**Running head: PERSONAL CONNECTIONS ASSIGNMENT 1**

**Personal Connections Assignment**

**Part 1: Preparation**

**Part 2: The Story**

**Part 3: Reflection**

**ECC 163 / CVS3 & CVS4**

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**PERSONAL CONNECTIONS ASSIGNMENT 2**

”Over the course of time, all families will experience change. Some of those changes are

termed “normative” changes. These include such events as the birth of a child, members growing

older and transitions to school. They are expected and welcome changes. Some changes are

events like death, divorce or unemployment that are unexpected and painful.

These changes impact families in different ways: change adds stress, may confuse parent roles:

may trigger unhealthy behaviors: create miscommunication: and /or financial problems.

Regardless of the change, families can successfully learn to manage or cope using their support

system, self-care, and family responsibilities” (Avender, P, 2019, para. 3).

Now I would like to share with you, my stories of how my family, (my Mum, Dad,

younger brother and I) navigated through, family rules and roles, our parent’s parenting styles,

family traditions and cultural practices, and times of stress and change.

Our large family city home was my Dads original family home. After my Dad and Mum

 married the house was large enough to be divided into two separate areas. The front end of the

family home was to accommodate my Dads Mum (my Nana) and the back end of the home was

where my Mum and Dad lived.

For my brother, Vaughan and I it was very exciting to have our Nana live next door to us

 At an early age we were taught by our parents to be respectful to our Nana’s home. My Mum

and Dad parented with an authoritative style. My parents along with my Nana enforced rules

through warm cooperative communication which Vaughan and I had to follow.

For example if we wanted to visit our Nana we would either telephone her or walk all the way

around our large family home to her front entrance, where we would knock on her door to see if

we could visit. When she answered yes we would jump up and down with excitement as we

knew that the following hour would be filled with crafts, homemade cookies and lots of Nanas

love. When she answered no, Nana would always give us a hug and a special butterfly kiss with

**PERSONAL CONNECTIONS ASSIGNMENT 3**

her eye lashes on our cheek and softly say “Not today dear children, come visit me tomorrow”.

As excited as we were to go to our Nanas home we were also thrilled to answer our door at the

back entrance of the family home when Nana came over for Friday night family dinners and

visits.

Following the rules in regards to our Nana’s home was important to our parents. Be

following rules our parents taught us how to be respectful, show politeness, how to treat each

other equally, along with warmth, maturity and independents. These were some of the many

lifelong lessons our parents taught us. When we did not adhered to the rules our parents would sit

 down with us and with a warm calm voice would go over the rules and explain to us why the

rules were important to our parents, “teaching morals and values” (Wilson, L, 2018, p. 370). Our

parents encouraged us to openly communicate with them. There was always time for us to ask

 questions if we did not understand the rules or the “set structure and order in place” (Wilson, L,

2018, p. 370) they enforced. Learning the rules side by side one another, parent and child,

allowed Vaughan and I to grow “socially, emotionally and intellectually” (Wilson, L, 2018, p.

370).

Working together in a parent partnership role, Mum and Dad had clear communications,

were in sync with one another and consistent with their rules and discipline decisions. They took

 control of the situation, they did not jump to judge or to find fault until they had actively listened

 to what we had to say in response to not following a rule. For Vaughan and I, we had a clear

understanding of the rules and discipline decisions and what our parents expectations were, eg:

 be kind to one another and others, express you are sorry if you hurt someone, always tell the

truth, if you break an item be honest and own up to it, be responsible for your own actions and do

 not tell lies. When our parents communicated with us we felt safe, supported, and loved. Our

**PERSONAL CONNECTIONS ASSIGNMENT 4**

parents looked for teachable opportunities if we broke any rules and they helped us to learn from

 our mistakes. Looking back now I see both my parents as wise owls of authority. Their

authoritative parenting style was fair, reasonable, assertive, with positive instructions, guided

problem solving, along with appropriate choices given when the time came to deal with the

consequences for not following a rule. Eg: time apart from one another, quiet time, redirected to

a different task. They were both great role models during our childhood years, through our

teenage years and when we were young adults. They continue to be amazing parents and

grandparents today. From the positive influence from my own parent’s authoritative parenting

style, I truly believe in this positive parenting style.

Family traditions and culture practices added strength to our family bond, enriched the life we shared together and create lifelong memories. Let me share with you a few of my

favourites we enjoyed.

Every year when it came to Vaughan and my birthday our parents would make a

homemade birthday cake for us. We would suggest some design/theme ideas and abracadabra a

 beautiful, stunning, magical birthday cake would be revealed at our birthday party. Butterfly,

dump truck filled with lollies, witch, a three carriage train, a makeup vanity table and a Smurfs

mountain are just a few designs to name. Vaughan and I were both excited for each other to see

what the birthday cake surprise would be. A sense of happiness and family love magnified. From

 the age of 1 to 10 years old a big part of our special day was our one of a kind birthday cake that

our parents made.

At Christmas time Santa would place a single Christmas gift on top of my bed just below

 my feet. When I went to bed on Christmas Eve I would close my eyes so tight so I could try to

get to sleep faster. I also remember feeling giddy with excitement in my tummy when I went to

bed, as I knew that when I woke up I would stretch my toes to the end of the bed to hear the

**PERSONAL CONNECTIONS ASSIGNMENT 5**

crinkle of the Christmas gift wrapping paper. When I heard that sound I bolted out of bed as

quick as a wink to unwrap the gift from Santa. No matter what the time was 2am, 4 am, or 6 am,

Vaughan and I were able to open the special gift from the foot of our beds, but we were not to

wake Mum and Dad up until 7am. A Christmas tradition the two of us shared together.

 When travelling in the car as a family to either go on a family camping trip, to the river

fishing, the lake for a swim, a hike, or to explore the big city of Christchurch, we would hold our

breath while driving over any bridge. From the start to the end of the bridge our faces would

sometimes turn red depending on how long the bridge was. We would make funny faces at each

other to try and make someone laugh. If we were still holding our breath at the end of the bridge

we would gasp for air as soon as our little blue bird car was off the bridge. A silly family

tradition that made us laugh.

Our parents taught us the value of living within our parents financial means. When going

 to the supermarket (grocery store) we would giggle when our Mum or Dad would buy bologna

 as we had renamed it the “poor man’s ham”. Throughout the year we all enjoyed our “poor

man’s ham” knowing at Christmas time we would get to enjoy a delicious meal with real ham.

What a special treat for us all!

Another special time for me was our childhood bed time routine which involved our

Mum reading us a bedtime story while we were both cozy under the bed covers in either

Vaughan’s or my room. We would listen to Mum and read along with her. We sometimes made

 up our own version of the story. At the end of the story there was always time to talk about the

 story before relocating to our own beds. Whilst Mum was reading us a story, Dad was making

our school lunches. After they had completed their task they each gave us a warm hug, a soft kiss

 on the cheek and tucked us into bed with a gentle whisper of “sweets dreams, love you”. It was

the best feeling of comfort and security you could ask for.

**PERSONAL CONNECTIONS ASSIGNMENT 6**

My parents showed and taught Vaughan and I a ray of skills and abilities through their

culture beliefs. This ranged from cooking, knitting, sewing, enjoying team sports, fishing,

hunting, building, gardening, caring for animals, bee keeping to making honey. Family culture

 was very important so we had daily, weekly and annual family get together’s with grandparents,

 aunts, uncles and cousins. We even had the ability to stay with family and friends on their sheep

 and cattle farms. This enabled us to experience the arrival of spring lambs and baby calf’s,

feeding the farm animals, tractor riding and driving, along with learning how to fix fences, and

checking crops. We called ourselves the “city country kids”. We had the best of both life styles

to learn from.

Vaughan and I had, and still have a strong sibling bond. With the close, happy and secure

attachment we each have with both our parents it created a positive bond between the two of us.

 From the day my little brother arrived into this world, I unconditionally loved him just like our

parents loved us. I was aware when it was feeding time, bath time, and I helped fold the nappy

for him when it was time for a change. I played with him, and played a “teaching role of naming

 objects, providing toys and stimulated his cognitive development. As my Mum and Dad would

 say, I was his little mother. As we grew older we stayed closely attached to one another,

listening to one another, supporting one another, learning from each other and playing sports

with one another. And we continue this amazing sibling connection today,

There of course were times my brother and I would have our share of situations of

conflicts, disagreements, arguments and debates, eg: I do not like it when you do not share the

blocks, I am going to sit in the front seat in the car, or I was first to that to win the race. If we

were not able to problem solve to find a solution to the situation on our own our parents would

intervene and guide us to a solution. We did not experience “bullying, physical interactions or

**PERSONAL CONNECTIONS ASSIGNMENT 7**

hurtful comments” (Wilson, L, 2018, p. 373) towards one another. As it was clear to us from our

 parents rules to be respectful to one another and to treat people the same way you would want to

 be treated. Therefore our communication was open, direct, and sometimes our tone of voice

could be loud with the emotion of frustration. We were not aggressive or negative towards one

another. Sometimes at the end of an argument or debate we would end up laughing at the

situation realizing how silly it all was and how it was a waste of time and energy.

While we enjoyed these milestones of growth and development and wonderful life time

events and experiences we also encountered times of stress and change.

When witnessing our Mum having a serious asthma attack in our family home, the image

 of this stressful situation has stayed with me forever. We had all just finished a delicious home

cooked dinner at the family dinner table in the kitchen. Vaughan and I excused ourselves from

the table to move through to the living room to play with our toys before our bed time routine

started. Mum and Dad were cleaning up in the kitchen, wiping down the oven, table and washing

dishes.

Whilst Vaughan and I were playing we suddenly heard a loud slapping sound from the

dinner table followed by a loud yell from Dad, “Stephanie can you hear me?” It was odd to us

and frightened us so we ran into the kitchen to see what was going on. At the same time we both

 screamed out “Mum!” in high pitch voices. Our Mum was face down on the dinner table with

 her long straight black hair covering her face. Her body limp, lifeless, and draped over the table

. She was supported in a chair and all we could hear was a quiet low sound of breathing with a

strange whistling sound. Our Dad turn to see our frightened faces with tears streaming from our

 eyes. He took a deep breath remind calm, quickly took hold of our hands to let us know our

Mum was having trouble breathing and that he is calling the doctor for help. He gave us a short

**PERSONAL CONNECTIONS ASSIGNMENT 8**

hard hug and asked us to go into the living room to draw a picture for Mum while he took care of her.

 I was 9 years old and Vaughan was 7 years old. I took Vaughan’s hand and lead him to

our craft table. All we wanted to do was give our Mum a hug but we knew it was best to follow

 what Dad had asked us to do. Dad carried our Mum through the living room to the bathroom and

 explained on the way that the stream from the shower would help Mum to breathe. We could

hear Dad talking on the telephone to our family doctor, Dr Bird. After his short conversation he

 let us know that Dr Bird was on his way to our home. What felt like a very long time just took

 two minutes for Dr Bird to arrive as he lived around the corner form our home. When I heard a

knock at the door I ran to open it as Dad was still in the bathroom with Mum. As I opened the

 door Dr Bird greeted me with a big bright smile and said hello. As we walked closer to the

bathroom Dr Bird also gave Vaughan a big bright smile and said hello. He let us both know he

was going to check to see how our Mum was doing. His bright smile and warm hello gave both

Vaughan and I comfort.

As we waited and waited we continued to draw a picture for our Mum. Now it was

difficult to concentrate on my drawing. Dad then came to us and gave us a huge hug and let us

know that Dr Bird was taking good care of our Mum and that he would let us know when we

could go see her, as she was resting in bed now. Dad then told us he was going to pick up our

Aunty Karen, (Mum’s sister) as she was coming over to stay the night. This made us excited as

we loved our time with Aunty Karen and our cousins Shane and Kyle. Once Dad returned home

 he quietly let Vaughan and I know that Dr Bird and him had to take our Mum to hospital. This

made us feel sad and confused, as we did not understand why she could not stay at home. We

gave Mum a hug and kiss goodbye but she did not answer back. We watched our Dad carry

Mum out of our home so they could drive her to the hospital. At this moment Vaughan and I

**PERSONAL CONNECTIONS ASSIGNMENT 9**

were both scare. We turned to Aunty Karen and asked if our Mum was dying and if she was

coming back home. She quietly said to us “We just don’t not know how long Mommy is going to

 be sick”(Wilson, L, 2018, p. 382). A true moment of stress and a world wind of emotions.

It was touch and go with Mums health for next 3 days. Dad thought it was best for Mum

to rest, to gain energy before we visited her so he communicated that with us. When the day

arrived to visit Mum in hospital we were so excited to see her and wanted to stay with her all

day. However we only had a short visit. Our Mum was pale and had very little energy to talk and

 it took a lot of effort for her to smile and hug us. All four of us shared tears with mixed

emotions. We were happy to see Mum and sad to see her so frail. The silver lining to this was

that if her health kept improving, she would be home in a week. Vaughan and I marked the days

 off on our home calendar and could not wait for her to come home. When Mum was well

enough at home, we all sat together to talk about what happened, ask questions, learn more about

 asthma attacks, and made a care plan just in case Mum had another asthma attack. Our lives had

 been changed from this situation but we had learnt how to cope with stress and change. We

learnt this from our Mum, Dad, Dr Bird, Aunty Karen and other family and friends who helped

 us all get through this stressful time. Lucky enough to this day we have not had to witness or

 experience another major asthma attack with our Mum.

I am very blessed with many loving family members around me. I grew up with my

parents Graham and Stephanie, who supported me, loved me, and encouraged me to be the

person I am today. My brother Vaughan is like a twin to me, we have always cared about each

other and think about each other often. Even though my parents live in New Zealand and my

brother in Australia, we have an amazing bond which keeps us close and we are supportive of

one another.

**PERSONAL CONNECTIONS ASSIGNMENT 10**

 I have two sons Cameron (aged 17) and Carson (aged 15). Both boys bring so much joy

 to my life. They each have their own personalities. Cameron is strong willed, competitive, and

driven, and speaks his mind. He is constantly asking questions and has a big heart which allows

him to have a sensitive side as well. Carson is our quiet thinker. He is always taking every

moment in and processing it. Carson likes to follow the rules and has great leadership skills.

Grandmas Joy (Cameron and Carson’s Dad’s Mom whom lives next door to our family).

She is supportive, loving, and loyal. Joy and her late husband, Bill, family values have followed

the same pattern as my own parents. I feel incredible blessed to have all these amazing parents.

Throughout my childhood and up bringing in New Zealand and through becoming a

parent in Canada to my two sons, I know I have a great understanding of the love and warmth of

 a secure and attached family. To know what it feels like to give and be loved, heard, included,

cared for, appreciated, supported, and encouraged on a daily basis is very empowering.

When parents and children are dependent upon one another, “parents share their power with the

children” (Wilson, L, 2018, p. 370). To be in a stable environment while learning from my

parents elevated my self esteem. To have responsible parents who parented in an authoritative

partnership allowed our communications to open and honest. To learn about the world around us

 through our families traditions and culture beliefs, my parents were “teaching morals and

values”, (Wilson, L, 2018, p. 370) to my brother and I.

Within our nuclear family we were fortunate to not experience difficult impacts from a

disability, mental health, natural disaster, substance abuse, homelessness, abuse and violence,

stress or an incarcerated parent. I cannot pretend to know how a child or know how their family

members feels when experiences any one of these situations. However our parents taught us the

 value of having an open mind. To not jump to judgement until you hear the facts and when we

**PERSONAL CONNECTIONS ASSIGNMENT 11**

have a bias opinion to always listen to other peoples view. To understand that all of us strongly

have our own values and beliefs and that is ok to disagree with one another in a responsible and

 respectful manner. To give a listening ear and provide support when the opportunity arrivals are

 the moments I can be a part of when the child and their family members are ready to open up

their world to me. If we all where to develop from the same environment, have the same

parenting style, to encounter the exact same difficult impacts on our childhood we would not be

the unique human beings that we are today.

Having all these natural tools and skills within me (structure, rules, roles, traditions,

culture, knowledge, acceptance, focus, encouragement, empathy, warmth, communication,

competent, social, emotions, awareness, choices, problem solve, flexible, and trust) created a

foundation of magic with my own parenting authoritative style with Cameron and Carson. I can

now share this magic while working with other children and their families. With these skills, a

new partnership will develop, with myself, the child in care and their family members. A great

start to a positive journey.

I truly believe my past family experiences have brought me to the right career path to

work with children and their families. My goals are to further my education, gain knowledge,

and continue to build tools that will help me to guide, support, communicate and develop

partnerships with the children and families in my care. I am here to follow my dream to be a

qualified Early Childhood Educator.

**PERSONAL CONNECTIONS ASSIGNMENT 12**

References

Avender, P. (2019). ECC 163 Personal Connections Assignment Hand Out. Courtenay, British Columbia: North Island College.

Wilson, L. (2018). Partnerships: Families and Communities in Childhood, 6th edition, Canada: Nelson ISBN: 10-0-17-659431-0