

Are There Black Sheep in Your Family?

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Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary definition:

- Someone who ...
- embarrasses a group or family because the person is **person** is different or has gotten into trouble
- has done something bad that brings embarrassment or shame to his/her family

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Black Sheep are in the Family

- Anyone can be the black sheep for just about any reason.
- The black sheep is simply the person who deviates from the family rules.
- In some families, the black sheep is used as a scapegoat, an object lesson to keep the other sheep in line.

Black Sheep vs Skeletons

- Black Sheep –
 - Info needs to be circulated.
 - Needs to be seen.
 - Needs to be discussed.
- Skeleton –
 - Tucked away [in the closet].
 - Family don't talk about it.

Questions to Ask the Family about the Discovery

- How much of the event should I tell and/or write?
- Family members – may not want the story (incident) be told
 - How long ago was the event?
 - Is this individual and/or family members still living?
 - What was/is their reaction about the incident?
 - Do they want it told?

- ▶ You **can** write about the incident **BUT** keep it private (don't publish it).
- ▶ Don't mention it at family gatherings.

Types of "Black Sheep"

1. Criminal Activity
2. Refusal to follow a mandated directive (example, an arranged marriage)
3. Unplanned or unwanted pregnancy
4. Extra marital affair
5. Mental or medical disability that embarrassed the family
6. Marriage outside the approved ethnic or religious group
7. Employed in what was perceived as an unacceptable occupation
8. Failure to achieve a family designated educational, social, or religious or occupational goal
9. Individual decides he/she doesn't want be involved with his/her family

Mandatory Directive

mandatory – required by law or rule – OBLIGATORY

directive – something that serves to direct, guide and usually impel toward an action or goal

From "Bring the Black Sheep Back into the Family's Fold"

Male or female, rich or poor, married or single, young or old, teetotaler or alcoholic – this person is often the object of ridicule, pity, envy, awe, fear, school, embarrassment or secret admiration, for as the proverb goes: "There is a black sheep in every fold."

Source: News clipping taken from *The Berkshire Eagle* (Pittsfield, Massachusetts) 25 Dec 1988 Sun, Page 63.

RESOURCES

Books

Jackson Buzzy (2010). *Shaking the Family Tree*; Touchstone Book, Simon & Schuster, New York, July 2010.

Midgen, Carl R. (2016). *A Step-by-Step Guide To Finding Black Sheep In Your Family*, Midgen Books, NC Printing, Hendersonville, NC, June 2016.

Internet Web Sites

Prison Records –

National Archives – www.archives.gov/research/prisons/

Federal Bureau of Prisons – www.bop.gov/

Newspaper.com, Plus Edition

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