genetic. Of those that are diagnosed with BiPolar or Schizophrenia it is estimated that

there was a family history of mental health issues in 75-80% of those living with those mental health conditions.

So understanding our relative's mental health and history of addictive behaviors can help us take steps to avoid triggers and build resilience.

Knowing genetic predisposition may increase our desire to increase our psycho-education or prompt more open prevention/resilience dialogue with our children/teens.

These crucial conversations both to gather family history then to share that history with the next generation may be the ticket to seeking treatment and sooner.

So have that oh so crucial conversation with older relatives that can still recall prior generations. The director of NIMH (National Institute of Mental Health) encourages everyone to think of predisposition not as "I have it or I don't" in my family tree but rather "I have traits of mental illness and traits of addiction in my family tree." Essentially all of us carry some traits for each - the question we need to find is the degree of severity of these traits and talk about these traits openly and honestly. Perhaps your family will respond with "Great-Grandpa Joe had a nervous breakdown and had to take a rest at the hospital for a month." Or you might hear "Oh we don't have any history of mental health issues



in "our" family. But Auntie Suzie died by suicide." Or perhaps you will hear "Every single member of my Mom's side had alcohol addiction." You may feel you already fully understand your family's history but you would be surprised how much may never have been shared until you are suddenly in a crisis situation. Perhaps you will lead the crucial investigative conversation at your next family reunion! Bring your sense of humor and sincerity to the table. Let's crush stigma and bring these conversations forward in El Dorado County and everywhere.